

Crossing the Modernist-Postmodernist Divide: Performance
Challenges in Late Twentieth Century Australian Flute Music

A portfolio of recorded performances and exegesis

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Abstract

This submission investigates through performance the aesthetics of modernism and postmodernism in selected Australian flute music composed during the period from 1980 to 2000. The exegesis explores the hostilities between Australian composers of differing aesthetic disposition and looks at how the selected repertoire fits within the modernist-postmodernist spectrum. The performance challenges in the selected repertoire and the means by which the author addressed those challenges is discussed, as are the similarities and differences in the preparation and performance of music of the two aesthetic positions. The discussion draws on two recitals given by the author and associate artist Jamie Cock, piano, that were presented and recorded in Elder Hall, The University of Adelaide, on 4 August 2010 and 22 February 2011, which are included at the Appendix.

Declaration

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1. Introduction

In Australia during the 1960s, modernism and the aesthetics of the European avant-garde became a dominant force in contemporary art music. David Tunley notes that ‘The decade of the sixties ... saw the emergence of a repertoire coming from a group of composers who were to give a totally new complexion to Australian music ... Amongst other things this period was notable for a growing awareness of music from the European avant-garde’.¹ According to Ross Edwards, younger composers studying in Australian institutions were expected to tow the modernist line: ‘When I was a student (in the 1960s), it was a time of compulsory rigid serialism and total obedience. Any transgression was punishable by death at the hands of brainwashed, politicised music critics’.²

However, through the 1970s and 1980s an increasing number of composers chose to abandon the modernist agenda in favour of music that allowed a greater degree of communication with audiences. These included Richard Meale, Carl Vine, Ross Edwards and Colin Brumby, who, according to Gordon Kerry, moved away from modernism when his ‘realisation that he couldn’t hear an egregious mistake in a performance of one of his own works made him reaffirm tonality in 1974’.³ These composers returned to a more tonal musical language, with less rhythmic complexity and less use of extended instrumental techniques such as unusual timbres and percussive effects. The situation was not unique to Australia however, as what came to be known as a postmodern approach proliferated in Europe and the United States, where it was also met with hostility from academics and modernist composers. Susan McClary characterises the situation as follows: ‘The proliferation of triadic sonorities in recent music has thus been received by those faithful to the premises of atonality as backsliding, as if culture had departed from the rules of a strict diet to engage in a Häagen-Dasz binge’.⁴

¹David Tunley. ‘Australian Composition in the Twentieth Century: A Background,’ in *Australian Composition in the Twentieth Century* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1978), 3.

²Ross Edwards. ‘Sampling Australian Composers, Sound Artists and Music Critics: Ross Edwards,’ in David Bennett. *Sounding Postmodernism* (Sydney: Australian Music Centre, 2008), 220.

³Gordon Kerry. *New Classical Music: Composing Australia* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2009), 96.

⁴Susan McClary. *Conventional Wisdom. The Content of Musical Form* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 141.

The tension between Australian modernists and postmodernists came to a head in the letters pages of *Sounds Australian* in the early 1990s. It began with a cartoon submitted by an anonymous source calling itself the Adelaide Pastoral Company which ridiculed complexist music,⁵ and developed into a discourse that has since been described as ‘ugly’⁶ and as a ‘vicious little spat’⁷. Composers and musicologists who adhered to the modernist aesthetic position described composers working in simpler styles as ‘composer-prostitutes’⁸ who sold out their artistic integrity in order to gain audience appreciation, while the music of modernist composers was described as ‘fruitlessly ugly’ and ‘taking very little talent’.⁹

Against this background the current study explores flute music composed in Australia during this period of transition, and examines how the aesthetic disposition of the composer and the style of the music affects its performance. The study highlights the challenges presented to the performer, and suggests strategies for overcoming those challenges. The submission consists of live recordings of two 60 minute recitals of selected Australian flute music composed between 1980 and 2000, along with this exegesis. The first section of the exegesis gives a brief outline of the aesthetics of modernism and postmodernism, the second section places the recital repertoire within the modernist-postmodernist spectrum, and the third section explores some of the difficulties faced by the performer and the means by which these difficulties were addressed in this study.

⁵Adelaide Pastoral Company. ‘Which is REALLY more complex?’ *Sounds Australian* 22 (Winter 1989): 4-6.

⁶Kerry, 95.

⁷Andrew Ford ‘In Praise of Difficult Music,’ in *Undue Noise: Words about Music* (Sydney: ABC Books, 2002), 29.

⁸Richard Toop. Quoted in Paul Brown. ‘After the Party: Australian Music in the Bicentennial Year,’ *Ossia: A Journal of Contemporary Music* 1 (Winter 1989): 3.

⁹Richard Mills. ‘Elitist tub-thumping,’ *Sounds Australian* 37 (Autumn 1993): 5.

2. The Aesthetics of Modernism and Postmodernism

At the centre of the discourse in the journals *Sounds Australia* and *Ossia* was the conflict between high modernist and postmodernist ideologies and aesthetics. The modernist paradigm holds the development of Western art music as teleological, a linear progression constantly moving forward to new ideas and modes of expression: the so-called ‘shock of the new’. Any reiteration or re-exploration of past musical language, such as music described as new romanticism or new simplicity, is anathema to this ideal. As a result of the desire for progress and continual innovation in the modernist ideal, many composers developed ever more complicated compositional techniques to create their works and explored methods for producing sounds on instruments that differed from traditional playing techniques. Georgina Born, in *Rationalizing Culture*, identifies six key characteristics of modernism: (1) a basis in a reaction against the prior aesthetics of romanticism and classicism (a negational aesthetic), (2) a concern and fascination with new media, technology and science, (3) theoreticism, (4) vanguard and interventionist aims, (5) oscillation between rationalism and irrationalism, objectivism and subjectivism, and (6) ambivalent attitude to popular culture.¹⁰ The first, fourth and sixth of these characteristics are perhaps the most relevant to musical high modernism in the Australian context.

Postmodernism, according to Norman Lebrecht, is an ‘anti-serialist reaction [that] arose during the 1970s as composers sought less austere methods’.¹¹ The term, however, is used in contradictory ways, and has become loaded with (often negative) connotations. In Jonathan Kramer’s words, ‘postmodernism is a maddeningly imprecise musical concept ... Does postmodernism react against or continue the project of modernist music? Is postmodern art original, or does it recycle older music? Is it serious or frivolous?’.¹² He goes on to say, ‘for some critics, postmodernism’s defining compositional practice is its deliberate attempt to reach out by using procedures and materials audiences are believed to relish: diatonicism, singable melodies, metric regularity, foot-tapping rhythms, tonality and/or consonant

¹⁰Georgina Born. *Rationalizing Culture* (California: University of California Press, 1995), 40-45.

¹¹Norman Lebrecht. *The Companion to 20th Century Music* (London: Simon & Schuster, 1992), 263.

¹²Jonathan D. Kramer. ‘The Nature and Origins of Musical Postmodernism,’ in *Postmodern Music/Postmodern Thought* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 13.

harmonies'.¹³ In the context of the contemporary art music scene in Australia in the 1980s and 1990s, this definition has some merit. One of the main criticisms of the composers on the postmodern side of the argument was that they were pandering to mainstream tastes by using an outdated musical language. Kramer, however, does not accept this definition of postmodernism, instead using the term 'antimodernist' to describe composers 'yearning for the golden ages of classicism and romanticism'.¹⁴ It is perhaps most useful to think of antimodernism as one strand of postmodernism, with the return to classical or romantic musical language being just one possible manifestation of a postmodern outlook. In attempting to define postmodern music, Kramer outlines 16 characteristics, the most relevant to this research being that 'Postmodern music: (1) is not simply a repudiation of modernism or its continuation, but has aspects of both a break and an extension; ... (4) challenges barriers between "high" and "low" styles; ... (8) considers music not as autonomous but as relevant to cultural, social, and political contexts; ... (10) considers technology not only as a way to preserve and transmit music but also as deeply implicated in the production and essence of music; ... [and] (14) encompasses pluralism and eclecticism'.¹⁵

The clash between modernist and postmodernist aesthetics can be summarised as the conflict between the modernist pursuit of a constantly evolving musical language and the postmodernist recourse to more traditional and simple musical structures and sounds. The modernist ideal of continual progress has led modernist composers to push the boundaries in their compositions by creating ever more complex and difficult music and by using non-traditional instrumental techniques – attributes reflected variously in the repertoire performed in this study. Similarly, postmodernist composers tend to use only traditional playing techniques and often take the playability of their music into consideration when composing, as is the case here. The following section considers how the selected repertoire fits into the paradigms of modernism and postmodernism.

¹³Kramer, 13.

¹⁴Kramer, 13.

¹⁵Kramer, 16-17.

3. Selected Australian Flute Repertoire and its Relationship to the Modernist-Postmodernist Divide

The repertoire for this study was selected for two reasons; first, its advanced level of technical difficulty; second, out of the desire to represent a broad range of styles and aesthetics. Some works were selected as obvious examples of either modernism or postmodernism, while the other works were selected in order to reflect the stylistic diversity in Australian composition in the 1980s and 1990s. The majority of the works in the recital programs are neither well-known to flautists nor regularly performed. It is hoped that in drawing attention to these works they may come to be performed more.

