

# Research Report: The Historical Anthology of Music by Australian Women

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In 1988 as part of a course I was teaching and as a celebration of Australia's bicentennial, a display was assembled which outlined the contribution of women to the history of Australian music. The project proved to be quite problematic due to the severe restriction of primary and secondary sources in this area. The resulting display was curiously unbalanced; while it made much of Australian women as performers, teachers, patrons and supporters of music, it could offer little concerning Australian women as composers. This was a reflection of the limitations of the critical writing on Australian music and the poor survival rate of published works by Australians in general and by Australian women in particular.

Although this exercise served to highlight the problem, it was not until 1993 that I put together a proposal for an Australian Research Council Small Grant to conduct a pilot project. The proposal was successful and the pilot continued through 1994 and, with carry-over funding, into the first half of 1995. At about this time infrastructure proposals were being put together in a consortium arrangement between the Australian National University, the Australian Music Centre, La Trobe University and Monash University to pool research resources on Australian music. One of the projects put forward for funding under this heading was the *Historical Anthology of Music by Australian Women*. This provided funding for all of 1996 and into the first half of 1997 for a day a week each for Joel Crotty, one of the members of the original class and the research assistant and collaborator throughout the project, and for Steve Adam supplying technical assistance. It was decided to use the Internet to publish the *Anthology* section by section, making the information on women composers widely available as soon as possible. However, the ultimate aim is to publish a hard-copy version when all the materials are complete.

The project collates and contextualises a representative sample of the musical works of Australian women in a manner suitable for both practical and academic needs. One of the reasons why Australian music in general, and music composed by Australian women in particular, is given scant attention in our educational institutions is that both primary and secondary sources are not easily available. The *Anthology* therefore provides much needed source material towards a fuller understanding of Australian music history in general, and also attempts to redress a bias towards male composers in the documentation and critical writing about composition in Australia. The *Historical Anthology of Music by Australian Women* aims to make music by Australian women more widely and easily available so that the critical literature of the future can write women into our cultural history.

Specific aims of the project include:

- to prepare a chronologically ordered anthology of works by Australian women composers
- to provide a single, accessible source of compositions by Australian women suitable for study in a variety of environments
- to provide a performance resource that demonstrates that music by Australian women is available, performable and rewarding in itself
- to project essential role models for the women composers of the future by supporting the presence of women's compositions in educational institutions and performances

The *Anthology* aims to set women composers apart only long enough to point out their essential contribution and thereby encourage integration of women's composition into the performance and study of music. Until women composers are more strongly represented in textbooks, anthologies, performances, recordings and music historiography, specialist projects such as this will continue to serve a very necessary function.

The project was designed with three objectives:

1. Art music was to be the sole area of concentration. This decision was taken in order to avoid a superficial coverage; women's contributions in other areas of music, for example popular music, film music and pedagogical music, are significant enough to warrant separate attention. Exceptions to the art music requirement include May Brahe's ballad 'Bless This House' and Moneta Eagles' film music *Airmen at War*. It was felt to be important to include these women in the *Anthology* as they were able to establish significant profiles in the realms of popular music and film music respectively.

2. No composer born after 1958 was to be included. A cut-off date was a practical necessity, but there was also the consideration that the cultural environment for younger composers now is far more supportive of Australian art music than was generally the case twenty years ago. Initially we trialled 1950 as a cut-off date but found that we would have had to exclude a small collection of composers who are neither quite mature enough to be part of the establishment, nor young enough to be part of the upcoming group. The list of composers is not intended to be definitive but aims rather to sample the generations and their various compositional styles.

3. Music across the gamut of styles and genres was to be included. The aim here was to break down stereotypical ideas of women's compositions as being designed for teaching or the drawing room.

The methodological rationale of the *Anthology* depends upon drawing together examples from the works of the selected composers with supporting bio-bibliographical details. The composers and works selected are shown in the table opposite.

The *Anthology* is organised in chronological order by composers' dates of birth. Within each entry the following information appears:

1. Photo: These were generally provided by the composer and used with permission.
2. Biography: We asked living composers to write their own biography, but most declined. Where biographical information is readily available elsewhere, the project's entry is brief and referential. In the cases of comparatively little-known composers, the entries are more extensive. This section contains information relating to composers' academic awards and public honours.
3. Composition Awards: Listing is restricted to awards associated specifically for composition.
4. Composer Philosophy or Evaluation: Composers were asked to write their composing philosophy, and with only one or two exceptions, all were happy to express this. For composers no longer living we have constructed composer evaluations, and where there is too little published material to reconstruct anything substantial we have approached other scholars for source material.

