Pragmatism and In-betweenery:
Light music in the practice of Australian composers in the postwar period, c.1945-1980

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Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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May 2015
Declaration

I certify that this work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in my name in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. In addition, I certify that no part of this work will, in the future, be used in a submission in my name for any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution without the prior approval of the University of Adelaide and where applicable, any partner institution responsible for the joint award of this degree.

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Abstract

More than a style, light music was a significant category of musical production in the twentieth century, meeting a demand from various generators of production, prominently radio, recording, film, television and production music libraries. These generators needed music that could accommodate a broad audience, and that maintained a connection between the mainstream of ‘classical’ music and the expanding influences of popular music. Light music provided an adhesive force between gradually diverging cultures of popular and ‘classical’ music and thus represents composers’ efforts, working with pragmatic intent, to forge musical styles in-between the popular and the ‘classical.’

Proceeding from this view of light music, the present study explores its breadth as a productive category for Australian composers. Considering Australian music from this perspective shows the widespread and intensive engagement of composers in a vital field of professional practice in the period following the Second World War until around 1980. Many Australian composers, whether based in Australia or working in Britain, drew opportunities from light music’s generators, and developed compositional approaches that blended the resources of ‘classical,’ jazz and popular music.

Focus is brought to the work of Australian composers Sven Libaek (b. 1938) and Don Banks (1922-1980). For Libaek, light music provides a place in which he can be recognized for his achievement within the ‘improvisatory’ environment of musical opportunity in postwar Australia. For Banks, recognition of his light music extends and re-shapes appreciation of his significance, highlighting his pragmatic drive and the breadth of his musical abilities and taste. For both composers, the values of pragmatism and in-betweenery represented in their light music were important sources of creative impetus and originality.
Acknowledgements

This study has occupied my thoughts for a long time, and after many years away from the academic environment. I am grateful to my supervisors Professor Mark Carroll and Associate Professor Kimi Coald rake for bringing and keeping me on track during this time, encouraging me to develop modes of clear thinking, and maintaining confidence in my sometimes slow progress.

I owe many thanks to Sven Libaek for his patient co-operation with my interviews. His is an unusual career in Australian music, and I am grateful that he was able to help me build a picture of his achievement that I hope will bring better appreciation of his work. Jim Schlichting of Starborne Productions in the US helped with information about his role in Libaek’s career, additionally providing insights into aspects of the Easy Listening industry. I am also grateful to John Carmichael, who answered my questions about his relationship to light music so frankly.

I have relied extensively on the collections of the National Library of Australia (the Don Banks Collection, Australian Performing Arts Programs and Ephemera Collection and TROVE), the State Library of Victoria (Douglas Gamley Collection), National Film and Sound Archive and the State Library of South Australia. Beyond Australia, the BBC Written Archives provided ready access to key information, and the late David Ades of the Robert Farnon Society provided background on Douglas Gamley and Hubert Clifford.

Friends and colleagues in the professional music industry were a valuable and reliable source of support, advice and ideas as my study evolved. Conversations with John Wilson, Matthew Freeman, Phillip Sametz, John Polglase, Martin Buzacott, Simon Healy, Christopher Latham, Gordon Williams and Vincent Plush turned up all sorts of ideas and information to help my progress.

And finally, thanks to my wife Fiona Sherwin and son Leopold for their patient forebearance and practical support without which this study would never have been completed.
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Track Listing of Appendix CD

Recorded examples (compact disc attached to back cover):

Track 1: Sven Libaek, Australian Suite, movt. 3 ‘Australia Square’
Track 2: Sven Libaek, Australian Suite, movt. 1 ‘The Isa,’ (Parts 2-4)
Track 3: Don Banks, Coney Island (complete)

NOTE:
1 CD containing 'Recorded Performances' is included with the print copy of the thesis held in the University of Adelaide Library.

The CD must be listened to in the Music Library.
Introduction

TONY: … then there’s a citizen who wants you to endow the de Carter Foundation for the Diffusion of Serious Music.
SIR ALFRED [de CARTER]: Throw him out… there’s nothing serious about music … it should be enjoyed flat on the back … with a sandwich in one hand, a bucket of beer in the other … It is a secondary art that adds to the joy of living… sandwich eating is a primary art.

Preston Sturges, Unfaithfully Yours (Original Screenplay, 1948)¹

This study seeks to illuminate a shadowy corner of Australia’s music history, the zone of light music. Although the name is widely familiar, light music’s identity is notoriously vague and ambiguous, and any serious consideration of light music must begin with an effort to interpret the term and understand its character. In applying it to the production of Australian composers, I also seek to present light music as an integral part of Australia’s postwar musical culture.

Devotees of light music will recognize it in the description given by the central character in Preston Sturges’s 1948 movie, Unfaithfully Yours, quoted above. Here the eminent conductor Sir Alfred de Carter identifies a type of music that shuns seriousness and favours the listener: ‘a secondary art that adds to the joy of living.’ Although Sir Alfred does not fix a name to it, the music that precisely fits the purpose and place he describes is light music.

Sixty years after Sir Alfred, Keir Keightley contends with the ‘historical “namelessness”’² of this musical category, searching for a coherent ‘historical name for that otherwise nameless and neglected period of twentieth-century popular music: the mainstream between the end of the swing era circa 1946 and the rise of rock culture after 1966.’³ The name Keightley fixes upon is ‘easy listening’, a name appropriate to the period that is his focus, and that correlates with the account I give of the category considered over a longer timeframe, and for which I prefer the name light music. In my

³ Keir Keightley, 309.
view, ‘light music’ best identifies this category of musical activity and production: the
term has been in use since the nineteenth century and is still used today, providing an
historical perspective that is a useful aid to understanding this ‘repertoire’ and its
evolution.

The Oxford English Dictionary does not give a definition of ‘light music’, but invokes
the term in defining others, such as ‘music while you work’, ‘Schrammel’ and ‘Salon.’
Similarly, no entry for light music is provided in Grove Music Online, though the term
appears as a passing reference in a number of entries. The index of the 2001 print edition
of Grove gives the term as a heading to direct the reader to various names: Herb Alpert,
Ronald Binge, Max Schönherr, Albert Ketèlbe, Eric Coates, Ron Goodwin and Leroy
Anderson among others. Implicit in the usage of the term by both the OED and Grove is
the assumption that conjoining the adjective ‘light’ with ‘music’ is self-evidently
descriptive: lightness is simply an attribute that some music has. But what is the quality
of music’s ‘lightness’? And what brings together ‘Music While You Work’, Salon music,
and musicians as diverse as Alpert, Schönherr and Goodwin?

The term ‘light music’ was commonly used to identify the nascent category of popular
music during the nineteenth century, where, as Derek Scott observes, the designation was
‘not formulated as light versus heavy or light versus difficult,’ but rather as the opposite
of ‘serious’ music. ‘Thus, “serious” is the dominant term, and “light” is defined
negatively against it, as music lacking seriousness.’

Although the name is still sometimes used to encompass everything that is not ‘classical
music,’ such usage became archaic with the increased recognition of the term ‘popular
music.’ According to Grove, ‘during the … early 20th-century period, translations or
equivalents of the English-language ‘popular music’ appeared, taking over wholly or in part from previous terminologies. In German, for instance, Populärmusik gradually
replaced the older Trivialmusik and Unterhaltungsmusik.’ As a consequence, the
English-language term ‘light music’ came to signify, in the early twentieth century, a

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5 Derek B. Scott, Sounds of the Metropolis: The Nineteenth-Century Popular Music Revolution in London,
6 Richard Middleton and Peter Manuel, ‘Popular music,’ Grove Music Online (Oxford Music Online),
more specific category – one that has a very particular relationship to both classical and popular mainstreams.

Most efforts to elucidate light music are found beyond the academic mainstream, in discussions of the genre by enthusiasts: indeed, until recently, the main commentary on light music has been sustained through their work. Many definitions from these sources reflect personal attitudes and interests in light music rather than examining the circumstances under which it was produced. Thus definitions arise which describe the enthusiast’s preferred features of this music, reflecting the authors’ personal tastes and even polemical purposes, as in this example from a US website:

The term ‘Light Music’ has been used in Europe for many years, although American audiences may have referred to the same music variously as ‘Mood Music’, ‘Beautiful Music, or ‘Pop Instrumental’.

Characteristics of the Light Music genre can be summarized as follows:
- a strong melody - whether ‘catchy’ in its simplicity, or otherwise ‘memorable’ in nature
- an interesting musical setting - a unique counter-melody, interesting chord progression, etc.
- performance by an orchestra or small ensemble - rarely are vocals used
- a programmatic association such as a mood, place, or era may appear in the title and music
- a form for the arrangement which has a sense of direction - a beginning, middle, & - end; and
- a sense of balance and contrast - solos balance tutti sections, etc.

This genre also can be distinguished by what it does NOT contain:
- no pretense [sic] of ‘serious composition’ such as is found with Symphonies, Concertos, etc.
- no long sections of improvisation or noodling which characterizes so much jazz & rock
- no forum for performer egos; it is a collaborative group of professionals playing the arrangement. 7

While too particular to really serve as a useful definition, the statement makes it clear that light music is to be somehow differentiated not only from ‘serious’ music, but from jazz and rock as well.

Even the practitioners of light music have been content with loose descriptions: composer Ernest Tomlinson liked the definition quipped by producer Andrew Gold that ‘Light music is music where the tune is more important than what you do with it,’8 and Lennox Berkeley gave this characterisation in 1952: ‘music may be called light which

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does not require, on the part of the listener, any previous education in taste or knowledge, but that can be immediately enjoyed by those who do not regard themselves as musical in the usual sense of the word.” Pertinent as the observations are, they essentially point out particular characteristics of light music, rather than serving as definitions. In coming to a satisfactory definition of the genre, we need to find a way to situate this music in a more complete context.

Attempts to define light music frequently highlight the alternative names for music in this zone, such as ‘Easy Listening, Middle-of-the-Road, Mood Music or Concert Music,’ and others that arose from marketing departments: Good Music, Beautiful Music, and (latterly) Lounge Music. These reflect the plural dimensions within light music, the shifts of emphasis that issue from national or regional preferences, the fads and fashions that have created a variety of shadings within the category. Light music provides a name to encompass a constellation of sub-genres or types of music, within which there is much stylistic and regional difference. In order to achieve a thorough understanding of light music to track its development and rich variety, it is necessary to approach the subject from different perspectives.

Much of the genre’s output came in the form of ‘easy’ versions of popular material. I discuss this in the process of ‘locating’ the genre, because it is integral to understanding light music, but my focus is on the composition of original works of light music. My interest is in the role light music played in the careers and musical output of Australian composers, and the interaction of broadly ‘classical’ means with popular influence or aspiration that the genre encouraged.

The thesis is tripartite in structure. Part I aims to recover light music as a particular genre of musical production. Chapter 1 examines light music’s relationship to other musical categories and provides a narrative of its historical development. This map of the musical terrain highlights the forces that gave rise to light music’s creation: the rise of new media bringing music to a wider audience and the challenges that flowed from the growth of popular music. Chapter 2 focusses on the ‘engines’ or ‘generators’ that brought light

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music into existence and the audiences who created the demand for it. The analysis aims to show light music as a coherent genre of musical production, not just a random assortment of pieces and composers chosen because their music sounds ‘light.’ I conclude Chapter 2 with my own statement of definition of light music. Chapter 3 addresses another task necessary to background the study of light music: a consideration of aesthetic perspectives from which to establish ways of understanding the music. This chapter begins with Carl Dahlhaus’s analysis of the genre he called *Trivialmusik*, and summarizes a range of subsequent aesthetic and methodological approaches that supplant or complement Dahlhaus’s restrictive paradigm to make for a more productive discussion of the genre.

Attention then shifts to the Australian context. Parts II and III examine the activity of Australian composers in the field of light music in the period after 1945. Part II considers composers’ activity within Australia, where light music is shown as a vital ingredient in the ‘improvisatory’ environment of Australia’s musical life. Chapters 4 and 5 view the period from the perspective of light music’s generators, revealing a significant shift in the character of Australia’s musical environment as ‘classical’ composers lifted their sights towards the opportunities of a new ‘aspirational’ culture, and light music aligned more closely with popular music. In the examination of his career in Chapters 6 and 7, Sven Libaek emerges as both a characteristic representative of Australian light music practice and a successful individualist within the ‘improvisatory’ musical culture.

Part III explores the activity of Australian composers in Britain’s thriving light music industry. London was the musical land of opportunity for many Australians in the period, and light music was particularly inviting for them. Chapters 8 and 9 show how Australians in London actively engaged with light music, though the relationship was both beneficial and problematic. Although Don Banks’s light music has long been overlooked, it was a vibrant and important inspiration, as shown in Chapters 10 and 11, and adds a highly significant dimension to the perception of his career achievement. My conclusion highlights light music’s role within a complicated series of relations between ‘improvisatory’ and ‘aspirational’ cultures, between popularity and seriousness, and between Australians and British culture.
PART I: LOCATING LIGHT MUSIC
Chapter 1: The Historical and Generic Context of Light Music

My effort to define light music is outlined in two chapters that take a long view of its history and draw upon a diversity of sources. After placing light music in the context of musical genres and broadly surveying its historical development to demarcate the genre’s general territory (Chapter 1), I consider the principal motivating forces that gave rise to the production of light music (Chapter 2).

1.1 Light Music in the Spectrum of Musical Types

*The Cambridge History of Twentieth Century Music* pairs light music with the related ‘Easy Listening’ to provide a catchall category to encompass the whole ‘mainstream’ of this music and to ensure coverage of ‘a number of historically under-represented individuals and trends.’11 Surveying this musical landscape, Derek Scott identifies the two terms as representing ends of a spectrum: ‘light music is often seen as downmarket classical, easy listening is often regarded as upmarket pop. That is why both genres meet in the middle, but it is the middle approached from different directions.’12

‘Middleness’ is a key concept in the definition – and ethos – of light music. It is directly reflected in another name commonly invoked for this musical zone, that of ‘Middle-of-the-Road’ music, and crops up in most attempts at defining light music, such as that given by Philip Scowcroft: ‘in general it occupies the middle ground between “classical” music – symphonies, concertos, grand opera, oratorio, etc. – on the one hand and “pop” (or in earlier days “folk”) and indeed jazz on the other, while inevitably taking something from all its neighbours.’13

Scowcroft’s broad definition echoes an earlier effort to describe the genre by music writer and journalist Peter Gammond.14 Introducing his 1960 *Guide to Popular Music*, Gammond was conscious of the shifting ground of popular music, which was beginning

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to draw new boundaries in musical nomenclature: ‘We had originally thought of calling this book *A Dictionary of Light Music*,’ he admits, and coins a useful term to describe that music: ‘in-betweenery.’\textsuperscript{15} While light music was a term that ‘might cover most of the music mentioned in this book,’ Gammond and co-author Peter Clayton chose instead to limit the conception of light music to ‘its narrowest sense of music uncontaminated by the jazz influence – in other words straight music of the polite, melodic, and easily listened-to kind which is based on the classical idioms and forms.’\textsuperscript{16} In his subsequent writings on the topic, culminating in the 1993 *Oxford Companion to Popular Music*,\textsuperscript{17} Gammond maintained his limited conception of light music, to identify it as a category historically related to, but ‘uncontaminated’ by popular music.

Despite Gammond’s insistence on a narrow definition, I propose he was right in the first place to call it ‘in-betweenery.’ As both Scowcroft and Scott highlight, light music’s peripheral relationship to mainstream genres of the classical and the popular is the essence of its character and indeed, its purpose in the world. Light music doesn’t belong within the mainstream categories of classical, jazz or popular: though it may cling to the traditions, style or conventions of one or other of those genres, at the same time it pulls away, to draw closer to other, opposing genres or mainstreams. The student of light music looks for the ways the music responds to the magnetic forces of different genres, pulling closer to one pole, repelling from another. In-betweenery also conveys a sense of light music’s practice of adapting or modifying the language of various popular and classical genres in ways that make the music accessible or palatable to a broad audience. By highlighting the peripheral status of light music, and its standing *in-between*, we can appreciate the music on its own terms, unencumbered by the expectations of considering it as classical, jazz or popular per se.

We arrive, then, at an approach to defining light music which places it in a spectrum of musical types, bordered (above) by the ‘classical’ mainstream, and (below) by the broad combination of jazz, folk and popular musical forms (\textbf{Figure 1}). We may speculatively pinpoint individual works or composers within the spectrum, chronologically and

\textsuperscript{16} Peter Gammond and Peter Clayton, 131.
stylistically, as illustrated below, and argue about whether this or that work or composer belongs within the light music domain or lies beyond it.

![Diagram of musical spectrum]

**Figure 1: Light music as an in-between stratum**

Even Theodor Adorno appears to endorse the view of light music’s placement within a musical spectrum, though with sinister connotations and an intense sense of hierarchy - and with light music not quite in the middle. ‘Below the realm of “musical life”,’ he writes, ‘stretches the vast realm of “light” music. Along with commercial art and song, literature for male chorus and sophisticated jazz, it extends musical life without interruption, assimilating as much from above as is accessible to it; it reaches downward into the bottomless underworld far beyond the bourgeois “hit song.”’

The shading in Adorno’s version of this spectrum stretches uncompromisingly from awful darkness to glimmering light. But for Adorno, light music’s proximity to the corruptive influence of the popular drags it down into the danger zone, where it succumbs to the Culture Industry’s power to reduce music to administered forms.

While the notion of light music occupying a stratum is helpful to understanding the genre, it is not the only music to occupy this zone. We may point to examples of music

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which bear similar characteristics without being classified as light music: the ‘Third Stream’ creations of André Hodeir and Gunther Schuller or the sophisticated post-modern collisions of Michael Daugherty and Christopher Rouse, for instance. Works by these composers could also find themselves pinpointed in the intermediate zone within the spectrum of musical types, but that doesn’t necessarily make them light music. They are differentiated from the category light music by other characteristics of intent and context. Our progress towards a definition of light music must take account of further issues and characteristics.

Placing light music within the spectrum of musical types does, however, enable us to use the term to describe the genre in a complete sense. While the name light music is commonly paired with Easy Listening to encompass, as the editors of the *Cambridge History of Twentieth-Century Music* sought to do, the whole ‘mainstream’ of this music, such names become understood as variants or subsets within light music’s mainstream, rather than as independent inventions.

### 1.2 The Historical Development of Light Music

Light music’s origins are commonly traced back to the milieu of the Strauss family in Vienna, as an alternative stream of musical development that arose as corollary to the emergence of German musical seriousness. Doyen of twentieth century Austrian light music, Max Schönher perceptively places Hegel at the decisive moment of the divergence of these two musical paths:

Hegel differentiated between art ‘used as a fleeting game, to serve for pleasure and entertainment, to embellish our surroundings’ and art as free art, ‘art generated from within itself’. In the language of our time, ‘utilitarian’ music is ‘U-Musik’ (light music), ‘free’ music is ‘E-Musik’ (serious music).19

This moment serves well as a marker of light music’s origins. The Strauss family created music to supply a new commercial demand arising from the Viennese bourgeoisie, and they represent an attitude to the production of music in sharp contrast to the Hegelian path that grew to dominate German music in the nineteenth century.

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Derek Scott warns against demarcating a territory for light music separate from popular music in the discussion of nineteenth century music. ‘Some Anglo-American critics have wished to make a distinction,’ he observes, ‘but there is no substantial differentiation worth pursuing,’ since the defining characteristic of all this music is its separation from ‘classical music.’ Light music and popular music can be treated as interchangeable terms in the nineteenth century context. It is nevertheless important to understand why the Strausses have been frequently identified as the parents of light music ‘proper’ – that is, as it grew to be recognized in the 20th century.

Scott’s analysis of the Viennese Waltz emphasizes the development of an identifiable ‘popular style’ represented in characteristics such as rhythmic dependability, non-notated ‘feel’ in performance (presaging ‘swing’ and ‘groove’), melodies freed from harmonic basis and harmonic enrichments such as the use of non-functional added sixths. While the Strausses deliberately courted popular acceptance, this music does not forsake – in Scott’s apt term – ‘artiness’, a feature the Strausses made overt in their performance and composition of waltzes for the concert hall.

Scott describes these concert or symphonic waltzes as an early form of ‘crossover’ music, and the blending of classical decorum with features of a new ‘popular style’ accounts for the music’s great attractiveness to a middle-class audience. Scott’s description of this music as a ‘crossover’ extends a twentieth century concept to the nineteenth in order to provide a contemporary contextualization of the Strausses’ popular ‘revolution’, and while this is effective in restoring appreciation for the originality of the Waltz as the first of successive waves of popular music’s development, it equally supports the view of this music as in-betweenery. The presence of classical and popular features together demonstrates its light music character, and justifies reference to this music as the beginning point of light music – if not as a distinct category, then at least as antecedent to the genre that arose in the twentieth century.

Light music’s path in the nineteenth century (whether viewed as a developing category in its own right or as antecedent to it) coursed through the zones of commercial opportunity that arose in response to middle-class appeal. The fields of Operetta, Music-Hall, Popular

20 Derek B. Scott, Sounds of the Metropolis, 6.
21 Derek B. Scott, Sounds of the Metropolis, 123-131.
Theatre, the Palm Court orchestra and Balladry were the chief sites in which the creations of light music’s Pantheon of Greats originated: Jacques Offenbach, Arthur Sullivan, Victor Herbert, Edward German and their peers and satellites. Well into the twentieth century, their compositions continued to supply light music markets and were taken as models for composers for their original light music works.

Light music also had a significant presence in the symphonic world. For the fledgling Boston Symphony Orchestra, it had a necessary place in the orchestra’s life and work. The orchestra’s founder, stockbroker Henry Lee Higginson, was an enthusiast for the Viennese popular style and from the outset (circa 1881), light music was integral to his business plan, but he also saw a quandary in its in-between status:

I do not know whether a first-rate orchestra will choose to play light music, or whether it can do so well … My judgment would be that a good orchestra would need, during the winter season, to keep its hand in by playing the better music, and could relax in summer, playing a different kind of thing. But I should always wish to eschew vulgar music, i.e. such trash as is heard in the theatres, sentimental or sensational nonsense; and so on the other side I should wish to lighten the heavier programmes by good music of a gayer nature.22

The Boston Symphony’s inaugural director, Englishman Sir George Henschel, liked to end concerts with ‘popular waltzes, marches and overtures’, but his successor Wilhelm Gericke – adopting Higginson’s solution to the problem of light music – separated this activity out into a summer ‘Promenade’ season under its own conductor, Adolf Neuendorff. From this beginning was to grow the Boston Pops, one of America’s prime sites for the propagation of light music and a model for ‘handling’ popular content in the orchestral domain.

While we may assume that Higginson’s use of the term ‘light music’ is descriptive (‘light’ as an attribute of the music), the conjoining of those two terms became enshrined as a generic name in the next phase of light music’s historical progress: the Radio era. The advent of radio broadcasting in the 1920s ushered in a new era for light music, as the medium sought to feed a new and insatiable breadth of musical tastes.

Light music quickly took on a major role in the musical fare of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC). Paddy Scannell and David Cardiff show that ‘Light music’ constituted 28.01% of the BBC’s total broadcast hours in 1936 and 26.13% in 1937, compared to 16.19% and 16.38% for ‘Serious music’ and 11.97% and 7.97% for ‘Dance bands.’ These statistics suggest that light music’s position in the musical history of the twentieth century is considerably more significant than the music-historical discourse acknowledges. The neglect of light music reflects attitudes going back to the origins of the BBC: for its administrators, light music was a distraction from their main, serious, purpose. Although it accounts for much of the output of the BBC Music Department of the 1930s, Scannell and Cardiff report that the Department administered ‘with little enthusiasm, the ambiguous intermediate category of “light music”’. For the Music Department, the main game was high-end ‘classical’ music: engagement with popular culture was forced upon them. Simon Frith identifies two concerns which motivated the BBC to sponsor its own type of quasi-popular music: a desire to counter American popular influence without undermining higher cultural values or aspiration, and a recognition that radio needed to provide relaxation from the cares of the modern world. The Music Department was forced to contend with these requirements, and from the outset, sought ‘to find “good light songs”, “music with attractive melodies, used and harmonized with distinction of thought and fancy”’ to satisfy the man at leisure:

Generally speaking, when a man gets home tired and ‘fed up’, he wants to be cheered by a good, lilting tune and harmony that is distinctive without being so ‘modernistic’ as to disturb the increasing tranquillity of his mental state. [Arthur] Sullivan and Edward German fill this want so adequately that a programme of works by these thoroughly ‘English’ composers is always welcomed.

The Music Department hoped that the models of Sullivan and German could be built upon to meet the needs of radio’s new mass audience without surrendering the hoped-for improvement in the general standards of public taste.

In their description of what constituted the BBC’s light music, Scannell and Cardiff invoke a definition along familiar lines: ‘soothing melodies and gently undulating

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24 Ibid., 182.
rhythms poured out in measured doses of soft lights and sweet music.' The term was ‘a catch-all which included the sentimental songs, ballads and instrumental compositions of late Victorian and Edwardian days, [represented by Haydn Wood, Albert Ketèlbey and the singer and song composer, Teresa del Riego].’

The category also encompassed ‘the music of the “jazz symphonists” [which, unlike the music of Wood, Ketèlbey and del Riego] was right up to date’, inspired by Gershwin’s *Rhapsody in Blue* (1924) and represented in ‘a whole generation of young English composers, including Constant Lambert, Eric Coates and George Posford,’ though some of these works ‘were straying over the borders into the domain of serious music.’ More representative of the light music ‘most often heard on the radio’ were the smaller ensembles, such as those led by Gershom Parkington, Lesley Bridgewater and Fred Hartley.

The two faces of light music’s inspiration – the backward-looking resort to nineteenth century models and the infusion of contemporary elements from the popular domain – situate the genre in a cultural no-man’s-land, though it was integral to the BBC’s functioning during the Reith era. Geoffrey Self characterizes the BBC’s mission, under Reith’s directorship, as a ‘cultural war … between popular and serious … cultures’, in which light music ‘found itself uncomfortably in the middle.’ In the contest between popular appeal and elevating purpose, light music became an important tool of compromise politics: expected to appeal to a broad audience without entirely forsaking standards of ‘classical’ propriety or merit.

In the United States, radio flourished in a free market environment. BBC Broadcaster Hilda Matheson noted in 1933 that the ‘story of broadcasting in America … is one of popular and commercial enthusiasm, with a very free rein to its expression, controlled for the most part by great commercial corporations, and paid for by every sort of commercial interest which advertises through it.’ Nevertheless the impetus to intertwine the ‘classical’ mainstream with popular sources or influence was just as strong: in seeing a

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26 Sam Heppner in *Radio Times*, 1936, quoted in Paddy Scannell and David Cardiff, 211.
27 Paddy Scannell and David Cardiff, 211-212.
28 Ibid., 212.
need for music that flirted with popular style without going as far as ‘vulgarity’, the Boston Symphony’s Henry Lee Higginson represented a widespread attitude.

Conductor André Kostelanetz (1901-1980) was among the first to leap into the fray of broadcast music, from early 1928. Beginning with a diet of edited classics, Kostelanetz soon perceived a need to include popular music. He was motivated by an appreciation for the popular songs of the 1930s and 1940s: ‘a luxury of riches in popular music; there was an abundance, and it was immensely attractive … what ever happened to the impulse that created them? Melody and lyric combined to uplift, to distract from the humdrum, to comfort, to amuse.’

Kostelanetz was acting instinctively, but with a vague sense of the need to provide for a broadening radio public:

I did not make any effort to explain that phenomenon in those days, no philosophical excursions into the meaning of it all… The only thing I knew then was that I wanted to make those songs part of our broadcasting repertoire. The radio-listening audience was growing all the time in number and variety, and I wanted to acknowledge that variety with a free mix of classical and popular music. So in 1933 … we began introducing one or two popular ballads each week.

The introduction of this popular music into the work of Kostelanetz’s radio orchestra required its re-formatting to exploit the capabilities of the orchestra:

Essential for presenting popular music was expertise in arranging … [Since the original orchestrations] were conventional to the point of dullness … we started fresh with the sheet music. First, the instruments to be used had to be decided on and then parts written for them, always with the idea of enriching the song, emphasizing its best qualities, giving it a fresh perspective.

At the same time Kostelanetz was learning the value of popular song in addressing the great radio audience, another crucial development was taking place in adapting jazz to a popular ‘classical’ context. Paddy Scannell has drawn attention to the influence of American symphonic jazz upon British composers of light music, and the major promoter of that form was Paul Whiteman (1890-1967). Whiteman turned to jazz out of boredom with his life as an orchestral violinist, and in jazz he found a source of refreshment and vitality. But, as Neil Leonard observed in 1964, Whiteman did not aim

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32 Ibid., 74-75.
33 Ibid., 78.
to overthrow the ‘conventional norms’ of the ‘classical’ mainstream, but to infuse these conventions with the vivacious character of jazz. Whiteman was ‘unwilling to go so far as to embrace real jazz’ but he prized its capacity to recall the sense of ‘joy in being alive. While we are dancing or singing or even listening to jazz, all the artificial restraints are gone. We are rhythmic, we are emotional, we are natural.’ At the same time, Leonard points out, ‘Symphonic jazz advocates … were quick to show that its practitioners committed none of the “excesses” of real jazz men,’ and they emphasized the ‘classical’ credentials of the musicians Whiteman and his counterparts employed.

Whiteman pioneered the quest for a way of accommodating jazz within the mainstream of orchestral or ‘classical’ music. The ‘symphonic jazz’ he tried to develop may be easy to condemn as a pale version of jazz, but as light music, it’s an outstanding exemplar. The great success of Whiteman’s campaign to create a kind of ‘classical’ music that accommodated jazz was Gershwin’s *Rhapsody in Blue*, which he famously commissioned and premiered. For light music’s audiences and practitioners, it became a masterpiece of the genre, particularly in renditions emphasising the melodious qualities that suited it to light music. The *Rhapsody* provided a new model for light music composition, to complement or supplant the models of Strauss and Sullivan.

From the perspective of light music, Kostelanetz and Whiteman are innovators whose pioneering work relating popular song and jazz to the ‘classical’ domain of orchestral music making led the way for light music’s future development. As new styles entered popular music, these influences began to appear in light music: in the inter-war period, tango, jazz and Swing inspired light music’s composers to include new elements and characteristics in their pieces. At first, these constituted inflections or a ‘tinge’ that colours the music, but the growth of popular styles stimulated the transformation of light music into a new phase of its development, the Easy Listening era.

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35 Ibid., 77.
36 Ibid.
1.2.1 Postwar Developments: the Easy Listening Era

After the Second World War, light music drew closer to the tastes of the broad public it sought to address. This new character can be usefully identified as ‘Easy Listening’ - a term more commonly applied to the genre as it evolved from the 1950s to the 1980s.

Although the name gives little hint of it, Easy Listening is characterized by the closer integration of jazz and popular elements into the light music score and orchestra. As jazz opened to a variety of new directions in the postwar period, light music became a destination for refugees from the Big Bands, especially those disenfranchised from the new world of innovative ‘arty’ jazz with its offshoots such as ‘Hard Bop’. Instead, the stylistic world they came to occupy was characterized as ‘soft’ or ‘smooth’ jazz, which could be accommodated readily into the light music context.

Ray Conniff (1916-2002) exemplifies this transition. He enjoyed success in the Big Bands of Bunny Berigan, Artie Shaw and Harry James as a trombonist and arranger, but ‘when he [James] wanted me to start writing Bop instead of Swing, I walked out and said he should find someone else, it just wasn't my style.’ After a period of self-doubt and questioning, Conniff’s musical outlook changed:

> When I was with the big bands, all of us musicians, we played to impress the guys in the band, not for the audience. Music for musicians - and it was fun - but who is the music really for? It's for the people who listen to it. I started doing research, looking at all the pop charts, looking at what worked and what didn't.

Conniff developed a formula of blended voices and orchestra performing gently upbeat versions of popular songs, old and new, that brought him enduring commercial success. The orientation of Conniff towards his audience is indicative of how audience demand drove the drift towards ‘sweet’ music – the ‘sweet revolution’ as Keir Keightley identifies it, reflecting ‘a new desire for musical peace’ among a generation that had survived the War.

Another signal of the confluence between popular jazz and light music in this era was the transition that many swing arrangers put themselves through in order to acquire

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38 Keir Keightley, 325.
traditional orchestral and compositional skills. Nelson Riddle (1921-1985) provides a famous example, studying with the Italian émigré composer Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco, much in demand among the composers of Los Angeles’ film community. Riddle gained from his study a ‘skill and fluency in handling large groups of instruments,’ but regretted that his career took him away from his teacher before he had the chance to acquire ‘the tools to transcend the title “arranger”,’ to gain ‘an earlier and firmer footing in the composition of film scores, which were my first love.’

39 The examples of Ray Conniff and Nelson Riddle illustrate a significant attitude towards the confluence of popular style and ‘classical’ discipline in the first years of postwar peace.

Meanwhile for the BBC, the War had brought attention to the need to accommodate the tastes of a mass audience, leading to the creation of the Light network alongside the Home Service and the high-end Third Programme. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, light music was employed by the Corporation to address these needs. It found a place across all three Services, providing the staple diet for some of the Corporation’s most popular programs, notably *Music While You Work* and *Friday Night is Music Night*. The BBC’s desire for a high quality supply of light music led to the formation in 1952 of the 45-member BBC Concert Orchestra.

40 As the 1950s progressed, the BBC struggled with the challenge of emerging new styles of ‘entertainment music’, but could not stop these new genres from steadily taking up more and more air-time, at the expense of the kind of light music the BBC had helped to create. Defences of light music were waged at various points (notably by Australian composer Hubert Clifford in his two reports on the issue41) but the genre’s in-between status worked against it. The Music Department resented it as a drain on resources that could be devoted to serious music, and advocates of jazz and popular music regarded the genre as out of date.

While jazz could be accommodated within light music by limiting its elements of soloism and improvisational freedom, pop and rock posed a greater challenge. For the

41 Asa Briggs, 747n.
custodians of BBC light music, the ‘pop revolution’ was a rude shock, an affront to prevailing standards. But resistance was futile: those who refused to adapt found themselves on the outer, and the revolution ushered in a generational change in the Corporation’s hierarchy. Speaking at his retirement dinner at the end of 1962, the BBC’s Assistant Head of Light Entertainment (Sound), the Australian former Dance Band leader Jim Davidson (1902-1982) noted ruefully that the year had seen ‘[e]stablished standards of entertainment … cruelly and rudely satirised and publicly punctured’:

A bitter year for ‘squares’, with the word ‘modern’ overworked and ‘teenage’ a gimmick for market research. It would appear that those of you who have spent years in the professional entertainment business have little to offer the Mods and Rockers, which in less erogenous times would no doubt be named ‘Poofs’ and ‘Shockers!’. It has been the fantastic year of the Liverpool Sound … But we can surely do better than amateur mania with a musical horizon bounded by four chords, and indifferently-played guitars…

Foretelling the resurgence of light music in its new (albeit short-lived) Easy Listening guises in the 1970s, Davidson concluded that ‘the wheel of fortune will inevitably turn away from the wholly vocal charts of the early sixties, ultimately returning to the music of the bands. New orchestras, new instrumentations, new music will eventually displace today’s vocal Bedlam.’

Similar issues were confronting an even bigger institution of British society at this time: the Church. Like the BBC, British Churches wanted to uphold a ‘classical’ tradition of sacred music, but at the same time confronted an urgent need to maintain and extend their popular relevance. ‘Pop’ music first intruded upon established domains of Church music in 1955 when Father Geoffrey (sometimes Gerard) Beaumont published his own effort to update the Anglican Mass to appeal to a younger, modern audience, the 20th Century Folk Mass. Beaumont was widely considered to be a well-intentioned amateur, and Erik Routley, a thoughtful commentator on sacred music, observed that his music ‘has not filled the churches with pop-worshippers.’ Beaumont’s revolution did, however, ‘bring into existence a group of composers and authors known as the 20th Century Church Light Music Group.’

The choice of ‘Light Music’ in the name was apt, since their music achieved a sort of quasi-popularity not entirely relinquishing the sense of ‘classical’ or traditional

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44 Ibid., 167.
standards. Routley pointed out that the composers of this group were not authentic pop composers, but rather (like himself) were ‘visitors from the bourgeois side.’ Although the movement was ‘seeking contact with an unevangelised section of the people,’ its composers were not ‘people who move freely and normally in the world of “pop”.’ It took some time before the Churches totally embraced popular music, but once it did take hold, there was no stopping it: popular music now dominates Church Music culture. Along the path of that dramatic transition, however, a rich in-between repertoire of ‘Church Light Music’ was created, represented in the work of composers Herbert Chappell, Michael Hurd, Donald Swann, John Alldis, Michael Garrick, Patrick Appleford and Malcolm Williamson.

While the BBC was succumbing to the ‘pop revolution’, America witnessed an unexpected light music revival on the radio airwaves, as the ‘growth of FM stations … encouraged the advent of softer sounds.’ The new movement was called ‘Beautiful Music radio … an effort launched in the mid- to late 1960s that provided soft and unobtrusive instrumental selections on a very structured schedule.’ The superior musical capacity of FM encouraged stations to adopt ‘Muzak-type formats of relaxing orchestrals, light classics, and showtunes,’ especially aimed to a female audience, so that ‘the breezy and at times hypnotic tunes of such light greats as Ray Conniff soothed women in their kitchens when not serenading them in supermarket aisles.’ The term ‘Beautiful Music’, in Lanza’s view, ‘evolved into “easy-listening”’ in the late 1960s, when it became ‘a Top 40 chart hit category in Billboard magazine to designate light instrumentals and vocals – anything from Paul Mauriat’s “Love is Blue” to the Lettermen’s “Our Winter Love”’.

Through his study of the period’s trade press, Keir Keightley traces the origin of the Easy Listening format to the years immediately following the Second World War, where the name evolves from ‘a description of an audience’s pleasure, to the title of radio programming seeking a particular demographic, to a genre of LP music, and to the name

45 Ibid., 161 and 172.
48 Ibid., 168.
49 Ibid., 170.
50 Ibid., 174.
of the immediate postwar mainstream of US popular music. The appearance of Billboard’s chart for Easy Listening in June 1965 signals both the term’s new status as the name for light music, and its distinction from a new popular mainstream closely identified with Baby-Boomer ‘teen’ culture.

The producers of Easy Listening radio drew their repertoire from established names in the light music pantheon, prominently including the old BBC stable of artists. Joseph Lanza cites Ronnie Aldrich, Frank Chacksfield, Ron Goodwin, Norrie Paramor, Geoff Love, Syd Dale, the BBC Midland Orchestra, and John Gregory’s ‘Cascading Strings’, and from the Continent, James Last and Franck Pourcel. The new format extended the careers of composers and orchestra-leaders who could otherwise be forgiven for thinking they’d become as redundant as Jim Davidson.

There were enough people who agreed with Davidson’s taste to enable light music to maintain a substantial corner of the marketplace. A strong commercial demand supported styles of music that avoided the ‘extremes’ of postwar musical innovation and that remained connected with traditional bourgeois values. By no means all light music conceded to the influence of new popular forms: Leroy Anderson’s music, provided for the programs of the Boston Pops, exemplifies the conservative side of light music. Anderson’s music is enlivened by drawing elements from popular domains, like tangos and reels, but even when ‘Jazz’ appears in the title (as in his Jazz Pizzicato), it is only the rhythmic syncopation of jazz style that we can detect. World-wide bestsellers like Mantovani eschewed too much influence from popular sources, deriving their character of in-betweenery from older models of popular orchestral music, taking advantage of technical advances in recording (in Mantovani’s case, Decca’s ‘Full Frequency Stereophonic Sound’).

Within the broad and stylistically varied production of light music, the vast bourgeois audience was able to find music to meet its taste or musical needs. Arranging popular material to make it palatable to this taste became an essential practice of many light music leaders, the ‘cash cow’ in making their livelihood. As Kostelanetz found with the songs of the 1920s and 30s, so did subsequent generations of arrangers find potential in

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51 Keir Keightley, 329.
52 Joseph Lanza, 175.
the popular songs of later periods - or pretended to. Gene Lees quotes a conversation with Percy Faith in 1974: ‘there is a rock influence in the things I’ve done in the last few years. I’ve just had to. You cannot sell Gershwin, you cannot sell Rodgers – they’ve had it. The Establishment won’t buy it, and the young people aren’t interested, so you’ve got to give it to them their way.’

Although Easy Listening prolonged light music’s popular and commercial standing well into the 1970s, its fall from popular appeal in the 1980s was rapid. Percy Faith, as noted above, identified the beginnings of the decline in the generational shift to the Baby-Boomers. The year 1980 becomes a symbolic marker of the end (or at least the ‘beginning of the end’) of light music’s ‘golden era’, with the deaths of key luminaries Kostelanetz (13 January), Mantovani (29 March), and Bert Kaempfert (21 June).

Easy Listening audiences transferred their allegiance to new genres such as ‘Adult Contemporary,’ World Music and New Age music. Light music ‘began to lose its identity as something distinguishable from pop’, observes Derek Scott, as the likes of Barry Manilow, the Carpenters and Barbra Streisand took over the middle ground. Pop’s ability to fuse and absorb other styles ‘eroded the possibility of light music remaining a separate category.’ Even the BBC felt that way: composer Anthony Hedges, Scott recounts, ‘was informed by the BBC at the dawn of the 1970s that his light music compositions would no longer find an outlet there, since light music was extinct.’ Among composers the label of light music became tainted, and it is rare to find a composer today who willingly accepts the label.

Nevertheless, light music has by no means disappeared. In the productions of André Rieu the long-dormant light music heritage has been revived to great commercial success. In the production of original music, the heritage of light music continues in television and radio and the production music libraries. Composers such as Karl Jenkins, Anne Dudley and Howard Goodall may be identified as light music’s contemporary practitioners, inheritors of the mantles of Eric Coates, Charles Williams and Ronald Binge for a different age.

54 Derek B. Scott, ‘Other Mainstreams: Light Music and Easy-listening, 1920-70,’ 332
55 Ibid.
Chapter 2: The Sources of Light Music Production

2.1 The Generators of Light Music

The historical development of light music highlights the importance of the introduction of new markets stimulating demand and providing impetus for light music. Every form of music depends upon some set of generators of demand or opportunity - or in the terminology David Osmond-Smith applies to the postwar avant-garde, ‘engines’.

Unlike the ‘engines’ of the avant-garde, those for light music had an element of commercial thinking to them, whether directly, as in the case of production library music, or indirectly, as in the case of the BBC. I prefer to describe these using the term generators, since that implies a less direct assertion of power than is carried by the term ‘engines.’ I have focussed on radio in the discussion of light music’s historical development, but other ‘generators’ of production play a vital role in the narrative of the genre.

2.1.1 Light Music in Live Performance and Theatre

Throughout its historical development, light music’s generators changed, outmoded forms like the Ballad Concerts or the Palm Court orchestras of Britain’s seaside resorts giving way to new sources of opportunity. Geoffrey Self observes that with the Second World War the ‘structures of musical society which had sustained light music … would begin to die … But to some extent, recording and film work had taken their place and new opportunities were arising in advertising, mood music and, above all, in the new medium of television.’

A general trend away from live performance outlets is a notable feature of light music’s evolution: in terms of its production, the demand arising from radio, film, television and recording takes on much greater significance in the Easy Listening era.

It became increasingly rare for light music to find its outlet in Concert Hall activity or in performances by symphony orchestras, other than in informal contexts. Light music was mainly hived off from the mainstream of ‘classical’ music performance into the field of

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57 Geoffrey Self, 185
Orchestral ‘Pops’ concerts, growing out of the nineteenth century ‘Promenade’ concert tradition,\textsuperscript{58} celebrating the great light music repertoire of the past (the Strausses, Gershwin, operetta, etc.), while building up a huge stockpile of arrangements of material from popular song, musical theatre and movies. Special presentations, such as the BBC’s Festivals of Light Music in the 1950s or the concert celebrations of light music stars, capitalized on the popularity of the genre’s celebrities and did not act as major generators of light music’s production. Star performers like Mantovani, Percy Faith, Bert Kaempfert, James Last and Geraldo satisfied the large audiences generated by their exposure on radio, recordings and television by presenting live concerts.

The world of theatre was more accommodating to light music, especially in the commercial sector, where the evolution from Light Opera to Musical created plentiful new material for bandleaders and arrangers. Even in the subsidised sectors of Opera and Ballet, companies turned to the talents of the light music composer and arranger to help create new works, or revive old ones, in the hope of broad audience appeal. Douglas Gamley (see Chapter 9) applied his skills as composer and arranger to support artists like Joan Sutherland and Richard Bonynge in their work in light operatic vein. Charles Mackerras contributed to the needs of British ballet for lighter musical material with \textit{Pineapple Poll} (1951). Another prominent contributor in this field was John Lanchbery (1923-2003) as conductor and orchestrator for productions of the Royal Ballet and the Australian Ballet.

\textbf{2.1.2 Film}

Other new media grew alongside radio from the 1920s. Film generated an enormous supply of music from the beginning of the silent era. For the early cinemas, music was supplied by anything from a single instrument (most characteristically, the cinema organ) to orchestras of varying size and distinction. Music accompanied the films and entertained audiences before the concert and during the interval. Already by 1936, Kurt London was looking back nostalgically on the ‘brief flowering of the cinema orchestra,’ from 1913 to 1928, when the ‘musicians of the biggest orchestras, with their well-known and popular conductors, were an independent attraction: and the cinema, which had

become the staple entertainment of an enormous proportion of the population, began to fill a social mission by turning itself into a purveyor of good music.\textsuperscript{59}

With the introduction of the sound-film, a new era of compositional opportunity was created for the supply of purpose-made music to accompany the action of a film, as well as theme music for main- and end-title sequences. A distinction is to be made between music having a dramatic function in the context of the film and light music, which supplies a mood or simply its trademark tunefulness. The kinds of movie that required a light music style were those in which psychological and other tensions were largely absent. Thus particular species of film, generally of more modest ambition, drew upon light music’s repository of styles and idioms: costume dramas, comedies of one variety or another. Aside from feature movies, light music found pride of place in documentary film production, again in circumstances where it mostly served as simple accompaniment or mood setting, rather than communicating dramatic tensions. Thus, light music appears frequently in documentaries of a promotional nature, including travelogues, ‘industrial’ films, advertisements (the music given its own name, the ‘jingle’) and newsreels.

Light music composers were naturally drawn to film, finding in it abundant opportunity to gain employment and produce music, making effective use of their skills and abilities. Constant Lambert encouraged his fellow composers to embrace film music as ‘a reasonable commercial outlet for [their] activities, comparable to the “occasional” music which the greatest classical composers did not despise to write.’ Film composition ‘opens up a new life for the composer whose talents are more executive than creative.’ Even though its production would be ‘inevitably more ephemeral and less important than symphonic and operatic music,’ nevertheless film music should be embraced in the same way as the work of ‘the first-rate poster artist or the first-rate journalist.’ The composer ‘endowed with technical facility and good taste, but with little originality’ could find a fruitful outlet in the film studio, preserving us from the ‘spectacle’ of watching him ‘wasting his time in an effort to be a latter-day Beethoven.’\textsuperscript{60}


\textsuperscript{60} Constant Lambert, ‘Foreword,’ in Kurt London, 8.
Film music made use of the light music composer’s skills, being of the same ‘executive’ character that film music required. As a result, the identity of ‘light music composer’ commonly sits alongside that of ‘film composer’, the two sources of work often constituting the major components of an individual composer’s ‘portfolio career.’

2.1.3 Television

In relation to light music, television encompasses elements of both radio and film uses. The BBC began television broadcasts in 1947, but the new medium proved problematic for musical performances, giving rise to an ‘uneasy relationship.’"61 Australian journalist Mungo MacCallum faced the facts early on: ‘Music-lovers,’ he observed in 1968, ‘do as well and better by going to concerts and listening to radio and buying a record-player. The natures of orchestra and opera are such that when they mate with television a freak is born.’62

In light music, Humphrey Burton observes that ‘middle-brow classical tastes had been catered for since 1951 by Eric Robinson’s potpourri “Music for You”’.63 Both the title and the format of potpourri conjure the feeling of the Fred Hartley-style radio programs of an earlier era, and shows in this format constituted one outlet for light music on television during the 1960s and early 1970s, though they formed much less a constituent part of television output than they did for radio.

The application of recorded music in television productions and in addressing on-air requirements for background music takes on much greater significance in creating light music’s place in the world of television. Keith Negus summarizes the key uses of light music ‘as theme tunes, interval music and accompaniment for test-card transmissions,’64

and in these guises light music took up many hours of television time, large amounts derived from production music libraries.

Light music’s composers found a new source of gainful employment in supplying music for the full range of genres of television production: game shows, situation comedies, documentaries, television plays and serials etc. In this, the principles of television music are similar to those of film, but were subject to ‘significant differences brought about by television’s smaller budgets, tighter production schedules, shorter programme durations and poorer sound replay.’

2.1.4 Production Library Music

While some television producers commissioned composers to create scores specifically for their new shows, most plundered the treasure houses of the production music libraries which had become important suppliers of light music to radio and the film industry. Many television productions combined commissioned music with material from such libraries. Arising from the huge demand from producers for theme tunes and incidental music across radio, film and television, publishers recognized a commercial opportunity they addressed through a new form of publishing outlet, the production or recorded music library. Philip Tagg defines ‘library music’ as ‘music whose purpose is to provide the makers of audio-visual productions (radio or TV programmes, adverts, low-budget film, etc.) with recordings envisaged as suitable to a wide range of quite specific moods, scenarios and dramatic functions.’

The production music libraries evolved out of the activities of publishers, arrangers and composers to supply sheet music for performance by the cinema organs and cinema orchestras of the silent movies era, exemplified by Giuseppe Becce’s *Kinothek* compendium of musical cues, published in 1919. Boosey & Hawkes started up a library of *recorded* music in 1937, after the arrival of the ‘Talkies’ had spelt the end of live music in the cinemas, and radio also made extensive use of these recorded tracks for

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67 Kurt London, 54.
theme tunes and incidental music for its productions. The subsidiary Cavendish Music Company ‘provided the entertainment industry with an affordable supply of light music which could be simply licensed through one source … [Ralph] Hawkes gathered together his own scratch band, the Regent Concert Orchestra, to play music by such as Armstrong Gibbs and Arthur Wood, whose Barwick Green proved a record-breaking success, and is still heard 24 times a week on BBC Radio 4 – The Archers’ main theme.’

The opportunities for supplying ‘instant’ music for radio, television and film were recognized by a variety of publishers whose names are well-known to devotees of light music: Keith, Prowse & Co. (known since the 1960s by the acronym, KPM), De Wolfe, Bruton, Francis, Day & Hunter, Bosworth, Southern (Southern-Peer after one of the early mergers in a highly merger-prone industry), Conroy and Chappell. The collections assembled by these companies, many of which may still be accessed by industry professionals online today, represent a massive repository of original creations by light music’s composers throughout the twentieth century. Many of the pieces supplied by the libraries have become familiar in their assumed forms as theme tunes, as happened with The Archers’ assumption of the identity of the Boosey’s track, Barwick Green. In such cases, the track might break free of its original confinement within the production music context (where it was exclusively available to credentialed media producers) and establish a presence in the public sphere. In an effort to capitalize on a possible market for this music in live performance, Boosey & Hawkes in the 1960s even issued a catalogue of selections from its production library as Light Music for Orchestra On Hire.

Light music composers were the production libraries’ content-providers from the outset, and leading practitioners were often placed in charge of the selection and commissioning of new scores. Their ‘executive’ talents were precisely what the new industry required. Charles Williams was the conductor and chief composer for the Chappell Recorded Music Library during its period of growth in the 1940s, working with the Queen’s Hall Light Orchestra, a name that was appropriated by Chappells for the informal orchestra that recorded their library music. From 1947, Sidney Torch led The New Century Orchestra, unseen in public, supplying recordings for the publishing company of Francis,

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Day & Hunter. A dispute with the British Musicians’ Union throughout the 1950s resulted in a ban on the recording by British orchestras of production library cues, to which publishers responded by taking the recording of cues offshore to various European bases. By the 1970s, the production libraries were striving to match contemporary developments in popular music, and the ties to an in-between style relaxed in favour of bona fide jazz, pop and rock styles.

The particular significance of the production library market was as a source of demand for original material. For composers of light music, the production library was a key source of opportunity to earn money from composition, and they responded by adapting their personal style, taste and skill to the commercial requirements of publishers. In the postwar period, while light music was turning into a business for reconstructing popular music through the art of arrangement into Easy Listening guise, production libraries became the main generator of original light music composition.

2.1.5 Recorded Music

As with radio, recordings also provided opportunity for musicians to serve the demand for music for relaxation. The advent of the Long Playing (LP) record in 1948, and Stereo in 1958, stimulated the demand of Hi-Fi enthusiasts for attractive packages of opulent sonic experience. The new format gave space, both in the sense of extended playing time enabling the development of expanded album programmes, and as a field for exploring heightened aspirations in sonic quality and invention, exploiting the qualities of ‘Hi-Fi’ and Stereo.

Rebecca Leydon portrays the recordings of Juan-Garcia Esquivel, for instance, as indulgences of a bachelor-pad fantasy appealing ‘to suburban male consumers eager to show off their hi-fi equipment,’ but far beyond this limited coterie, the rich sonic palette offered by the new recording formats and technologies fed a broader audience hungry for ‘good tunes’ and sonic splendour, which light music was able to satisfy. The technology spurred arrangers, producers and bandleaders to strive for more sumptuous

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and innovative scorings, and generated ambitious concepts in albums designed to attract the eyes and ears of consumers. Keir Keightley notes the importance of the LP in creating the ‘new genre’ of the mood music theme album, ‘reconfiguring aspects of classical music for an adult audience in a popular music context … Again, easy listening mood music is positioned in the middle, in-between classical and presumably teen-oriented, “high-pressure” pop.’

2.1.6 Programmed, ‘Piped’ and ‘Canned’ Music

The deployment of music ‘in the background’ became an important aspect of the functioning of light music in the postwar period, most famously in the form of Muzak, a term commonly applied to all forms of background or programmed music, though it refers specifically to the practice of the Muzak Corporation. Also referred to as ‘piped music’, the basis of the practice was a mechanism for delivering recorded music in public and work spaces through speakers with the aim of creating an aural ambience to encourage the listener’s sense of satisfaction or well-being. The Muzak Corporation developed the practice to a fine degree, based on psychological testing, applying a strict set of parameters for the music to be supplied over its speaker systems.

To supply their musical content, Muzak turned to light music composers to stock their music library. Jim Schlichting, a former producer for Muzak – the ‘Muzak Division of the TelePrompTer Corporation’, to be precise – recalls that:

> Until the early 1980’s Muzak was void of ‘hit music’. They had their own composers and music directors creating their music library. You didn’t hear ‘cover arrangements’ or original commercial recordings in the Muzak service until their decision to move from a proprietary library to an inclusion of known songs.

After ‘reformulating their product offerings,’ Muzak relied increasingly on external suppliers of recordings of arrangements of identifiable songs and artists, chiefly those associated with ‘Adult Contemporary’ formats, reflecting the general shift in emphasis that characterizes the Easy Listening period.

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71 Keir Keightley, 319.
72 Jim Schlichting, email message to the author, 23 August 2007.
73 Ibid.
2.1.7 Generating Light Music

Other generative sources for light music may be identified in such areas of functional demand as liturgical and sacred music, discussed in Chapter 1, or in pedagogical music, where light music composers could provide easy and attractive music for young and amateur players to learn by.