With this in mind, the repertoire selected for the recital recordings is as follows:

Recital 1:

Jane Stanley	<i>Firefly</i> - flute (1999)	2 minutes
Houston Dunleavy	<i>Icarus</i> - flute (1985)	9 minutes
Andrew Ford	<i>Spinning</i> - alto flute (1988)	5 minutes
Carl Vine	<i>Sonata</i> - flute and piano (1992)	14 minutes
Gerard Brophy	<i>Nymphe-Echo Morphologique</i> – amplified flute (1989)	8 minutes
Mark Pollard	<i>Under Simple Stars</i> - alto flute(1989)	11 minutes
Martin Wesley-Smith	<i>Balibo</i> - flute and CD (1992)	15 minutes

Recital 2

Ross Edwards	<i>Ulpirra</i> - solo piccolo (1993)	2 minutes
Michael Whitticker	<i>Kiah</i> - solo flute (1987)	5 minutes
Andrew Ford	<i>...les debris d'un rêve</i> - piccolo (1992)	6 minutes
Michael Smetanin	<i>Nontiscordardimé</i> - bass flute/ piccolo/ flute (1991-2)	10 minutes
Julian Yu	<i>Scintillation III</i> - flute and piano (1987)	4 minutes
Gerard Brophy	<i>Tweak</i> - piccolo (1991)	2 minutes
Ian Shanahan	<i>Dimensiones Paradisi</i> - alto flute (1991/98)	15 minutes
Mary Finsterer	<i>Ether</i> - amplified flute (1998)	9 minutes
Brenton Broadstock	<i>Aureole</i> - flute and piano (1982)	10 minutes

The composers represented above who fit most clearly into the modernist camp are Ian Shanahan and Michael Smetanin. Shanahan studied pure mathematics as well as music at an undergraduate level, and regards himself as a ‘scientist who happens to work with the physical milieu of sound’.¹⁶ His music is extremely complex, and extended techniques are integral to his work *Dimensiones Paradisi*. Shanahan’s compositional philosophy fits squarely within the high modernist paradigm, with an emphasis on experimentation, progress and exploration of new concepts, and with the goal of expressing ‘unity’: ‘Since I seek a new “harmonious unity”, how can I be satisfied with regurgitating secure, established, second-hand musical syntaxes? Part of this endless theosophical search involves forging one’s *own* creative path, untainted by duality, and this entails continual “experiment”’.¹⁷ Shanahan believes furthermore that ‘music-making [should] be a vehicle for “higher purpose”, beyond the superficiality and transitoriness of “culture”’.¹⁸ *Dimensiones Paradisi* was in many aspects the most intellectually challenging piece in the repertoire, with dense, highly complex time-space notation and a vast number of microtones (both quarter and eighth-tones). That the score is difficult for the performer is not surprising given Shanahan’s interest in extended techniques. He has written two dissertations on extended recorder techniques, and his music demonstrates a thorough understanding of the sonic possibilities of woodwind instruments.¹⁹

Michael Smetanin says of his composition practice, ‘I purposefully maintain a stance in which originality in musical output is paramount’.²⁰ His compositional style is influenced by modernist composers Iannis Xenakis and Karlheinz Stockhausen, as well as other influences as diverse as Igor Stravinsky, funk and minimalist composers Steve Reich and Louis Andriessen. Smetanin is acutely aware that his aesthetic is neither strictly modernist nor strictly postmodernist; ‘I certainly consider my ideas and music to fall in with postmodern thought ... Much of my most recent music owes more to modernism than to any other doctrine but cannot be considered

¹⁶Ian Shanahan. ‘Why Composers Compose: Ian Shanahan,’ in *Sound Ideas: Australian Composers born since 1950* Brenton Broadstock, ed. (Sydney: The Australian Music Centre, 1995), 325.

¹⁷Shanahan, ‘Why Composers Compose: Ian Shanahan,’ 326.

¹⁸Shanahan, ‘Why Composers Compose: Ian Shanahan,’ 325.

¹⁹Ian Shanahan. *The Avant-Garde Recorder: A Preliminary Study of Some Developments in Alto Recorder Playing Techniques and Their Notation* B.Mus. (Hons.) Dissertation, The University of Sydney, 1984; and *Recorder Unlimited: A Preliminary Study of the Alto Recorder's Multiphonic Resources* Ph.D. (prelim.) Dissertation, The University of Sydney, 1993.

²⁰Michael Smetanin. Quoted in Bennett, 479.

purely modernist'.²¹ Despite his identification with aspects of postmodernism, the style of *Nontiscordardimé* is clearly modernist, using microtonality, percussive sounds, glissandi and complex rhythms.

While Gerard Brophy's more recent music does not fit into the high modernist category, Brophy considered himself to be 'very much a high modernist' at the time that *Nymphe-Echo Morphologique* was composed.²² He was strongly influenced by the works of Salvatore Sciarrino, in particular the latter's *Sei Capricci* for solo violin, and *Nymphe-Echo Morphologique* was Brophy's attempt to 'out-Sciarrino Sciarrino'.²³ It uses a vast array of timbres, including a type of whisper tone sometimes referred to as 'Sciarrino Whistles'.²⁴ The other piece by Brophy in this programme, *Tweak*, was composed two years later, when Brophy was beginning to move away from the high modernist aesthetic. It is a much simpler work than *Nymphe-Echo Morphologique*. The only extended technique used in *Tweak* is flutter tonguing, and although atonal, its pitch material is restricted to the lowest fifth of the piccolo's range, with the exception of the final note.

Mary Finsterer's music also displays several characteristics of the modernist aesthetic. Richard Toop describes her music as 'unabashedly full-on and hyperactive'²⁵, while Gordon Kerry says that 'her work is characterised by intricate surfaces created in part by extended instrumental techniques and complex pitch organisation'.²⁶ According to the composer, her solo flute work, *Ether* 'seeks to examine the varied terrain of extended technique offered by the flute'.²⁷ Integral to the work is the use of whistle tone and harmonics, which give the piece its ethereal quality. Other contemporary techniques used in the piece include jet whistles and other air sounds, key clicks, flutter tonguing, pitch bends and glissandi, multiphonics and tongue rams.

²¹Smetanin. Quoted in Bennett, 477.

²²Gerard Brophy. Telephone Interview with the author, July 12, 2010.

²³Brophy, Interview.

²⁴Helen Bledsoe. *Graded Repertoire with Extended Techniques for unaccompanied Flute, Piccolo, Alto and Bass Flute* <<http://www.helenbledsoe.com/erep.html>> (20 January 2011).

²⁵Richard Toop. Notes to *Catch*. Music by Mary Finsterer. Audio CD. (ABC Classics 476 176-0) 8.

²⁶Kerry, 184.

²⁷Mary Finsterer. 'Programme Note,' *Ether*. Sydney: The Australian Music Centre, 1998.

Carl Vine and Ross Edwards both clearly fall into the postmodernist camp. Vine has described his music as “radically tonal”, “neo-post-modern” and “post-garde”.²⁸ According to James Koehne, Vine did not ‘snuggle up to the security blanket of neomodernist ideological revivalism’.²⁹ Vine’s *Sonata for Flute and Piano* is in many aspects the most postmodern work in the repertoire. It uses only traditional flute playing technique, diatonic harmony and traditional structures. Its three movements are labelled Fast, Slow and Very Fast, with the movements being in modified sonata form, binary form and ternary form respectively. The final movement shows the influence of minimalism, with the piano maintaining a descending, scalar semiquaver figure throughout.

Ross Edwards was one of those composers who, after he ‘only reluctantly posed as [a modernist] for a time’,³⁰ moved away from that style to a more simple and tonal musical language. Along with other composers writing in postmodern styles, he was heavily criticised. As he lamented: ‘critics were describing me as a renegade from modernism who had shamefully “sold-out”’.³¹ He does not closely identify with the postmodernist aesthetic, but says, ‘since I was reacting against orthodox modernism, I suppose you might call me an unconscious (or naïve?) postmodernist’.³² Edwards’s mature compositions fall into two categories: his sacred style and his maninya style. *Ulpirra* is in the maninya style, which Gordon Kerry describes as ‘active, full of dance rhythms, happily using an open-hearted modal or tonal harmony’.³³

Houston Dunleavy, around the time that he wrote *Icarus*, was strongly influenced by modernist ideology: ‘Right through the 90s ... what I was doing was more into that modernist, slightly spiky sound’.³⁴ However, *Icarus* is a unique work within Dunleavy’s compositional output, and certainly does not fit into the modernist category. He describes it as ‘an unashamedly programmatic work’ in a neo-romantic style.³⁵ It was, for Dunleavy, an experiment in composing in a way foreign to the musical language he had been using: ‘In a way *Icarus* is a little bit of a bad example

²⁸Carl Vine: *Featured Composer 2009* Musica Viva.

<<http://www.musicaviva.com.au/concertseason/2009season/featuredcomposer>> (6 February 2011).

²⁹James Koehne. ‘Record Reviews. Carl Vine: Three Symphonies,’ *Sounds Australian* (Spring 1991): 43.

³⁰Ross Edwards. Quoted in Bennett, 222.

³¹Bennett, 222.

³²Bennett, 220.

³³Kerry, 104.

³⁴Houston Dunleavy. Interview with the author, March 18 2010.

³⁵Houston Dunleavy. ‘Program Note’. *Icarus*. (Wollongong, Australia: Wirripang, 2002), 1.

[of his aesthetic] because it was actually an experiment ... it wasn't so much that I had this agenda, it was more along the lines of "maybe I could do this", and I haven't written a piece like it since'.³⁶

Jane Stanley's *Firefly* is another piece that was composed in a style different to the composer's usual method; she says that she wrote the piece 'quite spontaneously and with little of the pre-compositional planning that is characteristic of most of my music'.³⁷ In reference to the aesthetic divide between modernism and postmodernism, Stanley asserts that she tries 'to avoid reinforcing binary oppositions between "simple/complex" and "postmodernism/modernism" and as far as possible I resist attaching labels to my (and other people's) music'.³⁸ However, *Firefly* stylistically has many postmodern elements, most notably the jazz-like feel of its syncopated rhythms and accents.