5. Selected work: Composers were asked to select a work by which they would like to be represented. However, we asked them to consider a number of factors. The work had to be typical of their output, no more than ten minutes in performance time and, wherever possible,

Table of Composers and Works

Composer	Title of work	Genre
Mona McBurney (1862–1932)	<i>A Persian Spring Song</i>	song
Florence Ewart (1864–1949)	String Quartet in D minor	chamber*
May Brahe (1885–1956)	<i>Bless this House</i>	song
Mirrie Hill (1892–1986)	Symphony in A	orchestral*
Edith Harray (1893–1969)	<i>The Playmates</i>	song
Margaret Sutherland (1897–1984)	String Quartet No. 3	chamber*
Linda Phillips (b. 1899)	<i>Two Moods</i> for clarinet and piano	chamber
Esther Rofe (b. 1904)	<i>Terra Australis</i>	orchestral*
Meta Overman (1907–93)	Seven Miniatures	chamber
Peggy Glanville-Hicks (1912–90)	<i>The Transposed Heads</i>	opera*
Miriam Hyde (b. 1913)	Sonata in G minor	piano solo*
Dulcie Holland (b. 1913)	Symphony for Pleasure	orchestral*
Phyllis Batchelor (b. 1915)	Sonata for flute and piano	chamber
Moneta Eagles (b. 1924)	<i>Airmen at War</i>	film music*
Wendy Morrissey (b. 1926)	<i>Seasons</i>	choral
Betty Beath (b. 1932)	<i>An Excuse for Not Returning the Visit of a Friend</i>	song
Mary Mageau (b. 1934)	Triple Concerto	orchestral*
Helen Gifford (b. 1935)	<i>Time and Time Again</i>	chamber
Ann Carr-Boyd (b. 1938)	Piano Concerto	orchestral*
Jennifer Fowler (b. 1939)	<i>Blow Flute: Answer Echoes in Antique Lands</i>	flute solo
Moya Henderson (b. 1941)	<i>Crosshatching (Rarrk)</i>	piano solo
Ann Ghandar (b. 1943)	<i>Sinai Music</i>	piano solo
Judith Clingan (b. 1945)	<i>Songs of Solitude</i>	vocal
Anne Boyd (b. 1946)	<i>As We Cross the Bridge of Dreams</i>	choral
Becky Llewellyn (b. 1950)	<i>Berceuse</i>	chamber
Ros Bandt (b. 1951)	<i>Altars of Power and Desire</i>	sound installation
Sarah de Jong (b. 1952)	<i>I Set Fire</i>	music theatre*
Sarah Hopkins (b. 1958)	<i>Reclaiming the Spirit</i>	chamber
Clare Maclean (b. 1958)	<i>A West Irish Ballad</i>	choral

\* movement/section only

supported by a good quality recording. Some gentle persuasion was used in the interests of genre balance.

6. Composer Comments: Composers were asked to provide some background information on the selected work. This could include motivations for composing the work, how the process of composition of this particular work fitted in with their overall compositional philosophy, or the reception of the work. For deceased composers, where no original comments concerning the work survive, this section is omitted.

7. Analytic Notes: The analysis is intended to aid the reception of the work, and is aimed at music-lovers rather than at scholars with advanced analytical skills. Therefore short musical examples are not available on the top level, but can easily be selected. Following clues provided under 'Composer Comments,' I have written these analytic notes without further recourse to the composer. The only exception to this is Hyde's Sonata in G minor, where the composer provided a detailed analysis in the facsimile publication of the work.

8. List of works: This aims to be as complete as possible and composers are continually updating the lists. There is general consistency within individual lists and the composers themselves have determined the classifications of works as well as their order of presentation.

9. Discography: This lists recordings by work rather than by disc and is cross-referenced from the List of Works.

10. Select Bibliography: A selective listing of literature about the life and works of the composer. Where reviews of works or complete articles are available at other websites, links have been provided.

11. Archives: This details locations of manuscripts or published scores as well as providing links to other websites for further research.

Most of this material is currently available at varying levels of draft at two electronic addresses. The first is the more complete and is pendant to the Monash University Music Department's home page at <http://www.monash.edu.au/NFRAM/>. The second is accessible through the National Networked Facility for Research in Australian Music at <http://nfram.anu.edu.au/>.

Given the lack of copyright protection on the internet, it has been decided that scores will only be included in the hard-copy publication, which will focus on the scores and their analysis and interpretation. Bio-bibliographic material will be conveyed primarily through the internet; electronic publication is particularly suitable for this purpose since it can be constantly adapted and updated.

The project was designed by Carol J. Williams with research assistance from Joel Crotty and technical assistance from Steve Adam, of the Music Department of Monash University. It has been supported by an ARC small grant and most recently through financial assistance from the DEETYA: Research Infrastructure (Equipment & Facilities) program, through Monash University's collaboration with the National Networked Facility for Research in Australian Music.