The importance of these generators in defining light music should not be overlooked. While for some light music composers it may be enough to say that they wished to respond to their personal disposition towards writing music ‘to touch and gladden the heart’, it is also true that such music would hardly have found an outlet but for the generators adumbrated above. Composers did not merely decide to write light music, but responded to the opportunities and needs of these generators. Table 1 below outlines the chief fields of opportunity that attracted composers to produce light music.

2.2 The Audience for Light Music

In the same way that light music sits in-between musical categories, its listenership too, occupies a middle ground in the social strata. Light music draws attention to a bourgeois, middle-class tradition that did not embrace the challenging spirit that drove the modern development of classical music and popular music. The practitioners of light music were drawn consistently towards a broad audience, as the comments from Ray Conniff, previously cited, demonstrate. Mantovani, another of the giants of Easy Listening, went further in describing his demographic as ‘that fantastically large group of people who like music but can’t appreciate the masterworks – and who can’t abide anything like rock’n’roll’, elaborating that ‘[p]erhaps 25 percent of the people like the classics, and about 25 percent like the Beatles… I aim to please the 50 percent in the middle.’ This ‘50 percent’ shared a sense of musical values, a system of commonly understood and appreciated musical signification, for which we may adopt the name coined by the musicologist Stephen Banfield: ‘bourgeois tonality’.

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75 Quoted in Joseph Lanza, 84.
### Generator | Key Features and Examples
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**Live Performance** | ‘Pops’ concerts, as a subset of the activities of symphony orchestras aiming for a non-elite audience or as ‘off-season’ activity, and other ‘lightweight’ concert presentations.  
Celebrity concerts, in which light music’s ‘stars’ capitalized on their media popularity to present live concerts for their fans.  
Salon or Palm Court orchestras, including those servicing hotels and seaside resorts, etc.

**Live Theatre** | A regular field of production of Light Music in Operetta and Musicals.  
Light music was applied in productions of ballet and theatre aiming for popular appeal, but retaining ‘classical’ taste.

**Liturgical and Sacred music** | Music for church use sought to appeal to broader popular taste without foregoing traditional decorum.

**Pedagogical Music** | The demand for music for students and amateurs created opportunity for composers to apply a light music style.

### Media Generators

**Radio** | Variety or ‘potpourri’ programs of music intended for relaxation or accompaniment to everyday activities, such as ‘dinner music’.  
In-House recordings of material to be used as ‘fillers’ or items to be played within broadcasts.  
Theme tunes and incidental music for drama productions and serials.  
Jingles for commercial announcements and station identifications.

**Film** | Soundtracks for films and movies of a lighter nature (comedies, costume dramas, cartoons, etc.).  
Music supplied for newsreels, travelogues, ‘industrial’ films, promotional films and documentaries.

**Television** | Title or theme tunes and incidental music. Cues were commissioned or extracted from production music libraries, or commonly both.  
Some variety or potpourri-style programs.  
‘Test-card’ and background music for program intervals and interludes.  
Jingles for commercials and station identifications.

**Production Library Music** | Publishers (sometimes broadcasters) established Libraries of recorded music for radio, film and television.

**Recordings (LP, Tape, Cassette, etc)** | Most albums produced for commercial sale were primarily orchestral covers of popular music or popular classics, but opportunities were taken to include occasional original works.  
‘Concept’ or themed albums aimed at the Hi-fi market.  
Promotional discs for Corporations and Broadcasters; ‘House’ discs for internal broadcast use.

**Programmed Music** | Muzak the most famous, but other systems and copies developed also.

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**Table 1: Generators of Light Music - A Summary**
For the great middle class, Banfield observes, this ‘tonality’ constituted a framework of musical value and meaning that constituted identity as much as ‘the job, the fixed address, soap or the three-course meal’. It provided:

A comprehensive code of expression, structure, and meaning – in short a system – continued to suit most of music’s artistic, social and commercial obligations and had no intention of relinquishing its hold on Western culture. Tonality is the best single word for that system, with its keys and cadences, expressive and unifying calibration of major and minor scales, directional harmony, exquisite manners of voice-leading, and quadratic frameworks – that is, working in multiples of two and four – of metre, phrase and period.\(^76\)

The system dominated the bourgeois sense of musical value despite the challenges mounted by the questing iconoclasm of composers (‘Modernism’), or the rise of alien musical forms like jazz (‘Primitivism’). The repertoire of the revered ‘classical’ masters constituted the aspirational high point of the system, but around it thrived a ‘vast generic hinterland that … supported and surrounded classical music in a hierarchical but continuous spectrum of taste and system of meaning.’ This hinterland was the province of light music:

The arenas … of the mass or casual public, encompassing the commercial theatre, the salon and drawing room; the parlour, restaurant, tavern, café or street, the resort or spa, sporting a seaside promenade, populist concert hall, bandstand, palm court, ballroom, or festival town hall, and the civic gathering, in street or park, hall or church. To them must be added the new technological media: gramophone and player piano, cinema with its unprecedented mass public, and then radio. They complemented and amplified the reach of these arenas more than they ousted them, at least at first.\(^77\)

This system was only displaced by the cataclysm of the Second World War, and Banfield dates its demise at around 1950. But this was not the end of the Middle Class or its value system. The postwar era saw the construction of a new context for these values, one that adapted to changing conditions, and which can be characterized as the condition of the middlebrow.

Virginia Woolf defined the concept of the ‘middlebrow’ in terms that suggest, disparagingly, just the sort of person who might listen to light music, or indeed light music itself personified:

They are not highbrows, whose brows are high; nor lowbrows, whose brows are low. Their brows are betwixt and between … The middlebrow is the man, or woman, of middlebred intelligence who ambles and saunters now on this side of the hedge, now on that, in pursuit


\(^77\) Stephen Banfield, 92.
of no single object, neither art itself nor life itself, but both mixed indistinguishably, and rather nastily, with money, fame, power, or prestige. The middlebrow curries favour with both sides equally. He goes to the lowbrows and tells them that while he is not quite one of them, he is almost their friend. Next moment he rings up the highbrows and asks them with equal geniality whether he may not come to tea.\textsuperscript{78}

In his famous critique of taste, Pierre Bourdieu outlined musical examples to ‘distinguish three zones of taste which roughly correspond to educational levels and social classes,’\textsuperscript{79} with the middlebrow at the centre, which I summarise below:

1. ‘Legitimate’ Taste: ‘increases with educational level and is highest in those fractions of the dominant class that are richest in educational capital.’
   Representative works and artists: \textit{Well-Tempered Clavier} (Bach), \textit{Art of Fugue} (Bach) and \textit{Concerto for the Left Hand} (Ravel); Léo Ferré; Jacques Douai.

2. ‘Middle-brow’ Taste: ‘more common in the middle classes.’
   Representative works and artists: \textit{Rhapsody in Blue} (Gershwin); \textit{Hungarian Rhapsody} (Liszt); Jacques Brel; Gilbert Bécaud.

3. ‘Popular’ Taste: ‘most frequent among the working classes’, encompassing ‘so-called “light music” or classical music devalued by popularization’, as well as ‘songs totally devoid of artistic ambition or pretension.’
   Representative works and artists: \textit{Blue Danube} (Strauss); \textit{La Traviata} (Verdi); \textit{La Bohème} (Puccini); Luis Mariano; Georges Guétary; Petula Clark.\textsuperscript{80}

Bourdieu’s study is ‘very French,’\textsuperscript{81} but he invites the reader to ‘join in the game … to pursue the search for equivalents’\textsuperscript{82} in English-speaking cultures. The polarities of the light music ‘spectrum’ will be recognized immediately, with Gershwin and Johann Strauss uniting the category across the middlebrow and the popular.

\textsuperscript{80} Summarized from Pierre Bourdieu, 16.
\textsuperscript{81} Ibid., xi.
\textsuperscript{82} Ibid., xii.
The connection between Easy Listening and middlebrow culture is highlighted by Keir Keightley, writing in 2009. Taking his point of departure from a 1949 article in *Life* magazine which, like Bourdieu, identified ‘three basic categories of a new U.S. social structure,’ illustrated by a chart characterising ‘everyday tastes from high-brow to low-brow,’ Keightley identifies Easy Listening as the music of the middlebrow, dividing between an ‘upper middle-brow’ culture fond of classical music of the conservative mainstream, and a ‘lower middle-brow’ favouring the music of Kostelanetz, Ferde Grofé, Victor Herbert and Perry Como (matching the familiar spectrum of light music drawing from the classical tradition above, and Easy Listening that rises up from popular realms below). Keightley proceeds to show how middlebrow values – an adult taste opposing the lower taste of teen-oriented popular music – informed and supported the genre’s ascendancy during the postwar era. Middlebrow taste drove the evolution of light music into its Easy Listening forms:

Unlike the semiclassical or light music that shaped early easy [i.e., Easy Listening], big band, sweet music and popular vocal styles were more distinctly founded in the realm of the popular. Their ‘rise’ to respectability in the postwar years as part of the easy listening mainstream exemplifies the populist impulses of a middlebrow culture that has begun to move beyond simply simulating the once-hegemonic highbrow. Though the continuing importance of the string section suggests a residual influence, easy listening’s classical appropriations were ultimately more superficial than its deeper populist tendencies.

Keightley sees this as an assertion of middlebrow identity, a kind of liberation of this class from its obeisance to High Culture:

The true innovation of postwar middlebrow culture lies not in the older idea of popularization, in which high culture moves ‘downward’ to a mass audience. Instead, postwar middlebrow marks the beginning of an often-paradoxical process of elevation of the popular to respectability.

This process was eventually to spell the demise of Easy Listening, and light music, as a musical mainstream, as post-rock’n’roll popular music took hold upon middlebrow taste.

### 2.3 Light Music Defined

The survey of light music’s place in the musical landscape of the twentieth century gives rise to a broad definition to guide consideration of the genre’s influence among composers in Australia’s postwar culture.

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83 Quoted in Keir Keightley, 318.
84 Ibid., 330.
85 Ibid., 330.
The separation between the domains of popular music and ‘classical’ music beginning from the early decades of the nineteenth century created a space that was occupied by musical styles and forms that may be identified collectively as light music. The development of mass media in the twentieth century stimulated a demand for a type of music which could fill this gap, a type of music which has been consistently identified as light music, but encompasses other terms and sub-genres, such as Middle-of-the-Road, Easy Listening, or Mood Music. A central characteristic of light music is its standing in-between the categories of the classical and the popular. Observing the fluctuations in light music’s rapprochement between these opposing forces offers a focus for understanding the music.

The principal period of light music’s growth as a distinct musical category evolves from the advent of radio, cinema and recording in the 1920s, attempting to address the mass public these new media spawned. On one hand, the music referred backwards to earlier models of popular or popular-classical music from the nineteenth century (Johann Strauss, Victor Herbert, Arthur Sullivan), while on the other, it engaged with popular music, including jazz (George Gershwin, Irving Berlin) but tending to constrain their influence.

Developments after the Second World War thrust light music into a closer relationship with popular music. Spurning the innovations of classical music later than Debussy and Delius, light music relied more and more upon popular sources for its refreshment. Most notably, coalescence with the residuum of the swing movement – its repertoire, personnel and audience – is a feature of the genre’s postwar development. The new styles of light music became known as Easy Listening, and the two terms have become interchangeable or closely connected.

Light music is strongly related to its functionality, as musical accompaniment: providing background, setting a mood. Light music behaves attractively to the listener, exemplifying its purpose as, to recall Preston Sturges’s Sir Alfred de Carter, ‘a secondary art that adds to the joy of living’.
The foundation of light music’s ascendancy in the twentieth century was its effectiveness in uplifting everyday living conditions and appeasing the aesthetic sensibilities of a middle class audience. Its rise and fall from the musical mainstream is linked inextricably to the evolution of the ‘middlebrow’ tastes and preferences of its listenership. Light music’s existence as a genre peaked in the middle part of the 20th century, when it was possible to identify a ‘three-way division’ of musical genres – the classical, the popular and in between them, light music – which was ‘supplanted by a two-way one’ in the 1980s.

Light music served to help music producers cope with a period of transition in the general musical culture. Where the repertoire and concepts of ‘classical’ music at the beginning of the twentieth century dominated this culture, the continual rise of popular music throughout the course of the century reduced the hold of this repertoire. As popular music grew, ‘classical’ music shrank from mainstream to niche. While light music moved away from ‘classical’ leanings increasingly towards popular music models, it served to accommodate this transition, maintaining a cohesive (or adhesive) role for as long as it could be sustained.

The year 1980, in which several key figures of the light music ‘movement’ died, marks its decline, but not its disappearance. Although the generators that stimulated the production of light music have shifted their demand to other styles, many of the genre’s traditions and characteristics can be observed in practice today, though rarely calling itself ‘light music.’

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86 Nicholas Cook with Anthony Pople, 9.
Chapter 3: Valuing Light Music

This Chapter gives an account of a search for a productive way of speaking about light music. As an ‘unnamed’ category, situated peripherally to the dominant categories of musical discourse, light music has tended to evade, or be dismissed from serious or sustained consideration. A broad search is needed to identify methods and ideas to adequately inform discussion of light music.

3.1 The Dahlhaus Model

Almost alone amongst twentieth century musicologists, Carl Dahlhaus provided a sustained critique of the genre. Dahlhaus’s encounter with the category arose from his pursuit of an understanding and interpretation of nineteenth century music, where light music is placed in the context of the historical development of the Western Canon, as the Other to the music of Idealism. Dahlhaus chooses to name the category Trivialmusik (Trivial Music), which ranges ‘from the salon piece to the hit tune, from the periphery of operetta to entertainment music \[U-Musik\],’ thus encompassing light music and popular music in the era of ‘Bourgeois Tonality.’

While this music does not necessarily fail aesthetic judgment on purely technical grounds, it may ‘incur aesthetic contempt’ on the grounds of its prosaic qualities. When German philosophers of music created their concepts of ‘serious’ music in the early 1800s – i.e., when ‘Wackenroder and Tieck, E.T.A. Hoffmann and Schumann … elevated the metaphysical dignity of music to immeasurable heights’ – a new benchmark was created for musical value: the ‘emphatic-romantic concept of music’, urging music to reach for the condition of ‘sonorous poetry.’ Music that does not attain this condition is ‘prosaic’ music, functional music, Kapellmeister music. Such music is not necessarily to be despised – so long as it retains the honesty of being ‘trivial without denying it.’

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89 Ibid.
Dahlhaus identifies some characteristics of Trivial Music which ensure its status as a ‘lower music’ - that render it up to ‘the verdict of triviality.’ He admits that the task is not an easy one, since Trivial Music ‘resists attempts of analytical detection.’ As a result, his own detective efforts make him a pioneer in drawing attention to features of light and popular music in the 19th Century that might to some degree be analysable or at least, subjected to value judgment. I summarize Dahlhaus’s depiction of Trivial Music in five main character traits:

1. Functionality
Music that serves a function - such as ‘dance, sociability and liturgy’ – gives up its artistic status, and becomes trivial, under two circumstances: when the function it plays in society or culture is ‘of minor importance’, or when ‘the purpose the music is supposed to serve dictates its confinement within narrow boundaries.’ Dance, with its ‘fixated rhythmic patterns’ exemplifies this process in Trivial Music.

2. Distracted Listening
‘The distracted listener is one of the fundamental assumptions for trivial music:’ no-one is giving it their full attention, so the music is created for situations where concentrated listening is not guaranteed or expected. Accordingly, Trivial Music meets a purpose in providing a sociable atmosphere, serving ‘either as a background for conversation or its replacement.’

3. Potpourri and ‘Idling of the Elements’
The basic or favoured formal principle of Trivial Music is the potpourri: that is, a succession of sections, movements or pieces that have no logic of integration other than a desire to hold the ear of the (inattentive) listener. Potpourri involves the ‘lining up of unrelated parts,’ in contrast to the close (sophisticated) integration of disparate (differentiated) material which marks autonomous music. Thus, light music is characterised by the predominance of Suites and other patchwork structures. Trivial

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91 Ibid., 344.
92 Ibid., 356.
93 Ibid., 347.
94 Ibid., 357.
Music is built from basic compositional elements treated in a non-integrated way, and to convey this sense, Dahlhaus borrows a phrase from musicologist Hans Mersmann: ‘idling of the elements.’

4. Appropriation and Useability

‘Methods of appropriation – parody and contrafactum, adaptation and arrangement – are more typical of it [Trivial Music] than those of creation; decisive is not the original purpose of a work, but its useability.’ Everything is up for grabs to Trivial Music, and may be put to some commercial use or purpose in an amended guise, taking no regard of its musical integrity. The creators of Trivial Music treat all music as a ‘useable’ artefact, ahead of being original, which reflects the practical and commercial concerns that are its driving force.

5. Ornamentalism

In Trivial Music, musical devices and language borrowed from ‘elevated’ music appear as calculated ‘props’ which differ from genuine forms of ‘artful differentiation’ because they ‘come across as a glued-on ornament.’ The desire to appeal to an audience drives the composer of Trivial Music to adopt measures and strategies intended to achieve a desired effect, leading him or her to rely on stylistic borrowings. Such stylistic accoutrements, however, work merely as faux effect.

By contrast, true ‘[m]usical quality can be grasped analytically as differentiation, originality, and abundance of [internal] relationships,’ Dahlhaus concludes, to remind us of the qualities that are either absent from or represented falsely in Trivial Music.

Dahlhaus’s analysis has been extended to music of the twentieth century - in Trivial Music’s incarnation as ‘background music’ - by Hanns-Werner Heister, who contrasts music for the concert hall and music that ‘serves as a “sound-tapestry or “sound-

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95 Ibid.
96 Ibid., 345
97 Ibid., 355
98 Ibid., 356
99 Ibid., 354
backdrop”. This industrially fabricated non-music can be labelled Muzak.\textsuperscript{100} The contrast between the two modes of musical realization arises from their different relationships to autonomy. ‘Music, defined as background, is not self-justified and independent. On the contrary, it works as “part of the whole” – that is, of the respective situation or atmosphere – and serves “other ends”; for instance, relaxation or distraction of a non-musical kind.’\textsuperscript{101}

Background music’s insidious presence makes it the ‘banal and infernal distortion and caricature of a reconciliation of art and life.’\textsuperscript{102} Its power, which thrives through ‘abstract distraction, intoxication and manipulation,’ must be resisted through individual aesthetic ‘self-determination’ – through concert experiences that are ‘chosen, self-made and individually consumed.’\textsuperscript{103} Heister leaves us in no doubt when he proclaims finally that the ‘perfumed stench of background music … will one day return to where it belongs: the dustbin of cultural and musical history.’\textsuperscript{104}

We can recognize in Dahlhaus’s observations of Trivial Music’s character some of the genuine elements of light music, and may concur with his observations without adopting a negative value judgment of them. Putting aside notions of ‘aesthetic contempt,’ we can readily admit that Dahlhaus has usefully observed some key characteristics of light music. Dahlhaus’s insistence upon exposing the ‘verdict of triviality’ may be read as an example of the dialectician’s obsession with the ‘forced dichotomy’ that Richard Taruskin complains of in Dahlhaus’s work.\textsuperscript{105} It represents another ‘senseless distinction’ aimed at upholding a conception of music’s history as a trajectory rising higher towards autonomy and ‘universality’, and away from banality. Despite the accuracy of his observations about Trivial Music, Dahlhaus equips us poorly for engaging with it. In pursuing a study of the genre, other models are needed that can facilitate more productive discussion.

\textsuperscript{101} Ibid., 56.
\textsuperscript{102} Ibid., 67.
\textsuperscript{103} Ibid., 68.
\textsuperscript{104} Ibid., 69.
To counterbalance the negative weight in Dahlhaus’s approach to Trivial Music, the following discussion outlines the key viewpoints that guide the consideration of light music pursued here. This is not a comprehensive survey of current analytical and evaluative speculation, but aims to convey a sense of alternative approaches that have equipped and given direction to this study. The recent recovery of light music as a field for attention emerges from areas of enquiry that understand music within its cultural, social and economic context. Dahlhaus’s ‘emphatic-romantic’ conception is contrasted by the treatment of ‘banality’ as a reflection of music’s connection with reality rather than as a corruption of its ‘metaphysical dignity’.

3.2 Sociology of Music

First among these other perspectives is provided by sociology. Tia DeNora, prominent among contemporary sociologists of music, establishes the countervailing opposite to the Dahlhaus-Heister approach to music and its history:

Ever since Beethoven uttered the notorious phrase, ‘I will not play for such swine’ (in response to some aristocratic listeners who talked through one of his performances), Western music has been encumbered with the paraphernalia of ‘high art’; ‘good’ music has become, and been designed as, an object upon which to reflect, an object for rapt contemplation. This ideology has also been projected backward on music that was originally designed to be heard within social contexts: Telemann’s Tafelmusik is perhaps the most famous example, but even Mozart was often heard amidst the cries from the sausage-sellers …

Within the modern institution of ‘serious’ listening, to listen ‘correctly’ is to be ‘transported’, to abandon, albeit temporarily, the realm of material and temporal being, to allow oneself to be taken over by music’s textual time … The abstraction of music from the flux of daily existence, and its excision of the body – both in terms of bodily rhythms in compositions and in terms of the motionlessness stipulated as appropriate listening conduct – have served to oblitere the none the less vital tradition of other music and its role in social life through the informal singing of songs, the pop concert, the car radio, the jukebox, ambient music, organizational music, amateur music production, singing, whistling and humming, and the playing of records, tapes and CDs. It is in all of these locations – from gilded concert hall to mega-mall, from bus terminal to bedroom – that music makes available ways of feeling, being, moving and thinking, that it animates us, that it keeps us ‘awake’.

These observations encourage and assist the study of light music: DeNora not only identifies the sites of light music as locations for further musical investigation, she also opens up a world of musical experience that under Dahlhaus and Heister would seem unworthy.

106 Tia DeNora, Music in Everyday Life (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 157
Applying a sociological approach to the study of music in its historical context, music sociologists direct attention away from ‘analysis of musical works (whether as scores or performances) per se’ in favour of looking at ‘the pragmatic bases for musical “developments”, sticking close to what people do, what they say, and to patterns of production, distribution and consumption.’\(^\text{107}\) This orientation shows how musical styles take shape ‘in relation to the available conventions and ways of crafting within production networks or “worlds” of practice … [locating] the social shaping of art works much closer to prosaic matters involved in getting things (any sort of things) done – the interaction order, materials, patterns and institutions of music making, gatekeepers and arbiters, technologies.’\(^\text{108}\)

When DeNora points to the situation of composers within the ‘everyday’ musical world, she rescues Mozart and Telemann from the ether they breathe in Dahlhaus’s ‘immeasurable heights’ and brings them back down to earth. Her study of Beethoven’s career in Vienna examines the mundane processes by which the composer’s image ‘as universally admired and as the heir to Mozart’ was constructed, and explores how ‘Beethoven’s increasing reputation contributed to the initial emergence of an ideology of “serious” (as opposed to light) music.’ DeNora’s study belongs to a wider effort to consider ‘the ways exclusive or “high” cultural forms are both inaccessible and inappropriate to the lived experience of a large proportion of the people to whom they are upheld as aspirational.’\(^\text{109}\)

DeNora poses questions here that are relevant to the enquiry into light music, a field of production where composers engaged with a banal, commercial world. Focussing attention on the real circumstances of composers working in such a commonplace environment also highlights the role of light music in sustaining a professional compositional culture during the Twentieth Century. Looking away from ‘aspirational’ heights, light music shows composers attending to musical needs in contexts that are common, everyday, and, in intention at least, connected to a broad audience.

\(^\text{107}\) Ibid., 214.
\(^\text{109}\) Tia DeNora, Beethoven and the Construction of Genius (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995), xii.
3.3 Material Culture

Complementing the sociological view of music is that offered through ‘Material Culture’ studies. Deriving from anthropology, the study of Material Culture has moved from archaeological artefacts to the objects of high art, to the aesthetic consideration of everyday objects. Tim J. Anderson has applied a Material Culture approach to his exploration of the ‘recorded music object’ (predominantly the ‘LP’) in postwar culture. Anderson seeks to reveal the ‘aesthetic machinery’ through which industrial operators (producers, recording executives, radio programmers, etc.), musicians and listeners interact to ‘form’ our musical culture. Material Culture brings attention to the objects of everyday musical exchange so we may observe how the interactions took place. Accordingly, the Material Culture perspective leads us to consider the place of light music within the operation of the music industry, and directs attention towards artefacts and their interpretation as sources of information about the genre’s role in musical life.

Nicholas Cook observes that ‘[r]ecordings are a largely untapped resource for the writing of music history, the focus of which has up to now been overwhelmingly on scores.’\textsuperscript{110} Cook argues that the study of recordings becomes especially fruitful when empirical analysis of recorded performances is brought into play with the speculative enquiry of cultural analysis. Cook assures us that ‘there is no one way of analysing recordings, and that we should be prepared to work with as many different analytical methods as there are dimensions within which recordings signify.’\textsuperscript{111}

Recordings are important repositories of light music’s history. Since the music was mostly created for instant dispersal on radio waves and other ephemeral contexts, few scores and other information showing how and why the music was created, survive. LPs therefore are key evidence for the student of light music. Aside from the LP, the Material Culture perspective also directs our attention toward observing how other ‘generators’ were brought into play in the creation of the light music ‘repertoire’. Those generators outlined in Chapter 2 of this study constitute the ‘aesthetic machinery’ of the light music middle-world, and it is here that we discover the circumstances under which, and the purposes for which the music was created.

\textsuperscript{111} Ibid., 245.
3.4 Pragmatism

The third ‘post-Dahlhaus’ approach comes from aesthetics. Although this branch of philosophy has long been a partner to the elite conception of art that Dahlhaus embraced, philosopher Richard Shusterman has led a revisionist challenge to that hegemony, taking aesthetics downwards to artistic and musical underworlds. Shusterman proposes a ‘Pragmatist Aesthetics’ as a way to ‘reconceive’ art beyond the fixed boundaries of ‘elite fine art’, drawing upon his rediscovery of a text by Pragmatist philosopher John Dewey, *Art as Experience*.\(^{112}\) In keeping with Pragmatist principles, Dewey emphasised that artistic practice should be directed towards the improvement of the conditions of living people. Shusterman draws out a number of key principles or intentions from Dewey’s work that inspire his own. Proceeding from a recognition that the ‘roots of art and beauty lie in the “basic vital functions”, the “biological commonplaces” man shares with “bird and beast”,’\(^{26}\) art’s value is seen to lie in its effectiveness in meeting human needs, not in abstracted conceptions of artistic value that can only be acknowledged within the confines of its own world (e.g. the concert hall).

In place of dialectical oppositions, Dewey emphasizes the continuity and connectedness of traditional aesthetic opposites: ‘the fine versus the applied or practical arts, the high versus the popular arts … the aesthetic in contrast both to the cognitive and the practical, and artists versus the “ordinary” people who constitute their audience.’\(^{113}\) A better way to think of these contrasts is rather as components of a network or continuum. By giving attention to ‘those expressive forms which provide us aesthetic experience but which could provide us far more and far better, if they could be appreciated and cultivated as legitimate art,’\(^{114}\) Pragmatist Aesthetics insists that we recognize aesthetic value reaching beyond confined ‘High Art’ conceptions.

Shusterman applied his Pragmatist Aesthetics in two studies of contemporary forms of music. The first was a pioneering study of rap music that presented hip hop as an authentic expression of artistic ideals that could stand in comparison to the music of the

mainstream western tradition. Shusterman subsequently extended this type of consideration to the form he described as the ‘country musical,’ deliberately addressing a challenge to aesthetically justify a type of music that could never be given credence in conventional aesthetic analysis (unlike hip-hop which has acquired cultural ‘street cred’). Shusterman related the form back to its roots in storytelling, and argued that its very sentimentality, including its recurrent theme of redemption, ensured its authenticity to the experience and values of its audience. Shusterman focusses on the intentions and circumstances of the creation of the artwork, particularly the way it meets the needs of its audience, rather than imposing an abstract set of principles which art must be judged against.

Elevating low forms to serious consideration has benefits both ways: for the popular arts, it allows them to be ‘appreciated and cultivated’, while from the other direction, high art has much to gain from approaching art with ‘greater freedom and closer integration into the praxis of life.’ The Pragmatist direction looks at the interactions between low and high artistic practice in a manner that emphasizes their mutual reliance and advantage, rather than reinforcing hierarchical distinctions.

A similar outlook and rhetorical method informs a series of pioneering articles by musicologist Rebecca Leydon that consider aspects of the postwar Easy Listening musical culture in an enlightened, and enlightening, way. Leydon constructs a framework to appreciate this disparaged music from the viewpoint of ‘listening as an activity rooted in bodily experience.’ Her study of the music of Juan-Garcia Esquivel relates his work back to the seductive impressionism of Debussy and Ravel, and its treatment of the pastoral tradition. She draws parallels between Esquivel, impressionism and the values promoted in Playboy magazines from the early 1960s, emphasising the hedonism and affluence of the era and drawing attention to the ways in which Esquivel’s music reflects themes of opulence and abundance. Similarly, Leydon’s study of reverberation effect in

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117 Shusterman, Pragmatist Aesthetics, 145.
119 Rebecca Leydon, “Ces nymphes, je les veux perpétuer.”
the music of Mantovani and Melachrino and other masters of light music relates the music back to historical tradition by equating it with the quest for sonic splendour in the music of the late romantics and the impressionist composers, particularly drawing attention to the innovation of the sustain pedal and suchlike devices for creating sumptuous ‘aural haze’ effects.120

As Shusterman advocates, Leydon presents this music in the light of its own aesthetic aspirations, reaching out across the Great Divide between popular and classical music to embrace the music of Esquivel and Mantovani, and draw it back into the longer flow of music’s development.

3.5 ‘A Musicology of the Mass Media’

Thus far, my progress in developing an approach appropriate to the study of light music has proceeded from Dahlhaus to Sociology, Material Culture Studies and Pragmatist Aesthetics. It is a version of a process that is commonly identified as ‘turning’ - shifts in thinking that bring new ways of studying to cultural and historical disciplines.121

A comparable account of musical ‘turns,’ one that bears similarities with those I have passed through, is found in an approach developed by Philip Tagg and Bob Clarida. Ten Little Title Tunes has the obvious attraction for my purposes in that it deals specifically with pieces that belong firmly within the category of light music as I’ve defined it. The book distinguishes itself from the mainstream of film music studies (which generally focus on feature film soundtracks or big movie scores) by attending to the lesser domains of television and library music in which light music proliferated.

The authors’ greater purpose is conveyed in the subtitle, ‘Towards a Musicology of the Mass Media’: the book outlines an approach to the study of lower musical genres to compensate for traditional musicology’s lack of interest in such things. Giving their overview of the challenges to conventional musicology, Tagg and Clarida also begin with Dahlhaus, casting him as representative of musicology’s ‘Absolute Music’

paradigm, where classical music is ‘severed from that dynamic social and stylistic flux [from which it originated, so that it] could be frozen, embalmed, packaged, taken to the “museum” (or conservatory) and treated in isolation as music and nothing else.’ In chronological order, the challengers to the absolutist hegemony enter, labelled as ‘Ethno’, ‘Socio’ and ‘Semio’. The labels ‘can all be used as qualifiers of music studies: ethnomusicology, the sociology of music and the semiotics of music,’ each of which has contributed to the ‘de-absolutisation’ of music studies. ‘These three qualifiers imply that studying music entails relating it to other parts of human activity: ETHNO to peoples and their culture, SOCIO to the society in which the music being studied exists, and SEMIO to the meanings expressed in both musical and other terms.’

Tagg and Clarida’s methodology seeks to integrate these approaches into musical discourse. Theirs is a ‘musematic’ approach (i.e., drawn from Charles Seeger’s concept of the museme, the minimal unit of musical discourse) that requires identifying ‘VVAs’ (Verbal-Visual Associations), ‘IOCMs’ (Inter-Objective Comparison Materials) and ‘PMFCs’ (Para-Musical Fields of Comparison) in order to provide an evidentiary base for the development of an understanding of the music. These devices enable the student of ‘media music’ to subject material to various forms of analytical ‘detection’, and express them in a way that can be read across the domains of Musicology and Cultural Studies. Tagg and Clarida’s book represents a stimulating guide to ways of talking about music, bringing keen observation to revealing musical characteristics, and applying creative and diverse methods to illuminate our understanding of the music.

3.6 Constructing a View of Light Music

The various approaches that multiplied during the 1990s and 2000s, such as those outlined above, have been drawn together into the concept of a ‘New Cultural History of Music’, given definition by Jane F. Fulcher as a project that builds upon historians’ long engagement with cultural theory, and applies it to the field of music, coalescing with the approaches of ‘new musicology’. The ‘New Cultural History of Music’ vastly broadens

122 Philip Tagg and Bob Clarida, 32.
123 Ibid., 35.
the scope and methodologies for the study of music, embracing a lot of things. ‘New musicology’ addresses

questions of meaning, reception, and interpretation of “criticism,” as well as ... politics, ideology, and gender, and in doing so discovered or rediscovered the significance of theorists ... Simultaneously, the “new cultural history,” as well as the “cultural studies” movement in several adjacent fields, felt the impact of the ‘linguistic turn’ in the humanities, or the focus on the semiotic functions of language and the cultural construction and transmission of meaning.124

As a consequence, musicologists have a ‘New Agenda’ and must engage with a vast array of ‘emerging approaches’ and diverse ‘lines of inquiry’ that extend well beyond the traditional confines of musicological interest. Now, to be truly historically informed, musical observations should be supplemented by ‘a complete knowledge not only of the musical field but also of others that, at specific moments, impinged upon it.’125 Fulcher suggests that students can choose from a variety of methods and theoretical frameworks as befits a given subject:

The ideal is perhaps flexibility in selecting our paradigms, based upon the particular case at hand, and to critique our choice by examining the reading that emerges from a paradigm shift. It is not, then, a question of who ‘miscasts’ the relation between music and ideology or social meaning, but of our awareness of the different perspectives from which to view their enticing imbrication.126

Such an approach suits the study of light music well. Tagg and Clarida’s methodology provides, in particular, a useful ‘semiotic dictionary,’127 which complements study of the material forms of musical production, Pragmatist concerns with the relations between high and low, and explorations of music as a form of professional practice, to compile a multi-dimensional view of the work of light music composers. There’s no need to overlook Dahlhaus’s ‘conventional’ musicology either, and his observations have a significant place in the mix of means available to the student of light music. They add to the resource of ‘persuasive rhetorical tool[s]’128 that bring focus to these aspects of musical life. Though each brings a particular perspective to the task, the four basic ‘post-

125 Ibid., 11.
126 Jane F. Fulcher, ‘Shifting the Paradigm from Adorno to Bourdieu,’ in Opera and Society in Italy and France from Monteverdi to Bourdieu, ed. Victoria Johnson, Jane F. Fulcher and Thomas Ertman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 324.
128 Shusterman, Pragmatist Aesthetics, 58.
Dahlhaus’ approaches I have sketched look away from ‘transcendent’ musical concepts, downwards to where it all ‘really’ happened - with all its imperfections and shortcomings.
PART II: LIGHT MUSIC IN AUSTRALIA
4.1 Australia’s Generators of Light Music Production

In this and the following chapter, I place light music within its Australian context by exploring the main generators from which its production occurred. Light music played a role, sometimes small, sometimes substantial, in the careers of many composers in Australia during the postwar period. The account provided here encompasses many names, from which I select a few individuals for particular consideration. Connecting the stories of these composers to the ‘generators’ in which they produced their light music aims to convey a clear impression of the particular character of Australian light music.

Historian Stephen Alomes describes Australia’s musical life in the years immediately following the end of the Second World War as an ‘improvisatory musical culture,’ a phrase that encapsulates the character of Australia’s postwar musical life. Before the gradual development of an advanced cultural infrastructure over the period from the later 1950s to the 1970s, Australia’s composers sought work and opportunity wherever it could be found. This led them along diverse pathways in a quest to acquire the skills, experience and knowledge they needed in order to become composers. The improvisatory nature of the musical environment required musicians to approach their careers with pragmatic resolve, acquiring skills wherever they could.

The primary generator of light music production by Australia’s composers through the twentieth century was radio, in particular through the ABC, with television, film, and recordings supplementing production to greater or lesser extent. As noted in the discussion of light music’s generators in Chapter 2, live concerts were not the most significant of its outlets, and accordingly occasions where light music was presented in live performance take on signal importance because of their relative scarcity.

The most ambitious live presentation of light music was staged by Henry Krips, Resident Conductor of the ABC’s South Australian Symphony Orchestra. Krips mounted a

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Festival of Light Music in Adelaide in March 1957 and again in 1959, when performances in the South Australian regional centre of Mt Gambier were added. The Festival visited other Australian cities in 1958. From March 1960, however, the event was effectively superseded by the Adelaide Festival of the Arts. Krips’s 1957 Festival was subtitled ‘Nights of Gladness,’ a title borrowed from a popular BBC radio program of the time, and reflective of a certain old-fashioned inclination to the musical selections, which encompass popular classics (Rossini, Grieg, Tchaikovsky, Borodin, Chabrier, Lalo, etc.), ‘light classical’ (Johann Strauss, Waldteufel, Léhar, Ponchielli) and light music proper (Gershwin, Lecuona, Max Schönherr, Eric Coates, David Rose and Arthur Benjamin). The programs for the 1959 Festival included Malcolm Arnold and Ernesto Lecuona alongside popular ballet excerpts from Tchaikovsky and Khachaturian, and ‘light classical’ selections from the Viennese repertoire. Gershwin, Edward German, Eric Coates, Richard Addinsell and Ferde Grofé provided the main content of light music, while Australian composers featured reasonably frequently. Lindley Evans’ choral poem An Australian Symphony (1933) was given at Mt. Gambier, and soloist Clive Amadio presented a bracket of Australian miniatures in Adelaide: Dulcie Holland’s Musette & Gigue, Bruce Finlay’s Serenade for Saxophone and Krips’ own Rondinello. Live performance also figures in the Easy Listening boom of the 1970s, as discussed below, reflecting the popularity that the genre and its identities, such as Tommy Tycho and Sven Libaek, attained from their presence on radio and recordings.

In a similar manner, production libraries figure as generators for music by several Australian composers, occasional and one-off projects with international library publishers including Boosey & Hawkes (Henry Krips, as Henry Cripps), KPM (Neil Thurgate) and Southern-Peer (Sven Libaek), and produced for an international marketplace. A more continuous output came through the Castle Music Library, a subsidiary of EMI Music Publishing in Australia, active mostly in the era of the compact

131 Australian Broadcasting Commission, Festival of Light Music: Nights of Gladness, South Australian Symphony Orchestra, conductor Henry Krips, Adelaide Town Hall, 6 March, 9 March (with Clive Amadio, saxophone), 13 March (Isador Goodman, piano) and 16 March (Ricardo Odnoposoff, violin), 1957, concert program booklets.
132 Australian Broadcasting Commission, Festival of Light Music, South Australian Symphony Orchestra, cond. Henry Krips, Adelaide Town Hall, 28 February (with Glenda Raymond, soprano), 4 March (Clive Amadio, saxophone), 6 March (Lance Dossor, piano) and 11 March (Isador Goodman, piano), 1959; King’s Theatre, Mt. Gambier, 13 March (Richard Smith, percussion), 16 March (Glenda Raymond, soprano), 18 March (Lance Dossor, piano), concert program booklets.
disc - the 1980s and 1990s. Accordingly it dealt in styles of music that post-date the light music era (for instance the music of ‘New Age’ composer Mars Lasar), though the Library did represent Grant Foster, who may be counted among the latter-day producers of light music composition.

Other generators played limited roles in the production of light music. In relation to Church music, Malcolm Williamson was certainly Australia’s most important contributor, working in Britain. If the Church Light Music movement of Geoffrey Beaumont had much effect on Australian composers, it was likely to be undertaken by musical evangelists rather than composers of ‘classical’ background, and more strongly influenced by American models than British ones. Sister Janet Mead’s 1973 album The Lord’s Prayer (music by Adelaide rock musician Arnold Strals) represents Christian rock’s high point of the period, gaining success even among Easy Listening’s radio network.

The opportunities of writing for pedagogical purposes attracted many composers, who relished the opportunity to supply music of ‘the conventional and overtly-romantic style perpetuated for so long in the teaching world.’ William Lovelock, Dulcie Holland, Miriam Hyde, Colin Brumby and Mirrie Hill were prominent suppliers to the syllabuses of the Australian Music Examinations Board fulfilling ‘a desire, within the limits of certain European traditions, to be original and adventurous,’ though John Hind, writing in 1974, felt it ‘unfortunate that some of their piano sketches and the like tend to echo the style and content of a bygone age.’

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134 Grant Foster, Rhapsody for Piano and Orchestra, Grant Foster, piano, Sydney Symphony Orchestra, directed by Julian Lee, Castle Music Library, CM 2, 1988, compact disc.
137 Ibid., 67.
4.2 Australian Radio as Light Music Generator

For the Australian Broadcasting Commission, formed in imitation of the British Broadcasting Corporation, music was a primary focus of interest and development from its beginnings in 1932. Even more than the BBC, Australia’s national broadcaster devoted itself to building an infrastructure for serious music, through its six state-based orchestras and activities as a concert entrepreneur. The narrative of the ABC’s engagement with music is overwhelmingly dominated by the story of classical concerts and symphony orchestras. The towering figures of the ABC’s earlier musical history, William Cleary, Dr Keith Barry, Sir Bernard Heinze and Sir Charles Moses, ensured that classical music was guaranteed the resources needed to create a vibrant and ‘world class’ high musical culture for the ABC and for Australia.138

Some weakening of this domination began in the 1940s when a new generation of influencers in the ABC started to make inroads in the recognition of jazz. Ellis Blain and Clement Semmler sought to ‘persuade the ABC to recognize jazz as a minor art form, worthy of programme time in its own right rather than as a mere appendage of “light entertainment.”’139 In its ‘appendage’ or ‘light’ form, jazz had been present on the ABC airwaves well before, in the commercialized or popular form of the Dance or Swing bands. These had been recognized contributors, as they were for the BBC, to meeting a broader range of public tastes. As at the BBC, light music was surprisingly significant in relation to the contending genres: historian Alan Thomas shows (Table 2 below) that light music was the dominant category of musical content on the ABC. These figures also illustrate the impact of the Second World War on social and cultural values, as represented at the ABC: the rise of ‘Dance’ music occurs primarily at the expense of light music, highlighting a significant shift in ABC philosophy about its broadcast role.

The War exposed harsh realities for the ABC: the mission of cultural improvement was not having as much effect as the broadcaster’s overlords had believed. This was the inescapable conclusion to be drawn from the findings of the Listener Research Section, established in 1943. A Listener Research Officer reported that the ABC’s ‘programme officers and management could not believe that the audience was as small as it was seen

139 Ellis Blain, Life with Aunty: Forty Years with the ABC (Sydney: Methuen of Australia, 1977), 37.
### Table 2: Analysis of Music Broadcast by the ABC, 1939-45.\(^{140}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Music</th>
<th>Percentage of Program Time for year ended 30 June</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1939</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serious Classical</td>
<td>5.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Popular Classical</td>
<td>17.18</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Light</strong></td>
<td><strong>30.52</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dance</td>
<td>6.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>60.08</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To be in these reports, and their reaction was … that it was some ploy on the part of the commercial stations or somebody trying to make the ABC look very small.\(^{141}\) The conclusion to be drawn from the facts was that the ABC needed to address popular taste more directly, and provide greater balance to the ‘highbrow’ content. For the Chairman of the ABC, Sir Richard Boyer, this was, as ABC historian K.S. Inglis points out:

> ‘a confession of failure’, an end to the fond hope that the two purposes of high listener rating and service to the community could be achieved by the same programme item. The forced choice between popularity and public service now seemed to him ‘the Commission’s major dilemma of programme policy.’\(^{142}\)

It was no longer viable for the ABC to provide a balanced cultural diet in the hope that the listener who tuned in for Fred Hartley’s light ensemble would stay for Neville Cardus, or that somebody who liked to hear a cinema organ would not turn off before H.M. Green talked about Australian literature.\(^{143}\)

The ABC’s light music providers thereafter sought to admit a range of new cultural influences. To a considerable extent, the ABC managed to provide protection against too sudden or catastrophic change, but this only slowed what appears in retrospect to have been an inevitable process of cultural updating. Implied corporate culture dominated by Jim-Davidson-types, John Whiteoak suggests that ‘ABC radio did not respond to the

\(^{140}\) Alan Thomas, *Broadcast and be Damned: the ABC’s First Two Decades* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1980), 121.

\(^{141}\) Nancy Sheehan, quoted in K.S. Inglis, *This is the ABC: The Australian Broadcasting Commission, 1932-1983* (Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 1983), 142.

\(^{142}\) K.S. Inglis, 142.

\(^{143}\) Ibid., 141.
unexpected impact of rock-and-roll on popular culture in the 1950s. Until the 1970s it left rock music to television.\textsuperscript{144}

By contrast, the Australian commercial radio sector, which developed alongside the ABC, responded instinctively to the changing messages of public taste. At the beginning, commercial stations acknowledged a duty of cultural uplift in respect of their music policies: the initial application for the radio licence that was to become Sydney’s 2GB declared the applicant’s intention ‘to conduct the station on ideal principles with the object of uplifting our Australian people. For this purpose only classical music will be given as well as any suitable music of Australian composers, with the idea of developing an appreciation of art as well as a development of Australian National Music.’\textsuperscript{145}

In general, though, a much broader mix of tastes was addressed on commercial radio. An internal contest between highbrow and lowbrow was fought out within the fraternity of commercial stations, until ‘a general view that high-brow music was the ABC’s preserve’\textsuperscript{146} prevailed. More popular offerings of community singing, crooners, jazz and Swing, hillbilly and Hawaiian-style bands occupied commercial airwaves.\textsuperscript{147} Nevertheless, ‘classical’ music did not lose its presence entirely, the flagship of the commercial stations’ classical respectability being 2GB’s long-running \textit{World-Famous Tenors}, envied by the ABC for its combination of elevated taste and broad audience appeal.

Light music took a place in the commercial sector as a remnant of earlier ‘high-browed’ aspirations, emphasizing connection to the musical traditions of the Ballad Concerts and Light Opera. Exemplifying the conservative side of commercial stations’ operations was Humphrey Bishop, who came from London and ‘in 1939 joined 2CH Sydney as musical director for the A.W.A. network.’\textsuperscript{148} There he established ‘the A.W.A. Light Opera

\textsuperscript{146} Ibid., 248.
\textsuperscript{147} Ibid., 248-251.
\textsuperscript{148} Amalgamated Wireless (Australasia) Ltd. operated one of the largest Australian radio station networks until the 1990s.
Company which was, during the next decade, to produce hundreds of topline musical programmes of all types for broadcast.\textsuperscript{149}

Another notable in the commercial sector was Denis Collinson, active as a bandleader, musical director and song composer, and experienced in a diverse range of musical styles. English by birth, Collinson began working in Australia as a violinist in Harold (Harry) Bloom’s Tango Band, engaged by the ABC. Collinson became leader of the Melbourne ABC Dance Band in 1940, before switching to the commercial sector as director of the Colgate-Palmolive Radio Unit’s orchestra in Sydney. He was conductor for Frank Sinatra’s 1955 concerts in Australia, entrepreneured by Lee Gordon, and two years later served as ‘music director’ for Gordon’s tour of Bill Haley & the Comets.\textsuperscript{150}

In the 1950s, Collinson directed the Australian Federation of Commercial Broadcasting Stations’ project ‘to perfect and produce a recording of works of Australian composers sung by Australian artists which, when played in the home and broadcast over radio stations in Australia and overseas, would prove conclusively that we have in Australia all the material necessary to achieve the highest standards in musical recording and artistry comparable to any from abroad.’\textsuperscript{151} A committee selected the artists and their repertoire of Australian compositions, both published and unpublished, coming up with ‘a selection of what represented, in the opinion of the Federation, the best in the various types of Australian Ballads ... Backed by an orchestra of twenty-six players under the eminent Australian conductor Dennis [sic] Collinson, these voices [among them Margaret (Margreta) Elkins] are characteristic of the youth, beauty and virility of Australia.’\textsuperscript{152}

Alongside recognized names in light music such as Henry Krips, May Brahe, Alfred Hill, Marjorie Hesse, Horace Gleeson, Lindsay Aked, Horace Keats, William James and George English, the resulting LP included virtual unknowns Mildred Bell and Bradley Ryrie. Ryrie, the ‘Musical Bushman,’ from Arnprior station, near Braidwood, came

\textsuperscript{149} Hal Saunders, \textit{Humphrey Bishop Presents}, ‘Recordings made in the York Street, Sydney, studios of AWA between 1941 and 1945,’ RCA L101812, n.d., 33\(\frac{1}{3}\) rpm liner notes.


\textsuperscript{151} Denis Collinson, \textit{Australian Ballads}, Sydney: Festival, FGL12-995, n.d. (c. 1955) 33\(\frac{1}{3}\) rpm.

\textsuperscript{152} Denis Collinson, \textit{Australian Ballads}, liner notes.
briefly to public attention in 1940 when Noel Coward praised one of his patriotic songs and promised some assistance to Ryrie’s career.153

Isador Goodman also represents the in-between musical spirit in Australian commercial radio, at one time working as musical director for Colgate’s toothpaste opposition, Pepsodent. From his Bechstein grand, Goodman added rippling piano to the sounds of the Pepsodent Show Band for 3AW’s Sunday Night at Eight program in the late 1930s.154 His contributions as a composer to the repertoire of light music were to come in the form of his film scores (discussed in Chapter 5) and the New Guinea Fantasy (1944), in the manner of Richard Addinsell’s Warsaw Concerto (1941), written during his military service in World War II.155 Both Goodman and Collinson were able to switch their careers readily between the commercial stations or the ABC. Radio’s demand for content was voracious, and the musicians who could supply it were kept busy, creating numerous opportunities for the practitioners of light music.

Historian John Whiteoak characterizes ABC radio programming in its first decades as coming across ‘like a variety show with numerous short live or recorded music segments, but generally at least one long segment performed by a live popular, classical or light classical ensemble.’156 In this context, the main avenue for the presentation of light music was as ‘dinner music’ for evening radio. Piano music and string-based ensembles predominated, such as the piano duo of Lindley Evans and Frank Hutchens (both also composers) and the Clive Amadio Quintet, the one that remains best known to this day. Other groupings were attached to classically qualified musicians such as Montague Brearley, Isador Goodman, Robert Miller, Robert Boughen, Jack Harrison, George Dobson and Gabor Reeves. From time to time larger groupings, using names like the ‘ABC Light Orchestra’157 were formed, sharing players from, or being subsets of, the growing symphony orchestras. As the orchestras evolved, their work encompassed, in various ratios, the different styles of music radio wanted from them. In 1945 the Sydney

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156 John Whiteoak and Aline Scott-Maxwell, 18.
157 Phillip Sametz, Play On! 60 Years of Music-making with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra (Sydney: ABC Enterprises, 1992), 133.
Symphony Orchestra, for instance, was organized into a Symphony Orchestra ranging between 72 and 82 players for fifteen hours of the week; a Studio Orchestra of around 45 for another fifteen hours; and a remnant String Ensemble for another fifteen hours.\textsuperscript{158}

These ensembles drew from the extant light music repertoire, but also created a demand for new work from a wide range of local composers from both ‘high’ and ‘low’ ends of the spectrum. Recordings by many of these groups were preserved on ABC house or transcription discs, which remained available for broadcast use until the 1990s, but are now housed in the collections of the National Library of Australia and the National Film & Sound Archive.\textsuperscript{159} These discs provide a repository of Australian light music as it was represented on the ABC in the mid-twentieth century, sometimes classifying pieces according to their character, such as ‘cheery,’ ‘gay,’ ‘sophisticated fun,’ or ‘dreamy.’\textsuperscript{160} Composers represented on such house discs include Clifford Abbott, Werner Baer, Robert Boughen, James Brash, Dulcie Holland, Barry Keen, Arthur Loam, Roy Maling, Claude McGlynn, W. Arundel Orchard, George Pikler, Esther Rofe, Gaby Rogers, Archie Rosenthal and Frederick Whaite, as well as recognized ‘serious’ figures Alfred Hill, John Antill, Clive Douglas and William Lovelock. This list is by no means comprehensive of Australia’s light music composers on the ABC’s radio airwaves.

Lindley Evans (best remembered as ‘Mr. Melody Man’ on the ABC Children’s program, \textit{The Argonauts}) and Frank Hutchens performed together for many broadcasts as a piano duo. Their programs included their own characteristic compositions with titles evoking a pastoral mood reminiscent of the paintings of Sydney Long or a cuteness like Brownie Downing’s: \textit{The Enchanted Isle, Fairy Ships, At the Bathing Pool} and \textit{Lavender Time}, to name a few of their respective compositions. With pieces in this vein, Roger Covell and Brett Allen-Bayes speculate, these composers ‘were echoing a widespread activity in Edwardian and between-the-World-Wars Britain in the supply of neatly picturesque salon pieces for piano and agreeable drawing-room songs’ that were the fruit of a ‘determination to ignore the fact that the conventional, usually placid world of their deft

\textsuperscript{158} Ibid., 98.
\textsuperscript{159} Various albums with the prefix PRX, 2XS, LPX and/or RRC were produced by the ABC and retained in the National Sound Library as well as state-based Sound Libraries for broadcast use.
\textsuperscript{160} James Koehne, ‘Light music,’ in John Whiteoak and Aline Scott-Maxwell, 401
and fluent fantasies had been irrevocably torn apart by two major wars and ... violent social upheavals.¹⁶¹

A prominent figure in the ABC’s musical history was William James, probably the most exalted member of the ABC hierarchy to take an interest in light music. During his period of artistic rounding-out in London from 1914 to 1923, James established some renown as a pianist, and as a composer of ballads and a ‘fashionable’ dance-play called By Candlelight, a.k.a. The Debutante (1916). It’s an archetypal light music composition of its time, and James’s songs, including the famous Australian Christmas Carols and Australian Bush Songs, contain some gems of light vocal music. Once he came back to Australia, James was embraced at the music-loving ABC, eventually rising to become Federal Controller of Music in 1937. James set his sights upon addressing the standards of light music on ABC radio, an area in which he admitted that the ABC ‘found it difficult to maintain and improve standards.’¹⁶² James promised a determined effort for improvement.