Much of Martin Wesley-Smith's music clearly demonstrates Kramer's eighth characteristic of postmodern music through its political and social subject matter. *Balibo* is about the final hours of the five Australian journalists killed in 1975 in East Timor, and is one of several pieces Wesley-Smith has composed that deal with the political and social issues in that country. It is also an example of Kramer's tenth characteristic, with the technology of the Fairlight CMI on the accompanying CD being integral to the timbral language and character of the piece. Other postmodernist elements in *Balibo* include its use of folk-like melodies, traditional flute playing technique and essentially tonal melodic material.

For many composers, their compositional style is not a reflection of either a modernist or postmodernist aesthetic position, but instead includes elements associated with both aesthetics. Andrew Ford is one of the composers who did not get caught up in the modernist-postmodernist debate: 'I suppose there are composers who strongly believe they have a style and belong to one camp or another, but I honestly never have thought that'.³⁹ Of the piece *Spinning*, he says, 'It doesn't seem to be especially modernist (whatever that is) and it doesn't seem to be especially

³⁶Dunleavy, Interview.

³⁷Jane Stanley. Email correspondence June 2010.

³⁸Stanley, Email correspondence.

³⁹Andrew Ford. Interview with the author, 4 March 2010.

postmodernist. It is what it is'.⁴⁰ ... *les debris d'un rêve* veers more towards the modernist with its significant use of extended techniques such as air sounds, lip pizzicato, key clicks and pitch bends.

Mark Pollard's compositional style is eclectic, with influences ranging from jazz and pop music through to Javanese music and contemporary composers such as Terry Riley, Pierre Boulez, Phillip Glass, Elliot Carter, Györgi Ligeti and John Cage.⁴¹ In terms of the postmodernist-modernist dichotomy, Pollard notes that at the time he was composing *Under Simple Stars* 'I was moving away from a more formalistic approach to composition to a more intuitive/through composed style in my writing. The work is in a free atonal style and generally uses the diminished seventh chord to create background consistency'.⁴²

The music of Julian Yu, like that of Pollard, shows a broad range of influences. Brenton Broadstock describes Yu's music as having an 'obvious eclecticism - western "avant-garde" techniques mixing comfortably with traditional Chinese influences and with Bach'.⁴³ Broadstock also identifies 'colourful and sparkling orchestration; a powerful sense of unfolding logic - structurally and harmonically; highly idiosyncratic instrumental and vocal writing; and musical scores which reflect his life-long enthusiasm for visual perfection' as key features of Yu's music.⁴⁴ This eclecticism gives a postmodernist quality to Yu's music, while the structuralist aspect of his music and his use of avant-garde techniques connects him to the modernist tradition.

Brenton Broadstock's attitude towards the audience in the 1980s fit with neither the high modernist position of deliberately challenging audiences nor the postmodernist stereotype of pandering to a mainstream audience. Broadstock points out that 'my music is not written to be deliberately perverse, intellectually esoteric or because of feelings of social or artistic superiority. I do not set out to alienate, as composers did

⁴⁰Ford, Interview.

⁴¹Mark Pollard. 'Creativity as a vehicle for artistic/sonic communication,' in *Sound Ideas: Australian Composers born since 1950* Brenton Broadstock, ed. (Sydney: The Australian Music Centre, 1995), 318.

⁴²Mark Pollard. Email correspondence with the author, 12 July 2010.

⁴³Brenton Broadstock. 'From Burying Bach to Who YU Are. The Music of Julian Yu. Published in *APRAP (the magazine of the Australian Performing Rights Association.)* (1994).

Accessed at <<http://www.brentonbroadstock.com/page18/page12/page12.html>> (18 January 2011).

⁴⁴Broadstock. 'From Burying Bach to Who YU are'.

in the 1950s and 1960s, nor do I wish to woo an audience with 'whizz-bang' music that instantly appeals'.⁴⁵ Linda Kouvaras describes *Aureole* as being based on dualistic musical material: 'the demarcation between contradictory musical elements is clearly delineated; the juxtaposition of opposites is maintained'.⁴⁶ This challenges the idea of stylistic unity at the heart of modernism.

Michael Whitticker holds a somewhat postmodern attitude towards the audiences: 'I am conscious of the fact that I'm writing for an audience and I want them to want to hear my music ... I'd love to communicate to a wider audience than the educated contemporary music one I have'.⁴⁷ While some of his earlier music was composed using strict, predetermined processes, *Kiah* was composed using more intuitive processes. This piece does not use traditional tonal harmony, but instead is based on a series of ascending tonal centres. Whitticker states that absence of bar lines in the work was intended to give the performer more freedom and that he 'was convinced that a solo performer would shape the music much more effectively if given more temporal freedom'.⁴⁸

The contrast between the music on opposing sides of the aesthetic debate is most evident in comparing the modernist works *Dimensiones Paradisi*, *Nontiscordardimé*, *Nymphe-Echo Morphologique*, *Ether* and ... *les debris d'un rêve* with the postmodernist works *Sonata*, *Ulpirra*, *Icarus* and *Firefly*. The latter works use primarily tonal harmony, conventional structures and traditional playing techniques, while the former are atonal and/or microtonal, with extended techniques being fundamental to the musical fabric of these pieces. The next chapter will explore some of the performance challenges in the repertoire, and will examine whether the aesthetics and style of the music shapes the challenges faced by the performer in preparing and performing the works.

⁴⁵Brenton Broadstock. 'The Audience *Must* Be An Amorphous Blob,' 1984.

<http://www.brentonbroadstock.com/page18/page13/page13.html> (8 January 2011).

⁴⁶Linda Kouvaras. 'A Composer of Two Minds,' in *Sound Ideas: Australian Composers born since 1950* Brenton Broadstock, ed. (Sydney: The Australian Music Centre, 1995), 283.

⁴⁷Michael Whitticker. Quoted in Benjamin Thorn. 'Virtuosity,' *Sounds Australian* 20 (Summer 1988/1989): 15-29. 26.

⁴⁸Michael Whitticker. *The Music of Michael Whitticker* Doctor of Creative Arts Thesis, University of Wollongong, 1998. I-31.

4. Performance Issues in the Selected Repertoire

The music selected for the recitals was chosen to not only represent a broad spectrum of styles and aesthetic predispositions of the composers, but also because all of the chosen works demand a great deal from the performer either physically or intellectually. The complexity of the high modernist scores was the most significant challenge faced in the initial stages of learning the repertoire. Christopher Redgate, in his article on learning complex music, says: ‘The scores are often highly detailed with very demanding rhythmic work including nested irrationals and unusual time signatures. Alongside rapidly changing dynamics and articulations, contemporary or extended techniques are commonplace and often used in rapid succession and the physical demands can be very great in terms of stamina and intellectual resources’.⁴⁹ These difficulties are presented to the performer not only in the modernist works, but also in selected postmodernist works in the repertoire for this study. All of the issues Redgate outlines are faced in this repertoire: nested irrationals in *Dimensiones Paradisi*; unusual time signatures and/or changing meter in *Nontiscordardimé*, *Firefly*, *Icarus*, *Balibo*, *Sonata* and *Ulpirra*; rapidly changing dynamics and extremes of the dynamic range in *Kiah*, *Under Simple Stars*, *Dimensiones Paradisi*, *Scintillation III* and *Tweak*; rapidly changing articulation in *Ether*; and extended techniques in *Nymphe-Echo Morphologique*, *Ether*, *Under Simple Stars*, *Aureole*, *Nontiscordardimé*, *Dimensiones Paradisi* and *...les debris d’un rêve*.

One challenge that is faced in the preparation and performance of contemporary music is the lack of an established performance practice for the repertoire. According to Laura Chislett, ‘the lack of a history of performance practice in this music means that performers must use slightly different decision-making criteria to the inherited criteria used in interpreting music of the past’.⁵⁰ As there is not an established performance practice for any of the repertoire in this research, the methodologies employed in interpreting the scores for this project were:

- 1) A thorough analysis of the notation and any instructions given within the score;
- 2) Listening to any existing recordings of the works to determine how other performers have interpreted these instructions; and

⁴⁹Christopher Redgate. ‘A Discussion of Practices Used in Learning Complex Music with Specific Reference to Roger Redgate’s *Ausgangspunkte*,’ *Contemporary Music Review* 26: 2 (April 2007): 141.

⁵⁰Laura Chislett. ‘A Simple Matter of Practice,’ *Sounds Australian* (Autumn 1991): 33.

3) Researching the influences on and the aesthetic views of the composers by reading through articles by and about the composers, and through discussions with several of the composers, which included clarification of any ambiguities within the score.

Although communication with living composers is an extremely valuable resource in preparing the performance of contemporary repertoire, it is worth noting that many of the pieces included in this project were composed over twenty years ago, and often in the early stages of the composers' professional development. This meant that often the composers themselves had forgotten aspects their original intentions and compositional methods.

