A Hidden Treasure:
Symphony No.1 by Robert Hughes

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Volume One

Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Elder Conservatorium of Music
Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences
The University of Adelaide
October 2008
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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines in detail Symphony No.1 (1951 rev.1971) by Robert Hughes and the outcome is a new edition of the 1971 score. This study aims to preserve and promote our Australian music heritage and to stimulate a continued re-evaluation of Australian orchestral repertoire from the mid-20th century.

How many symphonies do we know that have been written by Australian composers? Why do we not hear Australian symphonies that were composed prior to 1960? A significant example of such a composition is the Symphony No.1 of Robert Hughes (1912-2007). It is a work that can be seen as a major contribution to the Australian orchestral repertory and the history of the symphony raises issues that resonate through the history of this repertory. The work was awarded second prize in the Commonwealth Jubilee Competition of 1951 and received attention from such distinguished conductors as Sir John Barbirolli and Sir Eugene Goossens. Since Hughes’ revisions of the symphony, however, there has been little discussion or performance of the work.

In his music Hughes pushed the boundaries of tonality through the use of tonal/modal ambiguities and drew inspiration from composers including Bartók, Prokofiev and Stravinsky. Like many Australian orchestral works written prior to 1960, the only score available of the Hughes symphony has been the composer’s autograph, and the original parts were copied by hand. The original score is difficult to read and there are numerous inaccuracies and discrepancies of pitch, accidentals and articulations. In order to facilitate performances of this significant major work, the score and parts have been fully edited. This edition forms the core of this thesis.

Chapter One of the thesis examines the issue of neglect surrounding Australian orchestral music from the mid-twentieth century and gives an overview of the influences on Australian orchestral composition with crucial insights into our musical past. Chapter Two is a critical re-examination of the inner workings of Symphony No.1 and provides information relevant to the creation of this new edition. In Chapter Three the autograph score is presented. Chapter Four gives a detailed account of the editing process. Chapter Five presents the new edition of Symphony No.1.
DECLARATION

This thesis contains no material that has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma 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 of the thesis.

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Signed: ______________________

Joanna Catherine Drimatis

Date: ______________________
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The completion of this PhD investigation would not have been possible without the invaluable help and support of many individuals.

Robert Hughes and his daughters Alison, Delia and Gwen (and their families) - thank you for allowing me to come into your lives and work on Robert’s music. I look forward to continuing the association and exploring Robert’s other works after this PhD investigation.

I am indebted to my principal supervisor Professor Charles Bodman Rae for his inspiration, mentorship, never-ending belief and encouragement.

Thank you to Mr Keith Crellin for all of his supervision, advice and knowledge on Australian music, as well as his complete support and encouragement of my conducting.

Thank you to Assoc. Prof Kimi Coaldrake for her valuable advice and help throughout the PhD.

I am sincerely indebted to the Australasian Performing Right Association and Brett Cottle, CEO for funding the typesetting of Symphony No.1. Without this support the project may never have happened.

Thank you to Julie Simonds who guided me through the editing and typesetting process. Her enthusiasm for the project, advice and support was invaluable.

Thank you to the Elder Conservatorium of Music Library Staff, and especially Gordon Abbott and Joanne Corbett for making it easy for me to use the library and its resources.

Thank you to all the librarians around Australia that organised and photocopied music, and extended loans for me. They are; Judith Foster; Australian Music Centre, Lois McEvey, State Library of Victoria; Eve Salinas and Ludwig Sugiri, Sydney Conservatorium of Music Library; Georgina Binns and Jacqueline Waylen, Monash University.

Dr. Rhoderick McNeill for his help with accessing resources.
All the musicians I interviewed about Australia’s musical history with special thanks to Prof. Larry Sitsky, Prof. John Hopkins and Richard Gill.

Christian Haines and Peter Sanson, for their help with anything to do with computers and at the beginning when I had to convert all of the old vinyl recordings to CD.

Dr. Luke Harrald for answering my never-ending questions on Finale and for all your invaluable help with putting the final touches on the new edition.

Thank you also to Dr. Jula Szuster for your proof-reading and support over the last two years.

My colleagues on the eighth floor, Catherine Gordon and Dr. Christopher Martin who have been there since the start and were always there to help answer all my questions.

My friend Ruth Saffir for her encouragement and friendship. You have helped me settle well into Adelaide, making the whole PhD journey move quite smoothly.

To Emily Kilpatrick for all your help and support throughout the PhD and especially for all the proof-reading at the end.

To all my family who have been there from the start, both near and far - to Paul and Barbara Morris, Joy and Greg Hocking, George Drimatis and Tricia DiCamillo. Thank you for all the support, endless babysitting and encouraging phone calls.

And finally to my husband Jonathan Morris and daughter Zoe, you have both put up with so much from me and have always given me endless love and support. Thank you.
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