As with its orchestras, the ABC relied considerably upon Englishmen to spur the development of higher standards in light music. In 1936, visiting bandleader Howard Jacobs was invited to put together ‘a symphonic-style ABC National Dance Orchestra,’ with a string section that was rehearsed ‘obsessively’ to ensure a smooth and mellow sound.¹⁶³ Another British ex-bandleader was Jay Wilbur (1898-1968), who lived in Sydney for about a decade leading a light music formation called the Jay Wilbur Strings (Tommy Tycho, who got his first break as a pianist with Wilbur, counted thirty string players).¹⁶⁴ In 1950, Wilbur produced a ‘middle-of-the-road ABC series’ called Music Hath Charms, whose theme tune had words by Dorothy Dodd.¹⁶⁵

Of greater influence was Fred Hartley (1905-1980), a leading figure in the BBC’s light music hierarchy. In contrast to ‘many of the classically trained musicians’ who took up

¹⁶¹ Roger Covell and Brett Allan-Bayes, in Tamara Anna Cislowska (piano), The Enchanted Isle: Australian Piano Music, ABC Classics, 476 6298, 2008, compact disc liner notes.
¹⁶² David Tunley, William James and the Beginnings of Modern Musical Australia (Sydney: Australian Music Centre, 2007), 90.
¹⁶³ John Whiteoak and Aline Scott-Maxwell, 18.
¹⁶⁴ Tommy Tycho, Music, Maestro Please (Ringwood: Brolga, 1995), 57.
¹⁶⁵ Peter Pinne, Australian Performers, Australian Performances: a discography from Film, TV, Radio, Theatre and Concert, 1897-1985 (Melbourne: Performing Arts Museum, Victorian Arts Centre, 1987), unnum.
light music duties out of necessity during the Depression years, Hartley ‘firmly remained committed to it all his life.’ Hartley himself approached Australian conductor Bernard Heinze when he was in London in 1938 to express his desire to visit Australia, but it was not until 1945 that William James secured him an appointment. Hartley traversed the continent to assess the local light music talent, and David Tunley suggests that ‘it is not surprising that he found much that was unsatisfactory.’ Hartley’s remedy was to form his own ensemble to lead the way, ‘setting new standards in Australia. No doubt a thorn in some sides he insisted on impeccable rehearsal protocol, the provision of the best grand pianos and made much fuss over the unsatisfactoriness of the situation of the engineers (provided by the Post-Master General’s Department).’ Until the mid-1950s, Hartley frequently spent part of the year in Australia, and Tunley credits him as mentor to Clive Amadio’s Quintet. In fact, the two groups were often compared against each other: although Amadio’s group was generally seen to be not quite as good as Hartley’s, it eventually supplanted Hartley’s ensemble in the ABC radio line-up.

In forming the trademark sound and content of his popular dinner-time program, Amadio was aided by his arranger, Henry Krips, who had arrived in Sydney in November 1938, escaping the Nazi tide in his native Austria. Krips immediately found himself in demand as a composer for the nascent Australian film industry, and as a conductor particularly of light music of the Viennese tradition. Krips wrote songs for the popular market, beginning with one from his film score for Gone to the Dogs (1939). Other songs were published by Boosey’s and Chappell’s Australian branch offices. Two Romberg-esque songs for Boosey & Hawkes, One Song is in My Heart (1940) and Shall I be Weary (1945) found their way, in recorded versions, into Boosey’s London-based production library, Cavendish Music Library. Krips also began composing his series of ‘light classical’ miniature tone poems and concertos at this time – the first being Blaue Berge (Blue Mountains, c. 1940). He kept up a regular output of these pieces, responding to occasional demand and connections, although his attention became focussed on his

166 David Tunley, William James, 91.
167 Ibid.
168 Ibid.
169 Ibid.
170 Donald Westlake, 91-93.
responsibilities as Resident Conductor of the South Australian (now Adelaide) Symphony Orchestra (SASO) from 1949 to 1972. Krips knew Clive Amadio almost from the moment he arrived in Australia, and supplied many arrangements and pieces for Amadio’s radio program.\textsuperscript{173} Their association reached its apex when Krips featured Amadio as saxophone soloist with the SASO in the Festivals of Light Music staged in Adelaide in 1957 and 1959.\textsuperscript{174} Despite having a loyal audience, Amadio eventually found himself targeted by a new regime, led by Kurt Herweg (appointed Officer in Charge of Light Music Programmes at the ABC in October 1957) and Werner Baer (NSW Supervisor for Music), and was himself supplanted in favour of a dinner-music program that featured a ‘composite contribution from a number of groups.’\textsuperscript{175}

Herweg and Baer were German refugees, part of a significant influx of new talents who featured in Australian music as a result of the wave of postwar immigration. Baer (1914-1992) had auspicious beginnings as a young musician in Berlin, before fleeing the Nazis in 1938, firstly to Singapore, thence (as an internee destined for the Tatura Internment Camp) to Australia. Baer occupied a prominent place in the artistic life of the cultivated Jewish refugee circles in postwar Sydney, being accompanist of choice for the eminent singing teacher Marianne Mathy\textsuperscript{176} and contributing scores for productions of Gertrud Bodenweiser (\textit{The Life of the Insects}, 1950; \textit{Dance Israeli}, 1958). Much of this compositional output addressed diverse needs of the ABC, where Baer was employed from 1951 to 1979, including some light music. He also contributed scores for productions of the Commonwealth Film Unit, including \textit{World of Birds} (1959), \textit{The Seventh Games} (1962) and \textit{Land in the West} (1963).

Kurt Herweg first visited Australia in 1938 as an accompanist to the dancer and Laban disciple, Anny Fligg, who had also been exiled to London from Germany, where Herweg had been a conductor of operetta. Herweg was persuaded to stay: shortly after the Anny Fligg tour Herweg became musical director of operetta productions staged at

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{173} Donald Westlake, 70. \\
\textsuperscript{174} South Australian Symphony Orchestra, \textit{Festival of Light Music}, 9 March 1957 and 4 March 1959, concert program booklets. \\
\textsuperscript{175} Donald Westlake, 96. \\
\end{flushleft}
Melbourne’s His Majesty’s Theatre. His main associations thereafter were in music for theatre: some significant musical contributions in ballet, as musical director of Ballet Australia, and later, musical direction for the popular Tintookies, the Marionette Theatre of Australia. Herweg contributed scores for Commonwealth Film Unit productions *Christmas under the Sun* (1947), *Just a Trace* (1957), *Plant Quarantine at Work* (1960) and *Mt. Isa Copper* (1963), among others.

The main fruit of Herweg’s appointment as the ABC’s Officer-in-Charge of Light Music in 1957 was the establishment of The Light Concert Ensemble (sometimes Orchestra) conducted by Herweg, which recorded light music compositions for broadcast, in pale imitation of the BBC Concert Orchestra. As well as the album *Beneath the Southern Cross* (discussed below), a disc for the ABC’s ‘in-house’ PRX series featured light music compositions by Dulcie Holland (*Secret Pool*), Dorothy Dodd (*How Many Dreams*), Bruce Finlay (*Summerbreeze*), Noreen Mendelsohn (*When I Whisper Your Name*), George English (*Yulunga*), and Herweg himself (*Sydney Harbour Vignettes*).

David Tunley proposes that entering the 1960s, light music ‘was reaching the end of its era, not only in Australia but everywhere, as post-war tastes changed under the impact of popular music from the USA.’ K.S. Inglis reinforces the point, observing that by this time, ‘Jay Wilbur’s light music ensemble attracted only 4 per cent of sets in use in cities,’ and the Sydney Dance Band under Jim Gussey ‘was beginning to sound odd when hardly anybody danced to the radio any more and people who danced anywhere were more inclined to rock with Bill Haley and twist with Chubby Checker than to glide with Gussey.’

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182 David Tunley, 91.
183 Ibid., 181.
184 Ibid., 230.
While ABC Radio did not embrace the new forms of popular music, they did adapt their offerings in an effort to suit changing tastes. A sense that policy-makers and programmers struggled to grasp where popular taste was heading, or were reluctant to respond to changes they did not approve of, emerges from the accounts of ABC music policy at this time. Inglis suggests that the ABC’s administrators had so much invested in high cultural values that they ‘could not easily be thoroughgoing patrons of popular pleasure,’ and were befuddled when confronted by the pressure to develop programs ‘aimed at entertaining the masses.’ Even after the War, when the need for popular approaches was obvious to all, a ‘lingering attachment’ to notions of improvement and uplift prevented the ABC from making too far-reaching concessions to popularity.

In 1956, as it prepared for the introduction of Television, the ABC restored its Variety Department to its original name of ‘Light Entertainment,’ and to Inglis, the ‘changes of name were one expression of continuing uncertainty about what the Department should be doing.’ The Light Entertainment Department had in its charge the Sydney and Melbourne Dance Bands, which had been going since 1932 and 1936 respectively. Clement Semmler considered that ‘altogether the two units achieved a standard of popular and dance music that has not been excelled in this country.’ Under the leadership of Jim Davidson and Jim Gussey in Sydney, and Al Hammet and Frank Thorne in Melbourne, the Dance Bands were adaptable enough to encompass light music as well as their trademark Swing: indeed as the Swing era faded, the work of the Dance Bands (sometimes taking on the title ‘ABC Dance Orchestra’) became increasingly oriented towards light music styles. In 1969 the Bands were renamed Show Bands, ‘in recognition that the kind of dancing they had been created to play for had almost disappeared.’ The Sydney Band did not last much longer, but the Melbourne Band was ‘retained, though with different working conditions, under the conductorship of Brian May.’

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185 Ibid., 114.
186 Ibid., 44.
187 Ibid., 179.
189 K.S. Inglis, 314.
190 Clement Semmler, 148.
Brian May (1934-1997) rose through ABC ranks to earn the job leading the Show Band. In his hometown of Adelaide, May’s driving ambition had seen him establish a formidable reputation as arranger and conductor for the popular music programs emanating from the Adelaide Light Entertainment Department. Clifton (Cliff) Johns had been appointed Supervisor of the Department in 1960, and together with May, drove an active production schedule in which members of the South Australian (now Adelaide) Symphony Orchestra combined with various popular-styled musicians to form a light music orchestra (going by various names over the years) to supply programs that earned the Department a national reputation for ‘light music excellence.’

The work of the Johns-May team is represented on a series of recordings discussed in Chapter 5.

In 1969, May took charge of revamping the Melbourne Dance Band as the Show Band, adapting to the new sounds of the 1970s and establishing new audiences on radio, television and records. Back in Adelaide, Cliff Johns found a new partner in the pursuit of light music excellence in former SASO French Horn player, Mike Kenny (b.1939). Kenny’s background was purely classical, but inspired by his discovery of the work of Nelson Riddle, Billy May and Henry Mancini, Kenny developed his skills as a popular arranger during the 1960s, concurrently with studies in serious composition. Martin Buzacott observes that by the 1970s, ‘Adelaide’s light entertainment team was right up with the times, Kenny and Johns picking repertoire that had been written during the last few years but that they predicted would have longevity.’ Kenny directed the Light Entertainment Department’s orchestra under his own name, The Mike Kenny Orchestra, and established a popular following with his regular program *New World of Music*. While most of his work in Light Entertainment was centred on arranging, one original work, called *Ocean Road*, stayed in the repertoire of the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra.

The demise of the whole ABC light music enterprise over the end of the 1970s and beginning of the 1980s was associated with great personal trauma for all those who had invested so much in the striving for excellence. Brian May was able to transfer his energies into the field of composing for television and film. Following the success of

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192 Martin Buzacott, 355.
193 Ibid., 357.
195 Martin Buzacott, 360-365.
Mad Max (1979) and Mad Max 2: The Road Warrior (1981), May established a minor career in Hollywood.\textsuperscript{196}

Mike Kenny continued to contribute arrangements and occasional compositions, mostly for use in schools, family and ‘Pops’ concerts, for the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra. He never pursued an identity as a film composer, but composed occasional works in the academic style he’d acquired from his studies at Adelaide’s Elder Conservatorium during the 1960s, where his main teacher was Jack V. Peters, whose background as an organist imbued him with a devotion to contrapuntal writing.\textsuperscript{197} The best representation of Kenny’s serious style is to be found in the Tuba Concerto he wrote for Peter Whish-Wilson of the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra. Composed in 1981, Kenny notes that the concerto ‘uses material derived from some of my earlier works. The first movement is a reorchestration of A Symphonic Study for symphonic wind ensemble (1965), the other movements being expanded versions of parts of my Divertimento for violin and viola (1964).’\textsuperscript{198}

During light music’s final flowering at the ABC, the genre, in a new guise, was making its revival internationally on commercial radio airwaves. The rise of the Easy Listening market in the US generated a frenzy to gather material. In the US, Easy Listening entrepreneur Jim Schlichting discovered the ABC in Australia and its minor treasure trove of light music recordings. Providing a de facto summary of the extent of the ABC’s light music production, Schlichting recalls that his company acquired the North American rights to recordings by:

- Brian May and the ABC Showband
- Mike Kenny Orchestra
- Kevin Keto [Kitto] Singers
- Kevin Hocking Singers
- George Golla
- Kenny Powell Orchestra
- Johnny McCarthy [John Grant McCarthy] Orchestra
- Judy Bailey Orchestra
- William Motzing Orchestra
- Penny Hay Singers
- Bill Burton and Neil Thurgate Orchestra
- Alan Wood Orchestra and more.\textsuperscript{199}

The Easy Listening trend became big in Australian commercial radio too, driven by increasingly commercial interests dominating the sector. Rod Muir was the ‘svengali,’ as


\textsuperscript{198} Peter Whish-Wilson (tuba), Tuba Concertos, Adelaide Symphony Orchestra conductor David Stanhope, ABC Classics 476 5251, 2006, compact disc.

\textsuperscript{199} Jim Schlichting, email.
Bridget Griffen-Foley describes him, who introduced profitable American sciences of radio format design to Australia. Other stations took his example and turned to the US for inspiration in their quest for better revenues. 2CH in Sydney pioneered the Easy Listening format, when:

Following market and overseas research in the early 1970s, the NSW Council of Churches [owners of 2CH] opted to introduce a ‘Good Music’ (also known as ‘Beautiful Music’ or ‘Easy Listening’) format, with middle-of-the-road vocal and orchestral material, no raucous sounds, and a minimum of talk, all targeted at the over-40s. 3AK, 3MP, 4BH, 5AA and 6PR also adopted variations of Good Music.\(^{201}\)

As ‘all-music’ stations with local content quotas to meet, Australia’s Easy Listening broadcasters actively sought material from Australian musicians. When 2CH turned to Easy Listening in 1972 (its Melbourne equivalent 3AK opened a year later), the station ‘soon found itself so short of suitable music that it was obliged to commission its own easy-listening recordings.’\(^{202}\) Willing to fill the yawning chasm was a procession of light music bandleaders and arrangers. Like musical snapshots of the period, LPs produced by and for these stations and their audiences give insight into their repertoire interests. An album, *Orchestral Sounds Vol. 1*, produced by Broadcast Exchange of Australia Pty Ltd for 3AK and recorded at the B.E.A. Studios in Chapel Street, South Yarra, describes the station’s achievement and outlines the aim of the LP:

Radio audiences once assailed on all sides by the sounds of over-exuberant music, now have the opportunity of turning the dial to 3AK Beautiful Music when in Melbourne and 2CH Good Music when in Sydney. Until today, this type of music was the domain of the overseas giants: Mantovani, James Last, Percy Faith, and others. Now in the first volume of ‘Orchestral Sounds,’ Australian musicians, arrangers and recording technicians make their meaningful and professional contribution to the ‘Good and Beautiful’ music scene.\(^{203}\)

The omission of composers from this list of contributors reflects the dominating role of the arranger in the ‘Beautiful Music’ movement. The radio stations’ primary interest was in supplying easily attractive renditions of popular tunes of the day, rather than building a new light music repertoire.

2CH’s programming manager of the day, Colin Bentley, established The Good Music Orchestra in 1973 ‘in response to radio stations’ need for more beautiful music


\(^{201}\) Ibid., 274.


\(^{203}\) 3AK Beautiful Music *Orchestral Sounds: Volume 1*, ‘Musical arrangers’ Geoff Kitchen and Bob Young, Broadcasting Exchange of Australia Pty Ltd, BM 10731, n.d., 33⅓ rpm.
performed by Australians.” Under the direction of Tommy Tycho (1928-2013), the ‘32 piece’ orchestra gave concerts at the spanking new Sydney Opera House in November 1973, but the only Australian content was a rendition of Waltzing Matilda. The orchestra resurfaced in 1974 with an album celebrating the first anniversary of the Easy Listening format in Australia, this time directed by Ron Falsom (1928-1980), a jazz trumpeter who became a stalwart of Australian television. The album had two versions: entitled Beautiful Music for 3AK’s Melbourne market, and Good Music for 2CH in Sydney. Falsom managed to squeeze one original work onto the LP, his own brief instrumental, the beach-inspired Sans Souci. A third LP, called Something else again, drew upon a team effort by William Motzing, ‘Tweed’ Harris and Bob ‘Beetles’ Young. The album bears the logos of Australia’s other Easy Listening stations, 2CH, 3AK, 4BD and 5AA, suggesting an informal network of like-minded broadcasters.

Major Australian labels, RCA and Festival, also leapt to supply the market with albums of Easy Listening orchestral music. Despite the amount of new production generated by Easy Listening radio, for composers this ‘New Wave’ of light music was less welcoming. In the eight albums by RCA, Festival and BEA cited above, there is one sole original track. The determined focus on ‘more palatable’ versions of pop hits created a demand for arrangers and conductor/bandleaders, so that the movement was dominated by Swing generation personnel supplementing their work in television studio orchestras. The orientation towards pop presaged the development of the ‘Adult Contemporary’ forms that were to supplant Easy Listening from the 1980s onward. By this time all trace of any relationship to the culture and practice of the classically trained composer had virtually disappeared.

207 The Good Music Orchestra, Something Else Again, arranged and conducted by William Motzing, Tweed Harris and Bob ‘Beetles’ Young, 7 Records, MLR 340, n.d. (c. 1980), 33⅓ rpm.
208 The Melbourne Pops Orchestra, Beautiful Music – ‘For the Good Times’, director Brian Rangott, RCA Camden VCL1-0051, 1974, 33⅓ rpm; Festival Strings, Good Music Hits Vol. 1, director Les Sands, Festival L-25191, 1975, 33⅓ rpm; Festival Strings, Theme from Upstairs, Downstairs, director Les Sands, Festival Harlequin, L 25237, 1975, 33⅓ rpm; Festival Studio 24 Orchestra, Heading in the Right Direction, director William Motzing, Festival L 25270, 1976, 33⅓ rpm.
Although ABC Radio was the main progenitor of Australian light music composition, the volume of its production hardly compares to that of the BBC. We can conceive ‘British Light Music’ as a grand production house for light music reaching across every genre, while the opportunities in light music in Australia were sporadic and opportunistic. Nevertheless, the genre played a vital role in the livelihoods of many Australian composers as the introduction of new media over the course of the twentieth century provided a steady demand for light music.

5.1 Television

It took some years after the ABC’s introduction of television in 1956 for light music to find its feet in the medium. The Magic of Music, begun in 1961, catered for ‘older viewers,’ for whom ‘Eric Jupp’s decorous ensemble, a successor to Fred Hartley’s, Jay Wilbur’s and Clive Amadio’s, helped many an evening meal to settle.’

Englishman Eric Jupp (1922-2003) had indeed begun his career in the London music scene at the time that Hartley and Wilbur were prominent bandleaders, but he was better acquainted with recent musical developments. In the late 1950s Jupp produced albums for Columbia in Britain that made an appeal to the tastes of the emerging teenager class: his The Rockin’ Strings album (1960) consists mainly of standards, but presents them with echo-chamber-treated violins and wordless female vocal chorus, over a rock’n’roll rhythm section of piano, drum-kit and electric guitar.

In 1960 the ABC began to court Jupp to take a role in the Light Entertainment Division. By 1961, he had settled in Sydney and commenced the long-running venture of Magic of Music, occupying an after-dinner time-slot on ABC TV until 1974, and spawning a considerable number of offshoot LPs.

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209 K.S. Inglis, 206.
211 Beginning with Eric Jupp and His Music, The Magic of Eric Jupp and His Music, EMI SCXO 7832, n.d., 33⅓ rpm. The material in the EMI discs was collected in Eric Jupp and his Orchestra, Eric Jupp’s
orchestra ‘played items such as ABC listeners would have seen in the 1930s had radio been visible,’ innovation was not altogether absent from *The Magic of Music*.

Jupp’s orchestra adopted the new style that was characteristic of light music ensembles in the Easy Listening era: a jazz group sat alongside a string orchestra to present the melodies of a wide range of standard and contemporary songs, sometimes with a vocalist to add variety. Jupp’s aim was to ameliorate certain unpalatable elements in popular (including jazz) music:

Spurning the gimmickry which is too often related to popular music he depends for his success on good arrangement and the high technical standards he demands from his players. The way in which he uses the resources at his command is an object lesson in control. Rather than let his strong string sections dominate he uses them as a backing for the lively interjections of his own piano and the other soloists. When the strings do come to the fore they produce music on a truly grand scale.  

John Sangster (1928–1995) recounts that *The Magic of Music*’s rhythm section consisted of ‘four percussions, drums, bass and … two guitars’, but the jazz component of *The Magic of Music* orchestra also strongly featured Don Burrows on flutes and reeds and trumpet-player Billy Burton. Although reputed to be a tough disciplinarian, Jupp appreciated that jazz musicians respond to different incentives than classically trained ones, and according to Sangster, he provided Scotch to his jazzmen to smooth the way at recording sessions.

While renditions of popular songs, standard and contemporary, was the main fare of *The Magic of Music*, new material could sneak in here and there. Back in London, Jupp had developed a sideline as a composer in film and production library music, scoring the ‘B Film’ production, *The Blue Parrot* (1953), and the archetypal *Bob-Sleigh* (1953) for Boosey & Hawkes’ Cavendish Library. In Australia, Jupp supplied music for the feature film *Tim* (1979), but mostly worked on television productions, being remembered

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best of all for the theme tune to *Skippy, The Bush Kangaroo* (1966). Jupp took the opportunity provided by *The Magic of Music* to polish up some gentle, even melancholy, little pieces: *Music Time, Blue Beguine, Song of Italy* and *Summer has gone* are titles composed by Jupp that appear on the recordings of music from the TV series. Jupp could also be encouraging to others. John Sangster gratefully records that Jupp picked out a piece, *Kaffir Song*, that Sangster had written for the Don Burrows Quintet and asked him to embellish it with ‘some string parts’ so that it could be presented on *The Magic of Music*.

There were other ‘potpourri’ programs on ABC and on the commercial stations, but these had virtually no significance in expanding the repertoire of light music compositions. Composers found more opportunity in the production of TV drama and comedy series, though arguably not as much as they should have, since most of the theme tunes for Australian television productions were by overseas composers, adopted from production library sources. This had already happened in Radio, of course, even on the ABC. A well-known example is the production library cue composed by English light music stalwart Charles Williams called *Majestic Fanfare* (from Chappell, recorded by the Queen’s Hall Light Orchestra in 1943), adopted to introduce news broadcasts on the ABC from the beginning of 1952. The piece has ‘played on, imperial and august,’ for more than sixty years, ‘earning its composer royalties which were the subject from time to time of public speculation.’ Similar status was attained by Ronald Hanmer (1917-1994), when his Bruton production library track *Pastorale* was adopted to introduce the popular ABC radio serial *Blue Hills* (1949-1976). Hanmer was a composer and arranger in light music and musical theatre in London, but retired to Brisbane in 1975, where he became active in the local music scene. There he revamped *Pastorale* into an extended *Blue Hills Rhapsody*, which has become an ‘Australian Light Classic’.

Many local hit TV series of the period sourced their music from the London production libraries. Peter Pinne observes that ‘in the early days, a theme was nearly always lifted

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217 John Sangster, 124.
218 K.S. Inglis, 151.
from a “library” disc, and if there were exceptions, they were few.’ Pinne suggests it was George Dreyfus’s popular theme for the ABC TV production \textit{Rush} in 1974 that ‘turned the tide,’ its success encouraging local producers to commission Australian composers for bespoke themes, but there were many examples before this.

Eric Jupp recorded an album of Australia’s hit TV themes circa 1974 that provides a snapshot of the time, a selection of compositions mostly by British and American composers. Several cues retain their original production library titles to betray their origin: David Lindup’s \textit{Testing Time} (from the KPM 1000 Series, used for \textit{The Box}, 1974), Jack Trombey’s \textit{Industry on the Move} (from De Wolfe, used for \textit{Matlock Police}, 1971), Steve Gray’s \textit{Paper Boy} (probably from KPM, used for \textit{Number 96}, 1972), James Reichert’s \textit{Victory} (from Boosey & Hawkes/ Cavendish, used for \textit{Homicide}, 1964), and Johnny Pearson’s \textit{Power Drive} (probably from KPM, used for \textit{Division 4}, 1969).

A contrasting image is conveyed by another album with a similar content dating from the late 1960s. The CBS LP \textit{This Day Tonight Theme & other Great Australian TV Themes}, with the TV Themes Orchestra conducted by Sven Libaek, presents arranged versions of twelve theme tunes, only one of which is not by an Australian. Libaek’s album celebrated ‘the success of local composers in providing musical scores and themes of … high standard – themes that are hummed, whistled or sung in households all over this country.’ The composers represented include Libaek himself (\textit{Nature Walkabout}, 1967), Tommy Tycho (\textit{You Can’t See Around Corners}, 1969), and Eric Jupp (\textit{Skippy, the Bush Kangaroo}, 1967), prominent identities we have already encountered. Frank Smith (\textit{Hunter} and \textit{Bellbird}, both 1967), Laurie Lewis (\textit{This Day Tonight}, 1967) and Graeme Lyall (\textit{Woobinda}, 1968) were jazz musicians who had adapted, learned or taught themselves to compose, while the career of Arnold Butcher (b. 1925), composer of the ABC TV theme \textit{The Contrabandits} (1967), is useful to consider in more detail.

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\textsuperscript{220} Peter Pinne, \textit{Australian Performers, Australian Performances: A Discography from Film, TV, Radio and Concert, 1897-1985} (Melbourne: Performing Arts Museum, Victorian Arts Centre, 1987), \textit{Telephone}, unnum.

\textsuperscript{221} Eric Jupp and his Orchestra, \textit{The TV Times Record of Your Top TV Themes}, EMI Axis 6138, 1974, 33\frac{1}{3} rpm.

\textsuperscript{222} TV Themes Orchestra, \textit{this Day Tonight theme & Other Great Australian TV Themes}, arranger and conductor Sven Libaek, CBS SBP 233557, n.d., 33\frac{1}{3} rpm liner notes.
Musicians of the Australian symphony orchestras may still be amused to read the designation ‘arranged Butcher’ that appears on numerous scores commonly used in their Family and Schools concerts. These arrangements and medleys were prepared by Arnold Butcher during his employment as a staff arranger with the ABC. For Butcher, permanent employment at the ABC (first as a copyist, then as an arranger) brought financial stability after years garnering piecemeal work opportunities in an ‘improvisatory’ career.

Raised beside the cane-fields of North Queensland, the youthful Butcher did not consider music a career, though he enjoyed playing the piano and gathered an eclectic repertoire encompassing Fats Waller and Chopin. While serving in the Air Force, Butcher met a fellow soldier who had been a piano student at the Conservatorium in Sydney, and was inspired to do likewise. With the aid of a repatriation scholarship after the War, Butcher too was able to study piano there with Alexander Sverjensky.

While at the ‘Con,’ Butcher first made acquaintance with the composer Ron Grainer, with whom his path was to cross again. Butcher’s own desire to write music did not emerge at Conservatorium, but rather in the School of Life. Like many young artists with communist sympathies, Butcher worked as a casual wharfie: with its community of writers and poets and artists of all kinds, working on the wharves was, for Butcher, ‘a marvellous experience.’ Artists were attracted there out of a desire to avoid becoming ‘caught up in the rat race. There were no officers and sergeants. Everybody looked after one another and this freedom was … appreciated by artists.’

The Waterside Workers’ Federation (WWF) supported ‘all sorts of cultural activities’ for its members, which Butcher found ‘very satisfying.’ The WWF’s Sydney headquarters in Sussex Street was ‘a vital centre of working class activity,’ its facilities including an ‘art studio, hall, facilities for film production and musical performance, and a reading room.’ It was in this environment that Butcher became involved in writing music, in particular to accompany the dance-dramas produced by Margaret Barr (1904–1991). Barr

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224 Ibid.
had founded her modern dance group in Sydney in 1951 and presented its first performances for the benefit of members of the WWF, adopting Australian subject matter for these allegorical presentations, in which the story serves to make a moral observation. Butcher produced scores for three of Barr’s works for her Sydney Dance-Drama Group: *The Flood* (1953), *The Breaking of the Drought* (1958) and the macabre *Strange Children* (1955), where ‘Butcher’s dissonant treatment of tunes reminiscent of nursery rhymes … heightened the work’s dreamlike atmosphere.’ 226 Another activity of the Union was film making, through its Communist-affiliated Film Unit, which made fourteen films between 1953 and 1958. 227 Butcher made his musical contribution to some of the Unit’s realist documentary productions, as well as in the plays and revues staged at the New Theatre, 228 ‘perhaps the best-known left cultural activist organisation in Sydney during the 1950s.’ 229

Butcher further developed his capacities as an arranger during a six-year period in London, where he lived as an accompanist and played in cabaret acts and pantomimes. He renewed contact there with Ron Grainer, who helped his fellow Queenslander in London when he ‘threw a lot of work my way, which I was very [grateful] for: copying, arranging, sitting-in on recordings and film recordings.’ 230

Returning to Australia in 1967, Butcher found work in the emerging Leagues Clubs of New South Wales (according to Butcher, a fruitful source of employment for musicians with their resident bands) until he landed permanent employment at the ABC. Butcher’s main contribution to the repertoire of Australian light music derives from his work for ABC Television and for productions of the Commonwealth Film Unit. This work is informally documented in an album featuring the then principal trumpet of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, John Robertson, one of several he recorded aimed at a popular audience in the 1970s, two previous albums of Latin selections being conducted by Tommy Tycho. 231 *Water Dwellers* 232 presents highlights from Butcher’s film and

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227 Lisa Milner, 6.
229 Lisa Milner, 27.
230 Arnold Butcher, interviewed by Jennifer Bowen.
television music, re-arranged for orchestra with trumpet soloist. Items include music excerpted from ABC Television productions *Contrabandits*, *Animal Doctor* and the television film, *Lucullus*. From the Commonwealth Film Unit comes music for documentaries *Return of the Five*, *Exploration 1770*, *After Cook...*233, *Get Fit, Keep Fit*, and *Water Dwellers*, as well as songs from a children’s musical called *Backyard Magic*.234

Commercial television also used Australian composers for theme and incidental music. Sven Libaek (b. 1938) established his career through such work (see Chapters 6 and 7). The popularity of the mini-series in the 1980s created opportunities for some ambitious theme-and-incidental-music productions including scores by composers Bruce Smeaton (*A Town Like Alice*, 1981) and Bruce Rowland (*All the Rivers Run*, 1983). Rowland (b. 1942) had graduated from ‘playing in rock and roll bands’ to song-writing for children’s television, to ‘composing radio/TV jingles – around 5,600 in all. At the same time he was playing cocktail piano six days a week at the Old Melbourne Hotel.’235 His major success came in the early 1980s with feature films *Phar Lap* (1983) and *The Man from Snowy River* (1982).

Of the mainstream producers, Reg Grundy may take credit for providing the largest number of commissions to Australian composers in terms of television music. Albert Moran calls Grundy the ‘TV Format Mogul,’236 a highly successful producer who spawned a large amount of production in many formats, seen all over the world in a demonstration of his doctrine of ‘Parochial Internationalism’.237 Grundy was highly successful in the format of the quiz show. For these, he turned to Jack Grimsley, a swing band trombonist and arranger who had become a musical director for television, to supply musical trademarks for shows including *Blankety Blanks*, *Blind Date*, *Celebrity Game*, *Concentration*, *Family Feud*, *The New Price is Right*, *Sale of the Century* and *Wheel of Fortune*. In other genres Grundy commissioned Australian composers Mike

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232 Arnold Butcher, *Water Dwellers*.
234 John Robertson, *Water Dwellers*.
235 Andrea Gray (ed.), *Music for Film: Papers delivered at the National Music for Film Symposium* (Sydney: Australian Film and Television School, 1985), 59.
Perjanik, Peter Best (‘one of the most successful jingle writers in Australia’), Bob ‘Beetles’ Young and Tony Hatch, the famed English songwriter who settled in Sydney for a period with his wife Jackie Trent during the 1970s and 1980s.

5.2 Recorded Music

The Long-Playing record, played back over ‘Hi-Fi’ equipment in Stereo, was a boon to light music in the postwar period, but in the output of Australia’s recording industry examples designed to attract such audiophile listeners are rare. A much stronger feature of Australia’s LP history is the format’s close relationship to film, radio and television. In relation to Easy Listening radio, we have seen above how the radio stations and record labels co-operated closely to create a supply of musical material to serve both their needs. Clearly there was a synergistic relationship between the record labels and radio and television stations, or at least the hope of one.

Not all LP recordings were made with commercial intent. The ABC produced ‘house discs’ as a means to supply music by Australian composers and performers throughout the broadcaster’s national ‘empire’. There is an extensive repository of Australian music stored on LP recordings, identified variously by numbers prefixed PRX, 2XS (this number possibly referring to matrix number), RRC or LPX, which were produced by the ABC for the broadcasters’ own use. Mostly this material was intended for dispensation from Head Office to local stations for broadcast, but they could also be distributed more narrowly or more widely than this. The ABC also produced LPs to supply international broadcasters through the Programme Exchange Service, promoting Australia overseas. The enterprising Adelaide Light Entertainment Department and its producer Clifton (Cliff) Johns were responsible for several ambitious productions in this vein.

Let’s Go Walkabout (c.1961) presented ‘A Programme of Light Music by Australian Composers,’ arranged by Mike Kenny and Brian May as vehicles for an array of performers associated with the Adelaide Light Entertainment Department’s productions: the Adelaide Concert Orchestra supported soloists Gaynor Bunning and Wally Carr

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238 Peter Pinne, Australian Performers, Australian Performances, ‘Film,’ unnum.
239 Reg Grundy, 352.
together with the diversely-styled vocal ensembles The Adelaide Singers, The Quintaires and The Spacemen. Most of the items featured were original efforts in contemporary style by Australian songwriters, in arrangements asserting a modern taste derived from such models as Billy May and Anita Kerr. The flip side featured a program of bossa nova and other international pop performed by an orchestra led by Eric Cook, consisting of ‘7 Strings, 4 Flutes (or Clarinets), 4 Trombones, Trumpet (or Flugel Horn), Piano, Guitar, Drums and Bass – in unusual, tuneful arrangements by Cook himself.’

In 1962, the Adelaide Light Entertainment unit assembled another program designed for international broadcasters with Australian Holiday, which served ‘to celebrate the [upcoming] 175th Anniversary of the First Settlement.’ The program mixed original pieces by members of the Adelaide Light Entertainment Department – Cliff Johns, Mike Kenny and Brian May – with popular song arrangements by Kenny and May. The Adelaide Concert Orchestra again featured in ‘a programme of light music by Australian composers to celebrate Australia Day, January 26, 1964,’ titled Under the Southern Cross. The album gives an overview of light music styles in Australia at the mid-1960s, with works ranging from the ‘transplanted’ English composer William Lovelock (Dorrigo), to younger, more up-to-date composers like Bruce Clarke (Barley Charlie). Clarke formed a commercial enterprise, the Jingle Workshop (1957-1974), to supply musical settings for radio and television advertisements for many Australian brands and companies. He promoted the enterprise with albums featuring the Workshop’s creations, which declare their commercial intent boldly: Music to Sell By and The Selling Sounds of the Seventies.

Another ABC promotional production was Beneath the Southern Cross (c.1965), which represented a range of light music composers and ensembles. Kurt Herweg directed the Light Concert Orchestra in several descriptive pieces (George English’s Myuna Moon; Arthur Loam’s Canberra Caprice; Edwin Harrison’s Riding the Surf) while works of a more symphonic scale were presented by the West Australian Symphony Orchestra.

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241 Australian Broadcasting Commission, Let’s Go Walkabout/Swing Softly, liner notes.
243 Adelaide Concert Orchestra, Under the Southern Cross, with Adelaide Singers, Wally Carr, conductor Len Dommett, ABC PRX 5392, 1964, 33⅓ rpm.
conducted by John Farnsworth Hall (Clive Douglas’s Boonoke Dance and Waitangi Dance; Clifford Abbott’s Martin Place Midday; Australian Summer by Charles Edgar Ford), and the ABC Sydney Dance Band presented Alan Wood’s The Cheeky Possum.\footnote{Australian Broadcasting Commission, Beneath the Southern Cross: Light Orchestral Music from Australia and New Zealand, WA Symphony Orchestra, conductor John Farnsworth Hall; Light Concert Orchestra, conductor Kurt Herweg; ABC Sydney Dance Band, conductor Jim Gussey. World Record Club D-897, c. 1965, 33\frac{1}{3} rpm.}

A variant on the same theme was undertaken by the ABC Sydney Dance Band, produced for the ‘179\textsuperscript{th} Australia Day’ in 1967, and titled Australian Birthday.\footnote{ABC Sydney Dance Band, Australian Birthday, conductor Jim Gussey, ABC 2XS3721/ RRC 26, 1967, 33\frac{1}{3} rpm.} Jim Gussey and his band may have been unfashionable by this time, but an attempt is made here to update its sound with the inclusion of the Claire Poole Singers and jazz vocalist Edwin Duff, and augmenting the band with strings. The album makes an appeal to those considering migration to a land of ‘Sunshine and Shade,’ as Eric Cook’s piece is titled. Other leaders of an updated light music style represented on this album include Glenn Marks (Australian), George English (Ski Trails), Eric Jupp (Surfers Paradise), Edwin Duff (Just what I’m looking for), Don Burrows (Esa Cara) and Neil Thurgate (Peg-leg Pete; Matinee). Thurgate, who had a substantial career as a jazz and television showband arranger, has the distinction of being represented on the KPM production library’s prestigious ‘1000 Series,’ where he supplied some distinctively Australian musical tracks for a project aimed at musically representing the nations of the world.\footnote{Neil Thurgate, Music of the Nations, Volume 5: Australia, KPM Recorded Music Library, KPM 1258, 1981, 33\frac{1}{3} rpm.} Australian Birthday was a ‘last hurrah’ for Jim Gussey, and he retired in 1969 after heading the band for 28 years (having taken over when Jim Davidson departed for military duties in 1941). Eric Cook sought to imbue his own sense of modern stylishness into the ensemble after that, but the band fell victim to one of the perennial rounds of ABC cost cutting.\footnote{Martin Buzacott, 360.}

Among the long series of ‘last hurrahs’ of light music production within the ABC was a series of house discs produced in 1979 and 1980. The LPX series included contributions by the ABC Show Band, as well as a number of albums by producer Peter Wall made in the ABC’s Studios 221 and 211 in Sydney with various specially-formed orchestras. LPX 0006 featured on Side 1 the Julian Lee Orchestra. Lee (b. 1923), a New Zealander, was one of Australia’s most respected jazz arrangers, having spent some years in Los
Angeles arranging for George Shearing and Peggy Lee, among others. In addition to strings, Lee’s orchestra contained electric and acoustic guitars, drums and percussion, Erroll Buddle playing several woodwind instruments and the Sydney Symphony harpist, Louise Johnson. They accompanied French singer Philippe Gabbay (a.k.a. Gubbay), performing his own suave songs, including ‘Take a Glass of Champagne’ and ‘Your Place or Mine’. Side 2 featured Kirk L’Orange, a Canadian session guitarist who migrated to Australia in 1974 (later changing the spelling of his name to Lorange), backed by a rhythm section and ‘strings arranged and conducted by William Motzing.’ LPX 0005 was shared by the orchestras of Judy Bailey and Neil Thurgate, where Bailey’s own cool compositions One moment and Samba d’Post, and Thurgate’s Cornucopia were included.

Some recordings made the transition from internal ABC use to commercial release. The ABC Melbourne Show Band appeared regularly on Australian commercial labels, with recordings made by the ABC being licensed for commercial release until the ABC set up its own commercial record label: Philippe Gabbay’s recording with Julian Lee was released by ABC Records in 1981.

The creative team behind the Adelaide Light Entertainment unit issued several recordings licensed to external labels, such as the Adelaide-based E.M.S. Sound Industries, and Axis, the budget sub-label of EMI Australia. The Helmut Zacharias-style pop violin of Brian Porter featured on one such album. Porter lived a twin identity as a violinist with the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra (for 47 years) whilst moonlighting as one of Australia’s leading jazz and pop violinists. In The Magic of Brian Porter, he performed a range of disco hits accompanied by the Adelaide Soul Ensemble on Side A, with the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra accompanying on Side B. Porter also appeared

251 The Australian Showband, Great Australian Hits, conductor Brian May, Fable FBAB 5304, 1975; The ABC Melbourne Show Band, Hits of the 70s, conductor Brian May, Hammard 002, n.d.; The ABC Melbourne Showband, Brian May and the ABC Melbourne Showband, conductor Brian May RCA VAL1 0186, 1977, all 33⅓ rpm.
on and arranged tracks for the album The Mike Kenny Orchestra, promoting Kenny and Cliff Johns’s New World of Music radio program.\textsuperscript{254} The Adelaide Pops Orchestra (the South Australian Symphony Orchestra by another name) directed by ABC house conductor, Patrick Thomas (styled as Pat Thomas for the casual listening experience offered here), recorded an album of popular arrangements (and including Kenny’s Ocean Road) as The Happy Sounds of the Adelaide Pops Orchestra.\textsuperscript{255}

1980 saw the release of a recording made by superstar flautist James Galway with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra in the Sydney Opera House. Galway’s selection of music for Songs of the Southern Cross\textsuperscript{256} includes some of the best-known of Australasian light music (Hill’s Waiata Poi, Benjamin’s Jamaican Rumba, Grainger’s Molly on the Shore), new arrangements by Charles Gerhardt of pop songs by The Bee Gees and The Seekers, as well as a song from Ron Grainer’s hit musical Robert and Elizabeth, and pieces by Don Burrows (2000 Weeks), George Dreyfus (Rush), Julian Lee (The Long White Cloud) and John Carmichael (Thredbo Suite, conducted by Louis Fremaux).

5.3 Film

Film production thrived in Australia in the early decades of the twentieth century, and cinema exerted a strong musical influence during the ‘silent’ era particularly through the proliferation of live orchestras in cinemas providing music to accompany film action and adding an additional entertainment dimension to the cinema-going experience. From the 1930s, producer-directors such as Ken G. Hall and Charles Chauvel provided the first popular successes of the ‘talkies’ from which a modern native film industry eventually grew. But Michael Hannan observes a ‘scarcity of music in Australian feature films of the early 1930s.’\textsuperscript{257} While this was the period when Hollywood was discovering the power of the symphonic underscore in the manner of Max Steiner or Erich Wolfgang Korngold, technical limitations in Australia’s industry did not allow such a flowering.

\textsuperscript{254} The Mike Kenny Orchestra, The Mike Kenny Orchestra, conductor Mike Kenny, produced by Cliff Johns, EMS TV 7087, n.d., 33\%/2 rpm.
\textsuperscript{256} James Galway, Songs of the Southern Cross, Sydney Symphony Orchestra, conductors David Measham and Louis Fremaux, RCA Red Seal VRL1 7371, 1980, 33\%/2 rpm.
Australian filmmakers faced ‘a lack of infrastructure for orchestral music composition and for synchronisation of music to film as well as … unavailability of experienced composers,’ and lacked technical capacity to blend dialogue and music effectively.\(^{258}\) As a consequence, the main musical elements in Australian films of this time are set pieces and on-screen musical numbers.

In this situation, a composer able to produce suitable music in a film could find himself or herself in strong demand. Although he had no previous experience in film music, Henry Krips (1912-1987) started working as a supplier of music for films within a year of his Sydney arrival (November 1938), his first credit appearing on the film *Come Up Smiling* (William Freshman, 1939). In *Gone to the Dogs* (1939), Krips makes a bigger contribution, since ‘[s]pecial attention has been paid to the music in this new Cinesound film,’\(^{259}\) which includes a dance sequence to feature the singing and dancing talents of its stars, George Wallace and Lois Green.\(^{260}\) The scene ‘employs an elaborate set, complex staging and choreography, a large off-screen swing band, clever male and female vocal harmonies, a large cast of dancers, a host of young female tennis players in shorts, and twelve paraded greyhounds.’\(^{261}\)

Hollywood was a powerful model for both Ken G. Hall and Charles Chauvel, and they were avid students and imitators of American movies of various genres. But nothing else in Krips’s output approaches the show-biz razzamatazz of this number. Krips continued to compose for films up to his appointment as Resident Conductor of the South Australian Symphony Orchestra in 1949. After *Gone to the Dogs* came *Dad Rudd, M.P.* (Ken G. Hall, 1940), *The Power and the Glory* (Noel Monkman, 1941), and *Smithy* (Ken G. Hall, 1946). Krips’s career as a film composer culminated with *Sons of Matthew* (1949), which required music to encompass the film’s large ambitions, ranging

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\(^{258}\) Ibid., 62.


\(^{261}\) Michael Hannan, 71.
from the broad epic sweep of the title music to episodes of natural cataclysm, turbulent passion, and evocations of primitivism.²⁶²

Lindley Evans and Isador Goodman were other leading contributors to Australian film of this period, Evans providing most of the musical content for Charles Chauvel’s productions *Uncivilised* (1937), *Forty Thousand Horsemen* (1941) and *The Rats of Tobruk* (1944). In addition to his credentials as a classical pianist, Goodman served a substantial apprenticeship as a leader of cinema orchestras – at the St James and the Prince Edward Theatres in Sydney before becoming musical director for Melbourne’s Capitol Theatre, which ‘featured duo-pianists, fifteen orchestral players, five singers, ten gorgeous ballet girls, glitter, glamour and scenery.’²⁶³ Goodman (a friend of Lindley Evans) composed the music for Chauvel’s *Jedda* (1955),²⁶⁴ which according to his wife Virginia, ‘was a good film score until Elsa Chauvel, the wife of Charles Chauvel, decided that parts of it were too modern. She had old silent movie style ‘hurry music’ substituted for sections where Isador had used bird calls and authentic Aboriginal instrumentation.’²⁶⁵ Enough examples of Goodman’s imaginative approach survive in the film, though, to support its recognition as an outstanding early Australian film score.

Feature films provided sporadic opportunity for Australian composers in ensuing decades: Australian film directors and composers were partners in negotiating one big ‘improvisatory culture’. Partnerships that developed between producers or directors and composers were short-lived, more likely to be based on opportunistic meetings than serious attention to the possibilities of film music. The locally-produced Eileen Joyce biopic *Wherever She Goes* (1951) employed two light music men, Clive Douglas and Sefton Daly, but mainstream movies produced in Australia in the 1940s and 1950s give a better representation of British and American composers than Australians: John Ireland (*The Overlanders*, 1946), Ralph Vaughan Williams (*Bitter Springs*, 1950), William Alwyn (*Smiley*, 1956)²⁶⁶, John Addison (*The Shiralee*, 1957), Ernest Gold (*On the

²⁶⁵ Virginia Goodman, 126.
Beach, 1959), Dimitri Tiomkin (The Sundowners, 1960) and Alan Bousted and Lawrence Leonard (They’re a Weird Mob, 1966) the key examples.

Australian composers slowly began to come to the fore again with a few pioneering efforts in the 1960s (Dorian le Gallienne’s short-lived collaboration with the young Tim Burstall; Sven Libaek’s successes in several genres; Sculthorpe’s aborted effort for Age of Consent (1969)), leading up to the resurgence of locally-based production in the 1970s and 1980s, when composers Peter Best, William Motzing, Bruce Smeaton and Bruce Rowland attained a level of local recognition. But no studio or production company arose to provide a continuous output that could constitute a powerhouse for a vibrant musical culture in Australian film – with the exception of one small outfit: the government owned and operated Commonwealth Film Unit.

Although going by various names over time, the original organization that became the Commonwealth Film Unit (and, from 1973, Film Australia) was established in 1940 to boost production of wartime training and propaganda films. After the War, the Unit was re-structured along the lines of British and Canadian models and a Canadian, Stanley Hawes, was appointed director in 1946. The Unit took on great significance for composers. Musicologist Graeme Skinner notes that during the 1950s and 1960s, opportunities for Australian composers to earn money were limited to broadcast and performing rights income, or the odd competition prize: ‘the only up-front commissions were the quite lucrative fees paid for documentary film soundtracks by the government Commonwealth Film Unit.’\(^\text{267}\) These documentaries, as short didactic or promotional films bringing attention to certain issues, places, policies and industries, were particularly well suited to a light music setting.

Composer Moneta Eagles (1924-2002) had provided the score for North to the Sun (1951) and another, ‘mainly pastoral in character,’\(^\text{268}\) for Down in the Forest (1953), an Axel Poignant wildlife film that was a prize-winner at the 1954 Venice International Film Festival. In the brief period between these two scores, Eagles (like Don Banks)


studied with Mátyás Seiber in London, and began writing production library music there. Eagles’s predilection for music in a ceremonial mode is heard in tracks that can be auditioned today at the websites of KPM and JW Media Music (consolidating production libraries of the Joseph Weinberger company). James McCarthy, Eagles’s successor at the Commonwealth Film Unit, observes two principal strands in her ‘full orchestral pictorial music, which could be quite dramatic, strong and dark or, on the other hand … lush, sunny scores.’

Eagles became music director of the Commonwealth Film Unit in 1957, and under her leadership, Skinner suggests ‘George English, Dulcie Holland, Clive Douglas and Robert Hughes … [were] among the unit’s most regularly contracted composers.’ Skinner posits 1962 as the time when ‘some young film-makers were tiring of the old-fashioned studio sound and, casting the net more widely, the CFU commissioned its first jazz score from Bryce Rohde.’ A sense of this tension was actually depicted in one of the Unit’s own productions, *From the Tropics to the Snow* (1964), where the soundtrack good-naturedly pits music by jazz composer Judy Bailey against that of classically-oriented Eric Gross in a tale about the conflicting styles and aspirations of documentary film presentation.

The Unit was highly productive in the 1950s and 1960s, engaging a wide range of composers extending well beyond the group Graeme Skinner identifies. Representative of the musical variety of the Unit’s output is an ambitious series of eleven twenty-minute films, the *Life in Australia* series, each depicting the way of life in a particular Australian city circa 1966. A brief survey of these films provides an overview of stylistic diversity and personality in Australia’s light music production of this period.

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The Commonwealth Film Unit’s long-time director Stanley Hawes took his motivation from the social mission of the documentary film movement, and he preferred straight-talking ‘classical documentary rather than … drama or more evocative or poetic forms of documentary.’ This began to change around 1964 as ‘a certain kind of filmic modernism’ began to emerge among the Unit’s creative personnel. An influx of younger talents meant that ‘the musical palette broadened to incorporate all forms of music, and … changes in technology meant that documentary films … could … employ the natural sound that accompanied the film.’ By 1966, a different style had established itself:

There was an increased tendency to eliminate that voice-over and replace it with varying combinations of on-screen voice and sounds, music and titles. With the removal of any explicit pontification, the films are modest and observational in tone … The importance of the soundtrack in these films is tacit rather than explicit.

This new style is presented in the Life in Australia film of Adelaide (1966), where director James Jeffrey creates a ‘silent’ narrative through images, ambient sound and music without spoken narration. Laurie Lewis (composer of a number of ABC television themes including this Day Tonight) provides a soft jazz underscore of bright-and-breezy melodies lightly orchestrated for flutes, clarinet, trumpet, brushes on drums, and electric guitar. The main melodic material of George Dreyfus’s music for Melbourne (1966, director Douglas White) is a study for his own Stravinskyan Serenade for small orchestra (1967), and is set with occasional dissonant counterpoints and colouristic, sometimes comic orchestrations woven into the musical fabric. Joe Scully adopts a narrated story to impart information about Sydney (1966), and the music by Robert Young (Bob ‘Beatles’ Young) draws upon the melodic freedom and invention of his ensemble of jazz players.

For director Christopher McCullough’s narrated account of Mount Gambier (1964), the young avant-gardist Nigel Butterley (b. 1935) supplies a remarkable version of light music. Butterley’s score drifts freely between atonal and tonal melodies played by a chamber ensemble of two flutes (one doubles on recorder), clarinet, cello and double

275 Ibid., 92.
276 James McCarthy, ‘John Antill and his Film Music,’ The Australasian Sound Archive 35 (Winter 2010), 55.
277 Albert Moran, Projecting Australia, 93.
bass (played pizzicato), vibraphone and bongos. The result is a kind of subtle ‘not-quite’
jazz, reminiscent of the music of French jazz composer André Hodeir, played by a mixed
ensemble of classical and studio/jazz musicians. The basically atonal material is
ameliorated by the soft instrumentation and rhythmic lilt, prompting an intriguing
displacement in the listener’s ear.

Martin Long (later known as a concert reviewer and crime novelist) created a similarly
modern accompaniment for Brisbane (1964, director Robert Parker), in a loosely
dissonant score drifting between textures of Webern and Hindemith. The scores by
Butterley and Long suggest an effort to achieve a modern stylistic expression that pushes
the light music ‘envelope’. They reflect a desire to explore a more adventurous
soundworld consistent with the composers’ personal aesthetic interests, rather than an
attempt to assign a connotation of modernity in the musical atmosphere of the respective
cities. Nevertheless, both scores have the effect of contributing a ‘certain kind of musical
modernism’ to match the ‘filmic’ one, without risking audience alienation.

Moneta Eagles’ score for Cairns (1964, no director credited) employs a chamber
ensemble dominated by flute, oboe, clarinet, harp and guitar, spinning long melodic lines
with simple contrapuntal and harmonic development. Scores by Eric Gross for Hobart
(1966, director Donald Anderson) and Kurt Herweg for Wagga Wagga (1966, director
Rhonda Small) gain liveliness from their melodic diversity and resourceful use of a wide
instrumental palette. Other films in the series use the same composers contributing fresh
material: Laurie Lewis also provided music for the film Perth (1966, director Henry
Lewes), George Dreyfus for Geelong (1966, director Antonio Colacino), and Moneta
Eagles gave a Gershwinesque orchestral score to Launceston, (1966, directors Peter
Young and John Edwards).

The Commonwealth Film Unit was no Hollywood studio. James McCarthy expresses the
frustration that ‘any attempt by the composer to write fitted music was usually defeated
by the fact that the commentary was recorded last, covering everything and often burying
the music.’ McCarthy cites John Antill’s score for This Land Australia (1959), where
‘[t]he composer made a valiant effort to fit the music to the image … [but was] hampered
by rough orchestral playing … Accident-prone cor anglais and undernourished strings
were not uncommon.'\textsuperscript{278} Despite reservations of budget and technical resource, however, the Unit was important, because it ‘gave many composers an opportunity to write music and hear it being played, something that was not common at the time.’\textsuperscript{279}

\section*{5.4 The Flight from Light}

The first impression of the foregoing survey is a reinforcement of Stephen Alomes’ characterisation of Australia’s musical culture as ‘improvisatory,’ with attendant features of the sporadic and at best serendipitous nature of the composer’s profession at this time. An account such as this can provide only an impression of the range of light music production, but it is clear that in a time before the development of large cultural institutions and government funding, composers made their way according to the opportunities they found. They threaded their way through the generators of light music to put together a livelihood, gain experience or supplement their main source of work or aspiration, whether in the classical domain, or increasingly during this period in jazz.