Another significant obstacle faced in the preparation of contemporary music is the use of notation that is either unclear or inaccurate. Despite the existence of numerous manuals of flute techniques and suggested notational devices dating from as early as the 1960s, very few extended techniques have developed standardised symbols. Many techniques can be indicated using a variety of symbols, while some symbols are used to represent different techniques. Most of the scores in this project included performance notes in order to solve this problem; Shanahan's notes to *Dimensiones Paradisi* were extensive and exceptionally well-detailed, which proved extremely helpful in preparing this work, and Finsterer's notes to *Ether* were also thorough and clearly explained. However, Smetanin did not have any performance notes accompanying his (unpublished) scores for *Nontiscordardimé I, II and III*, and although *Nymphe-Echo Morphologique* does have a notation guide, some of Brophy's explanations are unclear or misleading. For example, Brophy uses the term 'whisper tones' for a sound in his list of closed embouchure techniques⁵¹ while the term 'whisper tones' is most commonly used interchangeably with 'whistle-tones' to describe an open embouchure in which the flautist blows gently across the embouchure hole to produce pure sine tones. By listening to the recording of the piece by Chislett,⁵² I determined that she was producing the closed-embouchure whisper tones by blowing into the closed embouchure hole with the air column directed at the bottom of the chimney. This type of sound is used in the music of Italian composer Salvatore Sciarrino, whose flute scores Brophy used as models for

⁵¹Gerard Brophy. 'General Performance Indications,' *Nymphe-Echo Morphologique* (The Rocks, Sydney: The Australian Music Centre, 1989).

⁵²Gerard Brophy. 'Nymphe-Echo Morphologique,' in *The Flute Ascendant* Laura Chislett, flute. Compact disc. Vox Australis VAST 007-2, 1992.

Nymphe-Echo Morphologique, and this supported the decision to produce the sound this way.



Figure 1: Example of Gerard Brophy's 'whisper-tone' notation, taken from *Nymphe-Echo Morphologique* (The Rocks, Sydney: The Australian Music Centre, 1989), page 1.

To solve the issues of ambiguous notation in *Nontiscordardimé*, analysis of the recordings by Chislett again provided solutions. For example, in *Nontiscordardimé II*, Smetanin uses 't' on single notes; although the intuitive response to this might be to tongue aggressively, 't' is not a standard, unambiguous symbol (see Figure 2). Chislett's recording sounds like a 't' type of tongue pizzicato at the start of somewhat harsh tone,⁵³ and, as this sound worked effectively in context, I attempted to emulate this.

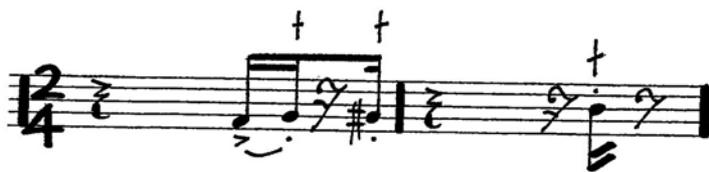


Figure 2: Michael Smetanin *Nontiscordardimé II* (Unpublished score), bars 22-23.

The modernist pieces in the program, particularly *Dimensiones Paradisi* and *Nontiscordardimé*, were considerably more complex than the postmodernist works, with quite dense notation. This can be quite confronting to a performer with limited experience in the performance of complex music. In learning these works, I followed a methodology recommended by flautist Laura Chislett: 'first practising the actual pitches (including special fingerings and multiphonics ...), then the rhythms, followed by unusual timbral effects, and finally the dynamic gradations'.⁵⁴ This approach proved particularly effective in learning the fingerings. Shanahan's piece not only used quartertones and eighth tone sets, but also used alternate fingerings for some pitches in order to produce different timbres. The fingerings he gives need to be used in order to create the timbral and dynamic effects he wants; he says in the

⁵³Michael Smetanin. 'Nontiscordardimé II,' in *The Flute in Orbit* Laura Chislett, flutes. Digital Album. ABC Classics ABC446738-2. Naxos Music Library <<http://uoa.naxosmusiclibrary.com.proxy.library.adelaide.edu.au/catalogue/item.asp?cid=ABC446738-2>> (2 February 2011).

⁵⁴Chislett, 'A Simple Matter of Practice,' 33.

performance notes, ‘Every fingering-indication provided within the score of **Dimensiones Paradisi**... are to be strictly adhered to: any modification of such fingerings are forbidden!’.⁵⁵

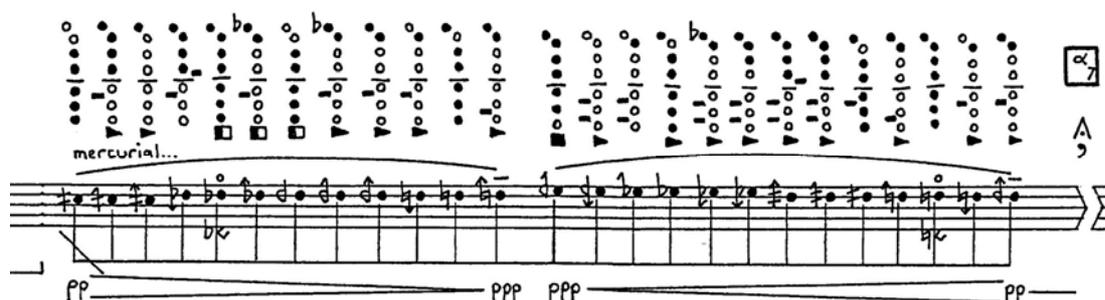


Figure 3: An example of required fingerings by Ian Shanahan in *Dimensiones Paradisi* (The Rocks, Sydney: The Australian Music Centre, 1998), page 9.

Smetanin, on the other hand, is less prescriptive with no fingerings specified for most of the quartertones in *Nontiscordardimé*. However, the use of the three different flutes (piccolo, c-flute and bass flute) for the three pieces necessitated different fingerings for some of the quartertones. In particular, because the bore and scale of the piccolo differ from that of the flute, some fingerings produce different pitches or different timbres on the flute compared to the piccolo. This meant that there were a vast number of new fingerings to learn for the second recital, and the only method that worked for me was to learn the fingerings first, without the added complexity of the other elements.

Within this repertoire, the high modernist pieces placed a greater physical demand on the performer than the postmodernist pieces. Although the postmodernist works were technically difficult, the more complex high modernist pieces needed a much greater degree of stamina to execute extended techniques such as air sounds and rapid tongue rams. According to Jennifer Borkowski, ‘The physical intensity in much new music is beyond what many flutists are prepared for’.⁵⁶ She suggests using ‘Periodization Training’ in order to deal with this issue. This is a theory that she adapts from sports science that involves ‘alternating periods of work and rest so that

⁵⁵Ian Shanahan. ‘Performance Notes,’ *Dimensiones Paradisi* (The Rocks, Sydney: The Australian Music Centre, 1998), iv.

⁵⁶Jennifer Borkowski. ‘Issues of stamina in modern music: Answers from sports science,’ in M.M.Marin, M.Knoche & R.Parncutt ed. *Proceedings of the First International Conference of Students of Systematic Musicology* (Graz, Austria: 14-15 November 2008) 12. Accessed at <http://www.uni-graz.at/muwi3www/SysMus08/index2-Dateien/Content/Proceedings_SysMus08/SysMus08_Borkowski_Jennifer.pdf> (12 December 2010).

the physical arousal is optimal at the right moment'.⁵⁷ In preparing the more physically demanding works (*Ether, Dimensiones Paradisi, Nymphé-Echo Morphologique, ...les debris d'un rêve, Nontiscordardimé*), I adapted this practice method, using short bursts of practice, followed by rest periods, as well as 'practice' away from the instrument. This involved activities such as reading rhythms with and without the metronome. Redgate found in his research that a significant proportion of the performers who responded to his questionnaire did 25-30% of their work away from their instrument, and he says of his own practice that 'working away from the instrument is a very significant strategy in my practice routine'.⁵⁸ The use of such practice strategies was necessary in the high-modernist works, as extended practice periods would result in physical fatigue, headaches and other physical symptoms, but these strategies also proved useful in the other styles represented in the recital programs. An example would be the final movement of Vine's *Sonata*. This movement is extremely fast (the metronome marking is ♩ =152; however both Geoffrey Collins and Alexa Still play the movement at a slightly slower tempo on their recordings⁵⁹), with tongued semiquavers in the flute for much of the piece. To prepare this movement, I alternated between practising at slow and medium single tongued tempi and practising at the performance speed for limited periods, as well as slurred practice in order to rest the tongue.



Figure 4: Fast tongued passages in Carl Vine's *Sonata for Flute and Piano* (London: Faber, 1992), third movement bars 348-350.

Rhythmic complexity is one of the performance challenges common to most of this repertoire, and across all styles in the recital programmes. Unusual time signatures and frequent changes in meter featured in several of the pieces, including *Firefly, Icarus, Sonata, Balibo, Nontiscordardimé*, and *Ulpirra*. There were also instances of unbarred music with a constant tempo/beat and requiring a degree of rhythmic

⁵⁷Borkowski, 13.

⁵⁸Redgate, 147.

⁵⁹Nigel Butterly, Andrew Ford, Keith Humble, Roger Smalley, Carl Vine, Martin Wesley-Smith. *Spinning* Geoffrey Collins, flutes; David Miller, piano; David Pereira, cello. Audio CD, Tall Poppies TP 069, 1995.

Anne Boyd, Ian Clarke, Carl Vine and others. *Carl Vine: Sonata for Flute* Alexa Still, flute; Stephen Gosling, Piano. Audio CD, Koch International Classics KIC-CD-7658, 2008.

precision such as *Tweak*, ...*les debris d'un rêve*, *Ether* and *Nymphe-Echo Morphologique*. Cross rhythms and irrational rhythmic groups were also common.