John Sangster was one of many jazzmen who set about building upon his skills as an improviser and arranger to encompass composing as well, and found himself ‘undergoing a crash course in this magic thing called Writing Music.’\textsuperscript{280} Firstly he credits his experience in the studio as the place where he learned how to write for instruments. ‘Watching first hand how they played each passage, finding out what they like you to write for their instruments, what’s difficult for them, how they get around all the bear-traps. What sounds nice and what doesn’t.’\textsuperscript{281} To this, Sangster added some informal, self-directed studies in composition: listening with close attention to Duke Ellington, examining scores of ‘my favourite Ravels and Stravinskys and Hindemiths and things,’ and buying ‘a couple of books; the Russ Garcia one, and Henry Mancini’s \textit{Sounds and Scores}. Jim Somerville loaned me Cecil Forsyth’s \textit{Orchestration}.’\textsuperscript{282}

Sangster was, like many of his jazz colleagues, moving into a field that was gradually being vacated by composers of ‘classical’ background. The movement away from light
music reflected a fundamental change in the ‘classical’ composer’s sense of identity and self-worth.

During the postwar period, Australia saw the growth of an institutional framework for the support of professional artistic and musical endeavour. Ruth Rentschler describes a progress from a ‘Reconstruction Era’ in the years 1954-74 and a ‘Foundation Era’ following it until 1987, ‘focussed on excellence, traditional monoculture and the preferences and values of the dominant upper and middle classes.’

The ABC, the main source of musical opportunity for composers preceding the Second World War, evolved to match the growth of ‘official’ cultural support. During the 1950s and 1960s, a basket of cultural institutions were either introduced or built up with the aid of funding from Governments, Federal and State. The growth of University Music Departments saw the birth of a new creature, the University Composer. All these developments offered composers the stability, credibility and prestige they had long yearned for. In short, there was a transition from the ‘improvisatory musical culture’ to one offering more regulated opportunities for composers to form a professional career. The improvisatory culture did not immediately disappear, however. Those who did not enjoy the favour of the new institutions could still resort to light music practice to keep them going, even as those opportunities were diminishing, or were taking ever more popular (less ‘classical’) paths.

The new formations in Australian cultural life in the postwar period enabled the growing separation of the classical domain from light music. At the beginning of the 1960s, a classical composer could look upon light music as a source of gainful employment, but by the latter part of the 1970s, composers identified themselves very differently. For

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most individuals seeking a career as a composer, light music was by this time entirely irrelevant.

Peter Sculthorpe (1929-2014) exemplifies this transition, as Graeme Skinner’s biography of the composer reveals. Sculthorpe began his career at a time when light music was an acceptable, normal part of even an aspiring serious musician’s life. Alongside his developing awareness of contemporary developments in serious music, Sculthorpe as a young man produced his fair share of light music. Even as he pitched himself as a ‘modernist’ composer with his Sonatina (1956), and was gathering material for a hopefully career-launching symphony, Sculthorpe was dabbling in the world of musical theatre. Firstly for the Canberra Repertory Society, then with Sydney’s Phillip Street Theatre, Sculthorpe indulged in a milieu of ‘[c]orny tunes, sambas, blues, jungle stomps, etc. etc.’ producing music for plays and numbers for revues, climaxing with the playful ‘Manic Espresso’, one of six songs he contributed to Phillip Street Theatre’s Cross Section (1957).

Upon his return from two years on the periphery of London’s modern musical scene, Sculthorpe began his ascent as a serious compositional voice. But for a while Sculthorpe’s two musical identities sat side by side, the lighter one finding its main expression in music for documentary productions of the Commonwealth Film Unit, and in a pioneering film of Nan Chauney’s children’s story, They Found a Cave (1961). A chance meeting with harmonica player Larry Adler led to his involvement in playing on the soundtrack of the latter film, and gave Sculthorpe a connection to the publishers Chappell & Co, who showed an interest in the possibilities of a Kings Cross Overture (using some of the ‘Manic Espresso’ material); the waltz theme from They Found a Cave, if it could be adapted into a more commercial form; and a song for children, The Little Fisherman.

Sculthorpe was rescued from light music servitude by the Sydney influencers, Curt and Marea Prerauer. The German émigré and his Australian wife were significant promoters of an Australian avant-garde, taking much credit for helping Sculthorpe and Richard

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288 Quoted in Graeme Skinner, *Peter Sculthorpe*, 178.
Meale to their leading positions in Australian composition of the 1960s and 1970s. Announcing Sculthorpe’s arrival as a serious composer, the Prerauers observed that although ‘he makes his living by light music,’290 Sculthorpe possessed the seriousness and originality to achieve some kind of greatness in Australian music. Sculthorpe himself was content to admit that ‘I have no angry young man complaints, because I am able to live here, if obscurely, as a completely self-supporting composer (mostly of light music).’291

Factors combined, however, to send Sculthorpe along a path in which seriousness became his focus, pursuing the goal that Curt and Marea Prerauer envisaged for him. With his appointment to a full-time lectureship at the University of Sydney in 1963, Sculthorpe was able to dispense with the obligation to make his living by writing light music, and the persona of the serious composer took on greater appeal. The maturing Sculthorpe lost interest in the possibility of an association with the publisher Chappell, since ‘their main business was light music,’292 and they didn’t have sufficient ‘reputation for publishing serious music.’293

Lending further support to Sculthorpe’s re-making was Roger Covell, who exerted influence as a music critic at the *Sydney Morning Herald* before publishing the most influential account of the nation’s musical history in *Australia’s Music: Themes of a New Society* (1967).294 Covell wanted to shake up the comfortable, inward-looking brotherhood of Australian composers working away in isolation from current international developments. A salutary lesson was dealt out to composer Moneta Eagles, when Covell declared that a 1963 recital of her work showed ‘no evidence of even a basically interesting personality.’ As Skinner points out, Covell was reacting to comments that there were ‘hundreds of worthy composers in Australia,’ and believed it was time to identify a few composers of singular stature who could really put Australia on the world compositional map. ‘It ought to be clear by now,’ he wrote, ‘that the encouragement of Australian composers en masse is purposeless and self-defeating.

290 Quoted in Graeme Skinner, *Peter Sculthorpe*, 279.
293 Ibid., 397.
What is needed is the encouragement of those few composers who have something original to offer.²⁹⁵

Sculthorpe became one of those happy few, while Moneta Eagles was consigned to oblivion. From around 1972, Eagles entered a ‘fifteen-year withdrawal from public life’²⁹⁶ until she found new inspiration in writing sacred and liturgical music. In targetting Eagles, Covell had launched a broadside against the culture of light music, which provided employment and income to a broad base of composers, in favour of an exalted vision of musical improvement with its ideological roots in Schoenberg and Adorno.

Sculthorpe’s ascent as a leading Antipodean ‘modernist’ was rapid. But traits of the light music composer did not altogether disappear. In terms of his personal style, certain compositional behaviours in Sculthorpe may be viewed as continuations of his light music persona. If Carl Dahlhaus were to consider Sculthorpe’s music he might, arguably, find some of the identifying characteristics of *Trivialmusik* there, such as a preference for the short characteristic movement or work, and even the form of the suite, rather than of integrated ‘symphonic’ design. Roger Smalley identified Sculthorpe as the leading exemplar of the ‘simple, sectional forms’ he found characteristic of Australian music rather than the ‘thoroughgoing, elaborate, symphonic kind of development’ held up as the ideal of European serious music.²⁹⁷ The light music persona emerges distinctly in pieces such as *Small Town* (1976), the ‘compromise’²⁹⁸ score for *Age of Consent* (1969), and the nostalgic *My Country Childhood* (1999). Above all, Sculthorpe was a pragmatic composer, singular in his productivity, maintaining a level of output for a diverse range of performers that a light music composer would certainly be proud of.

Sculthorpe’s transition from a composer making his living from light music to serious international compositional figure is emblematic of fundamental changes occurring in ‘classical’ music culture in the post-war period. It demonstrates the rapidly diminishing

²⁹⁸ Peter Sculthorpe, quoted in Graeme Skinner, *Peter Sculthorpe*, 506.
role and prestige of light music within the economy and culture of ‘contemporary classical music’. But the traces of a light music practice in Sculthorpe’s mainstream career to some extent account for the canny balance he achieved between serious respectability, extending internationally, and broad audience appeal: a balance no other Australian composer of the period was able to match.

Figures who sought to straddle the domains of light and serious, like George Dreyfus, achieved at best a peripheral status in the domain of serious music, and did not fit the light music mould all that well either. Dreyfus mocked the rising tide of musical seriousness with his Jingles (1968), ‘growing out of the composer’s involvement with the commercial world in producing radio jingles,’ and resulting in ‘a delightful pastiche of styles ranging from Mahler, Stravinsky and Shostakovich, to Rock and Roll, popular Ballads and Tijuana Brass.’ But, according to John Sangster, Dreyfus failed to convince hardened studio musicians of his credibility with popular style. Sangster recalls an encounter between Dreyfus, conducting his own score, and guitarist George Golla, who repeatedly asks for advice about how to play a vague score indication, provoking Dreyfus to increasing irritation as he fumbles to articulate his musical requirements. In Sangster’s story, Dreyfus shouts to Golla, ‘Just play me anything!’ – but:

No sooner has the guitar improvisation commenced than our Conductor stops us and goes charging over to George (Golla), really shouting this time. ‘No! No! That’s not what I want!’ Our hero, by now thoroughly bamboozled and more than a bit testy: ‘But you said “anything”: ‘Anything but that!’ yells George (Dreyfus).

The composer who could arbitrate between the divergent musical worlds of the late twentieth century and encourage a continuing dialogue between them, was becoming a rarity.

299 James Murdoch, in George Dreyfus, Jingles, West Australian Symphony Orchestra, conductor Sir Bernard Heinze, Festival Records L42014, n.d. (c.1971), 33 1/3 rpm liner notes.
300 John Sangster, 123.
Chapter 6: The Career of Sven Libaek (b. 1938)

The preceding chapters construct a general image of the nature of Australia’s ‘improvisatory’ culture. Sven Libaek (b. 1938) holds special interest in the story of Australian light music because he successfully navigated a career by improvising opportunities and exploiting the available ones in Australia’s musical culture.

Positioning Libaek within the framework of conventional musical categories is a tricky prospect. As an influential record producer in the early 1960s, he is celebrated for representing folk, surf and early rock acts that have become emblematic of sixties Australia. As a composer, he ‘falls between stools’: while elements of jazz, classical and popular genres can be identified in his compositions, one or other coming to the fore here and there, his music does not belong completely within any one of these, but encompasses everything in-between. In his pragmatic approach and his preference for straddling genres, Libaek can be placed prominently among Australian composers of light music.

Although his fame in Australia reached its pinnacle in the 1970s, Libaek has achieved revered status internationally among current generations of ‘Lounge’ music devotees. In the Australian wave of Easy Listening radio (described in Chapter 4), Libaek was a prominent figure – alongside Tommy Tycho and Eric Jupp. ‘2CH radio station in Sydney,’ Libaek recalls, ‘had four tapes’:

They had “Female Vocal”, “Male Vocal”, “Other instrumentals” and “Libaek Instrumentals.” Every fourth track they played on that station for years was one of mine! When I used my credit card at [Sydney department store] Grace Brothers or something, they’d look at the card and ask – “The Libaek?” My name was recognized. This music became elevator music and is looked down upon…

The revival of interest in Libaek’s music began in the underworld of DJs and ‘vinyl junkies’ who do not look down upon the creations of ‘elevator music.’ Re-mastered and re-mixed versions of several Libaek instrumental tracks began, in the 2000s, to acquire fashionable standing among an international coterie of fans of the zone of jazz-inflected

301 Unless otherwise indicated, all information and attributions in this chapter are taken from three interviews with Sven Libaek conducted by the author at Libaek’s home in Sydney on 26 November 2006 (Interview 1), 20 February 2007 (Interview 2) and 20 November 2007 (Interview 3).
instrumental music dating from the 1950s to the 1970s that is loosely defined as ‘Lounge’ music. The most greatly desired tracks were those from Libaek’s two hard-to-find albums of original production library music, My Thing (1970) and Solar Flares (1974). These tracks emerged from the bottom of the world’s dusty pile of abandoned LPs when two tracks appeared on a compilation CD of 1970s production library album extracts called Barry 7’s Connectors in 2001.\textsuperscript{302} The track Misty Canyon, from the My Thing album, was remixed by The Karminsky Experience (as Departures) and released on Thievery Corporation’s compilation CD Den of Thieves in 2003.\textsuperscript{303} The release in the following year of Wes Anderson’s cult movie The Life Aquatic with Steve Zissou (2004) moved the Libaek revival up a notch by including several re-mastered tracks from Libaek’s 1973 soundtrack to Ron and Valerie Taylor’s shark documentary television series, Inner Space. The revival has continued with reissues of Solar Flares and Libaek’s film soundtracks,\textsuperscript{304} feeding an international following of listeners who endow Libaek with iconic status.

Libaek has operated as a freelance composer for fifty years, almost entirely without the benefit of government grants, University appointments or opportunities from the ABC, historically the main sources that kept Australian composers afloat during the second half of the 20th century. Without following the usual path of a composer’s career, he has built his career by responding to chance opportunities, accumulating knowledge piecemeal from each new project, and generating activity himself.

6.1 Beginnings

As a child in Norway, Libaek took piano lessons from an early age and acted in the children’s theatre of which his father was Chairman. At the age of seven, he wrote a lullaby that his father, an impresario, self-published. Brought up on a diet of classical music, Libaek discovered Swing (‘the Benny Goodmans and all of those guys of that period’) in his teenage years, and picked up the style sufficiently to play at school dances. Norway’s culture was conservative, Libaek recalls, with popular music restricted

\textsuperscript{302} Compilation, Barry 7’s Connectors, Lo Recordings, LCD 25, 2001, compact disc.
\textsuperscript{303} Compilation, Den of Thieves, Eighteenth Street Lounge Music, ESL 063, 2003, compact disc.
to a minor place in the offerings of the State monopoly Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation (NRK), and rigid distinctions separated ‘high’ classical music from ‘low’ jazz and popular music. Libaek, however, did not separate musical realms: he was never musically single-minded, but followed an eclectic interest in folk, swing, jazz and popular music concurrently with his ‘classical’ studies.

The opportunity of an acting career first took Libaek away from Norway. *Windjammer: the Voyage of the Christian Radich* (1958), a spectacular production exploiting the widescreen ‘Cinemiracle’ format, would follow the voyage of a Norwegian sailing ship around the Atlantic. Producer Louis de Rochemont sought five Norwegian actors to play the roles of real-life sailors, and one of the parts fell to Libaek. Barely eighteen, Libaek set off on a journey in a sailing ship that was to bring him eventually to New York. During the trip, de Rochemont learned of Libaek’s abilities as a pianist, and determined to include a shipboard performance of the Grieg Piano Concerto featuring Libaek and the Boston Pops Orchestra conducted by Arthur Fiedler. De Rochemont’s grandiose scheme gave Libaek his first musical and theatrical credit (by his full name, Sven-Erik Libaek).

Libaek and his fellow sailor-actors returned to New York to help promote the film and Libaek, noting the great popularity of the Kingston Trio and other folk acts of the day, formed a trio with two of the other sailors as a promotional gimmick. The idea took off: the folk-singing trio, The Windjammers, toured the United States, but the three ambitious friends were also looking forward to the next steps in their careers. For Libaek, optimistic with the success of his film appearance with the Grieg Concerto, Juilliard beckoned, the most prestigious music school in the United States.

Though he completed only two years of study there, Libaek gained from Juilliard, the elements of a musical training and skill that was crucial to his career:

We had all sorts of interesting courses there: ‘Literature & Materials’, which means we analysed symphonies and concertos and all that … ‘Ear-Training’ which was listening and being able to hear third trumpet in the orchestra and that sort of thing … [There were also] certain exercises that everyone was supposed to do, which taught you, or got you accustomed to separating your four limbs, so that they weren’t doing the same thing. I can do this [moves each arm in reverse rotations] and go the other way. That’s a skill conductors need to have, but that came natural to me. One of the other things they made you do … You set a very slow beat with your left foot, you double it with your right, you triple it with your left hand, and quadruple it with your right hand. That’s another exercise in complete separation of the limbs. I guess it was a good thing for anything you play, because hands and feet tend to move in different directions.
The skills Libaek acquired at Juilliard provided broad equipment that had direct practical benefits. Juilliard was also musically open-minded, encouraging an interest in jazz as well as ‘classical’ music. It was a heady environment for a young musician in the late 1950s, and fed Libaek’s broad musical interests: ‘I used to go to jazz joints every night… we never seemed to sleep. We had to practice eight hours a day on the instrument – that was required – [and] go to concerts.’

Libaek was also able to experience some of the great American musicals, ‘the original production of My Fair Lady [1956-1962], Camelot with Robert Goulet [1960-1963], West Side Story with the original cast [1957-1960] and all that.’ With The Windjammers, he co-wrote a musical on a storyline that Libaek remembers as strongly resembling the subsequent hit musical How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying (1967). Libaek wrote the music for several scenes of the musical for voice and piano, including an overture that was played by the Norwegian Radio Orchestra (Kringkastingsorkestret) in an arrangement that Libaek commissioned from a Norwegian arranger: ‘it was very nice, he did a great job, but I thought about it afterwards. It really annoyed me that I didn’t do it myself. So I thought, now I’ve got to do this myself.’ Thereafter, ‘doing it himself’ became a fundamental principle of Libaek’s career.

In New York in 1960, Libaek composed his ‘op. 1’, Seks Lyriske Bagateller (Six Lyrical Bagatelles), a set of short piano pieces in a style reminiscent of Bartók’s Mikrokosmos, and published in Oslo in 1965. Although at this moment Libaek came close to being identified as a ‘serious’ composer, it was not for long, for The Windjammers continued a regular touring schedule, taking them around the United States and other parts of the world, and - fatefulty for Libaek - to Australia.

The trio was invited to Australia by Rupert Henderson, Managing Director of the Fairfax media conglomerate and its television arm (Channel Seven), for a six-week stint as resident variety act for the Channel, but the tour extended to nine months. As well as appearing on Channel Seven’s live entertainment programs (‘shows like Curtain Call

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305 Sven-Erik Libaek, Seks Lyriske Bagateller (‘Six Lyrical Bagatelles’), Opus 1 for piano solo (Oslo: Musikk-Huset A/S, 1965)
with Digby Wolff, *Revue ’61, Revue ’62.*,\(^{306}\), the group performed weekends at the King’s Cross restaurant, Romano’s. One member returned to the US to study, and was replaced by Australian Tim Gaunt, but after returning to Norway for a short movie project, the group finally dispersed.

### 6.2 Australia

Libaek and his wife, Lolita Rivera (the couple had met at New York’s International House while Libaek was at Juilliard) chose to return to Australia. There was no promise or professional opportunity apparent – ‘We just liked it,’ Libaek confesses:

> Well, I liked it in particular. Lolita was a little bit dubious because, coming straight out of New York to Australia in 1960, it was quite a shock. But it was a great male country then. I grew up in a very conventional [environment] – Norway was very conventional: you couldn’t go to town without getting dressed up properly. And I was just dying for this casual [way of life], thongs and so on – seeing people in the shops bare-feet! A Norwegian would normally shudder, but for me it was the opposite, this was paradise. I didn’t have to worry about being jumped on – ‘you can’t do this, you can’t do that’… Here I could – live!

Initially Libaek made his living by taking odd jobs, but while ‘doing the rounds’ of the recording companies in search of work, Libaek heard that Coronet Records, the Australian subsidiary of CBS, had a position for an Artists and Repertoire (‘A&R’) Manager. ‘I went to see Bill Smith, who was then the Managing Director of Coronet Records, about the job. And I got it. I got it, and I didn’t know what A&R stood for! I didn’t know what was involved. I just knew it had to do with music and producing records.’ The company provided Libaek with support in a very practical way: they sent him to New York to sit in on sessions with producers there, to ‘see what was involved in producing, editing and all this type of thing. I sat in on a lot of great sessions – Tony Bennett in his heyday, Miles Davis and Gil Evans’ Big Band – it was a hell of an experience. Then I came back and went to work.’

Over the next four years, Libaek brought a wide array of artists to Coronet/ CBS, names that are now mostly remembered for their niche value rather than their star status (Gary Shearston, Tina Lawton, Sean & Sonja, The Wesley Three, Johnny Rebb), with one exception: the surf band The Atlantics. Libaek’s role in The Atlantics’ story is gratefully

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documented by the band’s fans but Libaek recalls that it was fortuitous for him as well, ‘because they [CBS] wanted to get pop hits, and I didn’t get any. We did well in album sales [with the other artists on the roster]: I just didn’t have a ‘single’ hit until [The Atlantics’] Bombora.’

The experience as A&R Manager reinforced Libaek’s eclectic musical interests, and introduced him to the world of arranging, engineering and producing recorded sound. The job also allowed Libaek to develop some credits as a composer. ‘I wrote a lot of songs when I was at Coronet Records,’ Libaek remembers:

I did songs for some of the artists… I obviously had a knack for writing melody and that’s never changed. Then slowly, as we got budget – you can have four violins and a cello sort of thing – then I started making arrangements and realized all the amazing things you can do with a string section.

Libaek admits to being ‘green’ as a composer and arranger at this time, but he managed to pick up small jobs composing for ‘industrial’ films, among them a commission for a film about artist Stanislaw Ostoja-Kotkowski’s mural for the BP headquarters in Melbourne (Man and a Mural, 1965). The Music Editor for the film liked Libaek’s work, and recommended him for a new documentary series being produced for television: Vincent Serventy’s Nature Walkabout (1967), launching Libaek’s career as a composer for film and television. Libaek’s growing extra-curricular work led to his break from CBS and embarkation on the career of full-time composer and arranger.

To announce this new career path, Libaek recorded an album of his own compositions, released by Festival Records in 1967, The Music of Sven Libaek. The album presents a survey of Libaek’s early compositional projects, recorded afresh by an ensemble led by Libaek from the piano, with Don Burrows (flute and saxophones), Errol Buddle (tenor saxophone), Eric ‘Boff’ Thompson (trumpet), Richard Brooks (harmonica), George Golla (guitar), John Sangster (vibraphone, glockenspiel, bongos), Ed Gaston (bass) and Derek Fairbrass (drums). With the exception of the trumpet player, this line-up of musicians, active in Sydney both as studio and as jazz players – formed the nucleus for nearly all of Libaek’s projects for the next ten years.

308 Sven Libaek, The Music of Sven Libaek, composed and conducted by Sven Libaek, Festival SFL 932603, c. 1967, 33⅓ rpm.
The Music of Sven Libaek assembles a selection of excerpts from Libaek’s ‘industrials’ (corporate promotional films), documentaries and television work: Man and a Mural (Cinesound Prod. for BP Australia, 1965), Done Away With, (ABC television play, 1966), Destination Australia (Werner Wolleck, 1966), Raceweek (‘a documentary about the annual Gold Coast car races,’ JAY Films, 1966), Safe in the Snow (Cinesound for BP Australia, 1967), and The Isa (Cinesound for Queensland Tourist Bureau, 1967).309

The album cover (Figure 2, below) shows the composer at his piano with pencil poised over a page of orchestral score. A model of a Viking ship and the heavy knit of the jumper (sweater) he wears, signals Libaek’s Norwegian identity. These elements – ‘exotic’ Northern European identity, the image of a ‘composer at work’310 – combine to project a serious image for Libaek unequivocally associating him with the role of composer (rather than producer).

Nature Walkabout was followed by the feature-length surf travelogue, Ride a White Horse (Director Bob Evans, 1968), feature movies The Set (Director Frank Brittain, 1970) and Nickel Queen (Director John McCallum, 1971) and the television detective series Boney (Producer John McCallum, 1972-73). Each of these productions was accompanied by a soundtrack album.

Libaek’s approach to film scoring focusses on establishing mood, without obtruding onto the viewer’s consciousness too obviously. ‘You actually help the image to create the mood that they [the director] want, if he didn’t achieve it totally by the acting,’ but ‘the worst thing that can happen is that the music takes away from the visuals … [the viewer] should notice if you take it out, but shouldn’t if it’s in.’ In creating mood, Libaek begins by ‘com[ing] up with half a dozen key words that describes it to me, and that helps me to select the instruments, the type of sound that I want.’ While movies allow only restricted spaces for melodies to take centre stage, ‘[i]n documentary films, nature things or whatever, you can afford to use a lot more melody, because it’s not fighting with

309 Peter Pinne, unnum. (see individual production entries).
anything. It’s not fighting dialogue, it’s with narration which is pretty boring after all.’ The observation helps to explain why the practitioners of light music have found such a good ‘home’ in documentary productions.

In 1972, Libaek produced an under-score to accompany an album in which popular Australian television actor Gerard Kennedy read poems of a popular style. On *Seasons of Love*, Kennedy aims for an intimate vocal rendition similar to American poet-musician

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Rod McKuen, and Libaek’s music adopts as its model the accompanimental style Anita Kerr provided for McKuen’s albums: a string orchestra laying an harmonic foundation for simple melodic colouring. Kennedy and Libaek pre-date the similar effort by Australian radio identity John Laws, who recited his own poems to a backing by none other than Henry Mancini some five years later.\footnote{John Laws, \textit{Just You and Me Together Love}, Music by Henry Mancini, RCA AFLI-2362, 1977, 33\frac{1}{3} rpm.}

The collaborations of McKuen and Kerr were a staple of the Easy Listening ‘revolution’ that created great new demand for popular-orchestral music, and Libaek became local supplier of choice to the Sydney Easy Listening outlet, 2CH. In 1971, Libaek also launched his ambitious enterprise, the Alpine Orchestra (initially known as Alpine Sound 71), ‘a huge concert orchestra playing the more sophisticated pops of our time.’\footnote{Sven Libaek, \textit{Sven Libaek Concert Orchestra: Sven Libaek conducts his 38 Piece Orchestra}, produced by Martin Erdman, Festival L 35419, 1975, 33\frac{1}{3} rpm liner notes.} The orchestra gave its performances as free summer concerts, sponsored by the Philip Morris Company to promote Alpine cigarettes, ‘in parks or beaches in Sydney, Newcastle, Melbourne and other places.’\footnote{Ibid.} The idea came to Libaek from hearing of a similar venture by Burt Bacharach in the United States, and for three years the orchestra could be encountered at popular summertime locations like Manly, Bondi Beach and Melbourne’s Myer Music Bowl. Sangster recalls the orchestra as being ‘truly gargantuan, had about eleventy of everything, and performed on elaborate tent-covered stages on the beaches around Sydney to advertise the cigarettes. We all got to wear white trousers and shirts with the letter A emblazoned across the front.’\footnote{John Sangster, 117.}

Libaek recorded a selection of material from these concerts with the orchestra, re-named for the LP as the Sven Libaek Concert Orchestra. The 38-piece orchestra melded studio/jazz musicians with orchestral sections to create a sound that is notably sumptuous relative to other efforts by Australian musicians or record labels, exploiting Festival Records’ new 24 track recording facilities. For Libaek, the project was ‘a great thrill … a very exciting period in my musical career.’\footnote{Sven Libaek, \textit{Sven Libaek Concert Orchestra: Sven Libaek conducts his 38 Piece Orchestra}, liner notes.}
Libaek’s productivity reached its apex in 1974, when in addition to his activities with 2CH and the Alpine Orchestra, he released the album of his rock musical *Grass* and a second album of library music, *Solar Flares*. He also presented a six-episode series of programs for ABC Television *All About Music*, and recorded a solo piano album of classical favourites ‘at the Sydney Opera House Steinway.’ The contrasting styles of these projects give a potent demonstration of Libaek’s diversity and productivity.

*Solar Flares* (1974) is an important album in Libaek’s contemporary revival. Together with his earlier production library album, *My Thing* (1970), it has attained celebrated status among the popular movement rediscovering production library music of the 1960s and 1970s. Both albums were released by the Peer International Library, a subsidiary of Southern Music Publishing: ‘I had a great relationship with Chris Vaughan-Smith who ran Southern Music back then,’ recalls Libaek: they ‘published everything that I wrote – compilation from *Nature Walkabout, Australian Suite*, they had all that.’

In producing the library albums, Libaek was given ‘tremendous freedom.’ The publishers wanted music that they could sell to advertising agencies, film companies, whatever: It was cheaper to buy a track off a library album than to have a fellow compose something original. I just came up with titles that I thought suited the piece. *Solar Flares* was all some sort of ‘outer space’ titles, [because it used] one of the first synthesizers that was actually built in Australia.

*My Thing* utilises a jazz combo supplemented with a brass ‘choir’. Libaek doesn’t play on any of the tracks. The music combines depictions of ‘Australiana’ flavour (*Kangaroootine, Winds of Falls Creek, Indian Pacific*) with cues of an up-tempo modern spirit (*Soul Thing, Groove, Go, Girl, Go*). *Solar Flares* explores a wider set of moods and seeks to update the sonic palate, specifically through the inclusion of a significant synthesizer part and rock-styled guitar. While the album was recorded with the whole ensemble (again a jazz combo supplemented with brass) ‘in one go,’ Libaek added the synthesizer part later. Although Libaek cannot identify the builder of the synthesizer, it seems likely that it was a Qasar Model II, predecessor of the Fairlight CMI, developed by Anthony Furse in the early seventies.

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319 A brief historical outline is provided at the *candor chasma* website, accessed 3 September 2014, http://egrefin.free.fr/eng/fairlight/qasarE.php.
associations of some kind (though the music is not necessarily ‘spacey’) as a reflection of
the synthesizer’s presence.

For a composer, production library work offered opportunities of some significance. ‘I
still get royalties from them,’ notes Libaek:

Not as much anymore, but there again, this thing that happened with Wes Anderson – you
never know. Just think of the guy who wrote ‘Nadia’s Theme’ for the Olympic thing. And
then they decided to make that the theme for The Young & the Restless, which is a show
that will never end. It’s on five times a week, everywhere in the world. The guy is making
a fortune. It’s just amazing. You never can tell where your stuff ends up, that’s the exciting
part of it.

The rock musical *Grass* (1974)\(^{320}\) shows an unexpected stylistic turn for Libaek,
embracing the sounds of soul, gospel and rock in a work that bears the influence of
the musical *Hair* (1968). But equally one might observe an influence from the literature
of the jazz side of ‘20\(^{th}\) Century Church Light Music,’ as represented for instance by
Michael Garrick’s *Mr Smith’s Apocalypse* (1971) or Herbert Chappell’s *The Daniel Jazz*
(1963). Arguably, *Grass* could be viewed as a Pop Cantata, and thus more closely related
to light music, rather than a rock musical.

The lyrics reflect a young man’s questioning of traditional religious and moral values in
the face of various dilemmas of modern existence. The words, by a Dutch-Australian
writer, Avatar (Adrian) Linden, exerted a strong attraction for Libaek. In relation to his
other work,

*Grass* was different because he [Linden] wrote these lyrics… They were very unusual
lyrics. They didn’t have the standard metre, had weird rhymes. And for some reason they
really inspired me … to do something completely different because they weren’t standard.
My wife [Lolita], who’s a linguist, she was always correcting Adrian’s English – ‘It’s
wrong!’ But it was the ‘wrong’ part of it… He wrote ‘weird’. And it was the ‘weirdness’
that inspired me to do something different.

The soul/ rock feel of *Grass* is aided substantially by the contribution of its singers,
headlined by Terry Kaff, Janice Slater and Mickey Leyton, among Sydney’s leading
session singers of the late 1960s and 1970s. Bobbi Marchini was discovered by Libaek
and Linden together: ‘Adrian and I happened to go to a nightclub and we heard her and
said ‘oh boy.’ She was great, because she had that ‘black’ sound that very few people [in
Australia] had back then. We had to have her.’

The accompanying instrumental body is built on the same foundation that Libaek regularly worked with: Burrows, Buddle, Sangster, Golla and Fairbrass. To this core are added session musicians including electric bassists Dave Ellis and Valda Hammick and guitarists Ned Sutherland and Mark Punch, and Hammond organ player Col Nolan, who contribute the more liberal licks and riffs of soul or funk style. Tracks featuring Terry Kaff employ Doug Gallagher on drums in place of Derek Fairbrass, and a brass ‘choir’ headed by Jack Iversen (trumpet) and Peter Haslam (trombone) contributes on five of the recorded tracks. Linden and Libaek came close to achieving a production: ‘It was going to go up on the West End [in London]. We had the money, everything, and something happened to the economy in Britain at that time and the guy who was behind it all of a sudden lost the money.’ As a result, Grass exists only in its 1974 recorded form.

While Libaek was bringing elements of rock and soul music into his work on the popular music side, he was keen to indulge ‘classical’ aspirations as well. This ‘classical’ side of his musical personality found outlet through his recording of Classical Piano Favourites (a standard program of Grieg, Debussy, Chopin, Paderewski, Sinding, De Falla and Beethoven), and from 1975 through his work as conductor of his local community orchestra, the Sutherland Shire Symphony Orchestra. Responding to an advertisement for the position of resident conductor, Libaek thought:

I was classically trained, and hadn’t done anything classical since I came here [to Australia] … I wasn’t known as a classical conductor, so that was against me, but in ’75 I was quite famous here! Everybody on the committee knew who I was and what I’d done. When they found out my background was classical, they thought, ‘We can get a conductor who’s got a name and still can do it,’ even though his name is in jazz and pop.

By 1977, however, Libaek was looking further afield. Professional opportunities in Australia were limited, so Libaek decided to move to the heart of the film industry, Hollywood. He describes the move as ‘a whim. I wanted to have a go in America before I got too old.’

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6.1 American Years and After

In the US, Libaek had to re-start his career. ‘The very first thing I did over there,’ he recalls, ‘was to write cover notes for a record company that was re-releasing old classical records. All of a sudden, from all of this film career that I had in Australia, I was “back at Juilliard.” I was actually writing cover notes to classical albums.’

Of the many possibilities one might imagine for Libaek’s musical and career development in Los Angeles, the most remarkable feature is the extent to which Libaek remained connected to his Australian career and contacts. Libaek became, in effect, an Australian composer ‘outposted’ in LA. ‘That wasn’t the idea,’ he confesses, ‘but it worked out that way.’ Although Libaek lived in Los Angeles for seventeen years, his work did not grow through new musical associations and connections with new contacts among American musicians, but remained largely embedded within Australia’s musical culture. Stylistically too, Libaek remained mostly unaffected by new developments, adhering to the trademark features of his established style rather than adapting to contemporary developments as, for instance, Quincy Jones may be taken to exemplify.

Initially, Libaek maintained his connection with 2CH by recording interviews with Los Angeles-based recording artists, and he developed a modest business making recordings in Australia of instrumental versions of popular songs, paid for by the publishers, that were then sold through US radio syndicates. Albums of Libaek’s cover versions of hits by Lionel Ritchie and Neil Diamond were released in Australia to serve the Easy Listening market there. According to Libaek’s recollection, these recordings came to the notice of one of the leading entrepreneurs of America’s Easy Listening industry, Jim Schlichting, although Schlichting suggests that their contact came from Albert Mather, Muzak’s Sydney manager.

Schlichting has had a long career in sourcing and supplying recordings for the ‘Beautiful Music’ market, and in the 1980s, he ‘secured a rather large contract for music production with the Muzak Division of TelePrompTer Corporation.’ In an effort to update its appeal, Muzak moved from its own library-style material to making covers of popular

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322 Sven Libaek, *The Orchestral Side of Lionel Richie, Volume 1*, Easy Listening 5AD CH001, n.d., 33⅓ rpm.
323 Jim Schlichting, email.
and standard tunes. Schlichting called upon some of the best-known names of British light music to supply the Muzak contract, and Libaek joined a roster that included prominent composer-arrangers Frank Chacksfield, Syd Dale, Alan Tew and Nick Ingman.324

As the demand for Easy Listening petered out during the 1980s, Libaek turned his attention towards film work, resulting in a second phase of film scores. Libaek, director Howard Rubie and scriptwriter Ted Roberts had worked together in their early careers on some ‘industrials,’ and were united again for Rubie’s first feature, The Settlement (1984), which Libaek regards as ‘one of Australia’s better films. It didn’t make a big splash, but it’s a great little film. The director wanted the score to be of the [fifties] era. Goodman-type sound and a bit of Big Band type stuff. It suited it fine. A big score wouldn’t have suited the story.’

An association with an Australian sound mixer and editor, Ron Purvis, helped Libaek generate further opportunities in film. As well as operating his United Sound recording studios in Pier St, Sydney, Purvis’s work encompassed a variety of sound-related roles in Australian and Hollywood productions ranging from Stone (1974) to The Russia House (1990). Purvis and Libaek worked together in production roles on Peter Weir’s film, The Year of Living Dangerously in 1982, where Libaek assisted the soundtrack composer, Maurice Jarre, producing his score on a Fairlight CMI.

Purvis had contacts with Hanna-Barbera, a prolific company producing animated films for television since 1957. In the later 1980s, Hanna-Barbera planned a series of ten full-length animated made-for-television movies based on the company’s well-known properties, including Yogi Bear, Scooby-Doo, the Jetsons, Huckleberry Hound and Top Cat. The series, referred to as the ‘Hanna-Barbera Superstars 10’,325 was aired in the US on a roughly monthly basis between September 1987 and September 1988. Hanna complained that commissioning fully recorded soundtracks through their regular suppliers had grown too costly, and Purvis proposed recording in Australia, where musician pay rates were lower and exchange rates were favourable. When Hanna

objected that this would be complicated in the back-and-forth between the US and Australia, Purvis proposed Libaek, in a go-between role, as the solution: ‘there’s an Australian composer living next door to you! And he can do the job and hear and test it right here. He can fly down and record it, bring it back to you and if something isn’t right, he can take it back next trip, change it, and so on.’

Thus Libaek came to compose and produce soundtracks for Hanna-Barbera for the next four years, supplying eight hours of music (‘There was three or four symphonies in there!’ Libaek quipped) for ten films. ‘It was an interesting process,’ he observes:

What I used to do was – it was still hand-written then – I would hand-write scores for maybe six to eight sessions. Then I’d photocopy them, make sure they didn’t get lost, send the whole bunch down to Ron Purvis. He would organize … to copy it because MAGA (the Music Arranger’s Guild of Australia) was very insistent back then that Australian musicians weren’t supposed to use American parts. So it had to be copied here, and when that was all done, he [Purvis] would book all the musicians, set up the studio. He did it all at Film Australia, and booked the musicians. He would tell me the dates, I would book the flights, come down, conduct it, put all the tapes in my suitcase, fly back and give it to Hanna-Barbera.

These are ‘composite scores’ such as Daniel Goldmark observes are typical of Hollywood cartoon scores, ‘consist[ing] of a mixture of mood music, idiosyncratic original cues, and pop songs.’

Goldmark characterizes the 1980s as a period of decline in the production standards of cartoons, in ‘[b]oth the animation, which relied on the photocopying of drawings and repetition of backgrounds ad infinitum, and the music, which drew on stock cue libraries and generic mood music.’

In Libaek’s Hanna-Barbera films, however, every scene is represented with bespoke musical detail rather than applying ‘pre-fabricated’ cues. The style and character of the music itself is typical of Libaek’s film and television scores: as well as evoking mood through melody and tonality, referential musical associations (ghoulish pipe organ, xylophone bone-rattling and teeth-chattering, etc.) provide appropriate backgrounds. The

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music’s presence is subdued by the low level of playback relative to dialogue, since the
primacy of dialogue was established from the start of the process, as Libaek explains:

What I got to work with was a comic book, a storyboard. It would have every scene drawn,
it would have the amount of seconds between the arm leaving the side and going up in the
air. All the movements would be timed. And the very first thing that they recorded was the
voices, so that we all knew where the dialogue fitted into the timeframe. We’d all follow
the voice, so I knew I wasn’t interfering with the dialogue.

Within these parameters, Libaek was able to approach the scoring task with a ‘lot of fun’
because he could ‘do something different’:

I listened to a lot of cartoon music and I thought no, you can combine the dramatic scale
with a bit of ‘art’. You don’t have to do all ‘sting-y’ things. You can actually write some
music and still fit that in. There was one called The Good, the Bad and the Huckleberry
Hound, and it was based on The Good, the Bad and the Ugly, right? It was a Western, and
I talked them into just having a Western score. You’ve got this cartoon with ‘serious’
Western music.

By bringing aspects of conventional film scoring to these ‘cartoon’ scores, Libaek stands
at a turning point in the scoring practice of cartoon films. Working with extremely
limited resources, he nevertheless approached his scoring task with the kind of musical
approach that was to be applied in the vastly more ambitious scale of the subsequent
series of movies based on the Scooby-Doo characters.

In 1994, Libaek left America to resume his life in southern Sydney. He returned to his
role as Resident Conductor of the Sutherland Shire Symphony Orchestra (which he
continues to the present), supplementing this with occasional teaching at the Australian
Film, Television and Radio School. He never resumed the level of his professional
productivity of the 1960s and 1970s, however, and now considers himself retired.

In keeping with his pattern of turning to ‘classical’ work during periods when
commercial work dries up, Libaek since his return to Australia has undertaken some
substantial compositional projects: a Concerto for harmonica and orchestra (1998) as
well as many instrumental pieces. A major undertaking was The First Shire, for choir,
orchestra and brass band commissioned by the Sutherland Shire Council for the
Australian Centenary of Federation in 2001, and presented in outdoor performances at
Cronulla Beach and Kurnell. Libaek’s only film commission since returning to Australia
has been to score a documentary on the restoration of the James Craig, a nineteenth
century sailing ship similar, as it turns out, to a windjammer,\textsuperscript{329} recalling the adventure that first took Libaek from Norway. For the film Libaek composed an elegant score redolent with the tuneful orientation and tasteful articulation of mood that have long marked his personal style.

\textsuperscript{329} Sydney Heritage Fleet, \textit{James Craig: the Story of a Restoration}, music by Sven Libaek (Sydney: Sydney Heritage Fleet R-109137-9, 2009), DVD.
From the very start of his independent career as a freelance composer, Libaek struck upon a personal style and mode of composing that would essentially serve him throughout his career. Models such as Bartók (as seen in the *Seks Lyriske Bagateller*, op. 1, composed in New York in 1960) are distant, replaced by a ‘simple commercial’ style that emerges directly out of Libaek’s engagement in recording production. The style and working methods Libaek developed in the mid-sixties provided the basis for his highly productive period of compositional output in Sydney from 1965 to 1977.

### 7.1 Relationships

Libaek’s experience as a record producer provided him with the musical means to develop his compositional identity. Contradicting the imagery of *The Music of Sven Libaek* album cover (Figure 2 above), Libaek as a composer doesn’t work in isolation in the lonely garret, but in close partnership with a group of performers, engineers, and other professionals to construct his musical output in recorded form. To bring these resources into effective partnership, Libaek guides the process throughout, drawing upon his abilities as a keyboard performer, conductor and producer, to complement his writing skills. Accordingly, the recording studio is the operating environment in which he developed and deploys his broad skills in order to make music. These are intimately familiar places to Libaek, along with the history of the many changes they have gone through: EMI’s Studio 301 originally in Castlereagh St, Sydney, United Sound Studios at Pier St, the ‘Crystal Palace’ at Film Australia’s Studios at Lindfield in suburban Sydney. The studio plays an integral role as the site where the music-making abilities acquired from Libaek’s training, education and professional experience have been put to use.

This environment is inhabited by musicians of specialized skills: the ‘studio musician’. Libaek places great emphasis on the exceptional capabilities of these players as ‘unique and skilled experts. When I started composing … several decades ago, we indeed had many musicians with this unique skill to draw on.’ Libaek has expounded on these

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qualities: as well as being comfortable with ‘playing music that they have never seen or heard before,’ and which they will have virtually no opportunity to rehearse, the studio musician must be adept at playing appropriately for any musical style: ‘This could be a large orchestra cue a la Elgar or Stravinsky, or it could be a jazz-flavoured piece or even a hard rock cue.’

Virtually all of Libaek’s compositional work in Sydney from 1965 to 1977 was scored for small orchestras compiled from the lists of the Musicians’ Union, headed by the combination of Don Burrows (flutes and reeds), John Sangster (vibraphone), Errol Buddle (Saxophones), Ed Gaston (Bass) and Derek Fairbrass (drums). These musicians were in great demand at the time for all kinds of performance and recording work, and were experienced studio workers in precisely the mould Libaek sought. With an established jazz ‘core’, often with Libaek himself at the piano, additional instruments would appear, in solos or groupings, as opportunity (‘budget’) allowed. Although some were established jazz exponents, Libaek’s selection was motivated by their capacities as studio practitioners who suited his requirement for musicians who could expound upon the music quickly, rather than for their capacities as ‘pure’ or ‘real’ jazz exponents.

The talents of these musicians had great significance for Libaek’s musical output, as he takes careful pains to acknowledge. He required musicians who could improvise:

> If you asked them to improvise on any famous standard, they would do their own thing. But you have to remember that that they’re not playing something they’d ever seen before. So not only are they recording original music, but you’re asking them to improvise on top of everything. So it was a pretty tough thing to ask.

The process of working with these musicians took its genesis from the melody line, as Libaek describes:

> With my themes that had that jazz feel, I would write out the melody line. I would write the bass line if I wanted a certain type of bass line, or – with the guys that I had in fact, if I wanted a bossa nova feel, that’s all I had to say. I didn’t have to write out a drum part, I didn’t have to write out the bass part, I’d just give them chord symbols. Then I would tell the players – be it Burrows or Golla or Sangster, to play freely. It was as simple as that. They didn’t actually ‘read’ the melody line like a symphony player would do, exactly as written. They would add little flourishes…

> After a couple of takes – my tunes are not that complicated and they’re fairly catchy – they would just catch on to it. As a composer, I owe a lot to these guys, because they more or less created my ‘sound.’ When you do a score where you have Don Burrows, Errol Buddle and Johnny Sangster and so on improvising on your music, it’ll never be repeated. If you

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332 Ibid.
wrote it out, it wouldn’t get the same feeling. The feel that you get from reading is
different from the feel you get from [playing by] heart.

The orchestral formations Libaek used in his recordings and film work were constituted
from a series of components to create smaller and larger formations. The most basic
instrumental unit was a jazz combo, built around his established ‘crew.’ Libaek also
called upon a looser, but still quite regular grouping of brass instruments, generally
constituted of jazz or Swing style players, as a brass choir. To these core groupings
Libaek would add a body of strings (and perhaps some supplementary winds) to form his
modern style of orchestra.

Although individuals among this string grouping, like the violinist John Lyle and cellist
Lal Kuring, could play in jazz style and were as adaptable as any jazz musician, in
general the strings identified themselves as ‘classical’ musicians, retaining some of the
stylistic fixation engendered by their ‘classical’ training. To achieve his ‘melding’ of the
jazz and classical elements, Libaek acts as a consensus-maker to reconcile the differences
between jazz and ‘classical’ elements. We can get a sense of how these two components
in Libaek’s orchestra were in a state of natural conflict with the aid of an anecdote
recounted by John Sangster, from the Alpine Orchestra days:

I can dimly remember a coach trip with this mob, coming back from Newcastle or some
such outlying hamlet, where the string players, who always sat up the front of the bus well
away from the riff-raff, had all finished their customary bus-and-train-and-aeroplane
conversations about resins and bows and brands of strings, and had nodded off to sleep.
The brass/ reeds/ percussion/ vocalists party was still raging up the back.

Somehow or other we had Rupert the Rooster, who’s a little bloke, with all his gear off,
and we’d finished pouring beer all over him and were wondering what to do with him next.
So we rolled him up in a tight little ball and bowled him down the centre aisle. So that he
arrived, bollocky, up front amongst the straights. Touring-footy-team stuff.

Heavens to Betsy, what a to-do! Shrieks of outrage. Great Christmas Humphreys! Hot
towels for No. 8! “We’re Artists, we are, how long do we have to put up with this? They’re
no better than animals, hoodlums, vandals, hooligans!” Guffaws from the low-lifers up the
back, a small resigned smile from our Revered leader. On yer Sven.

Normally we travelled on two separate buses. Bus No. 1 carried the string players, Bus No.
2 the brass and reeds and the rhythm players. Speeding through the night after a concert,
Bus No. 1 is in complete darkness. Resting after their Artistic Endeavours. Bus No. 2 is
wide awake and raging, clink-clink and card games, loud laughter and smoke pouring out
the windows.333

333 John Sangster, 117-118.
Sangster’s characterisations give a vivid image of the ‘no man’s land’ of the light music composer’s world. Unlikely to satisfy the separated domains of ‘classical’ music or jazz, Libaek had to persuade his musicians to enter into his own in-between musical world, requiring each side to let go, temporarily, of some part of their ‘artistic’ identity in order to fulfill the practical purposes of their light music assignments. Libaek does not treat his jazz musicians as players of ‘real jazz.’ Instead he uses their jazz style as a way to inject jazz characteristics into his score. These players did not consider their work with Libaek to be ‘real’ jazz, but as ‘studio’ work. Conversely, Libaek required that in selecting classical musicians, he wanted players with an ability to respond to the jazz characteristics, the rhythmic impetus and melodic flexibility that the jazz ensemble brings. Not all classical players are capable of coping with this element of ‘feel’ or ‘swing,’ and Libaek had to manage the interaction of jazz flexibility and classical fixedness. When called upon to describe the character of the musicians he worked with, Libaek emphasizes their particular abilities not as jazz or classical, but as studio musicians, an ‘exceptional breed.’

Libaek’s ability to control (musically as well as behaviourally) the combined jazz and orchestral forces - the occupants of Bus No. 1 and Bus No. 2 - is a key feature of his compositional practice. As well as the ways he writes for the opposing camps of jazz players and the classical orchestra, Libaek maintains control by participating in the performance as pianist and conductor and having a voice in the recording. Libaek’s interaction with the players is part of his role as composer, in which making the notes on paper is the beginning of a wider process encompassing a whole set of practical involvements and interactions.

Libaek’s relationship with his musicians is complemented by one equally as strong with his studio technicians. Libaek praises the Music Editors he worked with in the US at Hanna-Barbera, and in Australia he pays tribute to the sound engineers or ‘panel operators’ (as they were commonly called at the time) he worked with in recording his music. Three names are prominently associated with the variety of Libaek’s work: Ron Purvis (in film and television), and Spencer Lee and Martin Benge (in albums and singles), although additional names also appear on his recordings, including Pat Aulton.

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Richard Batchens and Martin Erdman. Libaek credits his producers with a vital role in his output, as for instance in the case of producing a mix that will work effectively for a record, or for radio broadcast:

You have to rely on these guys’ experience and skills. With Spencer and Martin we’re producing records and what we came up with was exactly the way it should sound. You play it back on these beautiful speakers in the recording studio, then you play them back on the tiny speakers that they have sitting there just to test what it would sound like on the radio. The analogue sound that came out of the old radio you had to mix to get the best possible result.

Their advice about recording process was also crucial. Much of Libaek’s earlier work with studio orchestras was compiled by overdubbing, in which ‘you’d put down the rhythm section, then overdub the brass, overdub the strings and woodwinds. There were very few studios back in the sixties that could handle a big orchestra.’ Martin Benge proposed that a more effective result would be achieved ‘if we just went into the studio and recorded the whole thing in one go’:

Martin would just put a set of earphones on me and he would play the mix into my earphones. With the reverb, with everything. So I wasn’t listening to the live sound, I was listening to the actual recorded sound. All I had to tell him was ‘oh, there’s a little flute bit there that I need more of,’ and he would just do it. I’m listening to the final product. So I knew that it was going to work. It was really amazing. That takes an enormous skill with a big orchestra like that.

In both musical and technical domains, the resource network Libaek established gave him the foundation for a busy and prolific career encompassing every commercial opportunity he could find. In bringing together his roles as composer, producer and piano-conductor, Libaek exemplifies a significant trend towards the confluence of these roles. Virgil Moorefield has explored the increasing creativity of the producer’s role evolving from technician to ‘auteur’, culminating in the producer taking over the role of composer in the creation of contemporary popular music. In this evolution, the function of the producer has shifted from replicating live performance to creating a new sonic world, and from operating the equipment to ‘playing’ the recording studio as an ‘instrument’. While Libaek has not sacrificed his composer’s identity in order to acquire that of producer (in the way that George Martin or Quincy Jones exemplify),

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nevertheless his identity as a composer incorporates some of the key functions of a producer, suggesting interpretations of his role as producer-composer or ‘auteur.’

Libaek shares certain characteristics with a generation of musicians who acquired their musical fluency as practitioners of Swing, but who then, in the post-Swing era, adapted their skills to include composition in a light music style. To enable this work, these performers and arrangers undertook studies, even if only to a basic level, in ‘classical’ compositional techniques with sympathetic teachers or through other means, such as mail-order courses. In Libaek’s case, however, interests and capabilities in Swing and ‘classical’ music overlapped from an early age. His fundamental skills as a composer were not acquired through formal or informal studies in composition, but developed out of the broad practical skills taught at Juilliard and on-the-job with his projects undertaken as a producer for Coronet (CBS) in Australia.

Although the bulk of his production has addressed ‘commercial’ opportunities, Libaek has also maintained a connection to ‘classical’ music throughout his career. His early publication of the Seks Lyrisker Bagateller, op. 1, was the first of a series of instrumental works he has composed throughout his career. Some of these have been studies derived from or addressing technical performance aspects, such as the Toccata in D minor, op. 4 (1964), Three Etudes, op. 16 (1996), Jumps and Octaves (1997) for piano, or the Minor/Major Prelude for organ, op. 37 (1991). Larry Sitsky, discussing Libaek’s piano music, notes the presence of ‘descriptive romantic miniatures’ in his output and a vein of works in a ‘quasi-Bach manner’, but these ‘are not complex contrapuntal works, but rather an evocation of what Bach might sound like if he wrote light music.’ Sitsky also notes Libaek’s manner of developing his melodies out of harmonic progressions (‘chords with added notes’) in the Nocturne, op. 2. Other instrumental pieces by Libaek address imagery of natural or poetic association, such as the Six Musical Pictures, op. 6 (1965) for classical guitar, and A Stroll in the Mist (1997) for trombone.

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336 Ibid. xiii.
337 Larry Sitsky, Australian Piano Music of the Twentieth Century (Westport, Ct: Praeger, 2005), 165.
338 Larry Sitsky, 166.
The work list at the Australian Music Centre\textsuperscript{339} contains eight orchestral works by Libaek, beginning with *Australian Suite*, op. 7 (1969), the most recent being the Concorso for harmonica and orchestra, op. 32 (1998) which Libaek wrote for Richard Brooks to play with the Sutherland Shire Symphony Orchestra. Some of Libaek’s orchestral works were written for recording sessions with the Norwegian Broadcasting Orchestra (KORK), which he conducted several times:

> I used to do that almost every year for the first few years that I worked in LA. I composed some stuff to bring over. A few pieces *Harmonizations for strings*, op. 13 (1982) and *Oriental Impressions*, op. 12 (1981) which I conducted over there with them. [With] *Harmonizations* … I was trying to … put my string writing to work.

In 1975, Libaek compiled a suite called *Film Images No. 1*, op. 11 for performance at the Asian Composers’ League Conference in Manila. Libaek represented the Fellowship of Australian Composers at the conference as replacement for the Fellowship’s President Dorothy Dodd who could not attend. ‘Being very foreign to that Asian academic classical composer milieu,’ he recalls,

> I didn’t want to say too much. I just wanted to learn and listen. So I sat there at the conference and I listened to all the speeches, and it just became more and more crap in my mind. They didn’t know anything about copyright, they didn’t know anything about performing rights. So I couldn’t help myself, I stood up and said a few things about the real world. Within five minutes, they elected me on the Board of the Asian Composers’ League. I was on the Board for five years.

As well as showing how strongly ingrained is his sense of pragmatism, the anecdote also indicates Libaek’s alien status among the contemporary composer artworld. It is an artworld to which Libaek, lacking formal qualification in composition or the guidance of an established mentor, has always had a peripheral relationship. Instead of deriving from formal tutoring in compositional technique, Libaek’s compositions in a ‘classical’ manner owe almost as much to his experience as a performer and producer as his ‘commercial’ work does. Not much differentiates one style from the other: just as in his ‘commercial’ work, Libaek seeks ‘good tunes’ and applies sequential methods of construction featuring arpeggiated chords, ostinatos, rhythmic and harmonic ‘plateaux,’ which sustain individual moods - Larry Sitsky notes Alberti bass in the *Two Baroque Preludes*, op. 30.\textsuperscript{340} These devices arise from the fundamentally chordal conception of


\textsuperscript{340} Larry Sitsky, 165.
harmony upon which Libaek’s music, across genres, is built. William Russo observes this to be a characteristic of jazz:

In chordal harmony, chords take on a life of their own; they are beings in themselves, capable of being moved about according to their own laws, independent of melodic or intervallic considerations. Jazz harmony is chiefly chordal harmony: furthermore it is usually pre-established chordal harmony, a predetermined succession of chords … Chordal harmony … is harmony waiting to be broken down into melody.\(^{341}\)

We constantly recognize Russo’s observation in Libaek’s fondness for breaking up chords in all sorts of ways (arpeggios, Alberti basses, ostinatos, toccatas, etc.), investing extended harmonic sequences with melodic character. This method appears in most of his compositions, across genres, providing a signal identification of his in-between style.

Aside from the application of formal titles (Nocturne, Etude, etc.) and opus numbers, the main factor of stylistic difference between the two classes of his work is simply that the ‘classical’ works aren’t for jazz players. Do not require the same collaborative method, so therefore focus attention on the application of purely written skills.

Libaek’s classical compositions are undertaken in the periods where he has few or no commercial commitments, a pattern that can be easily traced through the timeline of his career. A reality of being freelance, says Libaek, is that sometimes ‘you can go months without anything.’ In these periods, ‘I just write things.’ But there is no major stylistic difference – after all, ‘Classical music is just a term,’ says Libaek, and the borders constructed between musical genres are to him unnecessary.

7.2 The Aesthetics of the ‘wrong’ and ‘weird’

Throughout his career, Libaek has been conscious of a sense that his musical choices might be considered ‘wrong’ or outside of the expected or correct way of doing things. Commonly, musicians are ready to characterize Libaek’s musical idiosyncrasies as errors. These might include awkward registers or shifts, instrumental combinations that are difficult to blend, or unexpected interpolations onto the soft jazz framework of his style. John Sangster introduces Libaek as a ‘nice friendly “Sir”’:

I learned a lot about how not to write for the brass from him. Ask Alan Nash or Ron Falsone or Mal Pearce or Alan Wood or Lloyd Adamson or Bob Barnard or Ivo [Jack Iversen] or Boof [Eric ‘Boff’ Thompson]. You’d look over at the trumpet section, and, while you wouldn’t see all that much foot-tapping going on, there’d sure be plenty of hand-rubbing in anticipation of payment.\footnote{John Sangster, 117.}

Disapproving, presumably, of the commercial, un-hot sounds of Libaek’s music or arrangements, his studio players were motivated by pecuniary interests in their involvement in Libaek’s successful projects, which were characterized by ‘Big budgets. Big paychecks. Big concepts.’\footnote{Ibid., 117.}

Such hints of aesthetic unacceptability also emanate from the classical side: when I mentioned to Libaek some comparisons with Don Banks, for instance, he plainly observes ‘Well, he was regarded as a legit composer, and I never was.’ A peripheral standing is inherent in Libaek’s in-betweenery, and ‘mistakes’ in his music help to identify it as not being properly concordant with the stylistic requirements and conventions of either the jazz or classical domain.

These failings, if they must be characterized as such, arise from Libaek’s incomplete musical training:

- My early piano training was based much more on learning things by heart than to read. As a kid I grew up learning things very quickly and playing without music. But as a result of that, my reading skills really was not up to par with the other guys at Juilliard. I’ve always suffered from that lack.

- Getting into arranging and conducting has forced me to train to read. It’s almost an advantage [to be a musician who works by ear] in conducting because … I have an instant ability to look at the big picture. I can sort of get the gist of it. For the French Horns [if they ask] ‘bar 3, what note is it?’ that’s a different thing, I have to work that out. But I can see the whole scope of the piece. I know when to cue them and all that, it just automatically gets into my brain.

So, it’s just a different way that I started out.

Not everybody sees Libaek’s ‘wrong-ness’ as a bad thing. English nostalgia entrepreneur Jonny Trunk, a key figure in the Libaek revival, describes his fascination arising from hearing Libaek’s music as ‘warm, gentle and jazzy but still a touch weird, and always had room for him to experiment when films dictated he could. To my ears he had a
Although some of his ‘voicings’ and musical gestures may be ‘wrong,’ they emerge directly from Libaek’s personal musical imagination, and provide an important ingredient of his musical distinctiveness.

Recalling Libaek’s comments (see Chapter 6) about the work of Adrian Linden, his librettist for Grass, the intrusion of ‘wrong’ and ‘weird’ features can be seen to have a vital role in upsetting the run of the mill pattern so that they ‘inspire’ expressive or artistic individuality. Throughout Libaek’s musical output, listeners are likely to be struck by the intrusion here and there of an unexpected musical element. These are the most obvious of Libaek’s transgressions against convention, signals of musical idiosyncracy or naïveté. Musicians (like Sangster’s brass players) tend to be more closely attuned to expectations of correctness in such matters as ‘voicing’ and rhythmic notation, and thus are likely to immediately judge such transgressions as mistakes.

As a composer, Libaek is entirely self-taught. Starting out, Libaek’s technical equipment was basic: ‘[t]he first score that I wrote was for Nature Walkabout. I came in with the trumpet part in C, forgot to put it up a tone. So that’s how green I was, really.’ Thereafter, the recording studio became the centre of his learning about how to write for orchestras. The only orchestration textbook he acknowledges is ‘the [Cecil] Forsyth one. I refer to it, but now it’s “up in the head.”’

As a result, Libaek’s principal guide is his ear’s own judgement or taste. Regardless of the judgements of those who are better acquainted with musical conventions of particular genres, Libaek pursues his own musical intuition and sometimes inserts ideas and effects in his music that may seem peculiar within ‘straight’ musical conventions. The equipment provided by his almost random accumulation of skills and abilities enables Libaek to give expression to his musical imaginings, but this knowledge does not dominate them. In considering Libaek’s work, idiosyncrasies’ and naïve or unconventional practice must be considered inherent to the personality of his style.

When in the course of my interviews, I compared Libaek to Gershwin and John Barry, as composers who also sought to acquire composing skills from an ‘outsider’ base, Libaek commented:

When you think about the people you just mentioned, these people – and I include myself in the same bracket, not in fame or fortune, but in the style of writing – I think that sort of learning has more of a tendency to create your individual sound. Learning how to voice strings – you learn to voice them the way you want to voice them. It might be right or it might be wrong by the [text-books], but it gives you your unique sound. Certainly Gershwin and John Barry [each] has a very distinct sound.

7.3 The Libaek Style: Australian Suite

The majority of Libaek’s music shares common features highlighted in the score he regarded as his major opus at the time, the Australian Suite (1969). The Suite was recorded in the early part of the year by Festival Records and was performed publicly at the Sydney Town Hall (the city’s major concert venue before the completion of the Sydney Opera House in 1973) on October 5, 1969.

Having established himself as a successful composer for commercial projects, encompassing ‘everything from music for TV commercials … to a feature film score (‘The Set’) to arrangements for artists,’ Libaek now felt that he was ‘ready to write a symphony, but so far I haven’t had the time.’ He ‘wanted to compose something about Australia – something on a full orchestral scale,’ and took advantage of a brief hiatus (‘those three dead months around tax time’345) to turn his attention to a project of full orchestral dimensions, though not quite of full symphonic aspiration.

Libaek described the Australian Suite in 1970 as follows:

One of the major things I have done in the past few years was a symphonic suite called The Australian Suite. I feel it’s the Grand Canyon Suite of Australia. It’s a simple commercial work based on my experiences in the outback of Australia, places like Mt Isa and the Northern Territory. I tried to describe the loneliness and empty spaces. It has a jazz group playing in the middle of the symphony [orchestra].

Over the past few years, jazz, pop and classical music have melted [sic] together. Composers like Jimmy Webb, Burt Bacharach and Henry Mancini don’t write ordinary three-chord music anymore. It’s getting very sophisticated. Classically-trained composers

are being influenced by pop. You can see that from people like Leonard Bernstein, who conducted the New York Symphony [sic] yet wrote *West Side Story*.346

*Australian Suite* bears little resemblance to Ferde Grofé’s once-popular set of tone poems. Libaek’s comparison no doubt referred to the work’s depictive approach, though in Libaek’s music, much less attention is paid to narrative structure, which is so vital in the *Grand Canyon Suite*. A much more direct influence is to be found in another work which Libaek cites as decisive in the genesis of *Australian Suite*.

Waldo de los Ríos (1934-1977) is remembered today for his pop versions of classical themes, arising from his partnership with producer Rafael Trabucchelli at Hispavox, including the hit singles *Mozart 40* (1971) and the *Himno de la alegria* or *Song of Joy* (1969), and the album *Sinfonías* (1970), issued in Australia as *Symphonies for Young and Old Swingers* (c. 1970).347 This ‘pop’ identity obscures Rios’s ‘classical’ credentials as a promising student of Alberto Ginastera. Rios straddled popular and ‘classical’ domains, and among his creations that sit well within the boundaries of light music is the *Suite Sudamericana* (South American Suite), released in Spanish and English editions by Columbia in 1959 or 1960.348 Its four movements convey ‘musical impressions’ of South American countries, each movement consisting of musical depictions of sites or features of those countries:

1. Paraguay: Cuzco Ruins (hyaño) – Lima (waltz) – The Giants (hyaño)
2. Argentina: Los Coloradas (vidalita chayera) – The Shadow of The Tiger (zamba) – The Tryst
3. Peru: Nanduty (polka) – Jungle Night (guarania) – Epic (galopa)
4. Uruguay: The Wagon (vidalita) – Gaucho Song (pericón and milonga) – Carnival (comdombe)

Thus each movement of Rios’s *Suite* is made up, potpourri-like, of conjoined instrumental sections or pieces, in quintessentially light music manner. Libaek adopts a similar method of structural outline for his *Australian Suite*.

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The LP Libaek’s sister-in-law gave him as a present, was most likely the 1966 reissue of the album (‘electronically re-channeled for Stereo’). South American Suite, says Libaek, ‘really got to me’:

It had all the Latin harps and all that in it. It’s really a great thing, and I thought I’ve got to do the same thing for Australia. Of course, Waldo de los Rios, I don’t know what his background is, but this is very popular music. I’m sure he had a classical background: some of the writing in the Suite is definitely not jazz, but a lot of it is. And I wanted to do the same thing. It was one of those major moments in your life. It was so appealing to me.

The composer of South American Suite is an unfamiliar figure: the pop hits of the seventies give little hint of the dynamic and inventive character of Rios’s earlier compositional style. It is recognizably the music of a Ginastera student, though thoroughly infused with the sumptuous exotic flair of Les Baxter (especially in the string writing), or of Morton Gould’s orchestral interpretations of Ernesto Lecuona. Dynamism comes from the driving rhythmic pulse that emanates from the Latin percussion and piano (rather than a standard jazz rhythm section), and the dramatic and colourful orchestration that incorporates much exotic colour (zampoña, bandoneon, cavaquinho, etc.).

The influence of South American Suite upon Libaek’s Australian Suite is a very broad one. Where Rios blended this popular-orchestral language with Latin American ‘national’ style, drawing upon a rich repository of ethnic and regional musical variety (instruments, dance forms, etc.), Libaek’s approach is less ambitious, forming his musical vocabulary by bringing together jazz and ‘classical’ elements in the same way that he does with his film and television and recording production work. In terms of instrumentation Libaek stays within his established network – Aboriginal instruments such as didjeridu or clap sticks, for instance, do not appear. The harmonica, played by Libaek’s friend Richard Brooks is a notable addition to the conventional jazz combination, featuring prominently in Australian Suite. ‘The harmonica… Richard should be on the list of important people in my life,’ notes Libaek:

I felt that it captured an ‘outback’ sound. It might’ve been accidental, although I was trying to think of instruments that would suit the outback and the obvious folky things of guitar and bass, they were fine. When I got involved with Johnny Sangster and really got to hear the vibes in full vibrato, I thought, that’s shimmering heat, that’s perfect. Then of course the mouth organ, the harmonica, was used. [Brooks] had this fantastic tone which I’ve never really heard since. It just suited [evocation of] the outback.

Rios’s primary benefit to Libaek is the model he provides of a way to make more extended structures, by selecting musical images identified with particular regions or locations, and constructing them into contiguous movements. Rios identifies particular rhythms and types of dances associated with the regions he chooses. Libaek, by contrast, adopts a broader sense of depictive, plainly pictorial mood, and thus has the character of being ‘film music without the film.’

Carl Dahlhaus’s first observation of *Australian Suite* would be to identify its lack of integrated symphonic design. To sustain its fifty-minute duration, the *Suite* pieces together a diverse range of musical material and cues.\(^{350}\) Not only is it comprised of six independent movements, but each movement itself consists of a series of musical images that join together either in a sequential (A-B-C or A-B-C-D) or ternary (A-B-A or A-B-C-A) form.

*Australian Suite* employs an orchestra that in its constitution and deployment is wholly indebted to Libaek’s understanding of the recording studio environment. The orchestral ensemble is constituted in four basic instrumental groups as follows:

Winds: consisting of 2-3 flutes, oboe and harmonica. Don Burrows and Erroll Buddle perform as ‘lead’ flute and oboe, with an additional ‘classical’ flute (and occasionally Buddle also doubling on flute), and Richard Brooks on harmonica. Libaek has written expressly for the abilities of Burrows (a highly capable player on clarinet and alto sax as well as flute) and Buddle (oboe, plus flute and tenor sax), who frequently switch roles between melodic leadership of the jazz combo or supplementing the orchestral texture.

Brass choir: consisting of three trumpets and two trombones. The trumpets, especially the ‘lead’ player (Eric ‘Boff’ Thompson), are sometimes called upon to serve some doubling on French horns.

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\(^{350}\) Sven Libaek, *Australian Suite* for orchestra, 1969, composer’s autograph, (Sydney: Australian Music Centre, n.d.). All references to the score are taken from this edition.
Strings: violin parts divided into four lines, plus viola, cello and double bass (lead bass player, Ed Gaston, switches between orchestral and jazz roles).

Jazz combo: vibraphone (John Sangster), guitar (George Golla on both ‘classical’ and electric instruments), piano (Libaek), bass (Ed Gaston) and drums (Derek Fairbrass) serve as a rhythm section. Flute, clarinet and sax parts are provided by Don Burrows and Erroll Buddle, so that the jazz combo expands or contracts as the wind instruments switch between their orchestral role and their jazz mode, or as special elements, such as bongos, woodblocks and timpani (played by Sangster), are added.

Libaek uses the doubling capacities of his players extensively. The flexible capacity of Burrows, Buddle and Ed Gaston gives each of them a double identity: on the one hand constituting a component of the orchestral tutti, but equally contributing to the jazz sections as well. Along with Sangster’s vibraphone and Fairbrass’s drums, they are busy contributors to the musical progress of *Australian Suite*, its character and melodic impetus. Libaek also provides occasional additional lines for clarinets, bassoon, fourth trumpet, timpani and French horns in certain movements. These options were intended for overdubbing later, probably by ‘doubling’ players, to contribute emphasis to particular textures and effects in the movements ‘Nullarbor,’ ‘Riverina Sunrise’ and the ‘Copper-pouring’ segment of ‘The Isa.’

### 7.3.1 Aspects of style in *Australian Suite*

*Australian Suite* contains six movements:

1. The Isa: The Country – Cattle Station – Copperpouring
2. Riverina Sunrise: Parts 1, 2, 3
3. Australia Square: Parts 1, 2, 3
4. The Snowfields: Parts 1, 2, 3, 4
5. Nullarbor: Parts 1, 2, 3, 4
6. The Kimberleys: Parts 1, 2, 3, 4

While Libaek’s comments about the piece emphasize the outback and outdoor inspiration of *Australian Suite*, I will begin this discussion by looking at the one movement that depicts an urban setting, the third movement, called ‘Australia Square’ (Track 1 of
Appendix). Like much of *Australian Suite*, this movement adapts material that Libaek had composed as incidental music for his TV or film projects. In this case, some material may derive from Libaek’s music for a promotional film made by the Australian Tourism Commission.351

Australia Square is an iconic office tower designed by the prominent modernist architect Harry Seidler collaborating with Pier Luigi Nervi, a famed stylist in reinforced concrete forms. Completed in 1967, the building was a symbol of Australia’s modernity and affluence, shaking off traditional architectural models with the aid of technological advancements to declare the new image of Sydney as a contemporary international centre. Libaek’s evocation of the spirit of Australia Square is in three sections, A-B-A. The symphony orchestra is tacet in this movement, so that it constitutes a jazz interlude for the Suite, featuring Libaek at the piano along with Burrows on clarinet and alto saxophone, Buddle on tenor saxophone, Sangster on vibraphone and miscellaneous percussion, Golla on acoustic guitar, Gaston on Bass and Fairbrass on drums.

Libaek utilises a commercial model of jazz scoring to provide effective direction for the members of the ensemble to facilitate the production of the musical cue. The score reads like a standard jazz chart, providing substantial information to structure the performance while allowing careful scope for improvisation and flexible interpretation of melody lines. The movement’s opening sound is soft but fast-paced to set the mood of modern life. The 7/4 meter of the opening section immediately invokes the Dave Brubeck Quartet, which made a speciality of such irregular rhythms. Over this rhythmic base, Burrows’ clarinet enters in a high register, moving with glissando slides between notes. It is not so much a melody as an alarm, recalling the famous opening glissando of Gershwin’s *Rhapsody in Blue*. Tagg and Clarida characterize this gesture as a ‘scoop’, a form of ‘impure slide’ that signals noir cityscapes or metropolitan nightlife, and that had been a part of jazz language since Ellington’s 1920’s ‘jungle’ style.352

Melody is carried principally by the saxophone, but in this opening section, the mood is set mostly by the Brubeck-inspired rhythms and major-seventh harmonies of Libaek’s


352 Philip Tagg and Bob Clarida, 598.
piano. The bustling opening gives way to a wholesale shift into bossa nova mood for ‘Part 2.’ The tempo becomes 4/4 and Derek Fairbrass establishes the rhythmic foundation by means of a shaker and a drumstick tapping out the rhythm on the rim of the drumhead (‘rim click’), supplemented by Golla’s rhythmic guitar and Gaston’s bass. Saxophones (alto and tenor) suavely present the melody line in alternation with vibraphone, following Libaek’s notations until first Burrows, then Buddle are each given eight bars for solo improvisation, aided by ‘light solo work’ from Sangster’s vibraphone over the continuing harmonic and rhythmic base written out by Libaek.

The allotted free space ends abruptly with a strange musical interruption. Libaek has scribbled the comment ‘conduct’ on the score at this point to remind himself to restore control over proceedings, bringing back the Brubeck-modern sound. The three solo players – alto saxophone, tenor saxophone and vibraphone – come together in a statement of a dissonant trichord, repeated in staccato crotchets in six bars of 9/4, with accents on third and seventh beats of the bar. The trichord as represented below is dissonant, a cluster effect perhaps loosely inspired by the piano style of Brubeck (as for example, in ‘Pick Up Sticks,’ from the 1959 album *Time Out*) or Bill Evans (as in his 1959 version of *I Hear a Rhapsody*, where ‘the elements of extended chords … [are] combined in close-range clusters.’:

![Chord Diagram]

The gesture acts as an evocation of modernity, which may have originally accompanied images of Seidler’s architecture in the original promotional film, but it also serves to disrupt the musical flow to allow the return of the opening 7/4 material. Burrow’s ‘metropolis’ clarinet glissandos are restated five times over an ‘orchestral fade’ in the performing version and a ‘panel fade’ in the recording. (The fact that Libaek has mentioned both options indicates that he had in mind from the outset that he was writing for both live performance and recording purposes).

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‘Australia Square’ uses modern jazz idioms to bring their associations of urban modernity, a fruit of Libaek’s knowledge of popular jazz of the day. Although Brubeck had found international fame with the release of his quartet’s *Time Out* record in 1959, and had visited Australia in a highly publicised tour in 1962, his use of irregular meters had not been widely taken up. Libaek, owing to his time in New York, was well acquainted with the jazz styles and performers of the late 1950s and early 1960s:

I was very into Brubeck because of the 7/4, 5/4 type beat which I introduced to Australia. The first time I had a 5/4 track, in *Boney* [1967], the guys here hadn’t played it. To ask a great guy like Burrows, who could play anything, to improvise in 5/4 was quite a shocking thing to do, because you really had to pay attention. So I got my interest in different time signatures back then with [Paul] Desmond and Brubeck.

Similarly, Libaek’s uptake of bossa nova style was innovative for sixties Australia. While the style had originated in Brazil in 1958, its musical influence in Australia was relatively limited. Standard jazz histories of John Clare and Gail Brennan and John Shand, for instance, ascribe no influence in Australian jazz to Brazil, bossa nova or Antonio Carlos Jobim.\(^\text{354}\) John Whiteoak observes that the ‘craze’ was confined to ‘Latin bands and cool jazz groups at first but [bossa nova’s standards] soon entered the repertories of middle-of-the-road bands, along with the mandatory cha-chas.’\(^\text{355}\) Burrows and Golla, however, became dedicated and proficient exponents of the style, developing partnerships with Brazilian musicians in the 1970s, releasing the albums *Don Burrows and the Brazilian Connection* in 1977 and *Burrows Bonfa Brazil* in 1979.\(^\text{356}\) In 1969, Libaek’s enthusiasm for bossa nova style was rare for an Australian composer.

The practice of placing jazz rhythm sections and melody instruments into an orchestral setting was a common feature of light music productions throughout the Easy-Listening era. In contrast to ‘real jazz,’ though, the light music composer takes pains to ensure that jazz’s improvisatory nature is constrained from ‘noodling’ and other ‘excessive’ tendencies of contemporary jazz performance. For the composer of light music, distractions or diversions from the clear communication of the melodic line are to be discouraged.

\(^{355}\) John Whiteoak and Aline Scott-Maxwell, 393.
\(^{356}\) Don Burrows, *Don Burrows and the Brazilian Connection*, The Don Burrows Quintet, George Golla, The Sydney String Quartet, Cherry Pie CPF 1035-2, c. 1977, two 33⅓ rpm discs; *Bonfa Burrows Brazil*, Luiz Bonfa, Don Burrows and George Golla, strings arranged by Julian Lee, Cherry Pie CPF 1045, 33⅓ rpm.
We can see this approach in Libaek’s score. Firstly, the use of Brubeck-inspired and bossa nova models in the A and B sections of this movement epitomises Libaek’s preference for jazz styles consistent with the taste of a broad, middle-class audience. The music remains within the stylistic parameters of a style that may be characterized as ‘soft jazz,’ retaining commercial appeal. As suggested by its absence from accounts of Australian jazz history and Whiteoak’s comments on its ‘middle-of-the-road’ status, bossa nova’s standing was in-between jazz and popular music, and this quality made it a ready associate of light music. Secondly, Libaek asserts his control over the score by clearly defining the scope and direction for improvisation. In *Australian Suite*, improvisatory elements are clearly delineated so that they add colour and verve, but do not assume narrative control. As well as constraining ‘jazziness,’ such control was also of course necessary to serve the integration of jazz instruments within the overall orchestral texture to create a varied and colourful musical potpourri.

The modern possibilities of musical imagery that ‘Australia Square’ provided for Libaek are largely absent from the remaining movements of *Australian Suite*, given their mainly outback and rural settings, but that by no means eliminates the presence of a modern musical sensibility. An outline of the music of the remaining movements will draw attention to further features of the score, highlighting the diversity of stylistic ‘melding’ and the contribution of a ‘classical’ element to the Suite’s musical expression.

It’s in the first movement that the Suite most directly imitates Waldo de los Rios in form, comprising three titled segments each representing an image of its location, ‘The Isa.’ This is the name by which locals refer to Mount Isa, a mining town in remote Queensland that Libaek had visited in preparing the score for a Queensland Tourist Board documentary in 1967. The experience had a great impact on Libaek:

> They sent us up to Mt Isa and they put us in an elevator and sent us 27 levels down. So we spent time in a mine, we saw the smelting and all that. One day, we drove straight out of Mt Isa for like four hours. Didn’t see a thing: not a person, not an animal. We lifted [a piece of] corrugated iron to at least see a snake, but there was nothing. It was really weird. So that was an experience and that had tremendous influence. The theme for the Isa movement in *Australian Suite* is one of the pieces from that documentary.

The three musical images Libaek chooses for this movement are ‘The Country,’ ‘Cattle Station’ and ‘Copper-pouring’. After a brief prelude of ambiguous or ‘empty’ tonality by
vibraphone and flute, the brass enter with fanfare declarations in A major, set above a martial rhythm from the snare drum. Strings alternate with a complementary stately counter-melody completing this opening statement of optimistic purpose. A sudden transition to improvised jazz (double bass switches to ‘jazz bass’) introduces the members of the jazz combo. Jazz improvisational sections and string melody statements alternate before the return of the fanfare announces a shift of musical setting. With these rapid alternations of various jazz moods and ‘classical’ atmospherics, Libaek has immediately introduced the listener to the range of instruments and styles that are to combine in the musical potpourri to follow.

Track 2 of the CD provided at the Appendix demonstrates the characteristic method of Libaek’s orchestral framework, his predominantly ‘classical’ mode. The extract traverses ‘Part 2,’ the brief bridge of ‘Part 3’ and the climactic ‘Part 4.’ For ‘Part 2’ (‘Cattle Station’) the rhythm section (vibraphone, guitar, piano, bass and drums) establishes a relaxed rhythmic base that establishes a rhythmic-harmonic plateau over which the musical action takes place. Solo oboe introduces a theme with a ‘riding-in-the-saddle’ dotted rhythm that calls up ‘cowboy’ or ‘big country’\textsuperscript{357} associations, projecting an optimistic view of the outback cattleman’s life. The brass choir provides unobtrusive harmonic ‘fill’, trumpets and French horns individually contributing to a close harmony ‘padding’ texture that accompanies the primary melodic line presented by the violins against a counter-melody from the flutes.

An abrupt cadence and general pause allows for a major mood change for ‘Part 3’. This is a brief depiction of outback harshness, or ancientness: a drone on C by ‘Solo Orch[estral] Bass’ is overlaid by piano arpeggios which establish a minor key mood for ‘Part 4 - Copperpouring.’ This is to bring the movement to its climax in a minimalist construction that takes its energy from the interaction between two overlapping forms of off-the-beat rhythm:

\textsuperscript{357} Philip Tagg and Bob Clarida, 361.
Over a drone from basses and brushes on drums, the rhythmic pattern is applied firstly between the two flutes, embellishing the rhythm with a simple rising and descending melodic ostinato. The two rhythmic strands continue their interplay, transferring to the strings before the vibraphone suspends the momentum with an added sixth chord that simply hangs, like a musical question mark, in the air. Libæk’s piano then takes up the melodic ostinato pattern as the instrumental texture starts to thicken, added instrumental lines giving increasing impetus to the insistence of the rhythmic pulse, introducing variants of the fundamental rhythms. These new lines are presented in repeated notes without melodic embellishment, while the drummer increases his presence accordingly. The melodic ostinato is overtaken by the rhythmic impetus of the accumulating orchestral texture, until it returns, in a simplified contour, as a fanfare statement by the trumpets over the driving rhythms of the orchestral tutti, reaching to a high trill at the climax. The vibraphone adds a shimmering cadence over the sudden orchestral silence that follows, before adding a final four-note cluster to hang once more in the air. The passage demonstrates Libæk’s intuitive use of jazz rhythm in setting effective orchestral mood, conveying a sense of the drama of the copperpouring without sacrificing the music’s jazzy appeal. The orchestral parts function to add to the density and volume of the overall texture, or to carry melody statements, but development is restricted to basic embellishment or textural function.

Constructed in three parts A-B-A, the second movement, entitled ‘Riverina Sunrise,’ pictures the lush pastoral and fruit-growing areas located along the banks of the Murray and Murrumbidgee Rivers. Most of the movement is based on a melody that is stated repeatedly in different instruments and shadings, moving through the orchestra and jazz combo. ‘Part 1’ has two sections. The first (section ‘a’) begins in a relaxed ‘barcarolle’ manner, marked legato moderato in 6/8 tempo. This barcarolle melody is stated repeatedly by solo flute, given harmonic support by the second flute, oboe and horns to conjure a pre-dawn mood. The melody transfers to harmonica and strings, each exchange of the melodic baton accompanied by increments of volume and density of orchestral texture until a final fortissimo statement brings this section to its climax. Section ‘b’ begins abruptly as the repetition of the melody takes a new form: two solo flutes softly stating the melody in canon-like alternation above rippling piano chords before passing to harmonica and oboe and again to the violins (divisi in order to present the melody in overlapping voices) to reach a climax with the introduction of trumpets. The melody is
stated once by each of the three trumpets before briefly acquiring a new, dynamic rhythmic statement, which climaxes in a series of chordal eruptions in which the whole instrumental assemblage joins. These six ‘blasts’ trace the descending contour of the barcarolle melody in sharp sforzando statements each followed by a dramatic descending tremolo-glissando motion. Between each sforzando chord, cellos and basses present six-quaver pizzicato bass lines rising upwards. After the sixth ‘blast’, the strings and vibraphone together sound a final pizzicato ‘vibrez’ chord. This concluding section is an unusual gesture of Libaek’s trademark ‘weird’ variety, but brings the momentum of ‘Part 1’ to resolute conclusion.

The jazz combo takes over immediately for ‘Part 2.’ Libaek designates this section as a ‘jazz’ one (the flautist, drummer and bass instructed to switch to jazz mode) and outlines the basic rhythm and chord changes that are to underpin the improvised contributions. Drums and rhythmic guitar start up an off-beat rhythm, over which Burrows’ flute, then Sangster’s vibraphone improvise freely. Notated flute parts provide harmonic oscillations to accompany Sangster to the conclusion of this interlude, which simply slows to a halt to admit the return of the ‘b’ section of the movement’s ‘Part 1’: recapitulation of the ‘sunrise’ sequence brings the movement to a close with restatements of the brass fanfare and the concluding orchestral ‘blasts’.

Following the jazz interlude of ‘Australia Square’ comes the fourth movement, ‘The Snowfields.’ In ‘Part 1,’ Libaek’s tinkling piano arpeggios, modulating freely, create an immediate picture of snowflakes that then pans out to encompass an open, extensive snowy landscape. ‘Part 2’ is in jazz mode: the jazz combo sets up a foundation of oscillating harmonies in A minor, the rhythm section setting the pulse, with overlying triplets from bongos in a ‘6/8 feel’ (though the time signature remains 4/4). Above this harmonic-rhythmic foundation a triplet motif that trickles down a descending fifth is introduced, suggesting the downhill progression of skiers. The figure is exchanged between solo instruments for a while before rhythmic variations of the triplet motif are introduced to build density up to an orchestral tutti underpinning the solo harmonica’s melody line, continuing for sixteen bars before an abrupt diminuendo. The jazz combo transitions to bossa nova mood, the association of which with snowfields suggests an après-ski atmosphere. In this section Sangster firstly improvises on vibraphone over the rhythmic seventh chords of Golla’s guitar and Fairbrass’s brushes, and brass choir and
strings add harmonic fill. Libaek at the piano takes over from Sangster to improvise sweetly and simply on the melody, free (for once!) of arpeggiated or scalar reference. The full orchestra introduces a new propulsive rhythmic element, a trumpet fanfare in off-set quavers that injects the bossa nova quality with greater drive. The drums are given the directive ‘Rock,’ bringing the rhythm from light off-the-beat touches squarely onto the beat in a brief section of bossa-rock fusion. Arpeggiated piano and flute change the pace for a brief interlude before returning to the head of the movement (letter B) with the skiers’ music. This repeat is altered for its conclusion: ‘agitato’ string chords adding a square beat under the jazz combo’s triplet motifs, as if in a dance, the bongos, guitar and drum-kit skipping lightly while the strings stamp out the beat. The strings and jazz players hold the chord to end the section (a rather choppy edit facilitates this in the recording), and ‘Part 3’ begins.

While the strings alter their beat to triplets in a 6/8 meter, two solo flutes introduce a florid melodic line creating a vaguely baroque sensibility which rises to a climax before ending in a full orchestral ritardando and crescendo to introduce the recapitulation of the ‘Rock’ section from ‘Part 2’ (i.e., a return to letter E, but designated at this point in the score as ‘Part 4’). The propulsive mood halts for a big cadential ending, where each instrumental line enters in a staggered accumulation of notes spread from low basses to high flutes, resolving to the tonic stated by the full orchestra in three emphatic chords.

‘The Snowfields’ movement features a variety of fleeting fusions of square and triplet rhythms, 4/4 and 6/8 ‘feels’ constantly overlaying or relaying from one to the other, to create its amalgam of jazz, popular and ‘classical’ characters. At various times, bossa nova, rock and baroque (or ‘baroquerie’) characteristics rise to the surface to add the constant refreshment of musical variety that Libaek’s potpourri style relies upon to sustain interest.

‘The Nullarbor,’ evoked in the Suite’s fifth movement, is one of Australia’s iconic physical terrains, a vast stretch of treeless plains. The prelude briefly evokes the harsh environment with discordant trumpet chords set, in Sculthorpian vein, against ominous cello and double-bass pizzicatos. This alternates with a gentle melodic section, Libaek’s rippling piano underscoring a solo flute melody, before the whole section is repeated. Solo flutes prepare a bridge (designated ‘Part 2’ although only four bars long) before a
modulation to E major lays the foundation for ‘Part 3.’ Jazziness disappears to allow the
harmonica to present a lyrical, sentimental tune over a bed of lush string harmonies, with
added warmth from a French Horn countermelody. The waltz tempo is maintained as the
violins take over the melody line, then switches to a slightly more upbeat tempo for a
jazz mood as the harmonica introduces a second melody that builds in density and
volume for the return of the E major melody presented by the orchestral tutti. The
orchestra fades down to a single oboe before the rippling piano begins ‘Part 4’ in A
minor, marked molto espressivo. This melancholy mood slowly dissipates as chords from
pizzicato strings, strummed guitar and ringing vibraphone accompany downward
melodic phrases from flutes, harmonica and oboe to bring the mood to a restful full stop.

The final movement is a depiction of the Kimberley region of far northern Western
Australia (‘The Kimberleys’), which encompasses a dramatic range of terrain reaching
from mountainous gorges to rich coastal environments. Harmonica dominates the
opening of the movement, propelled by a syncopated dotted rhythm over a 4/4 time
signature from the orchestral tutti, reminiscent of the ‘bossa fanfare’ at the peak of ‘The
Snowfields’ movement’s ‘Part 2.’ This rhythmic section returns after interpolations by
firstly, soaping violins and flute, and secondly by a bossa nova section, before
accelerating to an orchestral tutti climax that brings ‘Part 1’ to a closing flourish. After a
pause to let things settle down, Libaek’s piano gently restores a simplified bossa nova
mood, allowing a relaxed melody line to be exchanged by Golla’s electric guitar and Lal
Kuring’s solo cello, both lines fully notated, in simple counterpoint. Golla and Kuring
then take off on a short section of free improvisation accompanied only by bass and
drum-kit. This section ‘plays out’ with a general pause before a new ‘very slow’ bossa
nova section introduces the movement’s ‘Part 3.’ The violin leader contributes a soft,
slowly descending glissando in its upper reaches to enhance the mood of winding down.
Errol Buddle and John Sangster improvise over a soft rhythmic base provided by Libaek
at the piano and Fairbrass on subtle drums, and long, full chords from strings and
(muted) brass choir add harmonic richness. The basic procedures here are similar to
those which occur in the first movement (‘The Isa’) in the progress from ‘Part 2’ to
‘Copper-pouring’, discussed above. The introduction of Burrows’ improvised flute solo
begins a gradual intensification of textural and harmonic depth growing to forte before
ending on a long-held pause. The up-tempo harmonica solo that began the movement
returns, and the entire ‘Part 1’ is repeated to bring the Suite to an end.
Of the six movements in *Australian Suite*, ‘The Kimberley’ is the least closely related to a depictive or directly pictorial function: its bossa nova flavourings don’t really help to convey a sense of the region’s dramatic landscape contrasts. It is therefore representative of the general approach to ‘mood’ in Libaek’s music, in which the attractiveness of the musical surface takes priority over dramatic expression, with the consequence that the communication of mood is achieved in a much less focussed or direct manner. Moods and imagery such as the skiers in ‘The Snowfields’ (and even its snowflakes) are communicated in an abstract manner (in keeping with Dahlhaus’s ‘ornamentalism’) that downplays their expressive effect in favour of a tuneful and enjoyable sensibility. Even the application of concepts and observations from Tagg and Clarida’s ‘semiotic dictionary’ (as in the case of the ‘big country’ verbal-visual association in the ‘Cattle Station’ section of ‘The Isa’) is a matter more of vague correlation than direct comparison in the context of Libaek’s predominating light music sensibility. Connections of the music to the character of the scenes or vistas they describe are sometimes elusive, since they are likely to be mediated by the depictions contained in the documentary film source’s own narrative.

More importantly than its depictive or narrative aspirations, *Australian Suite* displays the wide variety of methods that Libaek brings to his blended musical style. The constant interchange of instrumentation and instrumental roles between jazz and ‘classical’ modes; the combination of bossa nova characteristics with ‘rock’ rhythmic propulsion; the rapid intercutting and transitions between jazz and ‘classical’ segments; and the constant modification of genre characteristics, limiting the free scope of each style in order that they may be accommodated together.

The ‘classical’ element is not a particularly potent force in the language of *Australian Suite*: the harmonies, rhythms and melodies of Libaek’s popular, modern jazz influences bring much greater aesthetic vitality to bear upon the piece. Occasionally, elements of a consciously ‘classical’ musical language rise to the fore. Libaek’s piano brings flavourings of Romantic-concerto chords to the opening of ‘The Snowfields’ and to the ‘molto espressivo’ segment of Part 2 of ‘The Kimberleys’. The brief contrapuntal conversation between electric guitar and solo cello that also graces Part 2 of ‘The Kimberleys’ is supplemented by various uses of canonic imitation between solo
instruments in several other movements (Part 1 of ‘The Isa’, Part 2 of ‘The Snowfields’). More generally, however, the ‘classical’ components act in a supplementary or supporting role to the jazz and popular instruments. Libaek’s own preference for arpeggiated piano style serves both a sensibility of classical technique as well as accommodating the rich colourings of jazz’s chordal harmonies. The strings supplement big orchestral textures, add harmonic fill, communicate in a ‘classical’ voice as in the waltz of ‘Part 3’ of ‘Nullarbor’, and provide another melody instrument option (and specific gestures like glissandos). Libaek’s ‘classical’ temperament appears as an inner voice, exerting control, adding texture, dimension and atmosphere to the orchestra and, in a not too heavy-handed way, some architecture. Just as the jazz elements are subject to constraint and limitation, so too is the classical element. Counterpoint and devices of symphonic integration appear only as traces – ‘props’ or ‘ornaments’ in Dahlhaus’s terminology.

Libaek identifies his melodic material as ‘tunes,’ in the manner that most light music composers prefer to do. Imogen Holst provides the definition that distinguishes ‘tune’ from ‘melody’:

> Tunes are not only clear-cut and compact and easily remembered: they are also self-sufficient, and can sound completely satisfying when taken out of context. A melody, in contrast to a tune, is inclined to spread itself intangibly. It is less easily held in the memory, and, from its very birth, it can be so deeply involved in what is going on all round it that it is seldom willing to live an independent life.358

To speak of Libaek’s ‘tuneful orientation’ is to identify an approach that maintains this distinction. Treating his melodies tunefully, Libaek keeps them compact and easily remembered (that is, ‘catchy’) and takes care that they remain prominent, without interference or complication from other musical elements. The tunes are emphasised through straightforward procedures of doubling, repetition, simple canonc imitation and instrumental colouring, rather than procedures of ‘integrated’ compositional treatment. The skills of Libaek’s jazz performers also make an important contribution to the subtle mechanisms by which melodic interest is sustained, through their ability to capture and enhance the catchiness of his tunes.

Just as it did for Paul Whiteman, jazz brings a sense of naturalness and of ‘joy in being alive’ to Libaek’s music. Jazz vocabulary is the source of harmonic, rhythmic and

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melodic vitality, ‘classical’ music the source of a sensibility and musical control. Overt expression of a ‘classical’ aesthetic or of ‘real jazz’ is avoided, each being controlled so that the interaction between them produces another type of language, that of light music. *Australian Suite* gains colour and verve from the application of a popular-jazz vocabulary, astutely modified to fit together with a composed element performed by ‘classically’ trained musicians. Libaek’s light music aesthetic controls every facet of the music, directing it towards a vivacious and melodic potpourri of styles and characters. He cajoles and massages the jazz, classical and popular musical sources to make space for each other and provide mutual support. In a demonstration of light music’s fundamental principles, *Australian Suite* gains its musical interest from the constant infusion and melding of different musical characters, and not from the ‘serious’ musical emphasis on thematic integration, complexity of development and other symphonic procedures.

The recorded version from 1969 does not represent the complete expression of what the score aims for, and it is clear that Libaek worked within constraints especially in terms of instrumentation and production resources. There is no trace, for instance, of the kind of sumptuous effects highlighted by Rebecca Leydon in Esquivel or Mantovani’s creations. Working within a relatively primitive engineering environment, Libaek was dependent on the resources of his (and his musicians’) melodic inventiveness and the sheer variety of his stylistic patchwork. Libaek found practical ways around the technical limitations, determined to reach the desired end result. While the language of Libaek’s *Australian Suite* is redolent of its period, the 1960s, it is nevertheless tempting to wonder how a modern interpretation of the score might more fully render the sumptuous sound and rich melodic, harmonic and rhythmic variety it aims for.

### 7.4 Libaek as Composer-Auteur

Sven Libaek’s career exists at the periphery of the musical mainstreams. Independent of the concert hall Establishment or the ‘Top 40’ music industry, he has built an extensive audience following that spans generations and countries. This audience is attracted by the admixture of jazz, ‘classical’ and popular influences brought together in the forthright musical personality of Libaek’s style.

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359 See Chapter 3.
The ‘improvisatory musical culture’ Libaek discovered in the Sydney of the early sixties suited him perfectly. Its willingness to embrace a musician with a broad and mixed skills base rather than specialised compositional expertise (and pretensions) allowed Libaek to flourish. During the period 1965-1977, he invented a personal way of working that fused the roles of performer, conductor, producer, arranger and composer, encapsulated in the concept of the musical ‘auteur’. This amalgamation overcame the limitations of Libaek’s technical musical equipment, and allowed him to apply his intuitive musicianship in order to become a prolific and fruitful composer. Over the years, Libaek has developed these abilities into a personal style that he is able to reproduce with assuredness and confidence.

Libaek’s career is marked by two recurring themes: pragmatic drive, and an eclecticism in which all musical types jostle for space in the magpie nest of his musical production. Libaek’s skill as a composer, and the continuing appeal of his music, derives from the effective and skillful combination of his diverse stylistic influences. A wide range of jazz and ‘classical’ influences are turned to popular purpose in his compositions, sacrificing their serious identities to serve Libaek’s individualistic, idiosyncratic light music style.
PART III: AUSTRALIAN COMPOSERS IN BRITISH LIGHT MUSIC
Chapter 8: Arthur Benjamin and Hubert Clifford

8.1 Australians in London

For Australian musicians following the Second World War, London was a destination full of promise and prospects. It offered a place to study at an elite level that was not necessarily available in Australia, and provided opportunities to match one’s talent against an international benchmark. It also reflects a certain absence in Australian music: there was not an economic and institutional infrastructure capable of sustaining a vibrant ‘high culture.’ Stephen Alomes plainly observes that:

As classical music lost popularity in the twentieth century, in face of the [rise of] popular music … the appeal of ‘overseas’ grew for singers, musicians and composers … In composition, the lack of music publishing houses and recording companies, the difficulty of getting works performed and the generally low status of Australian music drove composers overseas.  

In the story of Australian composers working in Britain, light music occupies a significant position. William James, as we saw in Chapter 4, made his name as a composer of light music during a stint in London as a young man. Albert Arlen (1905-1993) had similar achievements, working as a Dance band pianist, and acting in West End productions before starting to compose music for musicals himself. The apex of Arlen’s London reputation came with the wartime success of his mini-concerto for piano, The Alamein Concerto (1944), commemorating the victory that turned the tide of the North African campaign. Decca recorded the concerto with Mantovani and his Orchestra and soloist Monia Liter on 23 April 1945. Arlen returned to Australia in 1949 with his wife Nancy Brown (herself a successful performer on the West End stage) and together they ventured into the ‘improvisatory musical culture’ valiantly to pioneer the creation of an Australian variety of musical theatre, achieving their biggest success with The Sentimental Bloke (1961).

360 Stephen Alomes, 62.
The career of the prominent ‘Anglo-Australian’ musician, Charles Mackerras (1925-2010) vividly demonstrates the two faces of light music’s role for Australians in Britain. The authorized biography\(^{364}\) published in 1986 by his cousin, Nancy Phelan, presents the history of a man destined for great musical achievement, overcoming the limitations of Australia’s musical culture to reach a destiny as a prominent international conductor.

Phelan presents light music in an ambivalent if not negative role in Mackerras’s career. Light music and its institutions arise only peripherally in her account, and are even characterized as impediments to his ultimate achievement. Of his appointment as full-time conductor of the BBC Concert Orchestra, Phelan observes that Mackerras ‘soon found to his disappointment that the repertoire he was to play was very much middle-of-the-road – music from Cole Porter to Bach via Edward German. The number of broadcasts made serious study impossible and the constant switching from ballet to opera or light classics ruled out any constructive thinking.’\(^{365}\)

The freelance life Mackerras pursued during the early 1960s in London exploited his good nature and versatility, and Phelan highlights its negative side:

> Because he was versatile and could do whatever was wanted, he was often asked, and always agreed, to turn out film scores, adaptations, orchestrations, occasional music for plays. He was known to be clever, quick, hard-working, reliable, always ready to come to the rescue. He believes that those years of freelancing had a permanent and negative effect on his life… Certainly they must have obstructed any attempt at self-searching or contemplation, any real discovery about himself or serious music.\(^{366}\)

In short, all this light music business got in the way of his mission as a serious artist. Consequently, Mackerras’s nuisance body of ‘film scores, adaptations, orchestrations, occasional music’ goes mostly unidentified and unexamined in Phelan’s account and the BBC Concert Orchestra rates little significance. Mackerras’s early role as ‘Musical Associate’ to Lindley Evans on the score for *The Rats of Tobruk* (1944)\(^{367}\) is overlooked, though it gave him enough skill to produce his own highly ambitious scores for documentaries of the Australian National Film Board: Charles Mountford’s *Namatjira the Painter* (1947), *Watch Over Japan* (1947) and the prestigious record of the 1954


\(^{365}\) Ibid., 100-101.

\(^{366}\) Ibid., 102.

\(^{367}\) Charmun Productions, *The Rats of Tobruk*, producer and director Charles Chauvel, music by Lindley Evans (Melbourne: Umbrella Entertainment DAVID3081, 2014), DVD.
Royal Tour, *The Queen in Australia* (1954). ³⁶⁸ English bass-baritone Owen Brannigan rates a mention for his role in Mackerras’s short-lived stint as friend and champion of Benjamin Britten, but not their project together on a light-hearted album for Decca called *A Little Nonsense* (1962), which Mackerras conducted and arranged.³⁶⁹ And so on. Where Mackerras’s potpourri arrangement of selected items from various Gilbert and Sullivan operettas does arise in the biography, it seems like an off-hand concoction rather than the fruit of long professional experience. But *Pineapple Poll* (1951) cannot be ignored for its importance in bringing Mackerras’s name to prominence in Britain, as well as its life-long royalty income.

Although his destiny was to become a great British conductor, Mackerras did not always fit that mould. While a retrospective view may focus on the steps taken along the traditional incremental path to high standing, it also obstructs appreciation of the realities and full scope of a musical life. Mackerras’s musical skills and knowledge grew from youthful experience across the spectrum from high to low, which presented him with ‘unusual opportunities.’³⁷⁰ As a 16-year-old, he was pianist, oboist and arranger for the Colgate-Palmolive Radio Unit, supporting popular programs for Sydney’s 2GB and 2UE radio stations, whilst being rehearsal pianist (and composing a *Waltzing Matilda Fugue*) for the ballet company of former Ballets Russes star, Hélène Kirsova, among other things.

The skills Mackerras acquired from such a diverse range of practical employment were welcomed in the productive environment of British light music. The Australian Head of the BBC’s Light Music department, Hubert Clifford, was proud of his appointment in charge of the BBC Concert Orchestra, calling Mackerras ‘a gifted young conductor who has enthusiasm, vitality and promise.’³⁷¹ Not only was Clifford pleased to support another Commonwealth composer, he had found the right man for the job. Clifford’s outgoing report suggests that the orchestra, under Mackerras’s direction, could be made

³⁷⁰ Nancy Phelan, 57.
into ‘the finest of its type in Europe within the next twelve months.’ His remarks on the possibilities of the orchestra, set up expressly as a standard-bearer for light music, make Mackerras’s retrospective comment that it wasn’t what he’d expected seem disingenuous.

Clifford hoped to improve the imperfect conditions under which Mackerras and his musicians worked. But he was concerned that this would never be achieved, due to ‘(i) the lack of relative prestige attaching to this important and popular field of music [and] (ii) the financial rewards offered by the B.B.C. are not comparable to those offered for similar work outside. I fear that artistic snobbery may be the root cause of both of these disincentives.’ It seems a reasonable inference to suggest that Mackerras foresaw a brighter future in terms of professional status and a career that was not burdened with overwork, if he could avoid or escape the light music pigeonhole.

George Harewood, however, prefacing Phelan’s biography, makes a point of Mackerras’s ‘resourcefulness’ and ‘versatility’ as the foundations of his career success. These traits are not necessarily, if we take Harewood’s comments as a guide, undesirable capabilities in either a serious or light musician. It was certainly his versatility that brought Mackerras his first significant opportunities in London, at Sadler’s Wells in 1947. After applying for a job as second oboe, Michael Mudie, the company’s resident conductor, saw that Mackerras had more to offer and ‘appointed him as a junior répétiteur and off-stage conductor, despite the fact that he had had no previous experience in those areas.’ But Mackerras was certainly not lacking in broad and practical musical experience, so it wasn’t really out of nowhere that he ‘was soon conducting off-stage choruses,’ and began his steady ascent of the career ladder.

Stephen Alomes also sees Mackerras’s youthful eclectic blend of activities, and a lifestyle to match, in a positive light, as the ‘improvisatory musical culture of wartime

372 Ibid., 3.
373 Ibid., 13.
374 Nancy Phelan, 13-14.
Sydney, various ‘unsuitable friends’ and commercial musical opportunities helped prepare Charles Mackerras for the voyages of a future career.\(^{376}\)

Mackerras’s experience in the varied demands of light music complemented his classical credentials and helped the young Australian establish a career. But it is telling that he also felt the need to shrug off the light music tag in order to be taken seriously. Mackerras was justifiably conscious of the importance of such perceptions to one’s career development, later noting that although Covent Garden reportedly twice considered him for their music directorship, it never transpired. ‘Maybe I am wrong,’ Mackerras observed, ‘but I suspect that in those days I wasn’t thought to be enough of a gentleman for Covent Garden.’\(^{377}\)

Mixed feelings characterise the experiences of many Australian composers in British light music: not sure whether to be glad for the work or resent it, whether to seek or scorn commercial success, they nevertheless found themselves inexorably drawn to the genre, made use of it, and thrived or survived. Light music offers a complex narrative of the engagement of Australian composers with London’s professional musical life, in which Australian composers were active contributors, and gained crucial opportunities in establishing their careers and developing their personal style. Perhaps it was not always a positive influence, but neither was it altogether negative. The story begins with two Australians who became stalwarts of British light music: Arthur Benjamin and Hubert Clifford.

### 8.2 Arthur Benjamin (1893-1960)

In his obituary for his friend, composer Herbert Howells described Arthur Benjamin’s ‘two serious disabilities.’ On one hand, he was a Romantic composer by temperament, unfashionable in 1960, whilst on the other he had ‘conquered a large part of the listening world with an enchanting brevity (Jamaican Rumba),’ whose success ‘enormously extended his popular fame, but reduced his stature in the view of high-powered criticism.’\(^{378}\) Hans Keller called it ‘The Problem of Popularity’: as the gulf between the

\(^{376}\) Stephen Alomes, 63.
\(^{377}\) Susie Gilbert, 259.
musical language spoken by composers and the musical language comprehended by listeners grew ever wider, Benjamin was lost between the stools. Just at a time when the kind of ‘Artistic light music’ Benjamin produced was needed most to ‘form an urgently needed bridge’379 between composers and their public, it seemed to be disappearing from musical life.

The struggle against his own popularity even characterized Benjamin’s relationship with his publisher, Boosey & Hawkes. Benjamin apparently enjoyed a warm friendship with Ralph Hawkes (Senior Director of the company), but Helen Wallace, author of the company’s history, describes Hawkes’s attitude to Benjamin as fond but workmanlike, and practical considerations came before Benjamin’s muse: when he confides that he is working on a symphony, Hawkes is not impressed. ‘Well, don’t let me deter you but “times are ’ard”… I’m glad you like the idea of a Concerto for piano and strings. If you can, get this on the easy side without losing any brilliance in the solo part. I am sure with your imaginative mind you can make it brilliant as a piece.’ These were Hawkes’s two favourite words when describing music, and when Benjamin suggested an overture based on a Negro spiritual he hastened to stop him, assuring Benjamin that the ‘miserable’ nature of such songs was not at all what the market required.380

Models of musical seriousness were largely absent in Arthur Benjamin’s upbringing. In a section of memoir, Benjamin recalled that ‘in Australia I had had no instruction. In England everyone at first took it for granted that I, like himself, had grown up in intimacy with such technicalities as sonata-form, fugue, invertible counterpoint, 16th-century polyphony and so on.’381

Although he was mostly unacquainted with music in its higher artistic guises and advanced contemporary practice, music in many other forms was powerfully present, and Benjamin’s musical education grew upon other soil. In upper-class Brisbane society, the operettas of Sidney Jones and Arthur Sullivan were popular, and Benjamin added to this Chopin, Mendelssohn and Liszt among other more sentimental favourites from the ‘classical’ repertoire – but not Bach, Mozart or Beethoven. His musical exposure included even lower forms as well, the music hall and vaudeville.382 It was eclectic, but

382 Wendy Hiscocks, The Influence of Arthur Benjamin’s Film Music on Music He Wrote for Other Genres, Ph.D. Thesis (Canberra: Australian National University, 2009), 23 and 43.
unbalanced according to aspirational standards – the boy ‘had no idea that there was any possible difference of quality between Beethoven, Grieg, Ethelbert Neven [Nevin], Chopin and Sidney Jones. “Difference in style, yes, but not in value.”