Figure 5: One example of rhythmic complexity in the repertoire, taken from Houston Dunleavy's *Icarus* (Wollongong, Australia: Wirripang, 2002), second movement, bars 74-82.

In almost every work, I learnt the rhythms by working out the lowest common note value, which in the cases of *Firefly*, *Icarus*, *Tweak*, and *Balibo* was the semiquaver, but in the case of the end section of *Nymphe-Echo Morphologique* was the hemi-demi-semiquaver, then work at extremely slow tempi to ensure accuracy. This slow practice was essential, as Redgate points out: 'One of the mistakes made in learning [complex] music ... is to try to play it too fast – a response to all those black notes!'⁶⁰

In some of the works, the inclusion of rests within complicated rhythmic subdivisions or irregular rest durations in extreme tempi increases the rhythmic difficulty. Richard Toop notes that 'it may be more physically demanding if there are no gaps in the groups of sevens or fives, but it is conceptually/intellectually easier. In fact, nothing terrifies us more than discontinuity; the horror of waiting, the panic of pause (whether micro- or macro-)'⁶¹ This was an issue in *Scintillation III*, *Ether*, *Sonata*, *Nontiscordardimé I* and *II*, *Tweak*, *Sonata*, *Nymphe-Echo Morphologique* and *Balibo*. In the *Sonata*, *Balibo* and *Scintillation III*, the rests in the flute part were 'filled in' by the piano or electronics.

⁶⁰Redgate, 144.

⁶¹Richard Toop. 'On Complexity,' *Perspectives of New Music* 31:1 (Winter 1993). 45.

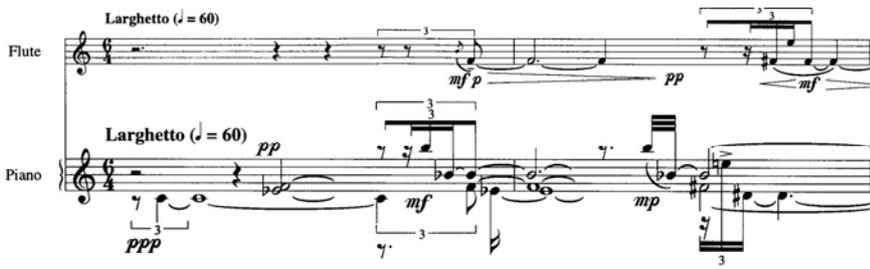


Figure 6: An example of the rhythmic interplay between flute and piano in Julian Yu's *Scintillation III*, in Mardi McCullea and Lawrence Whiffin eds. *Contemporary Australian Flute Volume 2* (Sydney: Currency Press, 1997), bars 1-2.

This alleviated some of the ‘terror’ Toop mentions, but meant that there was a need for absolute precision. In *Ether*, the rests are often necessary, as Finsterer alternates between closed embouchure techniques (tongue rams) and open embouchure techniques (open tongue rams and normal tones/harmonics), and the rests are needed to give time to change the position of the flute.

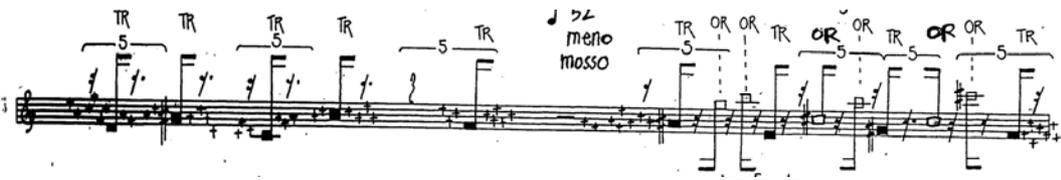


Figure 7: Mary Finsterer. *Ether* (The Rocks, Sydney: The Australian Music Centre, 1998), line 36.

As mentioned above, extremely slow practice (with a metronome) was used in order to develop rhythmic accuracy. In the case of *Tweak* and *Nymphe-Echo Morphologique*, the performance tempo of the lowest common note values are ♩=416 and ♩=496 respectively. These extreme tempi proved too fast for me to count through, and I eventually decided to approximate the rhythms rather than counting manically.

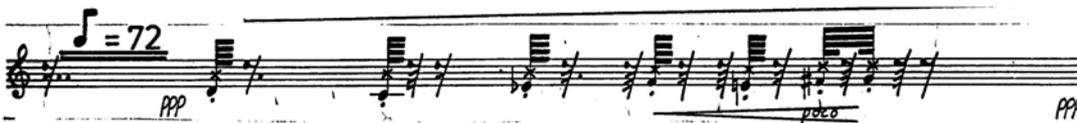


Figure 8: An example of the rhythms in Gerard Brophy's *Nymphe-Echo Morphologique* (The Rocks, Sydney: The Australian Music Centre, 1989), page 7.

This decision is not necessarily less appropriate than rigid counting. Percussionist Steven Schick suggests that ‘the idea of approximation implies “guesswork” and therefore the acceptance of rhythmic inaccuracy. I certainly do not mean it in this

way; “guessing” is another way of saying that the ultimate judge of rhythmic accuracy is the ear. And, by extension, the ear, the traditional means of learning, hearing and ascertaining the accuracy of the rhythms, was still of primary importance in learning even very complex rhythms’.⁶²

The use of technology adds another dimension to flute performance. Flautist Jean Penny holds a positive view of the interaction between performer and technology: ‘The flautist can revel in the increased ease of projection, the empowering scale of refinement, and the capacities for enriched and engaging encounters provided by this environment’.⁶³ Amplification was specified for *Ether* and is necessary due to the use of whistle tones, which would otherwise be inaudible in a large venue like Elder Hall, where the repertoire was performed and recorded. Whistle tones, for example, are acoustically unable to be played loudly. *Under Simple Stars* was composed at a time when Pollard ‘began exploring performance enhancement of sound via electro-acoustic magnification of delay and resonance’.⁶⁴ The use of amplification in *Dimensiones Paradisi* is optional. I decided to use it for the recital, as Elder Hall is large, and many of the sounds, which have dynamics ranging as low as *ppppp*, would not carry. For this reason, I also chose to use slightly more amplification in ... *les debris d’un rêve* than what was indicated. Ford says that the piccolo should be ‘scarcely amplified at all’,⁶⁵ but I decided to use a reasonable degree of amplification as the low register of the piccolo and the key clicks would not carry well in Elder Hall. This piece also used reverberation at selected moments.

The use of technology brings its own challenges, musical and practically. As a flautist not accustomed to playing with amplification and added reverberation, it took a number of rehearsals with a sound engineer in order to get used to the way the sounds I produced were altered. In the first recital, I chose to reduce the dynamics in *Nymphe-Echo Morphologique* as, with the amplification, the volume I had initially been playing at would have sounded overwhelming and excessive. On the practical level, a stationary microphone proved inadequate for both *Nymphe-Echo*

⁶²Steven Schick. ‘Developing an interpretive context: learning Brian Ferneyhough’s “Bone Alphabet”,’ *Perspectives of New Music*. 32.1 (Winter 1994): 136.

⁶³Jean Penny. ‘Re-activating performative spaces: the meta-flautist’s zones of intensity,’ <<http://www.australianmusiccentre.com.au/article/re-activating-performative-spaces-the-meta-flautist-s-zones-of-intensity>> (6 January 2011).

⁶⁴Pollard. Email Correspondence.

⁶⁵Andrew Ford. ... *les debris d’un rêve* (Sydney: The Australian Music Centre, 1992), 1.

Morphologique and *Under Simple Stars*, as both pieces required multiple music stands. This meant I needed to move a considerable distance across the stage, and one or more stationary microphones would give uneven amplification. In the first recital I used a lapel microphone in order to solve this problem, and, as this worked well, decided to also use the lapel microphone in the second recital despite not needing to move as great a distance on stage.

In my first performance of *Balibo* in Elder Hall in a postgraduate performance forum in June 2009, the electronics were played only through the wall-mounted speakers. This proved to be problematic because the piece requires extremely precise ensemble between flute and electronics in rapid semiquaver passages, and the time delay between the sound emanating from the speakers and being perceived on the stage, as well as the reverb of the sound in the hall, prevent this precision. In the recital performance, a monitor speaker on the floor in front of me was added to solve this, and the performance was consequently much tighter and more accurate.

Sometimes the challenges of contemporary music can be overcome by altering one's standard approach to the instrument. Redgate is correct to observe that 'in continually working on works with such a high-level technical demands, I have learned to 'think outside the box'. This has been a gradual learning process during which I have realised that I can break some of the rules'.⁶⁶ He uses the example of moving his hands to different positions on the instrument, which I used in *Nontiscordardimé III*. In bars 8 to 11, Smetanin uses a multiphonic requiring the F key and the adjacent E key, plus the trill key in between, and alternates between this and E quarter flat, as well as trilling the trill key (see figure 5). To facilitate this, I used the right hand middle finger for the trill key, and moved the finger that usually presses the D key up to the E key.



Figure 9: Michael Smetanin. *Nontiscordardimé III* (unpublished score, 1992), bars 8-10.

I also changed my hand position slightly in *Spinning*. Tara Helen O'Connor (the flautist for whom the piece was composed) suggested that rather than using the raised

⁶⁶Redgate, 143.

circles intended for the fingertips and therefore having the right hand tense, to ignore these circles and relax the hand position.⁶⁷ This gave the fingers more freedom and made the rapid passages of the piece considerably easier. In *Aureole*, most of the microtonal fluctuations could be produced effectively by trilling extra keys, but for the second register G this did not work, as pressing extra keys would either produce a semitone trill or no audible pitch difference. It was also extremely awkward to slide the left hand fourth finger on-and-off the hole in the G key. In the performance, I started the note with normal fingers, but then slid the finger onto the rim of the key and used the right hand second finger to produce the quarter tone fluctuation.

The use of extended techniques was a significant source of challenges within this repertoire, and, as the modernist works used a great deal more of these techniques than the postmodernist works, this meant that the modernist works took much more time to prepare. Particular techniques such as the various air sounds, multiphonics and tongue rams are physically more demanding than conventional playing techniques, so the performance of the modernist works requiring many of these techniques required much more stamina than the performance of the postmodernist works. Due to this use of extended techniques, notational complexity, and, in some instances ambiguity, was greater in the modernist pieces than in the postmodernist works. However, apart from the difficulties resulting from the extended techniques, there were many performance challenges common to both modernist and postmodernist music. Rhythmic complexity was one of these common challenges, as was a wide dynamic range and rapidly changing dynamics.

⁶⁷Tara Helen O'Connor. Masterclass at the Australian Flute Festival, University of Adelaide. 4 October 2009.

5. Conclusion

Irrespective of the polemics surrounding the aesthetics of modernism and postmodernism in the 1980s and 1990s amongst Australian composers, there is a great deal of stylistic and aesthetic diversity in the flute repertoire of the time. While a small percentage of this repertoire can be described as either modernist or postmodernist, the majority of pieces sit somewhere in between. As a performer, one of the key challenges in preparing the modernist works was the mastery of a range of extended techniques. While postmodernist composers may occasionally use percussive sounds, pitch bends, microtones, non-standard articulations and timbral variations, these sounds are integral to many modernist works. This often means that greater practice time needs to be allocated to the high modernist works in order to not only decode the score and master the techniques, but to be able to effectively and with technical control use the techniques in context to give a musically meaningful performance. This use of extended techniques, plus the complexity of the rhythms and pitch material also means that the modernist scores are more dense and require more time to decipher the composers' intentions. However, apart from the greater time required in preparing the modernist works compared to the postmodernist works, the general approach required is the same regardless of the aesthetic or stylistic predisposition of the composer. I concur therefore with Redgate's assertion that 'interpretation of ... complex music is no different from the interpretation of any other music As with any other music one should consider the phrasing, choice of colour, tempo, dynamic range and so on. Many of the complex composers give a great deal of instruction at every level of direction; however, there is still a great deal to be done by the interpreter.'⁶⁸ Chislett shares that view: 'I conceive of no huge differences between the study of complex music and that of any other sort of music that I perform'.⁶⁹ This study confirms the validity of both of these observations.

Despite the polemics in *Sounds Australian*, from the perspective of the performer there is no essential difference between complex/modernist music and simpler/postmodernist music. In Smetanin's words, 'it's all music ... it's just music'.⁷⁰ I agree entirely.

⁶⁸Redgate, 147.

⁶⁹Chislett, 'A Simple Matter of Practice,' 32.

⁷⁰Michael Smetanin. Quoted in Liza Lim. 'The Body: transcribes the text; inscribes the sound,' *Sounds Australian* 29. (Autumn 1991): 27.

A Recital of Australian Flute

Music

1980-2000

Melanie Walters, Flute

Jamie Cock, Piano

Jane Stanley	<i>Firefly</i>
Houston Dunleavy	<i>Icarus</i>
Andrew Ford	<i>Spinning</i>
Carl Vine	<i>Sonata for flute and piano</i>

INTERVAL

Gerard Brophy	<i>Nymphe-Echo Morphologique</i>
Mark Clement Pollard	<i>Under Simple Stars</i>
Martin Wesley-Smith	<i>Balibo</i>

Wednesday 4 August 2010

Elder Hall

Presented as partial requirement of a Master of Music degree at the University of Adelaide

'A Vicious Little Spat': Australian flute composition in the late twentieth century

The growth in Australian composition during the period 1980-2000 led to a great diversity in compositional styles, and, more negatively, ideological clashes between composers writing in a high modernist idiom and those postmodernists working with more traditional techniques. In the early 1990s, what Andrew Ford described as a 'vicious little spat' occurred in the journals *Sounds Australian* and *Ossia* between high modernist composers and those composers working within more traditional musical language. The high modernists were accused of composing music that was 'nonsensical' and 'fruitlessly ugly', and postmodernists of using tonal music language as a 'whore's carnival.'

Tonight's recital forms part of a research project exploring the stylistic diversity of the flute music composed during this period of confrontation. Gerard Brophy's *Nymphe-Echo Morphologique* is the most high modernist work in the program in its atonality, rhythmic complexity, use of extended techniques and density of notes, while Carl Vine's *Sonata for flute and piano* and Houston Dunleavy's *Icarus* are most representative of the more tonal musical language on the other side of the aesthetic divide. The other pieces fall somewhere in between, using elements of both modernism and postmodernism.

Firefly (1999)

Jane Stanley

(b.1976)

‘In my music I like to engage with patterns, especially circular and floral patterns. I am attracted to European modernism for its veneration of system based organization. The manner in which I apply systems in my own work is, however, playful. I am inclined to blend and break borrowed rules in the course of pursuing an ultimately individualised style.’ - Jane Stanley

Jane Stanley, who completed both undergraduate and postgraduate study at the University of Sydney, is currently a lecturer in composition at the University of Glasgow. She is the recipient of numerous awards and scholarships, including the Sydney Moss Scholarship, an Australian Postgraduate Award, the Albert Travelling Scholarship, the Tempe Mann Travelling Scholarship, and grants from Ars Musica Australis and the Ian Potter Cultural Trust. She was a visiting fellow at Harvard University in 2004-2005, and in 2008 was a Composition Fellow at the Tanglewood Music Center.

Firefly was composed for flautist Sally Treloyn, who was a fellow student of Stanley’s at the University of Sydney. The title reflects the staccato motif featured throughout the work; Stanley says, ‘I draw a connection between the darting repeated-note gesture introduced at the start of the piece and the overall energetic, agile, insect-like character of the music with an image of light-emitting fireflies zipping about at dusk.’

Icarus (1985)

i) The Longing

ii) The Flight

Houston Dunleavy

(b.1962)

'I think in sounds better than I think in words, and it is the best way for me to examine my life and to come to terms with who I am...' – Houston Dunleavy

Houston Dunleavy, who was born in North Ireland, came to Australia in 1973. After graduating from the University of Melbourne with a Bachelor of Arts degree in history and a Bachelor of Music degree in composition, he completed Master of Music degrees in composition and choral conducting at the Cleveland Institute of Music, and a PhD in composition at the State University of New York. He is currently a Lecturer in Composition in the Creative Arts Department of the University of Wollongong.

Icarus was the first piece that Dunleavy composed after finishing his undergraduate studies, and the first piece that he wrote without the assistance of a teacher.

Stylistically, it is a unique work within Dunleavy's compositional output. It is his only neo-romantic work, and was an experiment in composing in a style very different from the structuralist music he composed through the 1980s and 1990s. It is 'an unashamedly programmatic piece' in two movements. The first of these, *The Longing*, conveys Icarus' desire to escape from the confines of the Labyrinth. The second movement, *The Flight*, begins tentatively as Icarus first takes off with his newly-acquired wings, gradually building up with the exhilaration he discovers in flying and reaching a climax as he finally flies too close to the sun.

Spinning (1988)

Andrew Ford
(b. 1957)

‘I am one of those infuriating composers who believe that flute players can do anything – and I don’t think that about other players, it’s just flute players.’ –
Andrew Ford

Andrew Ford, who was born in Liverpool, England, migrated to Australia in 1983 to take up a position as a lecturer in the Creative Arts Department of the University of Wollongong. As well as his compositional activities, he is also well-known as a music broadcaster and commentator; he has presented ABC Radio National’s *The Music Show* for twenty years, has published numerous books on music, and in both 1989 and 1990 won the *Sounds Australian* award for the most distinguished contribution to the understanding of Australian music by a writer or broadcaster.

Spinning, which is scored for solo alto flute, was composed in 1988, for American flautist Tara-Helen O’Connor who gave the first performance of the work at the Aspen Music Festival that year. Ford says in his program note on the piece, ‘This instrument has been sadly typecast: it has come to specialise in the languorous and the sultry. But, when one looks at the instrument, it is quite clearly a shiny machine, a piece of precision plumbing. *Spinning* treats the instrument in just this manner.’ It is based on a series of eight notes, which are heard as an isolated flourish at the start of the piece, then used in a succession of ‘swirls and arabesques’ that develop into a ‘loud and punchy’ climax. After the first performance of the work in Aspen, O’Connor turned blue and could not speak for a few minutes, and Ford suggests that ‘it might not be wise to play the work at high altitudes.’

Sonata for Flute and Piano (1992)

Carl Vine

- 1) **Fast**
- 2) **Slow**
- 3) **Very Fast**

(b. 1954)

‘[Music] is an art form that exists only as a passage of time, and only in the ether. It contains no verbs, nouns or visual images. It has the power to make us weep and to feel exhilarated.’ – Carl Vine

Carl Vine has described his compositional style as “radically tonal”, “neo-post-modern” and “post-garde”. He has a strong association with dance music, having composed 25 dance scores and, perhaps as a result of this, rhythmic momentum is a feature of much of his music.

Vine’s *Sonata for Flute and Piano* was composed in 1992 for flautist Geoffrey Collins, and its first performance was given by Collins and pianist David Miller in a live broadcast from 2MBS-FM in January of the following year. The composer originally intended to call the work *Songlines* and write a piece ‘compris[ing of] a single mellifluous melodic line that would encircle the entire piece,’ but during the compositional process it became apparent that the musical material would be more suited to the final form of three contrasting movements – *Fast*, *Slow* and *Very Fast*.