Hans Keller felt that this unusual catholicity placed Benjamin in an ‘exceptional historical situation’:

Had he had less talent or taste, Australia might have proved harmful. As it was, the harmonious interplay between his romantic and eclectic musical character and his early musical environment has produced an intuitive mediator between styles, times, kinds, between light and heavy: international as well as intertemporal and intergeneric. Untouched in the most formative years by the conceptions of ‘great’ and ‘deep,’ and not having to intend, therefore, to be either, his mobile mind grew to incorporate modern moods and methods and to attain the modern marvel - light music that is not slight, and serious music which renounces depth without risking shallowness.

Benjamin, the proto-postmodernist, possessed the ideal equipment of the composer of light music, a practitioner of in-betweenery par excellence. Australia equipped him for it. While Helen Wallace describes Benjamin as ‘Originally Australian,’ it is perhaps more useful to consider what characteristics Benjamin drew from his Australian identity and his life-long association with Australians, in forming his musical personality.

The leading scholar on Benjamin’s work, Wendy Hiscocks, summarizes some of Benjamin’s musical strengths:

His receptivity to diverse styles and genres extended to an interest in jazz in the 1920s, a deep appreciation of French music – especially Franck, Debussy and Ravel, an ability to blend music of the ‘old’ with that of the ‘new’, and a love of the stage. The latter orientation found a new mode of expression in the 1930s, when he joined the ranks of some of Britain’s finest composers as a pioneer in film music for early British talking pictures.

Taking an overview of the inspirations behind Benjamin’s compositions, we are struck by the sense of broad curiosity they cover: Caribbean rhythms, jazz (in its 1930s London fashion), Music Hall, operetta, Latin music, Square dances, ‘baroquerie’, etc. Benjamin’s enthusiasm for diverse sources was constrained within an overview that is typical of light music composers: he adapts his popular enthusiasms to a classical situation. He ‘classicizes’ them. At the same time as he is being inspired by popular sources, he keeps

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383 Hans Keller, 6.
384 Ibid.
385 Helen Wallace, 29.
386 Wendy Hiscocks, 4.
them at arm’s length. Of his Piano Concertino, Benjamin commented that while the piece has ‘something of jazz in its makeup,’ he is only interested in certain elements of appeal that jazz offers:

apart from the nauseating noises and the blatant rhythmic devices, which are the unpleasant side of modern jazz music, there may be detected something more which may definitely become a valuable addition to our music – something more than mere syncopation: rather, a widening of the possibilities of combining rhythms and rhythmical counterpoint. 387

Wendy Hiscocks examines Benjamin’s work in film in the 1930s to discover how it was of benefit to his ‘legitimate’ creativity. As a film composer, Roger Covell describes Benjamin as a ‘pioneer among composers of real accomplishment in Britain,’ contributing music of ‘elegance [and] an assured command of diverse styles and moods.’ But in his serious music, says Covell, Benjamin’s ‘confident and competent apparatus seems to be marking time waiting for an inspiration that never comes.’ 388 Hiscocks, however, proposes that the relation between Benjamin’s functional output and his concert music was fruitful, bringing ‘new stimulus for his creative energies and scope for him to experiment with orchestration, dissonance and more abstract musical thinking. Film developed his understanding of the psychological drama, the importance of timing and build-up towards a designated climax and the skilful application of leitmotif to clarify and interpret story.’

The observation suggests a neat way of conceiving Benjamin’s artistic development: with his natural facility and eclectic musical tastes, Benjamin had success in a ‘first period’ style founded upon light music. With the acquisition of more sophisticated and ‘deeper’ compositional skills, however, Benjamin graduated to a ‘second period’ in which he achieved his aim as a serious composer (though this second period was cut short by Benjamin’s early death). This simplified graduation is not what Hiscocks proposes, for Benjamin’s musical personality did not change: ‘[t]he ‘light’ element remained an important feature in his music until his last years.’ 389 Benjamin continually expanded his eclectic musical interests, adding new forms of ‘low’ inspiration from

387 Wendy Hiscocks, 59.
388 Roger Covell, 29.
working in Canada during the War to inspire two brilliant light music creations: the *North American Square Dance* (1951) and *Red River Jig* (1945), among others that continue the light music strand of his career.

In both his work and his opinions, Benjamin implies the query: why must the ‘light’ and ‘serious’ musical worlds be divided? Why should it mean less for a composer to wish to occupy both musical territories? In a letter to Ralph Hawkes in 1946, Benjamin’s frustration can be sensed clearly. ‘It is obvious that one is not allowed to be versatile in this country, he complained. ‘That is, to be able to write both light and serious music, as one can in the States. I am afraid that here I am branded with *Jamaican Rumba* and [his comic opera] *The Devil Take Her*. We shall see.’ The discrimination was a reflection of English stuffiness, as he goes on to Hawkes: ‘I still love London – the grandest place in the world – but, oh God, what a lot of stick-in-the-muddery one comes up against. And there is quite a lot at Boosey & Hawkes when you are not there.’

For Benjamin the two modes of musical creativity were not opponents: they could co-exist in a career, helping to ensure a practical livelihood and nourish an all-encompassing musical vocabulary. In contrast to Phelan’s view of light music in Mackerras’s career, Hiscocks sees aesthetic and pragmatic benefits arising from Benjamin’s work in functional music. Benjamin’s work in film music both supported his development to achieve higher capacities in musical invention and expressiveness and belongs within the continuity of his practice in light music and serious music. Benjamin’s career highlights the tension between his natural musical proclivities and unbiased curiosity and the requirements of music’s serious realm. The tension was ultimately disabling for Benjamin’s reputation, setting him and his work aside from the prevailing concerns of the musical mainstream.

**8.3 Hubert Clifford (1904-1959)**

Like Charles Mackerras, Hubert Clifford left Australia for London with a diverse portfolio behind him. Jim Davidson recalls that Clifford ‘was the oboist in the Melbourne State Theatre stage band when I led it during the 1930s.’

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391 Jim Davidson, 140.
Clifford’s musical beginnings situates him as a viola player ‘in the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra under Albert[o] Zelman and later … principal viola at the State Theatre.’ Glennon implies more established classical credentials when he mentions that Clifford ‘in his late twenties was several times guest conductor of the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra which played some of his compositions.’ Divergent as these accounts seem, we can conclude, at least, that Clifford led a busy freelance life in Melbourne.

Davidson noticed that ‘Hubert had a deeper interest in music than some of his contemporaries, and it led him into the studies which resulted in his graduation as Doctor of Music in 1952.’ This ‘deeper interest’ was encouraged by his mentor Fritz Hart, and motivated Clifford’s move to London in 1930. There, Clifford received tutoring in composition from Ralph Vaughan Williams at the Royal College of Music, eventually putting his advanced compositional skills to expressive purpose in the ambitious personal statement, *Symphony 1940* (1940). Lest there be a suspicion that Clifford could not imagine beyond the ‘pastoral’ style, it should be noted that the sonic tapestry of the Symphony owes more to Walton than to Vaughan Williams.

In his liner notes for the premiere recording of the Symphony, Lewis Foreman traces Clifford’s subsequent career, which takes a distinctly ‘executive’ turn: as BBC Empire Music Supervisor during the Second World War, then as musical director for Alexander Korda’s movie production houses London Films and British Lion Films, and thence back to the BBC, as Head of Light Music Programmes between 1953 and 1955. Clifford’s name became ‘synonymous, as a composer, with BBC light music until his death … and this may have eclipsed his reputation as a serious composer.’ His obituary in *The Times* was headlined ‘Dr. H. Clifford: Composer of Light Music,’ and informs the reader that ‘most of his compositions were of light music, which he published under various pseudonyms, and scores for films.’

There is an obvious explanation for Clifford’s descent into light music. ‘In Australia,’ Foreman explains, ‘Clifford had known hardship in pursuing his musical aspirations,

pinching and scraping to get by, and just when he was achieving a growing musical reputation, he left for London and became a schoolmaster while trying to get established.'\textsuperscript{395} James Glennon points out that the ‘pinching and scraping’ continued in London as well, once his scholarship money ran out:

He found it difficult to obtain regular employment. With his finances at a low ebb, he took a part-time position at Westminster School, finding himself, in his own words, ‘in the somewhat anomalous position of teaching in an English Public School and taking my meals at the pie-stalls in the Tottenham Court Road and thereabouts.’ A year later he was appointed music-master at Rockenham [sic] County School for boys and subsequently became recognised as an expert on school music.\textsuperscript{396}

Pecuniary needs may have driven Clifford to develop his ‘executive’ skills as a musician and composer. The entry into the world of school music may be taken as the beginning of Clifford’s executive career, where Clifford’s academic side combines with his practical musicianship. Aspirations to compose, however, are always clearly to the fore throughout this career. The fruit of his specialist attention to school orchestras is found in a book, \textit{The School Orchestra: A Comprehensive Manual for Conductors},\textsuperscript{397} published by Boosey & Hawkes with an accompanying set of practical \textit{Studies in Orchestral Ensemble}, in 1939. The \textit{Studies} provide exercises to hone specific aspects of orchestral playing, namely attack, release, variations of speed, ‘rhythmic groupings and lilt,’ scales, and ‘intonation within the common chord.’\textsuperscript{398}

In discussing the repertoire available to school and amateur orchestras, Clifford embraces light music, but with caveats. Light music’s purpose is to provide content for performances ‘for Entertainment Purposes,’ and to meet certain everyday needs of school and community life:

Although members of school orchestras will usually agree that they find really good music more inspiriting and enlivening to play than light music, and so better for them from a recreational point of view, they are often required to provide music for such functions as informal concerts, garden parties, theatrical performances, and so on.\textsuperscript{399}

Listing a selection of pieces that includes Albert Coates, Edward German, Arthur Wood and Sigmund Romberg, Clifford adds the observation that the presentation of light music

\textsuperscript{395} Lewis Foreman, ‘Australian Symphonies,’ 6.
\textsuperscript{396} James Glennon, 152.
\textsuperscript{398} Hubert Clifford, \textit{Studies in Orchestral Ensemble} (London: Boosey & Hawkes, 1939).
\textsuperscript{399} Hubert Clifford, \textit{The School Orchestra}, 118.
'often presents considerable technical difficulties,' and he urges conductors and schoolmasters to take whatever liberties with the score are required. ‘It is all very practical,’ remarked the book’s impressed reviewer in *The Musical Times*. Clifford’s old teacher, Vaughan Williams, contributed a preface in which he extols these practical virtues, since ‘All art is a compromise,’ and reminds us that:

> A great man does not appear suddenly out of the sky: he is the product of his surroundings. If we want perfect music in England, it will come as the final result of a great mass of imperfect music. The great composer nearly always springs from artistically humble circumstances. Verdi first learnt his art by hearing his first efforts played by the band of his native town. Dvorak’s early compositions were written for the village band organized by his father, the local butcher.

It was with the orchestra of boys from the Beckenham County School that Clifford gave the first try-out of his *A Kentish Suite* in 1936. The year before, the five-movement suite had been awarded a W.W. Cobbett Prize, and in 1937, Clifford conducted a performance with the BBC Symphony Orchestra. With its cheerful disposition and fundamentally melodic approach, the piece is classed as a prime example of Clifford’s light music: Lewis Foreman describes it as ‘1930s film music without the film,’ inspired by imagery and events of seventeenth century English history.

Building upon the credibility and qualifications acquired during his schoolmaster years, Clifford’s career progressed steadily along practical pathways. During the war, he served as Music Supervisor of the BBC Empire Service, ‘in charge of the programmes of music put out on all the oversea[s] English-speaking services, and he saw to it that the works of Commonwealth composers were fully represented.’

Wartime saw a growth in the production of documentary films for training and propaganda, and Clifford, with the success of his pictorial *Kentish Suite*, gravitated naturally in that direction. His career as a film composer begins with the 1943 ‘Social Assurance’ documentary *The Second Freedom* (1943), where his music, played by a reduced London Symphony Orchestra and conducted by that paragon of British film

400 Ibid.
404 ‘Dr. H. Clifford,’ *The Times*. 
music, Muir Mathieson, lends reassuring optimism to the story of the Welfare State’s nurturing of its citizens.405

Clifford immediately applied his academic turn to analysing his new métier in a series of articles for Tempo between September 1944 and December 1945, surveying recent developments in film music, chiefly British. The experience of working in documentaries was obviously a positive one for Clifford, as he admits to feeling ‘that there is a real measure of artistic satisfaction on such a film if it is well planned and imaginatively executed.’406 The reticence about light music expressed in his comments in The School Orchestra gives way to a stronger sense of satisfaction in jobs well done.

The Second Freedom was produced at the Merton Park Studios near Wimbledon, which supported a variety of small companies producing documentaries for Government authorities during the War, and afterwards became a base for the production of British ‘B’ or second-feature films until 1967.407 Clifford worked there with documentary producer Ronald H. Riley in two films released directly after the War. Clifford’s score for the iconic Steel (1945) was again performed by the London Symphony Orchestra with Muir Mathieson, while Clifford himself conducted the LSO players in his music for General Election (1946).408

Clifford’s experience as a schoolmaster brought increased expertise to his abilities as a conductor, and this skill became one of the foundations of his career in films. With little delay following his documentary successes, producer Alexander Korda brought Clifford into the realm of feature film production. For Korda, Clifford served as musical director, conductor and composer, commencing in 1947. The styles of music and the musical resources employed in the scores that Clifford supervised for Korda diverged widely, but general discombobulation was sparked by director Brian Forbes’ insistence that zither-player Anton Karas supply the music for The Third Man (1949).409

Clifford’s film music is by no means uniformly ‘light’: he can also be regarded as a pioneer of film noir scoring in his music for such ‘B’ films as The Dark Man (1951), Mystery Junction (1951), Hunted (aka The Stranger In Between, 1952), House of Secrets (aka Triple Deception, 1956) and Hell Drivers (1957). Nevertheless, particularly in his documentaries, Clifford’s aptitude and love for the English pastoral mode prevails strongly. A case in point is the tender delight, even rapture that marks the musical accompaniment he provided for Round the Island (1956), a British Transport Film Unit portrait of the rural and coastal idyll of the Isle of Wight. The film makes a feature of the island’s active sailing life, and its leading identity Uffa Fox, who became a friend of Clifford’s when, enamoured of the island’s attractions, he moved there to live. Life on the island inspired Clifford to compose the Cowes Suite which, Uffa Fox observes, ‘described the waters of Cowes, with the great liners of the world and our great Naval war ships passing through the Roads. One movement, named The Buccaneer was a hornpipe and describes me, while the final movement, Royal Visitor, paints a picture of Prince Philip’s arrival in Cowes Roads aboard the Royal Yacht Britannia, and is most inspiring.’ Fox introduced the piece at a concert in the Royal Festival Hall, conducted by Clifford, as part of the BBC’s 1958 Festival of Light Music, for which it was commissioned.

Clifford’s output also includes a major contribution to the stocks of production library publishers, principally Chappell’s, where he also frequently conducted the Melodi Light Orchestra. Clifford’s production music catalogue features a variety of highly dramatic cues, as in the doom-laden Disaster and Desolation, and his mighty fanfares to industrial progress, Building for Tomorrow and Heavy Industry. Other tracks address specific needs of film and radio producers for cues to supply appropriate atmosphere with sets of short musical episodes grouped under the headings Ghost Story (1-3), Light Comedy Episodes (‘Main Titles/ Play In’; ‘Happy Go Lucky’; ‘Happy Ending’) and Three

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411 Uffa Fox, Joys of Life (London: Newnes, 1966), 170-171.
412 Hubert Clifford, Building for Tomorrow, on the compilation, Swing Easy, Archive Music Revisited AMR 053, 2009, accessed 23 January 2013, iTunes.
413 Hubert Clifford, Heavy Industry, on the compilation, UFO, Archive Music Revisited, AMR 057, accessed 1 July 2013, iTunes.
Aspects of Fear (‘Premonition’; ‘Hidden Menace’; ‘Terror by Night’).\textsuperscript{414} Clifford adopted a pseudonym, Michael Sarsfield, for some of his light music and film scores, such as the production library cue \textit{Main Event},\textsuperscript{415} and the ‘B’ film, \textit{Mystery Junction} (1951).

Some of Clifford’s production library tracks may be sampled today through the websites of Universal Production Music (now incorporating several of the smaller libraries that Clifford originally wrote for) and EMI Production Music, and bona fide production houses can download for licensed use. Universal’s library incorporates the catalogues of Bruton Music and Chappell, now presented in digitized form, the latest in a variety of formats and compilations of this material ranging from 78 rpm to 33 1/3 rpm and compact disc.\textsuperscript{416} The website of EMI Production Music incorporates archived collections of the KPM Library, including Clifford’s much-used series of fifteen \textit{Drama Links}, each lasting between seven and fourteen seconds.\textsuperscript{417} As well as being used in newsreels of the day, the applications of Clifford’s cues includes episodes of \textit{The Ren & Stimpy Show} between 1991 and 2003, and \textit{Spongebob Squarepants} from 1999 to 2010.\textsuperscript{418} Were it not for the publication of new recordings of his orchestral music by the British record labels Chandos and Dutton,\textsuperscript{419} these traces of his production music might constitute the main compositional legacy of Hubert Clifford.

Apart from his own extensive output of compositions, Clifford achieved a status in the world of light music for his decidedly executive role in the BBC during the 1950s. Clifford explained how he took charge, for a brief but important period, of the BBC’s light music output:

> In January of 1952 I was invited by Mr. R.J.F. Howgill, then Controller, Entertainment, to make a report on the Light Music output of the B.B.C. This I completed in June 1952.

\textsuperscript{414} Hubert Clifford, \textit{Ghost Story (1-3)}, on the compilation, \textit{Break Out}, Archive Music Revisited, AMR 051, accessed 1 July 2013, iTunes.


\textsuperscript{418} ‘Hubert Clifford Filmography,’ Internet Movie Database, accessed 29 June 2013, www.imdb.com/name/nm0166631/?ref_=fn_al_nm_1.

Subsequently, I accepted an invitation to take charge of a new department to be created to handle light music for a period of two years, limited by mutual agreement, commencing January 1st 1953. The general brief can be paraphrased briefly, ‘we agree in the main with your criticisms, come in and put things right.’ (A sporting challenge to avoid being hoist on one’s own petard is difficult to resist).\(^{420}\)

In his first report, Clifford raised concerns at practices that compromised artistic standards, and he made pragmatic suggestions to address the problems of creeping commercialism and inadequate or falling musical standards.\(^{421}\) Clifford’s recommendations sufficiently impressed the BBC’s leaders that they cajoled him into a short-term appointment as Head of Light Music Programmes (Sound) to implement his ideas. Clifford completed a second report on the conclusion of his stint, on 31 December 1954. While the emphasis in both reports is given to judgments of the standards of performance from the numerous ensembles and orchestras, both those external to the BBC and the numerous groups the Corporation itself maintained, they convey a great deal about Clifford’s aesthetic views, and the position of light music in 1950s Britain.

Clifford saw light music as a bridge between classical and popular musical cultures, and a bulwark against the intrusion of low American forms of popular music, debased by ‘laissez-faire’ commercialism. Light music could provide ‘something better than the trivial, brash sentiments of Tin Pan Alley,’\(^ {422}\) if it aspired to the ‘better type of light music, as represented by the orchestral suites of Eric Coates, Haydn Wood and Montague Phillips.’\(^ {423}\) But the pressure was becoming constant for artistic considerations to give way to commercial efficacy, making it difficult for composers to keep their gaze elevated. ‘The whole tendency,’ he complained, ‘is to encourage the short piece of about three minutes duration which … will so earn the maximum possible income of performing rights for the publishers’ capital outlay.’\(^ {424}\)

The desire to mount a concerted defence against the drift of popular culture towards American commercial influence perhaps lay behind the proposal which Jim Davidson, the Australian who succeeded Clifford, recalled:

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\(^{423}\) Ibid., 14.

\(^{424}\) Ibid., 14.
He [Clifford] and I used to discuss enthusiastically, and not a little alcoholically, the illogical subdivision of light music and pop music within the BBC. We thought it would be much more appropriate, and achieve a better mixture and balance, if the diverse musical entertainments were brought together in one department.\(^{425}\)

Writing on the eve of rock’n’roll’s transforming advent, Clifford warned that it ‘would be a great pity if the gap between “classical” and dance music which exists in the U.S.A. and in certain continental countries is allowed to develop in Great Britain. There is in this country a great middle-brow zone who persist in loving their “Grand Hotel” and “Those Were the Days.”’\(^{426}\) The programs mentioned by Clifford represented the ‘cornerstones of B.B.C. Light Music,’ whose ‘appeal depends partly on the tunefulness and straightforward lilt of the old-time dance tunes, partly upon memory and nostalgia, and partly upon vicarious participation in pre-jazz ballroom dancing.’\(^{427}\)

Clifford’s willingness to acknowledge the diversity of musical tastes in the Great British Public is evident throughout the report: no matter what the musical style, judgements of the quality of the performance and presentation of the broadcast product should be paramount, whether it be the styles alluded to above, or Irish Ceilidhe music, ‘Viennese music of various types,’ or the “‘progressive’ light music’ styles of Philip Green and Robert Farnon.\(^{428}\) There is a clear sense that Clifford would probably have reacted as negatively as Jim Davidson to the invasion of rock music, but writing in the pre-rock era, Clifford saw the many varieties of ‘entertainment music’ as parts of a continuum, and therefore the ‘present line of demarcation is in the wrong place.’ Instead of separating music on the basis of styles or tastes, Clifford argued that the distinction lay in the functions that different types of music serve. A more ‘logical sub-division would be into entertainment music, which is intended to make an immediate but not very profound appeal, and “serious” music which has deeper aesthetic or philosophic or religious implications.’\(^{429}\)

This emphasis on function allowed for a new way of regarding the practice of ‘entertainment music.’ If musical practice could be seen as falling into the categories of ‘Pure’ or ‘Applied’, a due appreciation of the role and potential of the light music

\(^{425}\) Jim Davidson, 140-141.
\(^{427}\) Ibid., 21.
\(^{428}\) Ibid., 6, 18 and 23-24.
\(^{429}\) Ibid., 52.
composer would follow. ‘Musicians have been so befogged by the traditional antitheses of “Absolute” and “Programme” music,’ Clifford wrote, ‘that they have hardly become conscious of the possibility that there may be a sub-division analogous to that in the plastic arts, in mathematics, and in science.’ Because it addresses society’s musical needs with a practical, service-oriented outlook, the practice of ‘Applied Music’ requires ‘a new race of musicians, including both executives and practitioners, who are both radio and television-minded. They should be thoroughly professional, they should have adequate knowledge of technical matters in sound, television, films and recording, they should have a sense of overall effect and presentation in some form of entertainment, dramatic or light.’

The trajectory towards ‘Applied Music’ was one that Clifford had journeyed along himself, acquiring new sets of skills and a new practical awareness at each step of his career progress. He had become successful in his trade, though this success came at the expense of his activity in serious vein. Whether and in what form he may have resumed that stream of creative activity is an unanswered question: Clifford was only 55 when he died, which leaves much room for speculation about his likely future. Uffa Fox described his friend as ‘a great composer. Unfortunately, just as he was becoming most fruitful, developing wonderful themes and compositions, he left us for paradise.’

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430 Ibid., 50-51.
431 Uffa Fox, 170.
Chapter 9: Composers of the 1960s and 1970s

Benjamin and Clifford were significant pioneers of British light music who were preserved from confrontation with the ‘pop’ revolution. The task of adapting to a drastically changing landscape of musical life and taste fell to a group of younger composers who, in developing their own light music practice and styles, responded to the variety of stylistic approaches and character that flourished in popular culture from the end of the 1950s.

9.1 Ron Grainer (1922-1981)

‘Who is Ron Grainer?’ asks the lead singer of the 1980s Liverpool band, Exhibit B. ‘Nobody knows/ Who wrote the music for old TV shows/ Man in a Suitcase is one I recall/ Doctor Who, Steptoe, The Prisoner and all.’\(^4\)\(^3\)\(^2\) The answer begins in the rural town of Atherton in Far North Queensland. Located high on the tablelands above the surrounding tropical rainforest, the town enjoys a surprisingly temperate climate. When Ron Grainer was born there in 1922, Atherton was the hub for a community of isolated townships, such as Mt Mulligan and Aloomba, the remote, tiny communities where Grainer would grow up, whose inhabitants drew their meagre living from mining or agriculture, and had little time for artistic pursuits.

But music, under the encouragement of his mother, became the focus of Grainer’s youthful interest and achievement. The boy who scored well in the Violin Solo section of the Cairns Eisteddfod in 1934,\(^4\)\(^3\)\(^3\) was drawn to music in an environment that was starved of cultural vitality. It was ‘[h]ardly the place where anyone lets you think of a music career,’ Grainer told the London correspondent of the *Australian Women’s Weekly* in 1964. ‘There was nowhere to study and it was scarcely a ‘man’s job’ when I was a kid. Funnily enough, though, I always seemed to end up being involved in music, even at school. Not that there was anything to encourage me on the Atherton Tableland.’\(^4\)\(^3\)\(^4\)

Intimations of wider possibilities emerged when Grainer moved south to study Engineering at the University of Queensland in Brisbane. Along with his Engineering studies, Grainer kept up the piano and violin, and started taking lessons in composition with local worthy Percy Brier (1885-1970), ‘an old-fashioned composer with Victorian roots.’ But Brier allowed his students to reach beyond the confines of Victorian taste. The first record of a Grainer composition is found in 1940, at a recital in which he contributed a piano piece called *In the Evening Glow*, described by the Brisbane Courier-Mail’s critic as ‘an atmospheric study of considerable beauty. Conceived in the sophisticated idiom of post-war music [First World War, that is], it sparkles with dissonances against a slow descending motif in the base.’

Brier’s circle of musicians exerted a stimulating influence. Grainer soon realized that ‘it seemed mad to be studying anything but music. I was always playing in chamber groups, either piano or violin, and listening to everything I could, from symphonies to jazz groups. I loved it all.’ A stint of War service ended abruptly with, as Grainer described it, ‘a 44-gallon drum falling on my leg.’ During his long recuperation from this serious injury, Grainer made the decisive turn to music, never to return to Engineering. As part of his repatriation provisions, Grainer studied at the Sydney Conservatorium, which had transformed into a dynamic place under the directorship of Eugene Goossens.

Grainer considered Goossens a mentor. ‘In Sydney when I had composed my first works I had always received the most helpful and constructive criticism from him. There was a violin sonata, some song settings, and an orchestral work that he had seen.’ That short list of works suggests a technique of some assurance in the young man, and Goossens must have encouraged Grainer sufficiently to lead him to pursue a dream of compositional fame. Evidence of the kind of music young Grainer was writing may be found in contemporary concert reviews. A review of a Brisbane recital from 1950 notes that Grainer presented his own ‘Suite of Five Pieces, written for children … [which] revealed freshness of treatment particularly in the cameos, “Ghost of a ghost of a waltz” and

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437 Betty Best, 9.
438 Ibid.
“Pablo the Puppet,” which gave promise for more serious work in larger forms.439 Back in Sydney on 16 August 1951, the *Sydney Morning Herald* critic reported on Grainer’s sonata performed in a recital with violinist Don Scotts:

> A sonata by … Ron Grainer, gave a clue to the player’s sympathy with the Gallic refinement and delicate romance of Milhaud, Faure and Delius, for it contained much of the language and spirit of the other works on the programme, with a touch at the beginning of Sibelian austerity. Grainer’s ideas are at least as memorable as those of the rather lifeless Milhaud sonata which opened the evening, but these ideas tend to side-slip into facile pleasantries in their development.440

Grainer’s credentials in Australia were mostly in the field of serious music. The main evidence to suggest anything other than a serious compositional career is a ballad, *An Australian Carol*, recorded by Irish tenor Patrick O’Hagan and published sometime in the 1940s.441 But Grainer was struggling to find a way forward for his composing ambitions. In 1966, Grainer recalled that he was frustrated that he couldn’t ‘find much outlet,’ but more confused about his stylistic identity:

> I couldn’t find into what niche I could fit, because … I’m very interested in all forms of music, particularly anything offbeat. I didn’t quite see into what niche I would fit as a composer. I think being out here [Australia], one doesn’t tend to think in the kind of work I do now … it doesn’t register very much, or at least it didn’t then, that it exists. So I thought mainly of pop music and of more serious music. I wrote odd pieces for friends to play or sing, but I had no real success.442

In other words, Grainer was searching for that musical in-between territory inhabited by the light music composer. While he could find occasional opportunity writing songs, or composing serious works without much hope of performance, the kind of opportunity which could support him and his family was elusive: he could not find entrée to an Australian light music milieu.

After graduating in 1949, Grainer kept himself busy, back in Brisbane, as an accompanist, but faced with little opportunity, he planned to embark upon overseas study in composition. ‘He had in mind,’ *Women’s Weekly* reported, ‘to go to Brazil to work with the composer Villa-Lobos. But by the time they got to England in 1952 with their

young daughter their money was down to £200 and they had to stay put. Grainer reiterated the point in 1966, pointing out that Villa-Lobos and Brazil were his intended destination, but once in London, he ‘got caught there, and I had to stay. So instead of studying with a man, I studied through experience.’

Had the Grainers made it to Brazil, one can only speculate as to how they may have thrived in a very different climate from that which they found in 1950s London. The writer of Grainer’s obituary in *The Times* describes the hard early years there:

Finding work was difficult and he was first forced to earn his living in a knockabout variety act called the Allen Brothers and June. As part of this act, he toured the Moss Empire circuit, his closest proximity to actual music during this phase consisting of his being hit on the head with the lid of a grand piano every night. Later he was caretaker of a block of flats…”

Grainer had, back in Australia, acquired sufficient reputation to be considered for ‘official accompanist’ to the recital presentations of the Australian Musical Association in London, as a candidate alongside Geoffrey Parsons, Douglas Gamley and former classmate Richard Bonynge. But the kind of accompanying work Grainer did eventually find came in lower markets: ‘helping out at charity shows’ and ‘as a general accompanist for television rehearsals.’

The work in television gave Grainer a foot in the door, and he edged the opening wider, providing music for episodes of early British television productions, and befriending directors and producers. Grainer’s work in these one-off productions made an impression on executive producer Andrew Osborn, but it was Grainer’s wife who ‘read in the press that the BBC were going to undertake a series,’ based on Georges Simenon’s Maigret stories (of which Grainer was an avid fan) and urged him to put his name forward. Osborn commissioned Grainer to provide theme and incidental music for the

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443 Betty Best, 9.
444 Ron Grainer, interview by Binny Lum
448 ‘Obituary: Mr Ron Grainer,’ 14.
449 Geoff Leonard and Pete Walker, unnum.
series *Maigret* (1963). His success with this assignment set Grainer upon the path he was destined to pursue for his career. He was hailed almost from the outset as the ‘Master of the Signature Tune’ in a way that has hardly been matched since.

Grainer was kept busy by a relentless stream of commissions for television themes and incidental music. His production library compositions, primarily for Chappell, were a natural overlap with his television work, but Grainer also grasped the opportunity to venture successfully into West End musical theatre. His work as a soundtrack composer extended naturally into feature film, progressing in the usual manner from documentaries to ‘B’ films, and onward to Hollywood.

In sharp contrast to Hubert Clifford and Jim Davidson, Grainer showed no fear of the invading new forms of American popular music. He readily embraces every new character of pop music to incorporate it into his stock of musical styles and devices, mimicking or evoking them in quick succession, and showing a perfect willingness to absorb the new styles and fads. In addition to his burgeoning media work, Grainer acted as musical mentor to a short-lived Bristol band, The Eagles, whom he met during the filming of *Some People* (1962). The relationship between Grainer and the band was synergistic: he helped the band develop material, while the band performed pop versions of Grainer’s Television and soundtrack themes, and sometimes contributed to his soundtracks.

The electric guitar sound of The Eagles became one component of the rich sonic palette that distinguishes Grainer’s soundtrack work. This palette incorporates Grainer’s fondness for antique musical instruments, which combines seamlessly with a curiosity for electronic instruments (like ondes martenot and clavioline). Grainer assembled his own collection of antique instruments, which according to the biography on the Grainer fan website, included the ‘virginal, the heckle-phones [sic], the shaums [sic], the tenor comporium [sic].’ The sounds of portative organ, clavichord and harpsichord are frequently heard in Grainer’s music, often amplified or imitated on electronic instruments. Grainer mentioned in an interview that, while his theme tunes came to him

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anywhere, he would check them at the piano or, more often, ‘at the clavichord, which I find better.’

Amidst all the business of his soundtrack and production library work, Grainer did not wish to entirely forsake his aspirations for ‘serious’ musical achievement. *The Women’s Weekly* reported that ‘Grainer still hopes to find time one day to get back to chamber and symphonic music.’ Grainer sought greater depth in his musicianship, taking private lessons in conducting with Goossens, now exiled from Sydney, in the last months before his mentor died. The heavy workload of his film and television career is blamed for Grainer’s deteriorating eyesight, one reason for removing himself to the sunshine of Portugal to live in the mid-1960s. There he hoped to fulfill more commissions for ballet and dance works, building on from his scores for productions of the Sunday Ballet Club in the early 1960s. He hoped to undertake compositional projects free of business pressures at his new Portuguese home. ‘That’s where I will write anything that doesn’t have a deadline like TV and films,’ he told the journalist, who saw in his eyes ‘a gleam of hope for the peace and sunshine.’

Grainer’s death from spinal cancer in 1981, aged 58, snuffed out that ‘gleam of hope.’ He provided music for film and television productions until his death, returning to England in 1975 in order to keep in closer touch with the film and television industry, but never managed to ‘find time’ for serious composition again. Grainer’s output as a composer is dominated by his work in three key generators of light music: television, musical theatre and film.

**9.1.1 Music for Television**

Grainer’s facility for capturing mood in a tuneful manner made him highly sought after in the early boom years of British Television, and he worked incessantly for commercial producers as well as the BBC. The early products of television interpreted the standard genres borrowed principally from radio, and new genres developed out of processes of

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453 Ron Grainer, interview by Binny Lum
454 Betty Best, 9.
456 Betty Best, 9.
rationalization and adaptation to demand, progressing from filmed plays to generic production formulas. Grainer’s success lies in his understanding of these genres, adapting to changing fashions, and his skillful application of small musical resources to evoke character effectively.

To gain the necessary understanding of ‘character, or mood, or atmosphere,’ the television composer relies upon observing rehearsals, meeting the actors and learning about the characters they play, hearing what the director is ‘setting out to do,’ and reading draft scripts. After absorbing what he could from these experiences, Grainer observes that he must then ‘write it purely from feeling’:

It is more a matter of feeling than of intellect, and the getting of the character. I find that once I see something I start to, myself, get in that mood. You shut your mind out to anything else that doesn’t register. When I’m writing I may get lots of ideas before the real one clicks. I get them and I immediately dismiss them if they don’t evoke what I’m trying to evoke.

Describing the origins of the famous Doctor Who (1963) theme music, Mark Ayres focusses attention on the composer’s craftsman-like contribution of a short score designed specifically to allow a free hand in its electronic realization. Grainer’s approach was informed by his personal experience in creating the soundtrack, in a prior collaboration with the BBC Radiophonic Workshop, for the documentary Giants of Steam (1963). Ayres highlights Grainer’s intent to pare down his compositions to essential lines, specifically targeted to meet the musical requirements of the project. The use of an electronic soundscape for the Doctor Who theme had been decided, Ayres recounts, by producer Verity Lambert, and it eventually fell to Grainer to supply the musical ideas:

Grainer composed the theme on a single sheet of A4 manuscript, and sent it over from his [part-time] home in Portugal, leaving the Workshop to get on with it. With an eye to the fact that the techniques … to realise the theme were very time-consuming, Grainer provided a very simple composition, in essence just the famous bass line and a swooping melody. There are few harmonic changes, and these are marked out almost entirely by the movement of the bass line, with only sparing use of inner harmony parts to reinforce where

458 Ron Grainer, interview by Binny Lum
459 Ibid.
460 Ibid.
necessary. Any indication as to orchestration or timbre was simple but evocative: ‘wind bubble’, ‘cloud’ and so on.\textsuperscript{462}

That the theme has been successfully adapted to different realizations attests to the efficacy of Grainer’s honed-back approach. As the \textit{Doctor Who} theme demonstrates, Grainer’s theme tunes can convey complexity of character with disarming simplicity. To establish the peculiar bitter-sweet, tragi-comic atmosphere of \textit{Steptoe \& Son} (1962), Grainer fixes on the character of the junkman’s horse, clip-clopping along in its relentlessly repeated daily grind, to frame the languid Cockney tune he titled \textit{Old Ned}. Greater complexity is encapsulated in Grainer’s title music for \textit{The Prisoner}, Patrick McGooohan’s genre-bending production from 1967-68, which ‘stands out for the way it wove together the conventions of Action TV, the enigmas of absurdist theatre and the startling spectacle of the big top.’\textsuperscript{463} For the show’s extended titles segment, Grainer transformed the basic material of one of his production library pieces, \textit{The Age of Elegance}, performed by an ensemble of harpsichord, zither, portative organ, electric guitar and timpani, into a three-minute title sequence that Elizabeth Withey describes as ‘pop Teutonic opera.’\textsuperscript{464} As well as removing the antique instrumental elements in favour of ‘two electric guitars, percussion, bass and brass,’\textsuperscript{465} and speeding up the tempo, the revamped version interpolates sound effects (thunderclaps resounding the protagonist’s anger) to generate the revolutionary impact the program sought.

There was a late burst to Grainer’s television work from the late 1970s: the historical mini-series \textit{Edward \& Mrs Simpson} (1978), the sit-com \textit{Shelley} (1982) and a series of adaptations of Roald Dahl’s suspense stories, \textit{Tales of the Unexpected} (1982). There is a sense that these projects lack something of the insight into musical character and the instrumental inventiveness which powers Grainer’s early television work, relying instead on the composer’s repository of musical moods and catchy tunefulness to carry them.

\textsuperscript{464} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{465} Ibid.
9.1.2 Musical Theatre

Grainer attained significant success – seemingly out of nowhere – with his first musical. *Robert and Elizabeth*\(^{466}\) premiered in Manchester in September 1964, before transferring in October to London, where it ran for 948 performances. International success eluded the show, however, when copyright complications prevented it from being shown in the United States.

The original production of *Robert and Elizabeth* featured two Australians in the leading roles: Keith Michell and June Bronhill, both enjoying great success in London at the time. But Sheridan Morley acidly observes the retrospective character of this Victorian-era production, describing the story as a ‘creaky incest melodrama,’ for which Grainer’s score ‘sounded as though it had been soaked in minor [Ivor] Novello rhapsodies for several decades.’\(^{467}\) Viewed in the context of Grainer’s other work, however, *Robert and Elizabeth* is startling in its competence with operetta style. Andrew Lamb calls it an ‘outstanding British work of the 1960s,’ whose success, unlike other hit musicals of the period, ‘belonged almost entirely to the composer,’ and that ‘stood out in its time for a score of almost comic-opera standard.’\(^{468}\) Encompassing the ebullience and melodiousness of comic opera, ‘Grainer’s score is topped by the joyous romantic duet “I Know Now,” while the leading lady rejoices in an operatic Soliloquy and the leading man in “The Moon in My Pocket.” There is also a delightful daydreaming piece, “The Girls That Boys Dream About,” for the numerous Barrett children.’\(^{469}\)

Grainer himself called it a ‘standard kind of professional job,’ undertaken as a commission from producer Martin Landau. ‘When I sat down to write the music for *Robert & Elizabeth,*’ Grainer recalled, ‘I had several things in mind. First of all, the story and the atmosphere and the character and what kind of music it would take. Then, within those limits, what kind of audience would come in to see that story, and then my tendency is to slant the music for that kind of audience.’\(^{470}\)

\(^{466}\) Ron Grainer, *Robert and Elizabeth: A New Musical*, EMI His Master’s Voice CLP 1820, 1964, 33\(\frac{1}{3}\) rpm.
\(^{469}\) Ibid., 328-9.
\(^{470}\) Ron Grainer, interview by Binny Lum
To follow their success, Millar, Grainer and Martin Landau teamed again for a project that turned in the opposite stylistic direction. *On The Level* (1966)\textsuperscript{471} aimed its appeal self-consciously towards the younger generation, and took an unconventional approach to the genre, seeking to find a new formula for the modern musical. Brian Epstein, The Beatles’ manager, joined Landau as co-producer, and the production strove for a new style rooted in popular music and innovative staging. ‘We decided to pioneer a production process involving a combination of cinematic, electronic and “live” effects, giving *On The Level* a total of forty-two major scene changes – most of which do not involve scenery in the conventional sense.’\textsuperscript{472}

To match the youth-oriented style of the production, Grainer gave his score a stronger pop feeling, using a Big Band line-up of brass and saxophones complemented by two electric guitars, double bass doubling electric bass, piano, organ, percussion and drum-kit. Such elements were not entirely new: *On the Level* continues a line of pop innovation which had begun with Monty Norman’s *Expresso Bongo* (1958), in which the British musical had ‘jumped forward decades in a single show… bringing contemporary pop styles into the theatre along with the first electric guitar in a West End pit orchestra.’\textsuperscript{473} But with *On the Level*’s limited success Grainer’s association with Millar and Landau came to an end.

Grainer returned to musical theatre in two collaborations with the comedy writers Caryl Brahms and Ned Sherrin, whom he had known since working with them on the BBC satire, *That Was the Week that Was* (1962). *Sing a Rude Song* (1970) featured the unexpected pairing of Bee Gee Maurice Gibb and *Carry On* star Barbara Windsor in a musical celebrating the Victorian Music Hall star Marie Lloyd. A few years later came a Dickensian celebration, *Nickleby & Me* (1975).


9.1.3 Music for Film

With the success of his early work on television, it was not long before Grainer picked up commissions to score films, starting out with documentaries. *Terminus* (1961)\(^{474}\) convincingly displays Grainer’s capacity for finding the right musical idiom to match the film’s rich array of characters and moods. John Schlesinger’s unscripted film, surveying the events and personalities of a day at Waterloo Station, evokes its broad range of drama, pathos and humour purely through its selection of moments of true life as observed at a busy metropolitan railway station.

Grainer’s music acts as a detached commentator who points out the contrast between the classes of travel: a calypso tune accompanies scenes of arriving Caribbean migrants, while a swing vocal quartet (the Don Riddell Singers) highlights the destinations and activities of the upper class set. Grainer deploys a variety of small instrumental combos to fit each scene: a languid electric guitar underpinned by slow-strummed double bass and ‘noodling’ piano characterize the waiting faces of passengers and workers, a skiffle tune serves for scenes of reunion. The loneliness of the bag-lady as night falls over the closing station is depicted by the languid saxophone of a jazz band that might be playing away the midnight hours at an empty bar, but Grainer adds the personal touch of an ethereal zither. The descent of darkness returns us to the Brecht-Weill air of the film’s opening scenes.

Grainer’s way with small combos and unusual instrumental sounds invests many of his scores with evocative flavour, as in his music for the Buñuel-influenced black comedy *Station Six Sahara* (1963), where portative organ, clavioline, and electric guitar combine with a rhythm section of zither, electric bass, bongos, chimes and claves, to generate the desafinado feeling that underlies the strange action of the film.\(^{475}\) Similarly, in the Walt Disney production *The Moon-Spinners* (1964),\(^{476}\) set in Crete and including a character who collects folk songs, Grainer takes the opportunity to explore the sonorities of the bouzouki and Greek percussion instruments.


\(^{476}\) Walt Disney Studios, *The Moon-Spinners*, director James Nelson, music by Ron Grainer (Sydney: Disney Family Classics E11030, n.d.), DVD.
Grainer’s musical language avoids the bombastic utterance, relying on elemental thematic material. Sparse and simple, these themes accurately convey the required feeling and set a mood precisely. Grainer’s skill is that of the inventor of sonorities, who shuns clichés in an effort to get to the heart of the musical mood that best suits the film’s requirements. An extensive demonstration of Grainer’s capabilities is to be found in his Hollywood movie, *The Omega Man* (1971). Derived from Richard Mathiessen’s apocalyptic novel *I Am Legend*, the movie steps above the general zombie movie level with the aid of Grainer’s music, which steers away from the clichés usually associated with such movies. Grainer develops his procedure of fitting instrumentation to the required mood to its highest level, as the details of the recording sessions show. The main recording took place over three days, divided between three basic instrumental combinations: two large orchestral combinations of an unusual Bernard Herrmann-like constitution including synthesizers and electric instruments; an ensemble of eight trombones, electric rhythm and large percussion; and a jazz combo for ‘source’ music.

Grainer utilized his mellow-voiced groupings to create an atmosphere of elegy and a sense of nostalgia for the present time, applying his diversity as a composer of light music to fulfill the dramatic needs of the film. Jeff Bond observes that:

Ron Grainer’s tuneful, pop-flavored score has gained a reputation equal to that of the film in its cult appeal. Eschewing the hard-edged, dissonant sound that dominated sci-fi movies of the period, Grainer’s work is melodic and catchy, with a beautifully somber, Baroque-style title theme that firmly places the story in an elegiac perspective. It is a strange hybrid of conventional film score, wordless rock opera and highly dramatic cocktail music.

Ron Grainer’s music is characterized by resourcefulness and economy, and an ability to encapsulate mood precisely and simply. He could apply his instinct for inclusiveness across the spectrum of styles, so that he is able to evoke the musical character of Victorian England for *Robert and Elizabeth*, the Parisian Musette for *Maigret*, Cockney song for *Steptoe & Son*, and skiffle, calypso and jazz for the documentary film *Terminus*.

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477 Warner Bros., *The Omega Man*, director Boris Sagal, music by Ron Grainer (Sydney: Warner Home Video 11210, 1999), DVD.


For the boy from the Atherton Tablelands, music was a language which came naturally, and in which he communicated with the ease of a multi-linguist.


In contrast to the other composers considered in this chapter, Malcolm Williamson created a large body of serious compositions, attained strong recognition as a serious composer, and achieved high standing in the British cultural Establishment. Where his current reputation lies is difficult to assess: it seems as shifting and restless as the composer himself was.

Williamson’s biography is almost bewildering in its many influences, interests and directions. Light music, however, plays a central role in this story, though in a manner strikingly different to the other composers considered in this study. Williamson’s output of light music defies the categorizations I have applied throughout this thesis, in that his work for the standard ‘generators’ of light music production is relatively limited. There are a small number of Williamson ‘cues’ to be found in the production libraries, though none has managed to break out into the wider discourse of light music proper. Roman World, for instance, is an epic fanfare of ‘swords and sandals’ variety, elided from a more extended fanfare and processional, Marziale,\(^{480}\) which continues, following the fanfare bit, in a stately ‘Crown Imperial’ mode. Also for Chappell, Williamson contributed an Autumn Idyll, recorded by Charles Williams with the Telecast Orchestra.\(^{481}\) The Josef Weinberger catalogue of Williamson’s works lists two other pieces of ‘Sound Library Material’ dating from the same year: Compline and On the Spree.\(^{482}\) In the realm of the popular musical, Williamson worked on a range of projects, culminating in Trilby, commissioned by West End producer Bertie Meyer, but never progressing beyond its out-of-town try-out, despite having ‘much potential.’\(^{483}\) For a


\(^{483}\) Anthony Meredith and Paul Harris, Malcolm Williamson: A Mischievous Muse (London: Omnibus Press, 2007), 128n.
project undertaken by the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra directed by bandleader Vic Lewis in 1977, Williamson contributed two interesting cues. Addressing the album’s designated theme, *Colours* (perhaps imitating Frank Sinatra’s similar project, the 1956 *Tone Poems of Color*), Williamson chose to represent two colours distinctive for their highly charged Australianess – *Azure* and *Ochre.*

While it’s possible to overlook Williamson’s production of ‘pure’ light music for the standard ‘generators’, the importance of light music in his career, and his importance to the category itself, is far greater. The centrality of light music to Williamson’s musical concerns makes his omission from the usual accounts of the story of British light music surprising. What Williamson did for light music was something quite different and typically unique: he integrated it into the serious domain. Williamson lifted light music from its cosy resting place to brandish it as a weapon against Establishment cultural views. Not even the most passionate present-day advocate of this music would match Williamson’s vituperation on behalf of the genre:

> Music needs a wide public, it mustn’t be aimed at a small snobbish coterie. The barrier between light music and serious music is artificial. Some stylistic fusion is going to come. But it makes life very difficult if you think this, as I do, and try to do the fusing. I am sick of the critics acting so superior when they hear anything sounding like light music. Why, if it comes to the point, shouldn’t music be vulgar as well as noble? Picasso isn’t noted for good taste. Good taste is a curse!

Examples to prove that Williamson engaged upon his ‘fusing’ task with passionate determination can be found throughout his musical output. It caused him problems: Brian Chatterton noted that Williamson was frequently accused of being ‘excessively eclectic, and … constantly changing his style of composing. In any genre one is likely to hear the strictest serialism, the rhythms of jazz or Latin American music, an expansive romantic melody, or … even a suspicion of aleatoricism.’ Thus, in a work like the *Sinfonietta* (1965), the three movements switch from a ‘bustling introductory Toccata’ to a deeply introspective lament for the death of a child (one of twin daughters born to Williamson and his wife Dolly), to a joyful Tarantella, redolent with the contours and rhythms of the

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485 He does not feature, for instance, in the accounts by Geoffrey Self and Philip Scowcroft.
486 *The Sun* (Melbourne), January 1962, cited in Anthony Meredith and Paul Harris, 136.
488 Anthony Meredith and Paul Harris, 165.
best Ealing Studios style comedic music, celebrating exuberant feelings at the birth of another child (the surviving twin daughter).

The collision of musical worlds can be seen at its most stimulating and productive during the stage of his life when he lived in London’s East End, from 1958 to 1960. There, Williamson drew together an unlikely clutch of associations and experience. While serving as organist for the congregation of St. Peter’s, Limehouse, Williamson developed ideas for musical comedies with the renowned writer-producing team of Caryl Brahms and Ned Sherrin. Williamson worked also as bar pianist at the notorious, ‘camp and coarse’ Colony Room Club, frequented by a cast of outrageous libertines, where he played popular songs of the day, and at the same time befriended Father Geoffrey Beaumont, leader of the Twentieth Century Light Music Group (see Chapter 1). Inspired by Beaumont’s example, and responding to the excitingly free-spirited, dirty and low-class world of his new associates and friends, Williamson began producing a series of works for sacred and liturgical contexts which took inspiration and elements of their musical language from ‘Broadway style’: Latin texts, unconventional rhythms gleaned from Messiaen, and ‘the parishioners’ musical vernacular’ were ‘mixed up into a hybrid type of music.’

Erik Routley, the sacred music scholar and commentator, was enthusiastic. In Williamson’s hands, the popularizing aspirations of the musical amateur Father Geoffrey Beaumont were transformed into art. As a ‘musician of high and serious purpose,’ Williamson had the technique to invest his music with much greater musical inventiveness and interest than Beaumont and most of his followers were capable of: Williamson gave his music richer harmonies, skillful modulation and a ‘quite remarkably energetic bass line.’ Like Keller speaking of Benjamin, Routley thought Williamson possessed the ability to resolve the ‘Problem of Popularity.’ By bringing to his liturgical music an easy familiarity with the ‘dialect’ of popular music and an expertise in serious writing, Williamson was ‘making a spirited effort to integrate ‘pop’ with the main stream of modern music. He alone is in a position to do this.’ Fully conversant in both popular and cultivated style, Williamson held out the possibility of ‘trying to reconcile a style

489 Ibid., 105.
490 Music Ministry, October 1974, quoted in Meredith and Harris, 108.
491 Erik Routley, 178.
conditioned by popular demand with a musicianship which leaps far ahead of popular understanding.\textsuperscript{492}

Routley’s appreciation of the need to make this bridge was not universally shared, and Brian Chatterton notes that the ‘barrage of written critical opinion’ directed at Williamson was of an intensity that could not be compared to any other composer in Australia’s musical history.\textsuperscript{493} The focus of abuse was the charge that Williamson’s music was ‘excessively eclectic,’ an allegation that shows how closely attuned critical opinion can be to the distinction of stylistic borders. This barrage from the English critics may have carried an objection to an upstart Australian who was too ready to purvey his low musical taste, and fuelled by Williamson’s appointment as Master of the Queen’s Music in 1975. However, the demands of Williamson’s honoured position proved crushing. His project of creating a bridge between popular and classical forms fell to dust in the overall collapse of his career. In the end, Williamson’s attempt at ‘fusing’ popular and cultivated music came to be interpreted as mere inconsistency, as if he could not make up his mind even about what his own musical style was. His biographers remark:

[Williamson] was too light a spirit, too much a creature of whimsy, too childlike in his openness to the latest enthusiasm. The stylistic inconsistencies of 1961-62 were to remain with him all his life, a token of his volatile personality. The serious Symphony for Voices was in marked contrast to the light Jazz Mass; the dramatic Organ Symphony to the easy Travel Diaries; and the intellectual Vision of Christ Phoenix to the crowd-pleasing Trilby. As his work gathered a furious momentum throughout the 1960s, it was characterised by a consistent determination to be inconsistent.\textsuperscript{494}

This judgement reflects Williamson’s general troublesomeness, but also speaks of the unflinching resolve with which the institutions of ‘classical’ music spurned the encroachment of popular influence. But at Williamson’s funeral, Robin Holloway was able to appreciate the power of what Williamson had achieved with his music, ‘occupying a no-man’s land somewhere between Ivor Novello, Palm Court and Hymns, Ancient and Modern, thoroughly vulgar without becoming cheap, resourceful, even artful, in making so much out of so little, spreading warmth and comfort.’\textsuperscript{495}

\textsuperscript{492} Ibid., 182.
\textsuperscript{493} Brian Chatterton, 146.
\textsuperscript{494} Anthony Meredith and Paul Harris, 135.
\textsuperscript{495} Robin Holloway in The Spectator, 29 March 2003, quoted in Anthony Meredith and Paul Harris, 509.
9.3 Douglas Gamley (1924-1998)

Throughout the 1950s, 60s and 70s, Douglas Gamley was among the leading practitioners of light music in Britain, as a pianist, musical director, conductor, arranger and composer. Gamley’s professional biography provides the basic outline of his career. After establishing his credentials as a pianist in Melbourne, Gamley departed for Europe in 1949, and in England took up studies in composition with Franz Reizenstein and conducting with Walter Goehr, but began his involvement with commercial musical production almost immediately. In 1952, Gamley went to work for MGM in their Elstree studios in London, beginning as a rehearsal pianist and steadily acquiring increased responsibilities. The same pattern occurred in his working relationships with three leading practitioners of ‘functional music’ in Britain at the time: Muir Mathieson, the great musical director for British films, Richard Addinsell, a prominent film composer, and Robert Farnon, the leading light music composer and arranger of the day. With each of these musicians and composers, Gamley began in a service role but soon became a close and reliable associate, as he equipped himself to fully absorb the capabilities of his mentor. From 1957, Gamley began his string of feature film scores, and thereafter pursued an active career as a conductor, arranger, orchestrator and composer in film, opera, ballet and light music.

Music of serious aspiration has little place in Gamley’s musical credits, and is mostly restricted to the early years of his career. It’s a surprise to encounter the report from London by Neville Cardus on the performance of Gamley’s ‘songs based on Bethge’s collection of Chinese poems [which] are in the latest fashion and based on a “tone-row”’, though the ‘Staff Correspondent’ for the Sydney Morning Herald, reporting on the same recital given at the Institute of Contemporary Arts with Eugene Goossens in attendance, described these as ‘poker-faced parodies of Alban Berg.’ Film scores and production library cues constitute the bulk of Gamley’s work as a composer.