The piece is characteristic of Vine’s mature musical style in its fundamentally diatonic harmony and rhythmic drive and complexity. It features cross-rhythms throughout, irregular subdivisions in the second movement, and in the first movement Vine uses a technique known as metric modulation, which is when a cross rhythm in one tempo is used to establish a new tempo. This technique was used by American composer Elliot Carter in his piano sonata, which Vine used as a model for his *Piano Sonata 1*, composed two years prior to the *Sonata for Flute and Piano*

Nymphe-Echo Morphologique (1989)

Gerard Brophy
(b. 1953)

Gerard Brophy is Lecture in Composition at Griffith University in Queensland, and is also working towards a PhD through the University of Adelaide. He is the recipient of numerous scholarships and awards including scholarships from the Accademia Chigiana di Siena, the Paris Conservatoire and the Italian Government, the 1988 Budapest International Composer Award and the 1988 Barlow International Orchestral Award. He studies with Richard Toop at the Sydney Conservatorium, graduating as Student of the Year in 1981, and with Franco Donatoni in Italy in 1982-1983.

Nymphe-Echo Morphologique takes its name from two paintings of particular interest to Brophy – *Nymphe Echo* by Max Ernst and *Echo Morphologique* by Salvatore Dali – though the influence of these artworks on the piece is limited to the title. It was composed for flautist Laura Chislett, and the original inspiration for the work was Brophy's earlier work, *Mercurio* for amplified flute and two pianos. At the time that *Nymphe-Echo Morphologique* was written, Brophy was very much a high modernist and believed that 'more notes equalled more integrity'. (He has since abandoned this aesthetic position). It was written during a period when Brophy was influenced by the music and aesthetic of avant-garde composer Salvatore Sciarrino and he says that *Nymphe-Echo Morphologique* was his attempt to 'out-Sciarrino Sciarrino'. Most of the sonic effects included in the work, such as whisper tones, multiphonics, inhalation and tongue pizzicato, were derived from Sciarrino's flute music.

Under Simple Stars (1989)

Mark Pollard

(b.1957)

‘I love everything about music. I am attracted to many styles of music and my style is responsive to what inspires me at any one time. For me composition is about what really tickles my fancy at that moment and expanding this sensation into a new work.’ – Mark Pollard

Mark Pollard’s compositional style is eclectic, with influences ranging from jazz and pop music through to Javanese music and atonality. In terms of contemporary art music, he lists a diverse range of influences including music by Terry Riley, Pierre Boulez, Phillip Glass, Elliot Carter, Györgi Ligeti and John Cage. He is currently an Associate Professor of Composition at the School of Music, The Faculty of the VCA and Music at The University of Melbourne.

Under Simple Stars for alto flute was composed for Australian flautist Mardi McCusle, and takes into account the style of her playing and the particular extended techniques (including breathy timbres, flutter-tonguing and pitch bends) that she liked, as well as ‘the particular sound of the alto flute over its full range.’ At the time the piece was composed, Pollard was ‘exploring performance enhancement of sound via electro-acoustic magnification of delay and resonance’, and the use of digital reverberation is an integral part of the work.

As the title suggests, *Under Simple Stars* was inspired by star-gazing. Pollard says that the title ‘describes aptly the fascinating interaction of complexity and beauty that exists in natural phenomena. *Under Simple Stars* attempts to capture this interaction through an exploration of musical abstraction and the natural beauty of the alto flute.’

Balibo (1992)

**Martin Wesley-Smith
(b.1945)**

Martin Wesley-Smith studied with Peter Tahourdin and Peter Maxwell-Davies in Adelaide, before undertaking postgraduate study at York University in Britain in 1971. After returning to Australia in 1974, he took up a position as Lecturer in Electronic Music at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music, where he established and directed the Electronic Music Studio. He specialises in audio-visual compositions, computer music and choral music, and much of his music reflects upon socio-political concerns.

Balibo is one of several works by Wesley-Smith dealing with issues relating to East Timor. It takes its name from a small town 10 kilometres away from the country's border with West Timor. In October 1975 the Indonesian military were pushing across the border in preparation for invading East Timor. Five young Australian journalists, Greg Shackleton, Tony Stewart, Gary Cunningham, Brian Peters, and Malcolm Rennie, were sent to Balibo to report on the Indonesian attack on East Timor, following its decolonisation from Portugal. While sheltering in a house clearly marked 'Australia', all five journalists were murdered and their bodies burnt. Wesley-Smith says in his notes on the piece, '*Balibo* is about [the journalists'] final hours. Shackleton and the others are waiting for the Indonesians to arrive, not knowing what fate has in store, but no doubt filled with trepidation...'

The piece was composed for flute with a tape created using a Fairlight CMI (computer music instrument), a digital sampling synthesiser invented in 1979 by Peter Vogel and Kim Rylie in Sydney. According to the Powerhouse Museum's website, the instrument was '[n]amed after a Sydney hydrofoil ferry because it represented the latest in technology.'

A Recital of Australian Flute Music 1980-2000

Ross Edwards	<i>Ulpirra</i> for solo piccolo (1993)	2 minutes
Michael Whiticker	<i>Kiah</i> for solo flute (1987)	4 minutes
Andrew Ford	<i>...les debris d'un rêve</i> for piccolo (1992)	5 minutes
Michael Smetanin	<i>Nontiscordardimé</i> (1991-2)	11 minutes
	I – Bass Flute	
	II – Piccolo	
	III – Flute	
Julian Yu	<i>Scintillation III</i> for flute and piano (1987)	4 minutes

INTERVAL

Gerard Brophy	<i>Tweak</i> for piccolo (1991)	2 minutes
Ian Shanahan	<i>Dimensiones Paradisi</i> for alto flute (1991/98)	15 minutes
Mary Finsterer	<i>Ether</i> for amplified flute (1998)	9 minutes
Brenton Broadstock	<i>Aureole</i> for flute and piano (1982)	9 minutes

Melanie Walters, Flutes

Jamie Cock, Piano

Tuesday 22 February 2011

Elder Hall

Presented as partial requirement of a Master of Music degree at the University of Adelaide

'A Vicious Little Spat': Australian flute composition in the late twentieth century

The growth in Australian composition during the period 1980-2000 led to a great diversity in compositional styles, and, more negatively, ideological clashes between composers writing in a high modernist idiom and those postmodernists working with more traditional techniques. In the early 1990s, what Andrew Ford described as a 'vicious little spat' occurred in the journals *Sounds Australian* and *Ossia* between high modernist composers and those composers working with more traditional modes of expression. The high modernists were accused of composing music that was 'nonsensical' and 'fruitlessly ugly', and postmodernists writing in simpler, tonal styles as being 'composers-prostitutes' selling out their artistic integrity in order to gain wider appeal.

Tonight's recital forms part of a research project exploring the stylistic diversity of the flute music composed during this period of confrontation. Michael Smetanin's *Nontiscordardimé*, Ian Shanahan's *Dimensiones Paradisi* and Mary Finsterer's *Ether* are at the modernist end of the stylistic spectrum, while Ross Edwards's *Ulpirra* is the most postmodern of tonight's repertoire.

Ulpirra

Ross Edwards

(b. 1943)

Ross Edwards has, in his own words, ‘created a unique sound world which seeks to reconnect music with elemental forces and restore such qualities as ritual, spontaneity and the impulse to dance’. One of Australia’s most widely performed composers, Edwards has composed in a wide range of genres, including symphonies, concertos, chamber music, vocal music, dance music and film music.

Edwards’s mature compositions fall into two categories: what he calls his sacred style and his maninya style. *Ulpirra* is in the maninya style, which Gordon Kerry describes as ‘active, full of dance rhythms, happily using an open-hearted modal or tonal harmony’. The title is an Aboriginal word meaning flute or pipe. The piece was originally composed for the recorder player Jo Dudley, but has been performed on several different wind instruments including oboe, saxophone, and piccolo.

Kiah

Michael Whiticker

(b. 1954)

Michael Whiticker holds a Bachelor of Music degree in composition from the NSW Conservatorium of Music and a Doctor of Creative Arts degree from the University of Wollongong. Whiticker was composer in residence with the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra in 1992 and has taught at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music High School, the University of Western Sydney and James Cook University. After completing his undergraduate degree, Whiticker undertook postgraduate studies in 1983 and 1984 in West Germany with Isang Yun and Witold Szalonek, and returned to live in West Germany from 1989 to 1990, during which time he was artistic director of The Antipodes, a festival of Australian music held in Berlin. His compositional output includes solo instrumental works, chamber music, orchestral music and operas.

Whiticker's solo flute piece *Kiah* was composed in 1987 for flautist Rebecca Steele. The title means 'a beautiful place' in an Australian indigenous language, and Whiticker says that the piece's inspiration came from the 'exquisite hills and dales engulfing Auchennesnane Cottage in Dumfriesshire, Scotland.' The piece is structured in three distinct sections, and the composer describes it as an 'expressive, strongly directional piece' with a 'continual upward melodic movement'.

...les debris d'un rêve

Andrew Ford

(b. 1957)

Andrew Ford, who was born in Liverpool, England, migrated to Australia in 1983 to take up a position as a lecturer in the Creative Arts Department of the University of Wollongong. As well as his compositional activities, he is also well-known as a music broadcaster and commentator; he has presented ABC Radio National's *The Music Show* for 20 years, has published numerous books on music, and in both 1989 and 1990 won the *Sounds Australian* award for the most distinguished contribution to the understanding of Australian music by a writer or broadcaster.

...*les debris d'un rêve* is for solo piccolo with electronic reverb. The title, which means 'the remains of a dream', is a line from the opera *L'Enfant et les sortilèges* by Maurice Ravel. It was composed in 1992 while the composer was in Amsterdam, Paris and Haute-Provence, and was written for Australian flautist Kathleen Gallagher.

Nontiscordardimé

Michael Smetanin

(b. 1958)

Michael Smetanin, who has been Chair of Composition at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music since 2002, studied composition with Louis Andriessen in the Netherlands after completing undergraduate studies at the Sydney Conservatorium. According to Lynne Williams, the author of the article ‘Emerging Australian Composers’, Smetanin was an ‘angry young man [who] returned home with a mission – to make a statement about the spirit of compromise’ which he saw as a threat to contemporary music’. He developed the reputation of being Australia’s ‘bad boy of classical music’ after a controversy over the first performance of his orchestral work *Black Snow*, which made the front page of *The Australian*. The piece was given its first performance by the Sydney Symphony Orchestra despite threats of a strike by the players, who complained that the piece was virtually unplayable. The influences on Smetanin’s music are eclectic, and range from Iannis Xenakis, Karlheinz Stockhausen, Louis Andriessen and Igor Stravinsky through to hard rock music. The latter, according to Gordon Kerry, appealed to Smetanin ‘both for its sheer physicality as well as its culturally subversive pretensions’. Much of Smetanin’s music uses extended instrumental techniques. *Nontiscordardimé* uses percussive sounds, pitch bends and glissandi, microtones and a variety of articulations. This work (the title of which means ‘forget-me-not’ in Italian) was composed for flautist Laura Chislett in 1991-92, and consists of three short pieces for bass flute, piccolo and c flute respectively.

Scintillation III

Julian Jing-Jun Yu

(b. 1957)

Chinese born Julian Jing-Jun Yu studied at the Tokyo College of Music with Joji Yuasa and Shin-ichiro Ikebe from 1980 until 1982 before emigrating to Australia in 1985. He was a Tanglewood Composition Fellow in 1988, where he studied with Oliver Knussen and Hans Werner Henze, and won the Koussevitzky Tanglewood Composition Prize. He has been the recipient of numerous other composition awards including the Paul Lowin Orchestral Prizes of 1991 and 1994. Yu is reported as believing that ‘quality and beauty in music come from something deeper than the sound produced: that they spring from the pattern of thought, the inner laws or structure of the music, and that it is this inner pattern which gives integrity and individual character to a work’. Lawrence Whiffin describes Yu’s music as ‘blending Chinese idioms with European atonality’. *Scintillation III*, for flute and piano, was composed in 1987 and is one of a series of pieces, with *Scintillation I* scored for solo piano, *Scintillation II* for piano and metallic percussion instruments. The pitch material is based upon intervals from the pentatonic scale. According to Yu ‘the title refers to the brightness of the metallic instruments for which the piece was originally conceived, and also to the flowery nature of the music’.

Tweak

**Gerard Brophy
(b. 1953)**

Gerard Brophy is Lecturer in Composition at Griffith University in Queensland, and a PhD candidate at the University of Adelaide. He is the recipient of numerous scholarships and awards, including scholarships from the Accademia Chigiana di Siena, the Paris Conservatoire and the Italian Government, the 1988 Budapest International Composer Award and the 1988 Barlow International Orchestral Award. He studied with Richard Toop at the Sydney Conservatorium, graduating as Student of the Year in 1981, and with Franco Donatoni in Italy in 1982-1983.

Tweak, for solo piccolo, was composed in 1991. It is a very short work based on pitch material from the lowest fifth of the instrument's range. Stylistically, the piece belongs to a period in Brophy's career when he was moving away from the high modernist style of his earlier compositional career towards a simpler musical language.

Dimensiones Paradisi

Ian Shanahan

(b. 1962)

Sydney based composer Ian Shanahan graduated from the University of Sydney with a double major in music and pure mathematics in 1985, and completed his PhD in 2003. He has taught composition at the Universities of Sydney and Western Sydney. As well as his compositional activities, Shanahan is also a recorder player who specialises in the performance of new music. He has commissioned many new works for the instrument and has written extensively about recorder extended techniques. Shanahan says that he is 'philosophically and practically aligned to those marvellous interdisciplinary creators of the Middle Ages who subscribed to the *quadrivium* of *musica, astrologica, geometria* and *arithmetica*'. *Dimensiones Paradisi* takes its name from John Michell's Book *The Dimensions of Paradise: The Proportions and Symbolic Numbers of Ancient Cosmology*, and its structure and pitch material is developed from the proportions of the sacred geometry discussed in the text. The durations and lengths of the sections are derived from the areas of the shapes, while the pitch material is derived from the shapes' perimeters.

Dimensiones Paradisi was commissioned by Laura Chislett in 1991, and was first performed by Kathleen Gallagher at the Ninth Sydney Spring International Festival of New Music in 1998, where it was awarded the Marienberg Sydney Spring Award for Composition.

Ether

Mary Finsterer

(b. 1962)

Mary Finsterer graduated from the University of Melbourne in 1987 and undertook postgraduate studies in Amsterdam in 1993 with Louis Andriessen with the assistance of an Australia Council Composer Fellowship. She was composer-in-residence for the Sydney Symphony Orchestra from 1992 until 1994, and her music has been performed by ELISION, the Tasmania Symphony Orchestra, the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, the Pittsburgh New Music Ensemble, the Australia Art Orchestra and the Arditti String Quartet. A feature of her compositional style is its high level of energy; Richard Toop describes her music as ‘unabashedly full-on and hyperactive’, while Linda Kouvaras identifies the concept of élan (or life-force) as fundamental to Finsterer’s music.

Ether, for solo flute, seeks to examine what the composer calls ‘the varied terrain of extended technique offered by the flute’. The piece, which was composed for Geoffrey Collins in 1998, features extensive use of whistle tones, as well as techniques such as tongue rams, harmonics, jet whistles, key clicks, portamento, multiphonics and flutter tonguing.

Aureole

Brenton Broadstock

(b. 1952)

Brenton Broadstock, who was born in Melbourne, studied History, Politics and Music at Monash University before travelling to the USA in 1979 to study composition and theory with Donald Freund at Memphis State University. He holds a Doctor of Music degree from the University of Melbourne, where he was Professor of Music and Head of Composition until 2007. He is the recipient of awards including the Albert H. Maggs Award for Composition 1984, Equal First Prize in the 1987 Hambacher International Composers Competition, West Germany and the 1994 Paul Lowin Song Cycle Prize.

Linda Kouvaras, in the book *Sound Ideas*, identifies both duality and freedom (and its antithesis) as common threads in Broadstock's compositions, and both concepts are apparent in *Aureole*. An aureole is, according to Broadstock, 'a border of light or radiance enveloping the head or sometimes the whole of a figure represented as holy.' *Aureole*, for flute and piano, was composed in 1982 and is the first in a series of works with the title for various instrumental combinations. These pieces explore what the composer calls 'the dichotomy that exists between holiness and unholiness, radiance and darkness, the so called "good" and the "bad" – those opposite facets of our human nature which are constantly struggling for supremacy'.

APPENDIX B - List of Tracks on the Recordings

CD 1

1. Jane Stanley	<i>Firefly</i> - flute (1999)	2.17
2. Houston Dunleavy	<i>Icarus</i> - flute (1985) – i. The Longing	5.24
3. Houston Dunleavy	<i>Icarus</i> - flute (1985) – ii. The Flight	3.52
4. Andrew Ford	<i>Spinning</i> - alto flute (1988)	5.13
5. Carl Vine	<i>Sonata</i> - flute and piano (1992)	13.13
6. Gerard Brophy	<i>Nymphe-Echo Morphologique</i> - amplified flute (1989)	7.51
7. Mark Pollard	<i>Under Simple Stars</i> - alto flute(1989)	12.40
8. Martin Wesley-Smith	<i>Balibo</i> - flute and CD (1992)	16.05

CD 2

1. Ross Edwards	<i>Ulpirra</i> - solo piccolo (1993)	1.41
2. Michael Whiticker	<i>Kiah</i> - solo flute (1987)	4.36
3. Andrew Ford	<i>...les debris d'un rêve</i> - piccolo (1992)	6.29
4. Michael Smetanin	<i>Nontiscordardimé I</i> - bass flute (1991)	3.20
5. Michael Smetanin	<i>Nontiscordardimé II</i> - piccolo (1992)	2.27
6. Michael Smetanin	<i>Nontiscordardimé III</i> - flute (1992)	4.11
7. Julian Yu	<i>Scintillation III</i> - flute and piano (1987)	3.46
8. Gerard Brophy	<i>Tweak</i> - piccolo (1991)	1.29
9. Ian Shanahan	<i>Dimensiones Paradisi</i> - alto flute (1991/98)*	14.11
10. Mary Finsterer	<i>Ether</i> - amplified flute (1998)	9.10
11. Brenton Broadstock	<i>Aureole</i> - flute and piano (1982)	10.07

*NB. Due to a failure in the transfer of digital data during the recording process, the final 30 seconds of Shanahan's *Dimensiones Paradisi* is missing

CD 3

PDFs of the scores of the recital repertoire (for examination purposes only)

NOTE:

2 CDs containing 'Recorded Performances' are included with the print copy of the thesis held in the University of Adelaide Library.

The CDs must be listened to in the Music Library.

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