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496 Douglas Gamley, Composer-Arranger-Conductor, n.d. (c.1983), from State Library of Victoria, Douglas Gamley Collection, MS 13496, Box 21.
497 Peu de profondeur: Sketches for a Puppet Ballet, for two pianos was performed in Melbourne, though Gamley composed it in London. From State Library of Victoria, Douglas Gamley Collection, MS 13496, Box 21.
For the production libraries, Gamley’s special expertise was in the waltz form, as exemplified by his *Swing-Waltz*\(^\text{500}\)*, *Dancing Youth Waltz*\(^\text{501}\)*, and the *Waltz in G*, recorded for the Boosey & Hawkes production library.\(^\text{502}\)* The influence of Robert Farnon, perhaps the most highly regarded light music composer of this period, is clear in the latter work. The waltz rhythm is established by spiccato strings, and rolling piano arpeggios introduce the main melody line, carried by the violins and containing a first and second subject (though no development occurs). Accordion and harp add splashes of instrumental colour, together with counter-melodies from flutes and oboes and from French horns. The material is repeated and returns a third time in a shortened form to bring the piece to its conclusion. This is elegant music that Hubert Clifford would have approved, distinctly Parisian in its sensibility.

Gamley worked with his friend Don Banks in a series of LPs produced for EMI in the early 1960s, the ‘Philharmonic Pops’ project, which we will consider more fully in Chapter 11. Gamley contributed a composition called *Prater Fest* (1961), where his innate musical personality is expressed in a Viennese concert waltz, evoking promenaders from the world of Richard Strauss’s *Der Rosenkavalier*, which itself is directly referenced in the piece. Some of Gamley’s ‘non-Waltz’ library tracks, recorded for Chappell, address ‘industrial’ themes. The cues *Power Drill* and *Machine Room*, both for wind and percussion ensemble, achieved lasting embodiment in the soundtrack for episodes of the *Doctor Who* series, *The Tenth Planet*.\(^\text{503}\)*

Gamley’s apprenticeship as a composer of film music was served with Richard Addinsell, completing orchestrations for his film projects until Addinsell handed Gamley his own first full feature assignment with *The Admirable Crichton* in 1957. Also in that year, Gamley and Kenneth V. Jones came to the aid of Arthur Benjamin in fulfilling the score for *Fire Down Below*, a British-American co-production starring Rita Hayworth,

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\(^{500}\)* Douglas Gamley, *Swing-Waltz*, Ole Jensen and his Orchestra, Chappell Recorded Music, Chappell LPC 1048, 1972, 33\(\frac{1}{3}\) rpm.


Jack Lemmon and Robert Mitchum. Gamley’s first film score was for the children’s film One Wish Too Many (1956), one of a handful of productions of the Realist Film Unit established by a leading light of the British documentary film movement, Basil Wright. One Wish Too Many is inspired by the Italian realist films of Vittorio de Sica, and like Albert Lamorisse’s The Red Balloon (also 1956), poses a confrontation between worldly realities and the childhood sense of imagination and fantasy.

Many of Gamley’s scoring assignments arose from his association with the musical director and film conductor Muir Mathieson, while later ones grew from his association with film composer and musical director, John Hollingsworth. Among Gamley’s collaborations with Mathieson is Light up the Sky (1960). Although it stars Benny Hill, Tommy Steele and Dick Emery, the film concerns itself quite seriously with the social and personal challenges of life during wartime. Gamley applied his capacity for musically underscoring diverse descriptive moods to the film’s mixture of wistful pastoralism, comedy, tragedy and drama. John Hollingsworth was music director for Hammer Productions from 1954 to 1963, and he engaged Gamley to compose music for the comedies The Ugly Duckling (1959) and Watch It, Sailor (1961). Randall D. Larson places Gamley in the ‘Nonhorror Notables’ chapter of his history of the music of Hammer Productions, pointing out that it was only with his appointment as musical director for Amicus Productions from 1972 that Gamley attracted ‘a degree of note as a scorer of horror films.’

In Gamley’s later career, the emphasis shifted away from composing towards his roles as a conductor and arranger of popular music and popular classics, as arranger and conductor for Joan Sutherland and other operatic stars, and as a music director for films. He undertook copious arranging and editing work for Richard Bonynge and Joan Sutherland and some of their cohorts, such as Luciano Pavarotti, Renata Tebaldi, Kiri Te Kanawa and Victoria de los Angeles. In addition to arranging (and occasionally conducting) for recordings and performances by Sutherland and others, Gamley

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505 Lewis Gilbert Productions, Light Up the Sky, director Lewis Gilbert, music by Douglas Gamley, (Melbourne: Umbrella Entertainment, DAVID 2387, 2012), DVD.
507 Ibid., 137.
contributed new music in pastiche style and re-workings of original material to suit the requirements of several ballet and opera productions. During the 1960s and early 1970s, Gamley arranged and conducted for Reader’s Digest’s sumptuous LP box sets of Easy Listening music.\footnote{Gamley arranged and/or conducted many tracks of popular, ‘light classical’ and light repertoire to supply LP box sets marketed by Reader’s Digest, such as \textit{Bolero: 79 Rhapsodic Light-Classical favourites}, Reader’s Digest RD 55-1 to 55-9, n.d. nine 33\frac{1}{3} \text{ rpm discs}, and \textit{Mood Music from the Movies}, RD4-56-1 to 4-56-6, n.d., six 33\frac{1}{3} \text{ rpm discs.}} As music director for films, Gamley’s notable projects include Stanley Donen’s surrealist film of Lerner & Loewe’s \textit{The Little Prince} (1974), ‘Monty Python’s’ \textit{And Now for Something Completely Different} (1971), and Wendy Carlos’s score for the Disney production, \textit{Tron} (1982).

As his busy career began to wind down from the middle of the 1980s, Gamley returned annually to Melbourne, making recordings and concerts with the commercial operation, the Australian Pops Orchestra. As David Ades recalls, Gamley divided the rest of his time ‘between working in London, and relaxing in Italy, where the climate suited him better as an asthma sufferer. Douglas was a charming gentle man who could always be relied upon in any musical situation. He died in London on 5 February 1998.’\footnote{David Ades, in \textit{The Sinfonia of London}, \textit{Musical merry-go-round} and \textit{Famous Evergreens}, conductors Robert Irving and Douglas Gamley, Vocalion CDLK 4181, 2003, compact disc liner notes, 4.}

\subsection*{9.4 Don Harper (1921-1999)}


\begin{quote}
Don Harper was born in Melbourne and studied under Raymond Hanson at the NSW Conservatorium of Music. A jazz violinist and conductor, he went on to become the leader of one of Australia’s most successful big bands, and a successful composer of music for film and television.\footnote{Ibid.}
\end{quote}

Harper’s career trajectory as a composer was, however, more circuitous and far less inevitable than this standard format implies. Harper’s surviving reputation is as a jazz musician, notable particularly for his instrument – the violin, an instrument that has a peripheral standing in jazz culture. Those quintet scores in the Australian Music Centre...
library were written for a ‘crossover’ string quintet called Constellations, which Harper put together when he was teaching jazz at the University of Wollongong, aged in his sixties. So where, one might ask, is the oeuvre of Don Harper the composer? To find it, we must direct the musicological gaze downwards, into the realms of light music.

An interview by John Sharpe in 1997 provides the principal source of information about Harper’s life and career.\footnote{John Sharpe, \textit{Don’t Worry Baby, They’ll Swing their Arses Off: The Stories of Australian Jazz Musicians} (Canberra: ScreenSound Australia, 2001), 113-125.} A fascination with the violin from the moment he heard it as a child led Harper to take up the instrument, while association with musical friends in and around the Melbourne suburb of Footscray, where he grew up, added a concomitant involvement with Swing bands. Harper’s Swing career reached its pinnacle when he became leader of the band that played at the immensely popular St Kilda Town Hall dances in Melbourne. There Harper made his first arrangements, along with fellow band-member, trombonist and arranger Jack Grimsley, especially influenced by the modern sounds of Stan Kenton.

Harper continued to develop his violin technique under the instruction of Reg Bradley, a member of the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra. It was on the back of his uncommon instrumental skill that Harper took himself off to England, encouraged by the comedian Tommy Trinder whom he’d met whilst on an Australian tour, and who introduced Harper to the Dance band impresario, Billy Cotton. Harper worked with Cotton’s band for three years, again alongside further technical studies, this time with Sascha Lasserson, who holds an historic place in the pantheon of 20th century teachers of classical violin (he had studied with Leopold Auer in St Petersburg before emigrating to London in 1914). Harper earned his living in London through a busy schedule of playing engagements in various ‘combos’ and acts, in live performance, radio broadcasts and recording sessions, but in 1962 decided to return to Australia, ‘to re-charge the batteries.’\footnote{John Sharpe, 123.} The re-charging involved re-skilling as well: against the flow of play, Harper left London for Sydney to study composition with Raymond Hanson at the New South Wales State Conservatorium of Music. Harper had chosen composition as the path to making a living through music,
and late in life he could say with satisfaction that ‘the wisest thing I did was to take up composing. That’s supporting us now.’

Harper’s studies with Hanson avoided the conventional path of theoretical studies, which Harper had found ‘perplexing. There seemed to be more rules about what you couldn’t do than what you could do. But Ray Hanson taught a simple set of rules and he taught you what you could do. It worked very well for me.’ Hanson was renowned for his sympathetic interest in jazz, unusual in a ‘classical’ music academic. Whatever Hanson’s ‘simple set of rules’ were, they were ‘a great help’ to Harper when he returned to London in 1968 and ‘got the chance to write television themes and stuff.’

Harper’s instinct about composing proved right, and he ‘became very successful as a writer.’ He adapted himself to several key outlets for the composer of light music. His production library music encompasses albums for De Wolfe and for Joseph Weinberger’s subsidiaries, Inter-Arts Music Publishers and Background Music Publishers. Harper supplied incidental music for several BBC Television productions, including eight episodes of the Doctor Who serial, ‘The Invasion’ [of the Cybermen] (1968), and a string of other projects, Champion House (1967–68), Sexton Blake (1967), The Devil in the Fog (1968), The Inside Man (1969), and Menace (1970). For A & C Black, Harper ‘composed a large amount of educational and religious music,’ though with the exception of his settings of Songs from Alice (1978, lyrics from Lewis Carroll’s Alice in Wonderland and Alice through the Looking Glass), this material is hard to find.

A look at some of Harper’s production library albums shows the features of his compositional work. A 1971 album for Background Music Publishers Ltd represents two different recording sessions: Strings go Pop features an instrumentation of string quartet, solo electric violin/ viola, flute/bass clarinet, electric guitar, bass guitar, drums.

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514 Ibid., 122.
515 Ibid.
516 Ibid., 123.
517 Ibid.
519 Ibid.
and percussion, while *Brass and String Bag* is played by a combination of two woodwind (flute and clarinet doubling), flugelhorn, three euphoniums, electric viola, harp, electric guitar, bass guitar, drums and percussion. Harper himself plays the solo string parts, which often carry the main melody. The blending of composed and improvised elements is suggested by the nature of the instrumentation: the string quartet is notated while drums, winds, guitars and other ‘studio’ instruments have improvised lines and flourishes. While these are predominantly jazz pieces, introducing classical instruments creates a peculiar sonic feature and sensibility, reflected in the playful mixture of opposites in Harper’s titles: *Chamber Pop, Hear Me Swing Violatta* (for an electric viola feature), and *Thoughtful Popper*. Later production library albums show an evolution in Harper’s approach: the titles more directly reflect the character of the piece or its possible use in a media context (*Sun, Sea and Air, Undercover Man, Counterstrike, Secret Vanguard*), and Harper’s own presence as a performer becomes less dominant.

Throughout Harper’s compositional work, electronic media are a continual presence. In his early albums he uses electric versions of violin and viola, but gradually synthesizers become more and more present, and tape manipulation. Harper probably encountered electronic music whilst working at the BBC, since electronic means were often used for the sound effects in the *Doctor Who* series, and particularly for ‘The Invasion’ serial. The effects were created or supplied by the BBC Radiophonic Workshop, and it’s likely that Harper made acquaintance there with Delia Derbyshire, a leading figure in the story of British electronic music.

Under the pseudonym Li de la Russe, Derbyshire together with her associate from the BBC, Brian Hodgson (using the pseudonym Nikki St. George) partnered with Harper to create a program of electronic production library cues for the KPM 1000 series of albums. While Derbyshire and Hodgson worked together regularly, Harper’s presence upset the balance of personalities. In a 2006 interview, Hodgson recalled his encounter with Harper:

> Don was an Australian mood music composer ... He'd done a *Doctor Who* or so. I'd done something for KPM some years earlier and there was an opportunity to do some work, so we did [Electrosonic]. I felt uncomfortable working with Don. At our first meeting he was pleasant enough, but I just felt he was using Delia and I to do something he couldn't do

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himself. He was pernickety. Delia had that capacity for dealing with his perfectionist thing. I think perfectionism is fine, but I'm more interested in broad brush strokes. Harper got up my nose a lot, so I really kept out of it as much as I could.\textsuperscript{523}

Hodgson’s characterization of a composer of high expectations but lacking the technical wherewithal to achieve it on his own may be an accurate image of Harper, though we have no record of complaint from Delia Derbyshire. In building his compositional identity, Harper worked from a base of strong practical musicianship but there was no equivalent theoretical knowledge or expertise in his musical upbringing. Harper had to acquire this expertise, and he made use of a range of opportunities to do so: Harper developed the craft of composing ‘through experience’.

If the work with Delia Derbyshire was undertaken with the intention of gaining expertise in electronic techniques, then Harper’s ‘solo’ album, \textit{Homo Electronicus} (1974)\textsuperscript{524} is its fruit. Unlike his other compositional work, this album does not address direct commercial needs, but holds modest artistic aspirations. These come to the fore in the extended track, \textit{Cold Worlds}, evoking Arctic life and scenery, and featuring ‘the eerie cry of the loon – a type of Arctic goose … together with the correctly-notated wolf howls in the pine forest – produced by Alan Branscombe on soprano and alto saxophones.’\textsuperscript{525} Ethereal vocal soloing by renowned experimental jazz vocalist Norma Winstone completes the ‘impressionistic’ effect of other-worldliness of this 12-minute track.

\textit{Homo Electronicus} is an experimental album in seeking to achieve an integration of live and electronic sounds, involving ‘flesh-and-blood performers inside his electronic excursions.’\textsuperscript{526} The choice of jazz performers to integrate into the soundtrack was ‘not surprising’ for this role writes Charles Fox, since ‘the jazz soloist remains the most self-contained of musicians – communicating his own identity and operating on a decidedly human scale.’\textsuperscript{527} There was also the advantage, of course, that Harper himself was a jazz soloist. His own contributions as a player on the album are subjected to innovative


\textsuperscript{526} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{527} Ibid.
treatment. In *Blue Book*, Harper’s viola is tuned down a fifth, and in other tracks ‘multi-
dubbing has been used to achieve the effect of serried ranks of stringed instruments.’
Harper’s cover version of the *Doctor Who* theme gives it a ‘rock-jazz feel,’ while
passages scored for ‘multi-tracked electric violins (or violin, to be more pedantic) tuned a
quarter-tone apart,’ are particularly striking in creating a massed cluster effect for the
tune.

The role Brian Hodgson resented in *Electrosonic* is taken on in *Homo Electronicus* by
Brian Steadman, the album’s ‘Synthesizer Programmer.’ Steadman’s role was ‘to realise
the composer’s intentions, yet in doing so he had something of a jazz musician’s
freedom, although instead of improvising on chords or scales he worked with timbres and
textures.’ The composer supplied a conventional musical score to which he added
‘numerous passages where he could only indicate the kind of feeling or texture he had in
mind,’ such as asking for ‘a *staccato*, sparkling, woody, bell-like sound’ (Steadman
noted triumphantly, ‘in the end, we got it!’). The laborious process of creating the
album took six months, requiring 72 separate tracks, and ‘before the live musicians
played their part some forty-eight hours were spent at Lansdowne Studios laying down
the initial electronic tracks.’ Any avant-garde pretensions of the album were ameliorated
with electronic versions of popular pieces, including Harper’s theme for London
Weekend Television’s *World of Sport.* (The tune’s success led to Harper’s appointment
as musical director of that program ‘for the next fifteen years.’)

Electronics do not appear in what is perhaps Harper’s most quintessentially light music
project: the songbook *Songs from Alice* (1978). Celebrating the re-discovery of
Charles Folkard’s illustrations for Lewis Carroll’s *Alice* books, A&C Black’s publication
of Harper’s songs in versions for voice and piano was accompanied by a recording by
Decca. The in-between character of this recorded version of the songs is everywhere in
evidence. The light operatic soprano Joanne Brown and baritone Leslie Fyson are
accompanied by an ensemble that is anything but operatic, featuring prominent London
session musicians, trombonist Don Lusher, trumpeter Kenny Baker and pianist Laurie

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528 Ibid.
529 Ibid.
530 John Sharpe, 123.
Holloway, with Harper himself on violin and viola. The album was distributed under Decca’s 1970s ‘MOR’ series – the initials deliberately signifying ‘Middle of the Road’ content.\(^5\)32

Harper returned to Australia in 1983 to help establish a jazz course at the University of Wollongong. He formed a ‘jazz/classical fusion’ string quintet, Constellation\(^5\)33 and explored ‘chamber jazz’ with his Australian Chamber Jazz Ensemble\(^5\)34 and in compositions like the *Illawarra Suite*.\(^5\)35 To interviewer John Sharpe’s question about whether he was ‘a jazz musician who can play classical’ or vice versa, Harper responded:

> I don’t know. Once I’d heard that fellow play the violin when I was a little child I never wanted to do anything else until later when I became interested in writing music. I fell madly in love with jazz when I first heard it improvised and it is my real love. But I did have a very comprehensive classical music education from Reg Bradley and Sascha Lasserson. I love Bach and a lot of my writing is very contrapuntal… So I’m sort of in the middle in a way."\(^5\)36

\*9.5 John Carmichael (b. 1930)\

Although he has lived in London for many years, John Carmichael has maintained ties to Australia through his continuous contact with Australian musicians and performing institutions, as well as with musical ‘expats’ in London. Unusually among Australian composers, Carmichael’s music has also grown from a wider continental engagement with French and Spanish musical cultures.

Born in Melbourne in 1930, Carmichael supplemented his principal studies in piano with composition studies with Dorian le Gallienne at the Conservatorium of the University of Melbourne, where he befriended Peter Sculthorpe. He continued piano studies at the Paris Conservatoire with Marcel Ciampi before moving to London in 1954, where he took private composition lessons with Arthur Benjamin between 1955 and 1957 (having met him during a rare visit to Australia in 1950) and later studied with composer Anthony Milner.

\(^5\)32 Don Harper, *Songs from Alice*, composed, arranged and conducted by Don Harper, Decca MOR 515, 1978, 33\(\frac{1}{3}\) rpm.
\(^5\)33 John Sharpe, 125.
\(^5\)34 Don Harper, *Don Harper’s Australian Chamber Jazz Ensemble*, Avan-Guard Music, SVL 502, 1984, 33\(\frac{1}{3}\) rpm.
\(^5\)36 John Sharpe, 124-125.
During the period from the mid-fifties to the mid-sixties, Carmichael pieced together his career from a diverse range of skills and abilities, musical and linguistic. Fluent in French, Carmichael at one time supported himself with ‘a job at night as a French speaker for the London Post Office in the Continental telephone service.’ But this was only for income while gaining credentials as a musician and composer, and in Carmichael’s career the two aims – of supporting himself as he established himself as a composer, can be clearly observed. Thus, Carmichael’s career has moved along a variety of practical paths including music therapy, where he was among the pioneers of the movement.

The Spanish influence in Carmichael’s music arises from his experience as music director of a Spanish folkloric ballet troupe, Eduardo Y Navarra, or the ‘Eduardo Romero Spanish dancers.’ Carmichael visited Australia with the troupe in 1963, and shortly afterward, The Australian Women’s Weekly reported that Carmichael’s piano duet Bahama Rhumba (1958) had been performed by Cyril Smith and Phyllis Sellick, while the ‘B.B.C. Light Orchestra’ (i.e. BBC Concert Orchestra) had broadcast the orchestral version of his 1958 piano duet Puppet Show.

Carmichael was also contributing scores to the production libraries: the Farnonesque French Flirt, performed by Charles Williams and the Telecast Orchestra, was published in tandem with Malcolm Williamson’s Autumn Idyll. Carmichael also contributed music for the production library of Mozart Edition, a lesser-known ‘mood music’ publisher that prided itself on high technical quality. Examples of Carmichael’s work for Mozart Edition include the cheerful Morning Call, in the style associated with Sidney Torch - a light-footed, syncopated rhythm underlying a sprightly melody-line incessant in its sense of movement. In its repetitions the melody acquires touches of contrapuntal

538 ‘Another success for composer,’ 19.
539 ‘Another success for composer,’ 19.
effect and added instrumental colour, the whole evoking scenes of families emerging from their homes in the morning to greet neighbours, milkos and tradesmen.\textsuperscript{542}

Mozart Edition supplied TV ‘Test card’ (or ‘Test Pattern’) music, and Carmichael’s Mozart Edition tracks have attained continuing life on compact disc reissues of music used for Test Cards on British Television. One such is a track entitled \textit{Zambra Flamenca},\textsuperscript{543} a piece that derives directly from Carmichael’s Spanish dance experience. The major fruit of Carmichael’s work with the Spanish dance troupe, however, was his \textit{Concierto Folklorico} (1965) for piano and string orchestra. It was his first work for larger forces, though the composer’s approach is more characteristic of chamber music than symphonic conception. Melodic invention provides the main impetus for the music’s progress, melody lines developed in the manner of most light music: supported through the methods of clearly-perceived melodic, rhythmic and contrapuntal development processes.

For Carmichael, these ‘traditional’ approaches continue to be sufficient to support his musical expression and development. The statement in the liner notes for a recent recording of his chamber music reflects beliefs that have been at the heart of Carmichael’s work and approach throughout his career: ‘[t]hematic and melodic material and its development are important elements in Carmichael’s work, as are transitions of mood and pace within a carefully wrought structure.’\textsuperscript{544} Following the \textit{Concierto Folklorico}, the concerto form immediately established itself as Carmichael’s natural métier, and subsequent applications of his melodically-centred style in concertos for other instruments have been championed by prominent instrumentalists such as flautist James Galway and trumpet virtuoso John Wallace.

The musical empathy with Arthur Benjamin may be identified in characteristics of the scoring and musical conception in Carmichael’s music, such as the preference for richly ‘romantic’ orchestral textures and gestures, the exploration of rhythmic and melodic character from Latin American sources (viewed through a modifying ‘classicizing’ gaze

\textsuperscript{542} John Carmichael, \textit{Morning Call}, Orchestra Raphaele conductor Peter Walden, \textit{Music While You Watch}, Winchester Hospital Radio WHRCD 1001, 2010, compact disc.
as Benjamin did), and the taste for ‘baroquerie’ and neo-classical dance forms (the Passepied and Rigaudon movements of *Fêtes Champêtres*, 1960).

Carmichael’s music is consistently labelled ‘light,’ and this becomes problematic for him when the appellation is given to works composed for the concert hall or recital room. The most widely available recording of Carmichael’s orchestral pieces – including the *Concierto Folklórico*, Trumpet Concerto and *A Country Fair* – is labelled ‘Australian Light Classics,’545 prompting Carmichael to exclaim with exasperation ‘why?!’ Pointing out that the two concertos each ‘last longer than 25 minutes,’ Carmichael is annoyed that ‘because they are written in an accessible, conservative style, the word “light” is applied.’546

Clearly Carmichael sees the term as a belittling one. For one who knew and admired Arthur Benjamin, it is to be expected that Carmichael should inherit his mentor’s sense of frustration at the lower standing that the label tends to confer. Just as Benjamin was forced to contend with a view that because he could write light music well, he should not be trusted to write serious music, Carmichael argues that the stylistic elements within his music that are considered ‘light’ should not diminish their appreciation or evaluation. Carmichael believes the composer whose music is characterised by tunefulness and other qualities of lightness has acquired a stigma of being ‘less worthy’ than the composer whose music ‘challenge[s] the listener with new and experimental techniques’. The label of light music constructs a form of glass ceiling or barrier which keeps tuneful, ‘accessible’ music from serious consideration and due recognition.

The grounds for classifying Carmichael as a composer of light music seem obvious: his music seeks to be ‘accessible,’ in that it may be readily comprehended at first hearing. Like all composers of light music, Carmichael prizes melody and tunefulness, but what arguably distances him from the ‘typical’ light music composer is his insistence on the primacy of artful development. The character of the melodic material is at the core of his


546 Unless otherwise indicated, all quotations from John Carmichael are taken from the composer’s responses to an email questionnaire submitted by the author, email dated 7 July 2008.
compositional approach, but the composer must subject it to appropriate and carefully considered treatment:

When I find a melodic idea or a motif which interests me, if the mood is bright, I develop it along those lines, so perhaps you could say I have adopted an attitude to maintain this mood. But, for example, when I found the theme for my flute concerto *Phoenix*, it was elegaic, quite sombre, so I had a different aim in order to exploit and expand the more serious style I was looking for.

Wishing to avoid the negative ‘baggage’ associated with the light music label, Carmichael proposes a distinction like Hubert Clifford’s between ‘Pure’ and ‘Applied’ music. The composer must address ‘what is appropriate for the task in hand; if you are asked to provide music for the theatre, then you are not going to launch into a complicated symphonic oeuvre. If it is a comedy then you will probably produce music regarded as “light”.

There is ‘good and bad’ in all genres of music, light music as well: for Carmichael, the best kinds of light music are ‘less like [Eric] Coates and [Albert] Ketèlbey whose music I find embarrassing,’ and rather possess ‘more wit, more adventurous harmonies and orchestrations.’ But in the best music, concepts of light and serious can be transcended. ‘Bernstein’s music for *Candide* is a perfect example of music which could be labelled “light”, yet it fits perfectly well into a programme of “serious” music, and you could say that basically, he was fulfilling a practical purpose in writing it, but at a supremely brilliant level.’ Carmichael argues that the type of music commonly termed ‘light’ has an integral place in the musical ecosystem. By avoiding the complications and obscurities of compositional innovation, it allows the listener ready and immediate enjoyment and can serve as a gateway to developing musical appreciation:

This music appeals instantly, and serves for many people as a way into the art of music, and once having entered the realm will allow them to develop their taste and [go on to] explore the less accessible areas. It performs an essential function, and should not be undervalued [since it] serves a very important service to the art of music.
9.6 Finding Opportunity

Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, Australian composers landed in London, the fire of ambition in their eyes. They each possessed some sort of equipment which gave them something to work from in establishing their career, their abilities garnered from a hotch-potch of musical training, experience and education. It seems characteristic of these young composers that their skills were broader rather than specialized, diverse rather than fine-honed. They were equipped differently to young composers in more established musical cultures. Their ability to make something out of very little placed them in good stead in the expanding musical business of postwar London.

More often than not, their careers grew from a start given to them in the practice of light music, and from it they forged remarkable careers, drawing sustenance of various kinds from light music. Australian upbringing, with its ‘improvisatory musical culture’ suited them particularly to the needs of the light music market, which prized versatility in a way that Concert Hall culture did not. Unless they made very deliberate and determined efforts to get themselves back onto a ‘straight’ path, however, they were sure to find themselves tied to the career of a mere light music provider, cut off from Concert Hall culture. It was as if a form of taxation was applied: in return for light music success, a compensating toll was extracted from the composer’s serious reputation. If a composer spent too long in the light music domain - wrote too much of it or enjoyed too much success in it - he or she would forsake opportunities within the serious music domain.

That formidable institution, ‘British Light Music’, provided opportunity, and composers made use of it in different ways. For some like Gamley and Grainer, it could become the basis of a fulfilling and busy career. For others it was a pathway to developing the identity of a composer, as in the case of Don Harper, for whom light music was the operating environment in which he was able to produce his own music. Others, like Hubert Clifford and Malcolm Williamson, promoted light music as a form of musical practice that had importance and value. Although their temperaments seem very different, these two may be considered leading ‘philosophers’ of light music, advocates for the benefits of musical pragmatism and in-betweenery.
The quality of versatility emerges as a distinctive characteristic of the Australian composers, and they needed it to give themselves competitive advantage. The advantage could be significant, or rather could have been. Erik Routley saw Malcolm Williamson as a great hope for maintaining the vital connection between popular and cultivated styles that was urgently needed by liturgical music, in the same way that Hans Keller had placed Arthur Benjamin in the ‘historically unique’ role of achieving the reunification of serious and light in the concert hall and opera house.

Only Benjamin and Williamson seemed able to keep some sort of balance between popularity and ‘cultivated’ style in their careers, though not without difficulty. For others, a choice had to be made, or was made for them: to be satisfied with the work that light music gave them (Ron Grainer, Hubert Clifford, Douglas Gamley, Don Harper), or to forsake it altogether in order to establish a serious identity (Don Banks, Charles Mackerras). The hope of serious success did not necessarily exceed the grasp of the light music composer, but it tended to remain aloof and elusive. John Carmichael has taken up Benjamin’s struggle, and has maintained a productive output in which the better part of a light music aesthetic survives in works written for the concert hall and recital room. But here too, we see the effects of a prejudice that apparently sidelines Carmichael from the serious mainstream on grounds of style.

These composers could not fully let go of a pragmatic sensibility that was to varying degrees driven into them in their Australian upbringing. Even when dallying with an intellectually challenging modernism, as Williamson, Banks and Gamley did, the Australians could not give themselves over entirely to such ‘extremes’, but found themselves drawn back to, or seeking a compromise with, the musical language of common appreciation. The years back home of inculcation with ‘low’ musical culture – the bourgeois soirees where Gilbert & Sullivan were played, the show business of the Colgate-Palmolive Radio Unit, or Swing nights in St Kilda – were hard to shrug off.
Chapter 10: The Light Music of Don Banks (1923-1980)

10.1 The Other Don Banks

Don Banks is remembered today as a pioneer of Australian modernism. Graham Hair, the leading Banks scholar, describes him, contentiously, as ‘Australia’s most important modernist composer in the third quarter of the 20th century,’ and proposes that ‘his most important works were probably the orchestral and chamber music he wrote while living in London between 1950 and 1971.’\(^{547}\) The ‘important modernist’ characterization is reiterated in the bulk of recent scholarship dedicated to Banks’s work. Stefanie Rauch focussed on the influence of Schoenberg’s op. 31 Variations on Banks’ concert music,\(^{548}\) and Marcus Hartstein analysed one of Banks’s first attempts at serial composition, an uncompleted set of theme and variations for cello and piano.\(^{549}\) The most substantial recent study of Banks’ music is a Doctoral thesis by Bradley Cummings from 2004 which focusses on the composer’s ‘early concert music,’ where he first set out to master the techniques of serialism.\(^{550}\)

Aside from this interest in his serialist music, Banks is occasionally claimed as a pioneer in Australian jazz, where he is credited with introducing Bebop style to Melbourne in the 1940s. After adopting the career of a serious composer, Banks’s affection for jazz would find its outlet principally through his engagement in the project of ‘Third Stream’ composition - the effort by composers, mostly American, to bring about a convergence of jazz and ‘serious’ idioms.

Musicologist Richard Toop traces Banks’s progress through diverse musical modes and influences with a sense of light-hearted astonishment at apparently bizarre or contradictory conjunctions:

\(^{547}\) Graham Hair, ‘From Thursday Night Swing Club to the BBC Proms: the Many Sides of Don Banks’ in The Don Banks Collection in the National Library of Australia: a guide to Don Banks’ personal papers and scores, etc. (Canberra: National Library of Australia, 1999), section 1.1, pages unnum.


What a gorgeous biography! A jazz background (via his Dad) led to his being – in his early twenties – one of the first Australians to respond to the magic of Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie. Yet within a couple of years, he was sitting at the feet of serialists such as Dallapiccola, Babbitt, and even the young Luigi Nono. In England, he wrote endless Bach chorale harmonisations for Mátyás Seiber, then helped him out with cartoon scores. Eventually, he graduated to the big time, and wrote scores for the Hammer Horror epics such as *The Mummy’s Shroud*. Prostituting his art? No, quite the contrary, this was the only way a young composer in fifties England could write ‘advanced’ orchestral scores, and hear them almost immediately. Moreover, Banks pre-invented late-sixties pluralism, at one moment he would be composing for Siegfried Palm, and, at the next, for Cleo La[i]ne.\(^{551}\)

Toop provides a vibrant picture here of a young composer determined to find his way towards his goal as a serious composer. But in the gloss, a view of significant details that are integral to completing the image of Don Banks is lost. Although many of the facts of Banks’s diverse stylistic interests and turns are broadly encompassed, Toop places the pursuit of serious credentials over and above his engagement with jazz and other interactions with the broad domain of popular music. By maintaining a virtuous dedication to ‘advanced’ purposes, Banks avoids becoming sullied by his engagement with jazz, cartoons and the Hammer studios, thus appeasing the judgement of compositional chastity Toop alludes to. In particular, Toop reduces Banks’s career as a film music composer to a cliché. In suggesting that by writing for horror movies, Banks ‘could write “advanced” orchestral scores, and hear them almost immediately,’\(^{552}\) Toop invokes a well-worn equation of modernist style with scary discordant music.

In reality, even the Hammer Horror movies encompassed a much wider variety of musical styles than that. *The Mummy’s Shroud*,\(^{553}\) for instance, the example of Banks’s Hammer Horror style Toop cites, possesses little in the way of ‘advanced’ orchestral scoring. It is dominated rather by evocations of ‘biblical epic’ scoring, with vocalizing choir adding an ancient aura, to suit the film’s principal settings of 1920s Cairo and Ancient Egypt. It owes more to Miklos Rozsa (*Ben Hur*, 1959) than to Arnold Schoenberg (*Accompaniment to a Cinematographic Scene*, 1930). The traces of modernist or ‘advanced’ scoring are constituted mainly by complex dissonant chords rather than extended passages of serialist derivation. For *Rasputin, The Mad Monk*

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\(^{552}\) Richard Toop, ‘Memories from those who knew him,’ 1.

\(^{553}\) Hammer Film Productions, *The Mummy’s Shroud*, director John Gilling, music by Don Banks (Melbourne: Shock Entertainment KAL 2929), 2013, DVD.
Banks’s score is driving, dramatic, tempestuous, but still pure Hollywood, with some inflection of Mussorgskyan Russianness to resonate the setting. In *The Evil of Frankenstein* (1964), dissonant and atonal references have passing relevance in scenes of the monster’s various awakenings, but the recurrence of the main thematic music in its varied guises has far more presence. The score that comes closest to conveying a structural sense of dissonance is the music of *The Reptile* (1966), though this owes more to the subtlety and adventurousness of the sonic environment that Banks constructs than it does to serial processes.

Randall Larson’s overview of Banks’s Hammer music reinforces the primacy of thematic processes as the cornerstone of Banks’s writing. While some of the thematic material itself may derive from Banks’s experiments and exercises in developing tone-rows, their treatment is mostly handled through means of traditional thematic development and variation. For others of his Hammer scores, the equation of Banks’s film music with ‘advanced’ scoring has no relevance. *The Brigand of Kandahar* (1965) is a straightforward tale of Empire derring-do in Indian outposts, graced ‘with a splendidly regal military march, a heroic theme for horns over furiously piping woodwind and snare drum.’ For the psychological suspense of *Hysteria* (also 1965), Banks creates an entirely jazz score (its ‘sound familiar from 1960s TV spy-show music’) in which Banks exercised his innovative spirit by adventurously mixing diverse instrumental combinations:

I featured Tubby Hayes on Tenor Sax & backed him with a jazz combo of 8 brass, 5 reeds, 4 horns, and 6 rhythm – then dropped some brass & included a cello section, then some of the reeds and included a large string orchestra – also sections were for solo guitar, 5 piece jazz group with French accordeon [sic], 8 piece & 10 piece jazz groups etc. OIVAH!

Furthermore, the Hammer assignments constitute only half of Banks’s feature film output, and there are few opportunities for dissonance in the scores to accompany, for example, Charlie Drake in *Petticoat Pirates* (1961), Tony Hancock as *The Punch & Judy*

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554 Hammer Film Productions, *Rasputin, the Mad Monk*, director Don Sharp, music by Don Banks (Melbourne: Shock Entertainment KAL2930, 2013), DVD.
555 Hammer Film Productions, *The Evil of Frankenstein*, director Freddie Francis, music by Don Banks (Melbourne: Umbrella Horror, DAVID 1301, 1992), DVD.
556 Hammer Film Productions, *The Reptile*, director John Gilling, music by Don Banks (Melbourne: Shock Entertainment KAL 2859, 2013), DVD.
557 Randall D. Larson, 54.
558 Ibid.
559 Don Banks, letter to Suellen Burcher, Australia Music Centre, 6 August 1976. From National Library of Australia, MS 6083, Box 34, Folder 255.
Man (1963), or the hi-jinks of Barbara Windsor and Bernard Cribbins in Crooks in Cloisters (1964). Nor does it find a place in the 1961 melodrama, The Third Alibi, whose central character, or villain, is a composer of musicals. Banks supplied the film with musical contrasts: flaming passion for the melodrama, upbeat light music business for the depictions of theatre life, and a pop song, Now & Then, for Cleo Laine (Dudley Moore is her accompanist). The summary equation of Banks’s film scores with the sounds of twelve-tone dissonance provides an inadequate framework for appreciating them.

Richard Toop did not invent the ‘advanced’ horror scoring hypothesis: that stems from Banks himself. To a local journalist upon his return to Australia in 1972, Banks quipped about his horror movies that ‘[t]hey are delightful to write for. Nobody says, “Let’s write a pretty tune.” Instead they say, “Let’s hear violent, dramatic sounds instead.’” He repeated the remark (amending the studio’s requirement to ‘exciting, dramatic music’) a few weeks later in his interview for the National Library of Australia’s Oral History program, and from there the aside somehow came to represent all that needed to be said about Don Banks’s film music. But the depiction of the film music as a peripheral project that only tangentially served Banks’s technical development as a serious composer, obscures an important fact. Don Banks’s Hammer Horror scores do not emerge from his modernist or ‘advanced’ experimentation. They are, rather, projects in a long, and at times intense, engagement with light music.

The diversity of Banks’s work has not been lost on Graham Hair, the scholar most deeply acquainted with the range of Banks’s work. Hair’s investigations have extended beyond Banks’s ‘straight’ modernist work to also give consideration to the influence of jazz as expressed in his Third Stream output. Hair also includes Banks’s experimentation in electronic music in what he identifies as Banks’s ‘Mixed Musical Identity,’ a concept

that suggests a way to encompass Banks’s broad ‘democracy of taste.’ This challenge, Hair admits, is still ahead, since ‘of all the commentary and study of this composer, none quite gets to grips with all the many identities which were an essential part of Banks’ musical personality.’

Admitting light music into our portrait of Don Banks, into our depiction of his identity as a composer, is essential to ‘getting to grips’ with him. It brings a significant dimension to the portrait, showing us that Banks’s pragmatic streak was as strong as his modernist aspiration. The interplay and tension between these forces points toward a way of characterizing Don Banks not as just another acolyte of Schoenberg but as a much more individualistic and subversive musical personality.

Banks’ engagement with light music was more sophisticated and wide-ranging than Richard Toop’s depiction allows us to appreciate. Given the long ‘invisibility’ and anonymity of light music within musical discourse, it is not surprising that this side of Banks’s output has been overlooked or excluded. To observers of Don Banks at an earlier phase of his career, however, like the English music journalist William Mann (writing in 1968 when light music was still a thriving genre), the diversity of Banks’ activities was more obvious. Mann told his readers in *The Musical Times* that while they ‘are likely to have heard his music on radio or television, at the cinema (he is much in demand for horror-films since he is an expert practitioner of composition with a vivid sound-imagination), or on your own record player (he is a brilliant arranger of light music), his serious compositions have so far been performed only a few times in this country, though quite widely abroad.’

Mann hints at another dimension to Banks the composer, where light music is prominent in his career, graduating from his work ‘first as a copyist and arranger of light music, then composing for cinema advertisements, television commercials and documentary films until he gained recognition as a composer for feature films.’ Mann observes that light music’s domination of Banks’s career waned ‘in the 1960s, [when] commissions for

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564 Graham Hair, ‘From Thursday Night Swing Club to the BBC Proms: the Many Sides of Don Banks,’ *National Library of Australia News* 8, no. 3 (December 1997), 16.
565 Graham Hair, ‘From Thursday Night Swing Club to the BBC Proms: the Many Sides of Don Banks’ in *The Don Banks Collection in the National Library of Australia*, section 1.1, pages unnum.
concert works came his way regularly. Although it has been long and widely known that Banks worked in light music, the fact has been treated as an inconvenient truth, and the music itself as undeserving of attention.

To guide us to the traces of his light music output, Banks himself compiled a list of what he called his ‘Commercial Music.’ In response to a request from the Australia Music Centre in 1976, Banks supplied a six-page listing of his work under the headings ‘Feature Films’, ‘Documentary Films’, ‘Animated Films’, ‘Music for Television’, and ‘Commercial Music (Miscellaneous).’ The listing covers an enormous variety of music, encompassing the eight Hammer film scores, as well as a large amount of production in what may be directly termed light music. Banks even notes that ‘[t]his list is by no means complete as it’s taken from scraps of evidence here and there…’

Banks informs us that from the late 1950s to the end of the 1960s, he wrote music for TV and Cinema commercials for Golden Syrup, Surf Laundry Powder, Nestlé’s Quik, Wills’ Woodbines, Marks & Spencer and the Station ‘Title Music’ for Scottish TV, among dozens of projects for leading advertising agencies of the day (like J. Walter Thompson and Doyle Dane Bernbach). For the famous Halas & Batchelor animation production company, Banks wrote music for ‘industrial’ films (corporate and tourism promotional films for British Petroleum, Shell, Esso and for destinations including Switzerland, Greece and Abu Dhabi to cite a few), as well as for cartoons (Foo-Foo, Snip & Snap and the Habatales series). Alongside material contributed to pantomimes, Royal Variety Performances and theatrical revues, jingles for Radio Luxembourg and supermarket background music, Banks mentions ‘many original scores’ for the Production Music Libraries of the publishers Boosey & Hawkes, Charles Brull and Conroy. It is an impressive litany that highlights Banks’s immense industry and clearly establishes him as an active player in the British light music scene. Through his activities in ‘Commercial Music’, Banks could claim association with Stanley Black, Dudley Moore, Mikis Theodorakis, Peggy Seeger and Frank Ifield as complements to his associations with Milton Babbitt, Luigi Dallapiccola and Luigi Nono in serious music.

569 Don Banks, letter to Suellen Burcher, Australia Music Centre, 6 August 1976.
Banks brought his light music career to an end in 1970, after taking up a position as Music Director of Goldsmith College for a short time before making his return to Australia. His career in Australia was based in the realms of academia and bureaucracy, leaving little time for composition, and offering none of the lucrative business that the British light music scene provided. Banks himself did opine, in 1976, that ‘I’ve never been asked to do any commercial work in Australia since my return! (so much for a track record).’\textsuperscript{570} Randall Larson claims that Banks ‘was offered a few Australian films to score, but due to his teaching and administrative workload, as well as his failing health, he was prevented from taking up those opportunities, though he indicated he would have loved to score the films.’\textsuperscript{571}

Beyond the light music output arising from his ‘commercial’ career, Banks also contributed some concert works in a light music style deriving from folk sources. The first of these was a setting of \textit{Five North Country Folk Songs}, premiered in a recital at Australia House in 1953 by Sophie Wyss, accompanied by Banks’s Australian friend, Douglas Gamley. A second set of \textit{Three North Country Folk Songs} was premiered by Gamley with his wife the lyric soprano Ailsa (née Green) in a recital for the BBC Home Service in 1955.\textsuperscript{572}

Years later, Banks was commissioned by Musica Viva Australia to write a work for The King’s Singers to feature on their 1979 Australian Tour. Just at this time, wrote Banks in his program note, ‘[m]y interest in folk-song was re-awakened by hearing performances of songs I had arranged in London in the 1950’s, so I turned to the Australian scene.’ In what was to be his final composition before his death at 58, Banks returned to his light music persona, blending arrangements of the folk songs \textit{Botany Bay}, \textit{Bound for South Australia}, \textit{Moreton Bay} and \textit{Jacky Jacky} with original material derived from ‘folk motives (and others)’\textsuperscript{573} in a meditation upon Australian character he called \textit{An Australian Entertainment}. Banks’s return to the light music modus at this late stage of his career signals his abiding interest in the professional composer’s role reaching across the

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\textsuperscript{570} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{571} Randall D. Larson, 52.
\textsuperscript{573} Don Banks, program note for \textit{An Australian Entertainment} in Musica Viva Australia, \textit{The King’s Singers: Programme Notes: 1979 Australian Tour}, Sydney: Musica Viva Australia, 1979.
boundaries of genre or style. Even as his standing as ‘Australia’s leading modernist’ was at its height, Banks’s pragmatic streak comes through in this work dealing with ‘Australianness,’ in which his serious and light personae intertwine.

10.2 Don Banks’s Relationship to Light Music

Banks’s ‘commercial music’ career began in 1957 at a time when he ‘had to assume much more financial responsibility.’\footnote{Don Banks, interview by Hazel de Berg.} Having begun as a copyist for his teacher and mentor Mátyás Seiber (1905-1960), Banks realized that orchestration and arranging would make a much better contribution to his effort to ‘buy time to compose,’\footnote{Ibid.} and he focussed attention on building up his work in this vein. Banks recalls the years 1958 to 1960 as a testing time, as he struggled to balance the competing requirements of his suddenly busy career. Having made his break into the film music industry – ‘a very, very difficult business to enter in Britain, the competition is completely fierce there’\footnote{Ibid.} – his serious work began to suffer in competition with it.

Such work met an obvious financial imperative for Banks. In 1966, Banks observed of his finances that:

\begin{quote}
The return from my professional work in Film Music, etc., is excellent. From my serious composition I wish it were the same, but as it is I use my activities in commercial music to subsidise my own writing – still I think it’s fair to say that from the serious side it is improving all the time, but I cannot yet see the day when I could support a family on what I earn. For the moment I consider myself lucky to be able to earn a living entirely by writing music, by doing the thing I want most of all to do in the world.\footnote{Don Banks, untitled [Biographical Sketch (1966)], 3, unpublished typescript. From National Library of Australia, MS 6083, Box 34, Folder 255.}
\end{quote}

Although for a time, much of his energy was going into a wide range of light music work, ‘I don’t really regret this,’ Banks was later to say of his work in film particularly, ‘because I was working with the best orchestras in London. I would be composing forty-minute film scores, some of them for me experimental in sound, and I would hear them played back by absolutely the best players in town.’\footnote{Don Banks, interview by Hazel de Berg.}
Banks fully appreciated that ‘I have developed my practical orchestral expertise through my work as a professional in film and recording studios,’ and Philip Bracanin observed that much of Banks’s compositional skill was ‘acquired during the years spent in the exacting task of writing music for film scores … television shows, cartoons, documentaries and commercial advertisements.’ The stylistic breadth of the work he did in the commercial zone had far-reaching significance for Banks’s musical identity and led him into musical encounters extending beyond the confined domains of serious music.

Banks gained his first work in light music from Wally Stott (1924-2009). Known as Angela Morley after a sex change operation in 1972, Stott was ‘a leading light musician, as composer, arranger and conductor, in addition to creating many radio, television and film scores.’ After beginnings in the Dance Bands of Geraldo and Oscar Rabin, Stott had, like many of his colleagues from the ‘Swing’ world at this time, turned his attention to arranging and composing, and had elected to study with Mátyás Seiber. By the mid-fifties, Stott was well established as a light music identity in London, contributing music for BBC Radio’s *The Goon Show* and *Hancock’s Half Hour*. Banks’s ‘Commercial Music’ career began when Stott asked him to help out with some cues, in particular for an episode of *Hancock’s Half Hour* that required ‘quite serious’ music rather than the comedic fare normally associated with the show. With each successful project thereafter, Banks’s career in light music grew, the composer conquering a succession of challenges to build his impressive repertoire of television, radio, film and production library music.

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582 Don Banks, interview by Hazel de Berg.
Don Banks’s career in light music drew significantly upon his friendships with two composers: his Australian colleague Douglas Gamley and his mentor, Mátyás Seiber. As a means to appreciate this dimension of his career, it will be useful to focus on these two relationships as they influenced Banks’s light music practice. In his association with Gamley, we can observe some of the key features of Banks’s style and his professional engagement with the world of British light music, while his association with Seiber highlights the relationship between his light music and his practice as a serious composer.

11.1 Banks, Gamley and the ‘Philharmonic Pops’ Project

Douglas and Ailsa Gamley were Banks’s ‘very old mates from Melbourne,’\(^{583}\) where they had been students together at the Conservatorium of the University of Melbourne. As a young man, Gamley found success as a piano soloist in concertos, and as an accompanist and duo-pianist with fellow composer Phyllis Batchelor. Arriving in London in 1949, Gamley soon found his feet in the world of British light music. He applied his broad skills to diverse musical tasks for some of the leading practitioners of the genre: the film composer Richard Addinsell, the film conductor and music director Muir Mathieson and the composer, arranger and conductor, doyen of British light music, Robert Farnon.\(^ {584}\)

In London Banks and Gamley became allies in the quest to establish a career. A principal source of contact in their early career paths came from their mutual involvement with the Australian Musical Association. A combination of charity, concert presenter, music library and professional network, the Association provided practical support for Australian music and musicians in London, and Banks was prominent in its activities for about a decade. In fact, he did all the hard work in creating it, a fact recognized with a vote of thanks at the Association’s Inaugural General Meeting in 1952.\(^ {585}\) The Association had a range of purposes for the promotion of Australian musicians and

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\(^{583}\) Don Banks, interview by Hazel de Berg.

\(^{584}\) An outline of Gamley’s career is provided in Chapter 9.

\(^{585}\) Minutes of the Australian Musical Association Inaugural General Meeting, 16 February, 1952. These and all following references to the Minutes of the Association are from National Library of Australia, Records of the Australian Musical Association, MS 7996, Box 1 ‘Minutes’.
Australian music, addressed chiefly by presenting recitals (by Australian musicians and occasionally of Australian music) and establishing a library of Australian scores and sheet music in Australia House. The Association drew its main importance from its access to an ‘Australian Royal Concert Trust Fund’, established using the £2,000 proceeds from a concert at the Royal Festival Hall in the presence of Queen Elizabeth II, preceding her departure for her first visit to Australia in 1953. For a number of years, aspiring opera stars, instrumental soloists and conductors benefitted from awards made from the Trust Fund.

Banks wanted the Association to have Australian music at its core, and he strove to give the Association a strong composer presence. During the first few years of its operation Margaret Sutherland, Arthur Benjamin, Malcolm Williamson, Charles Mackerras, Keith Humble and Douglas Gamley all served on the Executive Committee and Sub-committees of the Association, along with Banks. While his vision of the AMA as a kind of professional networking group was at odds with the ‘Society’ nature of the Association’s membership, Banks persisted in his aspiration to raise the standing of composers, and in May 1957 put his foot down:

Mr Banks expressed regret at the lack of interest in Australia in commissioning and thought that the AMA should give a lead in this field. He also pointed out that although performers had already received fees from the AMA, composers had derived little or no help from the Association and a move should be made to right the position.

As a consequence, a once-off sum of £10.10.0 was applied to the commissioning of recital pieces from Margaret Sutherland, Dorian le Gallienne, Malcolm Williamson and Douglas Gamley. The usefulness of the Association waned significantly over time. Banks shook himself off from Committee responsibilities by 1960. Australian jazz violinist and composer Don Harper observed that when he arrived in London in the mid-1960s, ‘the Australian Musical Association was running classical concerts at Australia House which were real flops, attracting only twenty or thirty people.’

Nevertheless, the AMA had its uses. It was through the Association that Gamley and Banks kept up acquaintance with another lad from Melbourne, Peter Andry (1927–2010). Although born in Germany, Andry was raised in Melbourne from a young age and considered himself thoroughly Australian. He was also at the Melbourne Conservatorium

586 John Sharpe, 121.
at the same time as Banks and Gamley, and had come to London in 1953, intending to pursue a career as a conductor (by studying with Adrian Boult). Andry too, became involved in the work of the Australian Musical Association, including playing flute in the promotional recitals. Barry Millington suggests that Andry’s lack of Oxbridge education and connections were an ‘impediment to his progress’, but eventually Andry was able to draw on the experience he’d gained with the ABC producing concerts for radio broadcast, and snared a job as a producer for Decca, moving shortly thereafter to EMI, where he rose through the ranks to become ‘one of the leading executives of the golden age of recording ... In a career that took him to three major companies of the postwar era – Decca, EMI and Warner – he cultivated a glittering roster of celebrated artists, initiating and bringing to fruition many of the classic recordings of those decades.’

The AMA can be credited with a role in facilitating a collaboration between the three young Australians when, alongside his producing projects with the great names of the era - like Karajan, Callas, Menuhin and Klemperer - Andry brought Gamley and Banks together with the British conductor Robert Irving on a series of light classical albums for HMV (a sub-label of EMI in the British market), which Andry called ‘the Philharmonic Pops Series.’ Gamley and Banks shared arranging and other duties for the series, which eventually numbered five LPs, beginning with the album Philharmonic Pops (HMV CSD 1262), recorded in June 1958, in which Banks arranged Rimsky-Korsakov’s Flight of the Bumble Bee with a harpsichord feature for George Malcolm, a Brahms Hungarian Dance, and MacDowell’s To a Wild Rose. Subsequent albums followed similar lines, Banks contributing arrangements of popular classics for Carnival Time (HMV CSD 1280) (where he also joins with Gamley for the two piano parts in Saint-Saens’ The Swan) and Famous Evergreens (HMV CSD 1319). The latter albums were recorded between 31 March and 3 April 1959 at Abbey Road Studios.

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588 Ibid.
589 Christine Sunderland, Assistant to Peter Andry, letter to Don Banks, 26 October 1961. From National Library of Australia, MS 6083, Box 34, Folder 255.
590 Philharmonic Pops: Recording Plan for LP ‘Standard’ Record, n.d. From National Library of Australia, MS 6083, Box 34, Folder 255.
591 Philharmonic Pops: Nos. 2 & 3, ‘2 LPs to be recorded between March 31st and April 2nd, 1959 at No. 1 Studios, 3, Abbey Rd.’ n.d. From National Library of Australia, MS 6083, Box 34, Folder 255; and 5 Colourful LPs of the World’s Best Tunes, promotional flyer, n.d. From National Library of Australia, MS 6083, Box 34, Folder 257.
The most ambitious production of the series was recorded in June 1960, called *Musical Merry-go-Round*, released in 1961 as HMV CSD 1333. For the Australian pressing of the album, the subtitle ‘A Fairground Fantasia’ was added to concisely convey the album’s theme.\(^{592}\) The album incorporated ‘actuality sounds … recorded at the Festival Gardens, Battersea’ and created a ‘stereo illusion’ that the music was ‘issuing from a merry-go-round’ for two of the record’s tracks: Oscar Straus’s *La Ronde* and Richard Rodgers’ *Carousel Waltz*. More importantly for our present interests, the album also contained two original works of ambitious scale by Gamley (*Prater Fest*) and Banks (*Coney Island*).\(^{593}\)

In 1961, further additions to the series were planned, and a new sense of vigour emerges in pages of enthusiastic scribbles and doodles in which it is apparent that Banks and Gamley have brainstormed ideas for further projects in the series. Some hope for modernising the approach is suggested by a proposed new title and ‘hook’ for the series: “‘SOUNDWAVE’”, a new series of popular orchestral recordings bringing you Music freshly orchestrated, often specially composed, always planned for your special enjoyment.”\(^{594}\) The series would include further original works composed by Banks and Gamley – roughly one each per album.

Eventually, the flurry of ideas consolidated into a series of more or less concrete proposals. *Overture & Beginners* was to include, in addition to Arthur Benjamin’s *Overture to an Italian Comedy*, a new *Overture to ‘The Mousetrap’* from Gamley and a piece to be called *Theatre Musik* by Banks. *Les Oiseaux* would include arrangements of keyboard pieces by Daquin and Rameau, with Gamley contributing an original piece called *Bird of Paradise* and Banks a piece with some dramatic potential, *The Phoenix*. Banks would compose a piece to a Les Baxter kind of name, *Up the Amazon*, for an album about the *Romance of Rivers*, and for an exotic program called *Arabian Nights*, Gamley wanted to write a *Japanese Ceremonial*, Banks a *Balinese Temple Dance*. The

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\(^{594}\) Handwritten page headed ‘SOUNDWAVE,’ from National Library of Australia, MS 6830 *Papers of Don Banks*: Box 34, Folder 255.
concept of *A Shakespeare Companion* inspired a lot of ideas, without seeming to consolidate into a specific project.\textsuperscript{595}

And yet it was only the Shakespeare idea that eventually made it to record, independently of the ‘Philharmonic Pops’ Series as an individual ‘serious’ project, *Touches of Sweet Harmony: Music Inspired by Shakespeare*.\textsuperscript{596} For this album, Gamley wrote *Three Melodies of Arne*, ‘freely transcribed for flute and strings,’ and Banks contributed a miniature concerto grosso for strings with flute, viola da gamba and lute, *Elizabethan Miniatures*, based on pieces from the Fitzwilliam Virginal Book, set ‘in deceptively simple orchestration [which] brings these pieces into the realm of the modern concert hall while adhering faithfully to the idiom of the period.’\textsuperscript{597} Unlike *Coney Island*, the *Miniatures* made it into the catalogue of Schott, Banks’s publisher. One more record was made in the ‘Philharmonic Pops’ series, *Springtime* (HMV CSD 1346), consisting entirely of popular ‘classical’ pieces.\textsuperscript{598}

This kind of work was to become the bread-and-butter of Douglas Gamley’s long and productive career - piecing together programs, conducting, playing piano, arranging, composing, and writing program notes for many LP recording projects. For Banks, it underscores the pragmatism, professionalism and perfectionism that are hallmarks of his practice as a composer, in whichever field he was working.

As he approached work in each new field of commercial endeavour Banks was keenly aware of new challenges requiring him to master new expertise. In his Oral History interview of 1972, Banks reflected that ‘in many ways … I tend to be a perfectionist and if I was going to do something I wanted to do it very, very well.’\textsuperscript{599} When he started working as a copyist, Banks set off to the library for books on calligraphy, and taught himself to write notation with exceptional clarity. As he entered the arranging field, he ‘had to make a study of certain recording techniques … I had to get to know the breadth of the musicians I was writing for. I started to be plunged into situations for which I felt I

\textsuperscript{595} Eight typed pages headed *Philharmonic Pops* and *Philharmonic Pops, 1961 – Preliminary Suggestions*. From National Library of Australia, MS 6830 *Papers of Don Banks*: Box 34, Folder 255.
\textsuperscript{597} The Sinfonia of London, *Touches of Sweet Harmony*, liner notes.
\textsuperscript{598} 5 Colourful LPs of the World’s Best Tunes.
\textsuperscript{599} Don Banks, interview by Hazel de Berg.
was probably unprepared." Banks’s approach to the ‘Philharmonic Pops’ project demonstrates his determination to equip himself to conquer the demands of light music.

The ‘Philharmonic Pops’ series utilized a leading session orchestra, the Sinfonia of London (operative 1955-1965). Working with a triple-wind strength orchestra made up from London’s vibrant community of session and moonlighting musicians gave Banks a golden opportunity to access valuable orchestral time and develop his skills in orchestration. But Banks also applied himself to addressing the broader parameters of popular orchestral style involved in the creation of light music. Involvement in the ‘Philharmonic Pops’ aided Banks in developing his competence in diverse musical styles and functioning as a commercial orchestrator and composer. There was much he could learn in this respect from Douglas Gamley, who had become an integral part of the production enterprises of the prominent light music leader and composer, Robert Farnon (1917-2005), firstly as his orchestral pianist and then ‘with his guidance and encouragement began arranging and conducting.’

Farnon had moved to London from Canada in 1944 and quickly established a busy schedule as an arranger and conductor, initially for Vera Lynn and Gracie Fields, but later including Frank Sinatra, Lena Horne and Tony Bennett. His composing encompassed all the fields of light music work in radio, film, television and production libraries, but a particular range was his composition of ‘light orchestral cameos’ and tone poems.

The cameos were pieces of direct popular appeal, arising principally from Farnon’s production library work, and they employ elements of a Swing style and popular orchestral language that also feature strongly in his arrangements. Farnon's arrangement of Yes, We Have No Bananas, for instance, begins with rhythm guitar in a ‘vamping’ tempo, over which piccolo and xylophone lightly pick out the familiar melody. The various orchestral sections contribute exuberant flourishes: the strings extemporise in a running bluegrass fiddle or ‘turkey in the straw’ style, while the brass interject with

600 Ibid.
601 Douglas Gamley, ‘Composer-Arranger-Conductor.’
broad melodic statements in swinging rhythms, and prominent lines on electric guitar reinforce the rhythmic and colouristic vitality of the arrangement. While this arrangement gains its character from the deployment of sounds close to popular music, some of Farnon’s other cameo pieces employ a popular orchestral language that grows more directly from the heritage of Arthur Sullivan and Edward German. The melodies of *Portrait of a Flirt* (1949), for example, flit changeably over a bouncing rhythmic base provided mainly by pizzicato lower strings; the rising melody which first portrays the confident and carefree character of the ‘flirt’ is distracted into snippets of bubbling chatter (cascading strings or flutes) and dreams of romantic waltzing before swooning finally into some form of restful embrace (of either a comfortable chaise longue or a handsome partner, according to the listener’s inclination).

Farnon’s slightly longer tone poems, such as *Lake of the Woods* (1951) and *À la claire fontaine* (1955) adopt an impressionistic sensibility, borrowing and modifying harmonic and textural features found in the musical language of Debussy, Ravel and ‘post-Impressionists’ like Albert Roussel and Frederick Delius. The popular-leaning style of the cameos and the more ‘classical’ character of the tone poems represent poles of a spectrum in Farnon’s musical language, though they could and did overlap extensively. Within this broad range, Farnon was able to combine elements and components of his musical language as befitted the musical purpose and character of each composition.

Through the 1950s and 1960s, Farnon relied heavily upon the assistance of Douglas Gamley as pianist, arranger and conductor, and it is most likely through Gamley’s inner knowledge of Farnon’s light music style that Banks too came to understand the techniques of his ‘progressive’ light music. Banks approached the ‘Philharmonic Pops’ project with studious intent, and in *Coney Island*, the major fruit of his work on the project, he shows his mastery of light music style, drawing influence from familiarity with the music of Farnon and other stylists of light music.

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606 Ibid.
11.1.1 *Coney Island*

*Coney Island* has a unique place in Don Banks’s output. It is neither film music nor ‘straight’ concert music, but blends aspects of both musical worlds to effect a piece intended to serve as a stereo showpiece for the ‘Philharmonic Pops’ project, in a combination of tone-poem and ‘cameo’. Employing a large orchestra of triple-wind forces with augmented percussion, the piece depicts four scenes or attractions of New Jersey’s Coney Island, framed by fanfare-like opening and closing statements and linking passages (a recording is provided at Track 3 of the *Appendix* CD).

The original liner notes for the LP provide a clear outline of the piece’s musical and pictorial progress:

*Coney Island* opens with a kaleidoscopic impression of the brash, artificial world of the modern Fun Fair, and this leads into a gentle Carousel in 5/8 time – which asymmetrical rhythm corresponds to the movement of the carousel horses. This in turn leads to the Water-shoot – a very literal musical pictorialism this – and then we are in the quiet atmosphere of the Tunnel of Love, where the languorous and seductive tones of three alto saxophones, placed in a perspective of depth, create the illusion of the long, echoing tunnel. The kaleidoscope turns again to reveal the Big Dipper careering past and the work finishes with a return to the bustling jollity of the opening scene.

This is a very clear structural template, which avoids any complications of structure that might impede the musical flow, and this sense is at the core of what Banks sets out to achieve in this piece. The four main pictures the tone-poem describes are presented in three sections, framed by a fanfare-like opening and closing, and fanfare bridges between sections. **Table 3** outlines the basic structure of *Coney Island*, identifying the features of each section:

1. The image described (in the terms used in the original album’s liner notes);
2. The basic musical characteristics;
3. A concise depiction of the mood, and finally
4. The ‘trope’ I assign to highlight pertinent musical features: a simple (and liberal) adaption from Tagg and Clarida’s methodology, as outlined in Chapter 3.

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With such a clear structural outline in place, the challenges that Banks addresses here are those of capturing appropriate moods, representing a ‘kaleidoscope’ of different moods, and effecting transitions so that they sound ‘natural.’ Banks himself drew attention to the importance of his film work in aiding his technical capacity in these areas in his 1972 Oral History interview, where he observes that the work taught him ‘an appreciation of scale, timing, space in music; how to move along with visual images; the creation of mood, the creation of atmosphere.’ While the ‘formal problems’ posed in film music are less significant, the work demands a more flexible style: while having to synchronise to a rigid time framework, the composer must develop material that ‘sounds natural and is musical.’ Banks works on these same principles in *Coney Island.*

In seeking this practical fluency, Banks gives emphasis in *Coney Island* to creating a sense of movement, represented in two pervasive elements: the progressive sound of the opening fanfare (and subsequent references to or derivatives of it), and the various types of movement which characterize the sonic environments of Carousel, Water-shoot and Big Dipper. For contrast, the Tunnel of Love gives the listener luxuriant, sensuous repose. Each section is clearly delineated, in the manner of the traditional light music *potpourri,* but Banks ensures that they sit together comfortably and continuously. The writer of the original album liner notes (probably Douglas Gamley) uses the metaphor of a kaleidoscope, which presents each colourful image, then turns to reveal another.

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608 Don Banks, interview by Hazel de Berg.
609 Don Banks, *Philharmonic Pops: Coney Island,* June 1960, unpublished manuscript score. From National Library of Australia, MS 6830 *Papers of Don Banks:* Sequence D: Folio Box 15: Folder marked ‘HMV’. All references to the score refer to this document.
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Image</strong></td>
<td>Opening Fanfare</td>
<td>‘Carousel’</td>
<td>Bridge-Fanfare</td>
<td>‘Water-shoot’</td>
<td>‘Tunnel of Love’</td>
<td>Bridge-Fanfare</td>
<td>‘Big Dipper’</td>
<td>Opening Fanfare Reprise/ Finale</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Music</strong></td>
<td>Allegro; 4/4; C major</td>
<td>Moderato; 5/4 (3+2); G major</td>
<td>Moderato; 4/4; B flat major</td>
<td>Tempo primo; 4/4; F major</td>
<td>Slowly; 4/4; G major</td>
<td>Allegro moderato; poco accel.; B flat major</td>
<td>Allegro; 4/4 C major</td>
<td>Poco Meno [Mosso]; 4/4; C major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mood</strong></td>
<td>‘brash, artificial world’</td>
<td>Genteel and playful</td>
<td>Dynamic</td>
<td>Genteel and playful</td>
<td>Warm embrace</td>
<td>picking up the pace</td>
<td>Fast momentum</td>
<td>‘bustling jollity’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Trope</strong></td>
<td>Popular Progress/ Exciting Adventure</td>
<td>‘Wonky’ Waltz</td>
<td>Fairground Elegance</td>
<td>Farnonesque Romance</td>
<td>Fun-Ride</td>
<td>Popular Progress and Conclusion</td>
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Table 3: Sectional outline of Don Banks's *Coney Island* (1961).
The liner notes apply the terms ‘brash, artificial’, and ‘bustling jollity’ to describe the music which opens *Coney Island*, and which returns for the finale. This is a representation of the spirit of ‘Exciting Adventure’ that a day at Coney Island would offer. There is something more to this sound than that, however: a sense of dynamism and modernity which entails a second designation of the light music trope at work here – one of ‘Popular Progress.’

Propulsive energy is established at the start with the strings pushing ahead in quavers beneath a fanfare theme that is rhythmic and fast-paced. The orchestral piano contributes chords in steady repeated quavers (evoking George Shearing’s ‘block chord’ method or, more directly, the use of piano in Percy Faith’s arrangement of Max Steiner’s *Theme from ‘A Summer Place’*) in reinforcement of the momentum. These features also suggest attributes of a news theme, according to Tagg and Clarida, and in its ‘syncopated, repeated-note’ ‘Morse Code figures’ or newsroom teleprinter rhythms, there are significant connections between *Coney Island*’s opening and a news theme: connotations of the bustling city, immediacy and confidence. *Coney Island*’s fanfare opening quickly establishes an air of popular modernity and happy progress.

This combination of sentiments is precisely in keeping with the spirit of the 1951 Festival of Britain, with its mission to be ‘a tonic to the Nation,’ in which these two lines of feeling are aligned. There, the projection of the promise of Progress and Industry was combined with family entertainments for a broad taste. The chief of these latter was the Festival Gardens incorporating the Battersea Fun Fair (1951-1974), the place that had first inspired the idea of the *Musical Merry-Go-Round*. It was also likely to have been the real model for Don Banks’s musical images, since it possessed some of the same American-style rides that are featured in *Coney Island*, including The Big Dipper and ‘Water-Chute’.

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610 Max Steiner, arr. Percy Faith, *Theme from ‘A Summer Place,*’ on the compilation *Turn Back the Hands of Time: Great orchestras of the ’50s & ’60s*, Decca 532 2950, 2010, 2 compact discs.
611 Philip Tagg and Bob Clarida, 487-494.
614 The Sinfonia of London, HMV CSD 1333, liner notes.
The sense of movement also prevails as the chief feature of the pictorial sections. Banks clearly had in mind that the producers were aiming to devise some means of creating a merry-go-round stereo illusion, though no-one quite knew how they would do it:

Various suggestions were made, including microphones mounted on a revolving spindle, and even placing the orchestra on a revolving platform. However, the solution came, as all scientific solutions must, by painstaking experimentation. A careful electronically synchronised manipulation of Left and Right tracks was found to provide the complete illusion of the music issuing from a Merry-go-round.616

In the end this technique was applied to only two tracks of the album, but listening to Banks’s liberal use of the cascades, glissandos, runs and other dynamic rhythmic patterns in Coney Island, it is easy to imagine how effectively they would have sounded with the revolving effect.

Power drains from the Opening Fanfare to bring the tempo to moderato for the first musical image - the Carousel. At first it feels like a waltz, but it soon becomes clear that it is a lopsided one. The time signature is 5/4 (not 5/8 as in the liner notes) in a gait that Banks clarifies as ‘(3+2).’ Where Tagg and Clarida consider that horse riding motions (the ‘equine anaphone’)617 are most closely associated with a 3/8 canter or a 4/4 gallop,618 Banks’s ‘asymmetrical’ pattern at a moderate tempo conveys a more gentrified kind of horse-motion that ‘corresponds to the movement of the carousel horses.’619 Over the rhythmic faux-equine gait provided by bassoon, contrabassoons and bass clarinet, the strings represent the riders gently rising and falling as they glide around and around. The disjunction or sense of mismatch between clumsiness and gracefulness mimics an effect exercised by Robert Farnon in his ‘cameo’ piece Poodle Parade (1956), in particular at 1:22 of its original recorded performance.620 The mismatch in Farnon’s piece is between the light tripping of the strutting poodle, portrayed with skipping piccolo over a bouncing pizzicato bass-line, and the glamour of the parade, evoked by legato lines that move in unflappable, gliding ease, the smooth contours of the melodic line distinctly contrasting with the poodle’s little leaping movements.

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616 The Sinfonia of London, HMV CSD 1333, liner notes.
617 Philip Tagg and Bob Clarida, 154.
618 Ibid., 292-297.
619 The Sinfonia of London, HMV CSD 1333, liner notes.
Coney Island’s Carousel invokes the memory of a waltz, but distorts it with humorous effect in a way that Robert Farnon often practiced. The waltz was an indispensable component of Farnon’s light music vocabulary (*Westminster Waltz* and *Sophistication Waltz* were two of Farnon’s most popular cameos) but could also serve other purposes, such as its use for humorous effect as an evocation of a daydream of romance in *Portrait of a Flirt*. The effect of Banks’s ‘wonky’ waltz in *Coney Island* is to suggest that the charming mechanical horses are attempting a waltz, but not quite getting it right.

The gentle oscillations of the merry-go-round are swept away by a fanfare announcement, which recalls the music of the Opening Fanfare, and may be seen as a variant of a bridge passage contained there. The Bridge-Fanfare…

\[\text{Music notation image}\]

… is a thematic variant on a passage from the Opening Fanfare at four bars before letter E in the manuscript score:

\[\text{Music notation image}\]

The gesture provides a link to the next musical image. The ride known as the ‘Water-shoot’ (or ‘Shoot the Chute’ at Coney Island) consists of a large slide with two channels: a boat is winched to the top of one channel, then allowed to slip down the other: as it releases at the end, the boat shoots off rapidly. Two thrills for the rider: the slide and the ‘shoot’. Banks represents this with arco crotchet triplets from the strings, the violins descending against ascending notes from the other strings in a crescendo to evoke a gliding sensation:
This gesture concludes abruptly with a sharp, ‘molto crescendo’ downward glissando from xylophone and harp (coinciding with the string sforzando) as the boat shoots off. Fragments of the descending motif are echoed in horns as the music heads toward a great rallentando, which concludes with the strings swooning into the music for the Tunnel of Love.

Here the music strongly resembles the string writing of Robert Farnon, specifically in its character of close-harmony richness, which Farnon favoured particularly in his romantically themed albums such as Flirtation Walk (1956), Presenting Robert Farnon (1950), Pictures in the Fire (1957) and Two Cigarettes in the Dark (1954). This is the style Tagg and Clarida designate as ‘string padding,’ and specifically in this case ‘string wallpaper.’ This effect ‘performed arco on several string instruments,’ is characterised by its ‘lack of audible attack and decay and by the relative consistency of its envelope … all

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621 Don Banks, Philharmonic Pops: Coney Island, unpublished manuscript score, June 1960. From NLA MS 6830 Papers of Don Banks: Sequence D; Folio Box 15; Plastic Pack 3. All references to the score refer to this document.

frequently enhanced by extra reverb in the recording. While the term ‘padding’ can be understood as referring to a practice of filling-out with unnecessary content, in this context it denotes a cushion-like texture, built on the close harmonies of the divisi strings. Farnon employed the method in different registers and different tempos to suit the requirements of his arrangements, careful to avoid the possibility of textural sameness that the technique could engender. In Farnon’s version of Always, the effect is languid, underpinned by hints of waltz rhythm plucked on guitar and emphasized by big portamento movements. Portamento effects are subtler in the sumptuous string bedding of Laura, where Farnon makes the texture richer and more intensely flavoured by emphasizing the lower strings (including the lower strings of the violins) and legato strokes. The texture is supplemented by surrounding colourations of celeste and harp, which simultaneously add textural interest and lend a ‘moonlight’ effect to the musical imagery.

In Coney Island’s Tunnel of Love, muted strings in close harmony accompany a trio of seductive alto saxophones: a central solo line with second and third players placed to the Left hand and Right hand sides (for stereo effect). The saxophones luxuriate along the Tunnel’s course, the leader’s triplet-laced melody echoed laconically in fragments by his colleagues, as they recline upon their cushions of ‘string padding’. The warm sound of Farnon’s Laura is present here, together with the extreme legato that gives emphasis to the Tunnel’s atmosphere of secluded separation from the world of everyday concerns and business. Sparkle, evoking the stars of a cloudless summer night, is added here and there by touches of celeste, harp and vibraphone. Finally, the strings emerge from their underbelly role with a huge portamento (notated in demisemiquavers) to take up the saxophones’ melody and bring the languorous journey to an end.

The atmosphere of romance is conjured here by some of the strongest of all light music devices (Dahlhaus would call them ‘props’). Tagg and Clarida essay extensively the properties of curvilinear melodic contours, of the gentle motion of boats in their depiction as pleasure craft, and the luminosity of ‘shimmer and tingle’ effects in provoking romantic feelings in the listener. Banks has deployed a Farnonesque language of musical romance rich and direct in its associations, purposely to indulge the expectations of his listener and

623 Philip Tagg and Bob Clarida, 170.
624 Ibid., 231-249.
serve the album’s audiophile aspirations. It is an earnest expression of a desire to work effectively within the light music style understood within its own terms.

The brass section abruptly ends the romantic mood, pronouncing the Bridge-Fanfare again and gradually picking up the tempo to introduce the racing cascades of the Big Dipper, represented in rising and falling semiquaver runs, accented by crescendos and decrescendos on two (stereo) snare-drums. The strings alternate with the winds’ rapid swooping in a more measured rising and subsiding movement, which is a recollection of a similar ‘riding’ pattern heard in the Opening Fanfare. This time, the ‘riding’ chords are given more dynamic force, with George Shearing ‘block chords’ underpinning, in order to presage the return of the Popular Progress mood of the Opening Fanfare. A further variant on the Bridge-Fanfare motif brings a transition to the return of the Opening Fanfare’s propulsive opening bars, foreshortened to make way for the exuberant concluding bars. The liner notes’ description of this as ‘bustling jollity’ brings emphasis to the effect here of ‘teleprinter rhythms’ working in conjunction with ‘trumpet punctuations’ to connote the quality of ‘busting.’ In its ‘jollity,’ this finale brings a feeling that the patrons have had a happy day among the Funfair’s varied pleasures, experiencing a ‘tonic to the Nation.’

_Coney Island_ is Don Banks’s commercial symphonic poem, a work in a style that is specifically that of light music, and British light music in particular. Numerous aspects of orchestration, melodic contour, tempo, harmonic voicing and performing style show how Banks was wholeheartedly engaging with light music style in creating his contribution for the ‘Philharmonic Pops’ project. David Ades in the _Grove_ entry on Robert Farnon summarizes his style as being ‘influenced by the exciting North American rhythms of his youth, yet respects the traditions of light music he encountered in Britain.’ In _Coney Island_ Banks makes a similar adaptation of his own, developing a language that derives some elements from the musical vocabulary of Robert Farnon’s popular orchestral compositions and arrangements, but which also reflecting his own wider awareness of popular style and his inherent sense for musical drama and imagery.

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625 Philip Tagg and Bob Clarida, 599.
626 David Ades, ‘Farnon, Robert.’
11.2 Banks, Seiber and the Craft of Light Music

That Wally Stott and Don Banks both studied with Mátyás Seiber (1905-1960) was neither mere coincidence nor a strange conjunction of light music stylist and ‘international modernist’. As a composer and a teacher, Seiber possessed both a strict professionalism and a stylistic open-mindedness that suited these students perfectly. Seiber was ‘completely undogmatic about the course that contemporary music should take, and he recognized that there were many different kinds of composers.’ Banks studied formally with Seiber for a period of two and a half years, but an apprenticeship phase persisted for years after that, until, in fact, the student was fully equipped to take over from the master after his (premature) death. Seiber’s professional relationship with Banks extended well beyond the disciplines of ‘serious’ compositional training, to encompass writing for cartoons, industrial films and various other low forms of everyday musical labour. Seiber gave work to and collaborated extensively with Banks on commercial work until his death in a car accident at Kruger National Park in 1960.

The experience of working with Seiber influenced Banks more enduringly than his brief encounters with Milton Babbitt, Luigi Dallapiccola or Luigi Nono. Seiber was an enthusiast for serialism, jazz and folk music, enthusiasms Banks shared (folk music perhaps only peripherally). But more importantly, Seiber provided the composerly role model to which Banks also aspired, as ‘the complete professional … He earned his living by his writing, and could turn his hand to any type of music, whether it be jazz, music for cartoons and feature films, or for radio productions – any style, any type of music - Mátyás could produce it, and with the utmost integrity.’

Even when Banks returned to Australia, he continued to acknowledge Seiber’s crucial role. Speaking to a Conference of educationalists in 1974, Banks recalled:

I had in front of me a model of a composer who was the complete craftsman. Seiber said composition should be taught in the same way you teach shoemaking. The apprentice would come along and find out how to cut leather, to make soles, to make joins, and how to get the stitches neat… A kind of craftsmanship, allied with a strong sense of discipline.

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628 Don Banks, Mátyás Seiber, script for a radio talk presented on the BBC General Overseas Service, 4 January 1961, unpublished typescript. From National Library of Australia, MS 6083, Box 33, Folder 244.
The pragmatic voice in Banks’s ear was that of his own artistic conscience. When his interviewer at the Conference speculated about the creative process that ‘in everything else we have an administrator over us. You haven’t got an administrator over you when you write [music],’ Banks interjected: ‘An internal one.’

The importance to Banks of musical practicality, encompassing notions of craftsmanship, professionalism and discipline, is pretty well established by such comments. Seiber’s role strongly supported a pragmatic streak that was essential to Banks in all aspects of his musical career. Seiber recognized the ‘historical’ importance of influences like Babbitt, Dallapiccola and Nono, and could fully support Banks’s ‘democracy of taste’ through his own interests. But his more enduring role was to equip his student with practical skills in creating music and making a living as a composer. In gaining that equipment, practical efforts in both serious and light music fields aligned. From Seiber’s teaching, Banks acquired astute analytical and technical skills, and through the application of these skills in both serious and commercial work environments, Banks learned how to make music out of them.

The period from the mid-fifties to the early sixties is the crux of this development. In particular, it is where we can observe a transition in Banks’s compositional approach in which intuition takes over from system, and practical outcomes start to override technical concerns. Working in light music lent fundamental support to this transition in Banks’s practice as a composer.

In his teaching, Seiber insisted on a meticulous and thorough process of preparation focussing on structural outlines and motivic development. His instruction laid great emphasis on the analysis of scores and exercises in variation technique and counterpoint based on imitation of the techniques of past masters. The skills derived from these studies and exercises, however, could be applied or adapted to the writing of music in a full range of musical styles and language.

Examining the evolution of Banks’s style in his ‘early concert music’, Bradley Cummings identifies three fundamental elements of Banks’s compositional approach: compositional

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630 Warren R. Lett, 16
pre-planning, preparation of structural outlines (or ‘formal templates’), and processes of motivic and thematic development.

Both Seiber and Babbitt, whilst not representing a ‘united front,’ had in common a strong emphasis on compositional pre-planning. For Seiber, this was a matter of thoroughly analysing ‘the materials to bring out all their latent potential, and variation techniques in the manner of Bach, Haydn and Brahms are the means by which this is achieved.’ Babbitt takes the pre-planning further, making it the primary organisational process in composition, but this method soon became frustrating to Banks, since he viewed composition as ‘a process of discovery and the static or otherwise abstract nature of determining such things as small-scale successions of chords in isolation could not be made to fit comfortably into that process.’ In other words, Banks was reluctant to render up compositional control over his a priori calculations, and preferred to allow more space for his musical intuition to guide the treatment of that material, using Seiber’s motivic variation methods in preference to a strict serialism.

Cummings traces this development in Banks’s style in two very early works. In developing the material for the Three Studies for violoncello and piano (1954), Cummings observes Banks exploring in his sketches, ways to develop sonic materials out of his twelve-tone row by means of chords of three, four and six notes. But rather than end up with material to support structured serialist methods, Banks extracts instead sounds that interest his ear, fragments of the row that constitute what Cummings represents as ‘textures’ rather than harmonies. Banks tweaks the sounds until eventually ‘nothing that was tried in this pre-compositional phase was used verbatim in the finished music.’ In Psalm 70 for voice and piano (1954), Cummings discusses the ‘tension between the demands of the twelve-tone system as he [Banks] had learnt it from Babbitt and his own musical impulses that centred on the development and variation of motivic and other specific musical ideas,’ characterizing the dilemma as a ‘tension between system and idea.’

631 Bradley Cummings, Early Concert Works of Don Banks, 286.
632 Ibid., 336.
633 Ibid., 336.
Psalm setting, Banks wanted to ‘extract a good lyrical line from the row,’ and set it against ‘the harmonic noises I like to make.’

Cummings concludes that ‘Banks composed primarily with themes, motives, and textural ideas, and not with twelve-tone rows as such. He maintained a distinction between these two layers of his compositional practice, and this distinction denied the very possibility of a systematic and structured application of twelve-tone techniques to his music.’ Banks uses serialism as a way to construct a sound world that he then explores quite freely. This loose interpretation of serial method is a key development of Banks’s musical approach, readily acknowledged in his comment to James Murdoch for his book *Australia’s Contemporary Composers*:

> I would say that my own approach to serial composition is a pragmatic one – that one has a feeling for, or a vision of, a certain kind of ‘sound’ world, and one’s own writing will tend to approach this whether it’s written serially or not (e.g. my Trio for Horn, Violin and Piano [1962] – a non-serial piece).

A transition occurs in Banks’s professional development over the later part of the 1950s and early 1960s as he adapts his technically oriented serialist approach in pragmatic ways. The easing or loosening of the strictures of serialist style allows Banks to refine three key elements of his compositional practice:

- The development of thematic processes as the core of his method
- The adaptation of structural outlines from integrated or systemic models to more practical, conventional tripartite formal outlines.
- His treatment of the practice of pre-compositional preparation, which moves from a technical focus to a practical one.

By the time of the *Sonata da Camera*, his homage to Seiber written in early 1961, Cummings observes that Banks has become less reliant on a pre-compositional sketching process, which Cummings sees as an indication that Banks had attained both ‘a greater degree of fluency as a composer as well as a better capacity to compose suitable ideas with which to begin the composition. The former point is indicated by the fact that Banks was able to complete entire sections on single continuous sketches, and the latter point is made

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635 Don Banks, letter to Mátyás Seiber dated 24 February 1953, quoted in Bradley Cummings, ‘Psalm 70,’ 77.
636 Bradley Cummings, ‘Psalm 70,’ 93.
637 Don Banks, untitled [Responses to Questions from James Murdoch (1966)], 2, unpublished typescript. From National Library of Australia, MS 6083, Box 34, Folder 255.
evident by the fact that the beginning of the composition changes only minimally from the very first sketch to the final draft.  

In acquiring this fluency, Banks’s work in light music was a significant contributor. Banks said of his film work that it did him ‘a great deal of good in that I became very, very experienced in writing for any possible combination, creating any kind of orchestral sound,’ and in all his light music work, we can trace elements of Banks’s pragmatic development, finding equation of his thematic, structural and pre-compositional practice in his light music to parallel what was going on in his serious work.

Thematic procedures dominate Banks’s film music, employed with a variety of material. Some of the themes and thematic constructions may sound as though they have been developed from twelve-tone calculations, but this material is deployed in quite traditional thematic ways. Themes, whether melodic or ‘nonmelodic,’ dominate in Randall Larson’s account of the Hammer Horror scores. *Rasputin, the Mad Monk* (1966) has a Russian-Hollywood style theme which is ‘reworked into several interesting variants’ for a seduction scene and an acid-hurling scene. The thematic material of *The Reptile* (1966) is more adventurous (‘nonmelodic’ to Larson) but nevertheless works as ‘the score’s thematic mainstay … occasionally interacting with [the score’s other] ambient dissonances and suspense motifs.’

In the example of *Coney Island*, we have observed Banks’s concentration on bringing to his compositional practice a musical fluency and capability in the expression of mood. Banks laid out a simple plan for the piece conforming to three basic sections, framed by introductory and concluding sections and intervening bridge passages, which conform to a series of musical images that Banks links together in a seamless potpourri of component moods. In the serious *Sonata da Camera*, written soon after, Bradley Cummings observes a similar approach: ‘a sectional, tripartite construction assisted this fluency. It functioned not only as a means of creating coherence in the music but as a means by which to compose.’ Applying a structure based on further sectional development within the first movement,

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639 Don Banks, interview by Hazel de Berg.
640 Randall D. Larson, 56.
Banks was ‘now able to ensure the motion from one section to the next was musically congruent.’

Light music poses none of the challenges of ‘advanced’ musical language, but instead demands quick turnarounds and suitability to the end product’s commercial ambitions. In that context, while pre-compositional preparation and analysis is useful, the focus is clearly upon gathering material and ideas to be developed with the utmost fluency (and quickly). The pre-compositional approach that Seiber prescribed for serious compositional work could be applied broadly to the materials of popular music. A study of publications like Humberto Morales’ Latin-American Rhythm Instruments and How to Play Them or All About Cha-Cha could inform the composition of a jingle for Forham’s Toothpaste with its ensemble of flute, guitar, piano, ‘Conga-Bongos’, shaker and cowbell. Transcription and arrangement of some of Alan Lomax’s massive collection of American folk songs (1960) could help Banks to write a convincing cowboy song for the yodelling pop singer Frank Ifield in the ‘light purely fictional film’ for BP, The Cattle Carters (1962).

Seiber provided Banks with ‘commercial’ assignments ranging from the copying of parts for his film scores to folk-song setting and collaboration in providing music for Seiber’s constant commissioners, the Halas and Batchelor animation studio. Helping Banks to survive in London was only part of the purpose in giving him this work. It also served to complete Banks’s equipment as a composer, by putting into practice the methodical and musical intelligence acquired from Seiber’s instruction.

In the late fifties and early sixties, Banks occupied two musical worlds. Both served Banks to develop his personal compositional style. As he adapted his compositional style to address the challenges of twelve-tone technique, Banks’s work in writing light music

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641 Bradley Cummings, *Early Concert Works of Don Banks*, 335
ameliorated the pressures of the systematic process, assisting him to be productive, fluent and natural. The two streams of his work in the period interact to give Banks the equipment to be himself as a composer, working together in a complicated but fruitful relationship of pragmatic influence and modernist aspiration. The two sides combined together to reinforce the direction of his technical development and compositional style.

Banks applied himself with serious intent to the production of light music in order to learn from the practice, as well as ‘pushing the envelope’ with an innovative, questing approach even to modest assignments. While light music may have reinforced to Banks ways to compose with fluency, and to use his pre-compositional planning for directly practical purposes, from the reverse angle, Banks also brought his questing, innovative approach to his work in light music.

In his correspondence with Bassett Silver, manager of the Boosey & Hawkes Recorded Music Department (production music library), we gather a sense of a broader conversation in which Banks sought to devise projects that allowed him to explore new methods and structures. In a project dating from 1965 that was to result in a piece of production library music called *Tensions*, Banks clearly intended an experiment in adaptable form. On an introductory letter from Bassett Silver, Banks has sketched the following diagram:

![Diagram]

From A cue to any section. Each section may be looped.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>E</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>static</td>
<td>growing</td>
<td>stronger</td>
<td>agitato</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>crotchet=80</td>
<td>=90</td>
<td>=108</td>
<td>=120</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 4: Banks's structural outline sketch for Tensions (1966).**

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646 Bassett Silver, letter to Don Banks dated 19 November 1965. From NLA MS 6830 *Papers of Don Banks*: Box 34, Folder 253, ‘Miscellaneous documents’.
The recorded version of *Tensions* at the site of Imagem Production Music\(^{647}\) (the company currently holding the Boosey & Hawkes recorded music catalogue) comprises six sections, titled and described as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tensions</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Duration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tensions - Main Title</td>
<td>‘Horror Movie fanfare. Brass and strings’</td>
<td>0:22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tensions - Static Misterioso</td>
<td>‘Mysterious goings-on in the shadows’</td>
<td>0:57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tensions – Growing</td>
<td>‘Sinister and spooky’</td>
<td>1:06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tensions – Strong</td>
<td>‘Mounting tension’</td>
<td>0:51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tensions – Agitato</td>
<td>‘Chase’</td>
<td>0:45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tensions – End Title</td>
<td>‘Playout commercial length’</td>
<td>0:15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These are indeed independent but relatable musical modules that can be laid out and ‘looped’ in the ways Banks intended. They align directly to the ‘cues’ in Banks’s pencil sketch, with a coda in the form of a ‘playout’ cue. The music can be ordered in a range of durations and permutations as required. Banks has given a new realization here to an experiment he’d tried in the *Sonata da Camera* (1961), where he ‘composed the first movement by breaking it into smaller sections and subsections and then piecing the material together as contiguous subsections.’\(^{648}\) The experiment challenges the composer to negotiate the balance of independence and connectivity between the component parts.

In his next project with Silver in 1966, it’s apparent that Banks had some desire to explore symphonic scale or tone. After initial discussions, Silver requested that Banks supply a score for a piece that would cover ‘a double-sided 10” record (a very Miniature Symphony!).’\(^{649}\) The piece was eventually released with the title *Alla Sinfonia*,\(^{650}\) chosen by Silver following discussions with Banks, in two parts designated First Movement and Second Movement (the two movements segue into a coherent ten minute work). As a symphony would do, the music traces a variety of moods (contradicting the basic purpose of production library music, which usually conveys a designated mood), with rich variations and contrasts in the manner of Hindemith or Walton.

The negotiations that Banks put into such production library cues show that he was no passive subject of light music’s expectations, supplying product simply as directed or in

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\(^{648}\) Bradley Cummings, *Early Concert Works of Don Banks*, 335

\(^{649}\) Bassett Silver, letter to Don Banks, dated 17 October 1966. From National Library of Australia, MS 6830 *Papers of Don Banks*: Box 34, Folder 253 ‘Miscellaneous documents.’

accordance with stylistic convention. On the contrary, Banks used every opportunity to make experiments of technique and style, without losing sight of the commissioner’s requirements for music that would be useful and suited to popular taste. *Tensions* is entirely in the style of Banks’s Hammer Horror music, and can be considered to step over the bounds of light music, but while the symphonic pretensions of *Alla Sinfonia* also take it a step towards that boundary, it nevertheless projects a spirit of optimism, energy and colour in the first movement, contrasting with pastoral, romantic, playful qualities in the second (before recapitulating the opening fanfare in a procedure reminiscent of *Coney Island*), that place it as light music.

Banks’ work as a composer for film, TV, LP albums and myriad other commercial contexts is continuous with the development of his serious style. William Mann noted that Banks’s ‘flair for orchestration … was extended and developed by work of this kind [i.e. light music],’ and this is certainly demonstrated by the example of *Coney Island*. But the benefits of his practical work extended beyond orchestration alone. Banks’s studies encompassed analysis of every kind of music from Bach fugues to Cha-cha-chas, from cowboy songs to the permutational possibilities of the twelve-tone series. This education provided him with a remarkably diverse range of equipment and expertise that could be applied to every circumstance of a musical career.

### 11.3 Between Pragmatism and Modernism

Don Banks is a complex character to piece together. While there is clearly much in his music, ideas and values to connect him with modernism, Banks himself could undercut such a depiction by describing himself, as he did in 1974, as ‘a very conservative, reactionary composer. I’m not part of the avant-garde by any means, except that I do keep my ears open … I need to know what’s going on: I’m curious, and if I can use anything and bring it into my own musical world, then I’m happy to do so.’

It’s a statement of real pragmatism: seeking to construct a musical language piecemeal, responding to new discoveries or challenges, and continually refining skills and knowledge.

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651 William Mann, ‘Banks, Don’, 122.
The pragmatic sensibility was innate in Banks, but Seiber encouraged and supported it by providing his student with the skills and experience to support his practical career.

Pragmatism and modernism are traditionally opponents in artistic practice, but in Banks’s music, the two directions of purpose vie continually for attention. The interaction of Banks’s pragmatic streak and his modernist sympathies need not be characterized as a dichotomy, as Carl Dahlhaus would do. Rather the interaction of the two sides is the source of a productive, creative force, each modifying or ameliorating the other. Bradley Cummings traces the tension in Banks’s early concert music between the high-minded, abstract principles of serialism and the practical requirements of the composer seeking free expression. Banks reconciled the tension by adapting a serialist ‘sound world’ to his own intuitive means, as another piece of stylistic equipment in a diverse armoury of styles.

The logical outcome or resolution of such tensions or interactions would be a synthesis, and indeed synthesis is a recurrent feature of Don Banks’s career. Banks’s attempts at stylistic synthesis arose from his perception of the differences between, and the limits of the musical mainstreams of jazz and classical music in particular. By acknowledging what each field was lacking, Banks was also ideally placed to identify what each could gain from the other. Although Banks’s jazz persona is heavily modified by his classical sensibility, and vice versa, he accommodates both worlds and negotiates within their limitations and opportunities.

From jazz, Banks acquired the ability to create music, through improvisation. Jazz offered ‘salvation’ from the staid and rigorous world of learned music: ‘it was a delight to be inventive instead of realizing what were to me frozen notes.’ On the other hand, Banks yearned for the structured disciplines of the ‘classical’ musical world. His interest in this music ‘was awakened during the ’40s through listening to recordings and concert-going, and I realized that jazz wouldn’t fulfil all I wanted from music.’ While he relished the joy to be gained from the fact that ‘improvisation is spontaneous playing with sounds; it’s free and inventive,’ at the same time he felt improvised jazz lacked ‘in most cases … the sustained effort needed to give the resultant music a definitive form and shape.’

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653 Ibid., 5.
654 Ibid., 6.
655 Ibid., 5.
But the ‘frozen notes’ of ‘classical’ music bound and restrained its musicians. In a radio talk he gave for the BBC Third Programme, Banks spoke—in terms that Paul Whiteman and Sven Libaek would recognize—of the jazz player’s advantage over the classical. ‘You can’t expect classical musicians to interpret jazz phrasing correctly, but fortunately you can find jazz musicians who are excellent readers and well trained musicians as well. They can transform any given material into a new dimension by their improvisation.’

Banks’ desire to capture the best of both worlds drove his interest and commitment to Third Stream composition, exemplified in his popular concert work, *Nexus* (1971). The seriousness of Banks’ commitment to jazz inclined him away from the superficial pleasures of ‘softer’ forms of jazz, but he was drawn towards such commercial styles by another inextricable trait—his pragmatism. Banks’ modernism (whether of a classical or jazz kind) is consistently modified by his pragmatic sensibility. Neither musical category is preserved from pragmatic adaptation or treatment (the saxes in *Coney Island*, for instance, exchange their Be-bop berets for plush cravats).

The requirements of his commercial work drove Banks to expand his stylistic capabilities to encompass a wide spectrum of popular and light music. As a ‘perfectionist,’ he undertook this with dedication and resolve, to the point where these also became, at least potentially, components of his personal style even within his serious compositional work. The re-emergence of his light music persona in *An Australian Entertainment* of 1979 only hints at the possibility of Banks’s interest in a broader stylistic synthesis that would have been in keeping with the spirit of post-modernism. But with a suite of stylistic expertise like his (far more than just a ‘gorgeous background’) what an excellent post-modernist Banks would have made.

Thirty years ago, Julian Silverman pondered these same unrealized possibilities in the work and practice of Mátyás Seiber. Silverman observed that Seiber ‘sought to master all the forms of music around him, to balance one with another and thus to open the way to new

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Seiber’s Third Stream collaboration with John Dankworth, the *Improvisations for Jazz Band and Symphony Orchestra* (1959) suggested some of the possibilities of stylistic synthesis:

Here a dazzling array of techniques and devices from Hindemith, Bartok, 12-tone technique, the big-band style of Count Basie and others, rocket like fireworks into a concerto grosso and a half. But the piece is very short; and the path has long been clear for composers now to take advantage both of the limitless sounds of new music and not only free-form and experimental jazz and its precursors … but, more consequentially, to create concepts of harmony, rhythm, etc., appropriate to a new music idiom with the aid of the practical rules-of-thumb of (e.g.) bop. 658

We might also propose that Banks, if he had lived longer, could have reached towards ‘limitless sounds’ and ‘new forms’ ranging across an extraordinary gamut of musical genres, making music ‘something it hadn’t been.’ 659

Banks himself yearned for autonomy, the freedom to be creative, and dedicated great effort to constructing the opportunities for composers to enjoy such, firstly with the Australian Musical Association in London, then more seriously, through the Australian Council for the Arts. While in his own career Banks never enjoyed such autonomy for himself, his practical drive ensured that he turned every possibility into a creative outlet. There’s some irony in the fact that his example should serve to indicate the vitality and creativity of a practice that is grounded in the banal world of pragmatism, but which constantly seeks to extract from these opportunities, the outcomes of an autonomous practice.

Any misgiving that admitting light music into the portrait of Don Banks might weaken his serious standing is misplaced: viewing Banks as a composer who encompassed modernism within a broader range of musical possibilities offers a richer and more compelling potential. His early death meant that he was never able to bring together the proficiency in all the styles and genres that lay at his fingertips into some greater synthesis. But his example, the comprehensive portrait, can be frankly celebrated as an indicator of the possibilities of a broad, all-encompassing musical attitude.

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658 Ibid., 13.

659 Ibid., 14.
Chapter 12: Conclusion

I have taken a broad definition of light music, one that allows the name to encompass a wide stylistic diversity. Instead of relying on stylistic features, my definition emphasizes components of the music industry that generated production of the music. The generators that sponsored light music provide the beginning point for considering the genre, rather than seeing the music purely in terms of style.

These generators required a music that could help them in a time of significant change in the musical topography, where ‘classical’ music moved away from its position as the dominant musical mainstream, and popular music grew to dominate the musical economy. Light music was a tool for the generators to negotiate this shift in cultural weightings. The generators sponsored light music as a means to accommodate a ‘great transformation of musical taste,’ and to sustain basic structures of the musical profession while it happened. Light music, accordingly, is principally identified with the period of this transition: the period from the 1920s to around 1980. Preceding this, we can trace forms of popular music that influence the nature of light music, and after it, we can identify traces and recurrences where the need for an in-between music creates opportunity for composers to construct their own stylistic responses.

Australian composers were good at light music. To some extent they had to be, because it was the place where they were most likely to find the opportunities they needed in order to become composers – the source of ‘three p’s’ of the music profession: payment, practice and performance. Stephen Alomes’s term, ‘improvisatory musical culture’ suitably describes the character of Australia’s musical environment as the nation entered the postwar period of growth and internationalism. The experience composers gained from operating in such an environment equipped them to provide what light music needed: composers who could accommodate the span of broader musical tastes and make the best of the resources at hand. There was also a sense in which light music styles came naturally to them, given the circumstances of their musical upbringing, which was more likely to be like Arthur

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Benjamin’s, ‘untouched … by the conceptions of “great” and “deep”.’661 As a result, light music may have been, in this period, the Australian composer’s natural métier.

Eventually this was to change, and Australian composers began to find their opportunities in a more upmarket, internationalist musical economy. But light music continued to provide opportunity, increasingly now for musicians from beyond the ‘classical’ realm. Swing personnel who saw these opportunities took various routes to find the skills they needed to be able to compose light music. Sometimes from a teacher, sometimes from textbooks, and always from ‘doing it’, they acquired the basic skills they needed in order to become composers.

Much of their work was ephemeral: once the commercial opportunity had passed, the music was not revised or revisited. But in its traces we can discern a form of composer practice in which the Great Divide between popular and classical musical worlds became permeable.

Looking over the output of these composers, we observe that at the outset their work tended towards a pastoral strain, eschewing excessive popular influence, as reflected in the work of Lindley Evans and Frank Hutchens. Gradually, Latin American rhythms appear (the tango and the rumba), and an occasional inflection of Swing. As long as there is a degree of continuity or compatibility between a ‘classically’ based musical language and the influx of new elements from popular culture, light music is able to find a means to negotiate the competing inputs. But as the classical and popular domains grow separately, this negotiation becomes more difficult. The ability for light music composers to speak across stylistic boundaries becomes stretched further and further as the gulf widens.

Gradually, light music becomes distanced from the ‘classical’ domain and its lingua franca. Instead, the demand for light music is increasingly met by musicians who hail from a jazz or Swing background, and who modify their jazz expressiveness to meet the needs of light music production. The craft of arranging is better known to these musicians than that of composition, and becomes the foundation for their repertoire, which also meets a public taste for sumptuous or softened renditions of popular melodies (reaching its apex in the Easy Listening movement of the 1970s). But the members of the new ‘jazz generation’ of

661 Hans Keller, 6.
light music producers were also keen to develop the ability to compose for themselves, and original compositions of light music pop up in diverse, sometimes unexpected places.

For composers like Sven Libaek, the generators of light music provided the very means by which they could develop an identity as a composer. Excluded or marginalized by some reason of training, background, ability or taste from the ‘legit’ composers’ world, they turned to light music’s generators for the opportunity to create their own music. Their world was not principally that of ‘classical’ music, but more likely of jazz and, more specifically, Swing. To their creativity in the Swing manner (characterized by the blend of improvisation and arrangement) they added some degree of ‘classical’ formality and control in order to add another commercial string to their bow.

For a ‘classical’ composer like Don Banks, working in light music gave him the chance to apply his musical sensibility and develop his technique and personal style. Banks and Libaek are at two poles of twentieth century music’s Great Transformation. Libaek found his place in Australia’s improvisatory musical culture after arriving from Norway via New York in 1961. Equipped with an eclectic musical interest and knowledge of Swing, jazz and traditional ‘classical’ repertoire (at least up to Bartók), and a set of practical skills in writing and playing music, Libaek formed a personal musical practice that drew effectively upon the scattered and small-scale resources of Australia’s musical economy. In doing so, Libaek drew together personnel and resources in ways that characterize him as a composer ‘auteur.’ Thus, he belongs within the historical movement that brought the studio to the status of a ‘musical instrument,’662 and culminated in a confluence of professional roles where ‘the producer is the artist is the composer is the producer.’663

Libaek understood diverse musical genres well enough to be able to accommodate them within his compositional style, maintaining a co-existence between jazz, popular and ‘classical’ modes throughout an exceptional period of personal productivity in Sydney from 1965 to 1977. Although he might be taken to represent the Swing generation ‘type’, he possessed from childhood a strong connection with ‘classical’ culture that caused him to modify and adapt his jazz and popular interests.

662 Virgil Moorefield, 43-44.
663 Virgil Moorefield, 111.
In this respect, Don Banks looks to have a lot in common with Libaek, having an equal balance of expertise in jazz and ‘classical’ music. But Banks’s interest in both musical forms was more serious in its intent than Libaek’s. Libaek has freelanced throughout his career and his pragmatism has been principally that of the musical businessman, who puts his creativity at the service of meeting commercial needs. Banks’s pragmatic streak was every bit as strong as Libaek’s, but it served his aspirations as a serious composer, both providing valuable income and contributing to the development of his technique in serious composition. It is not necessary to consider either attitude as better than the other, but rather to take this as an indication of light music’s capacity to support a diversity of approaches to the career of a composer.

As light music took on a more popular orientation, composers of ‘classical’ orientation abandoned it, preferring the new opportunities that could be found in serious domains. The postwar ‘Flight from Banality’ that saw composers increasingly identify themselves with modernist aspirations, equated to a ‘Flight from Light’ as ‘classical’ composers no longer felt connection with light music’s language and aesthetic, or needed its support. The transition was particularly acute in Australia, since the postwar period saw such a dramatic development of institutions and infrastructure that shifted the emphasis in Australia’s musical culture from ‘improvisatory’ to ‘aspirational.’

At first glance, Banks’s career progression appears to accord with this shift. He made his return to Australia in response to the new opportunities arising from the boom in government funding of the arts and education of the era, most of it firmly placed in the serious musical world. But although he had very few opportunities to work in light music in Australia, it nevertheless remained part of Banks’s practice as a composer until late in his career. A significant possibility, if perhaps a contentious one, is suggested by some of Banks’s own comments (describing himself as ‘a very conservative, reactionary composer’ who wanted to write more film music) and by his reversion to light music style in An Australian Entertainment (1979): that the pragmatic streak served also to

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664 Howard Hartog identified this as the ‘contemporary pattern’ in European Music in the Twentieth Century (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1961), 17-18. The original observation is Adorno’s, see: Theodor Adorno, ‘On the Social Situation of Music’ (1932), in Adorno, Essays on Music, 293.
666 Randall D. Larson, 52.
modify or constrain Banks’s modernism, pulling him back from vanguard musical territories to maintain his connection to a ‘common’ aesthetic.

The tension between the ‘improvisatory’ culture and the ‘aspirational’ one emerges as a central theme in the light music version of Australia’s musical history. The weakness and insecurity of the ‘aspirational culture’ in Australian society drove composers to England, the logical place for them to gain access to it. Once they arrived, these composers were keenly aware of their inadequate educational and technical equipment, but although they recognized their Australian musical upbringing as being ‘deficient’, at the same time they relished the sense of freedom and difference that arose from it. They were willing and able to embrace a wider musical world and work with it, even as they strove (or dreamed of striving) towards aspirational heights. The examples of Benjamin, Mackerras, Clifford, Grainer, Banks and Gamley highlight how well the ‘improvisatory musical culture’ served to equip Australians to find a place within the marketplace of British light music. But in doing so, they were cast into a problematic relationship to the mainstream of ‘classical’ culture, regarded suspiciously or excluded from serious prestige. Charles Mackerras showed that if you wanted wholehearted serious acceptance, you had better cast off the light music identity.

Back home in Australia, music was ‘the laggard among our arts; still, after more than 150 years, more of a phantom than a fact.’ Lorna Stirling’s evaluation is based upon the lack of recognized masterpieces and composers of international stature at the time of her writing (1944). Taking this view, the history of Australia’s musical creativity is characterized mostly by its absences. But bringing light music to the surface offers a way beyond this impasse, treating the ‘improvisatory’ culture as a source of creative productivity and identifying presences where it seemed there was almost nothing before. Observing light music in the practice of Australian composers brings forth a plethora of names (many of which would otherwise go forgotten) and a broader range of influences in the identities and capacities of Australian composers. Their work can be recognized and valued by a different measure than the judgement of concert hall programmers and reviewers.

Composers are at the forefront of this account of light music. Although the pantheon of musical greats served as the aspirational highpoint for Australia’s ‘classical’ composers, they could not do without the support of the ‘hinterland’ of Stephen Banfield’s ‘bourgeois tonality,’ 668 which equates closely to the light music domain. Light music provided a crucial source of economic sustenance and wider social relevance that supported the existence of an artistic musical culture by embracing a broad audience, forming a major part of bourgeois cultural identity and linking the markets of popular and ‘classical’.

The story of light music shows Australia’s musical culture as a breeding ground for practical musicians, not elevated above the banal, working pragmatically in their circumstances, and creating a legacy of enduring music that frequently manages to transcend its humble origins. Light music brought composers down to earth from the ‘immeasurable heights’ of ‘Wackenroder, Tieck and Schumann.’ 669 As we define a new culture for ‘classical’ music that is less distant from the concerns and interests of a popular base, the story of light music takes on fresh significance as an alternative to a musical idealism that has lost its power to command its former prestige.

668 Stephen Banfield, 92.
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