

# AUSTRALIAN ORGAN COMPOSITION: A BRIEF HISTORY 1788 - 2002

## *Abstract*

This article outlines a chronological history of organ composition in Australia, touching briefly on the organ building and organ culture since colonisation.<sup>1</sup> It also identifies a number of areas for further research and data collection.<sup>2</sup> In addition, this it provides an overview of the author's research and documentation of Australian organ music. The author's catalogue of Australian organ composition is published at <http://home.vicnet.net.au/~ohta/>.

### **Early organ culture: The nineteenth century**

Arising from the "brutal frontier culture"<sup>3</sup> derived from Australia's role as a penal colony, early Australian music making was performed by military bandsmen who had a multiple role in the society, which included the organisation of church services.<sup>4</sup> Churches were one of the earliest venues for public music making in Australia. As in Europe, organs were used primarily to accompany church services in the colony, although they were also used in secular contexts, for example in accompanying public ceremonies.<sup>5</sup> The first keyed organ arrived in Australia in 1824, and was installed in St David's Church, Hobart.<sup>6</sup> In 1840 the first instrument by a colonial organ builder was completed, a two manual instrument by Johnson & Kinloch of Sydney produced for St. Matthew's Church, Windsor, NSW. By 1850, most major centres in Australia had craftsmen building organs from locally produced and imported materials.<sup>7</sup>

An enormous demand for pipe organs for Australian churches and public buildings soon became apparent. The

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<sup>1</sup> While the author has done much of the current research into this area, due acknowledgement is given to Dr Robert Boughen for access to his unpublished catalogues, entitled *Australian organ compositions* (1975/1993/1999), which includes Australian organ works and recordings. Dr John Henderson's *A directory of composers for organ* lists a number of the published works, and a limited number of unpublished works (and even some non-existent works). Another important source has been the WebCat online catalogue of the Australian Music Centre. In addition, a small number of dissertations have discussed specific areas of Australian organ composition. Articles by Robert Ampt and David Kinsela are amongst few published writings on Australian organ music. Much of the data gathering otherwise has been through the study of autograph scores and personal communications between the author and composers and performers.

<sup>2</sup> In this article an organ composition is defined as both solo organ composition and composition in which the organ plays in ensemble with other instruments and/or voices, but excluding works for choir and organ, both ecclesiastical and secular. Australian composition is interpreted as works composed in Australia by either persons born in Australia or by persons living in Australia permanently at the time of composition. The catalogue of Australian organ composition includes music written for organ solo and with other instruments including solo voice, but excludes works for choir and organ. This remains a task for future research..

<sup>3</sup> Andrew McCredie, *Musical composition in Australia*, Canberra, 1969, p. 2.

<sup>4</sup> Eileen Dorum, *Composers of Australia, A chronological guide to composers born before 1950*, E. E. Dorum, Melbourne, 1997, pp. 2-3.

<sup>5</sup> John Maidment, Melbourne concert organs: Past and present, in *Grand Concert Organ, Melbourne Concert Hall*, Victorian Arts Centre Trust, Melbourne, 1983, p. 6.

<sup>6</sup> Graham Rushworth, *Historic organs of New South Wales: The instruments, their makers and players, 1791-1940*, Hale & Iremonger, Sydney, 1988, p. 45.

<sup>7</sup> Hastie, p. 74.

economic boom period from 1850 until the depression in the 1890s led to the building of over 500 instruments by local and European builders; all the major English organ builders exported instruments to Australia during this time.<sup>8</sup> These organs were built for churches, private residences, concert halls, theatres and Town Halls. In 1872, in accordance with English tradition, the position of City Organist was created in Melbourne, the first in Australia, although Tasmanian public organs preceded this instrument. This position provided for the promotion of musical awareness in Melbourne,<sup>9</sup> and was later instituted in the capital cities and major towns in most other Australian states. Such positions were often filled from a range of international applicants.

### **Organ composition in the nineteenth century**

The majority of composers active in Australia in the nineteenth century emigrated from Britain, a country apparently in a period of musical decline that was to last until the 1890s.<sup>10</sup> Organ music composed in Australia during this time comprised of mostly liturgical music by church musicians, and churches provided the main performance venue.<sup>11</sup>

One of the influential figures in the musical life of Australia in the mid-nineteenth century was London born organist Charles E. Horsley (1822-1876). Horsley had arrived in Australia in 1861, and within six months had taken the position of organist at Christ Church South Yarra. In 1866 he arranged the music for the Melbourne Intercolonial Exhibition,<sup>12</sup> and composed a work for the occasion, the *Exhibition march*.<sup>13</sup> The *Exhibition march* is the earliest surviving organ composition written in Australia; paradoxically it was written for a non-liturgical context. This does not discount the possibility of earlier works, as organist positions were established in Australia from the 1820s; many of the organists holding these positions were published composers.<sup>14</sup>

Horsley's organist colleagues also wrote marches for other important Melbourne occasions. Philip Plaisted (1844-1920) composed a *Grand march* (1872), for the opening of the Melbourne Town Hall, and for the Melbourne International Exhibition of 1880, G. W. Torrance (1837-1907) wrote *The Melbourne Exhibition march*. Similarly, *Commemoration march* (1882) by Alex Rae (1825-1899), organist of St Stephen's Newtown, NSW, was written for the opening of the new organ in the Great Hall of Sydney University.<sup>15</sup> The majority of the surviving works from the nineteenth century were published, including works by Alfred B. Plumpton (1841-1902),<sup>16</sup> A. William B. Chinner (1850-1915),<sup>17</sup> Neville G. Barnett (1854-1895),<sup>18</sup> Thomas H. Jones (1856-1936)<sup>19</sup> and William Knox (1861-1933).<sup>20</sup> The musical value of these surviving short works is doubtful. Unadventurous tonal writing is rife, often combined with repetitious formal structures; these characteristics may be seen clearly in Plaisted's *Grand march*.

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<sup>8</sup> Hastie, p. 74.

<sup>9</sup> Jason Smith, *Melbourne city organists, 1872-1938*, unpublished honours thesis, Australian Catholic University, Ascot Vale, 1992, p. 41.

<sup>10</sup> McCredie, 1980, p. 708.

<sup>11</sup> W. A. Orchard, *Music in Australia*, Georgian House, Melbourne, 1952, pp. 97-98.

<sup>12</sup> Dorum, p. 9.

<sup>13</sup> Matthews, 1969, pp. 77-78.

<sup>14</sup> Dorum, pp. 5, 7-34.

<sup>15</sup> *Sydney Organ Journal* August/September 1987.

<sup>16</sup> The titles of these works (also listed in Appendix A, pp. 132-193) and those listed above immediately after are as follows: *Offertoire in a minor* (1882), Wickins; *Suite* (1882), Wickins.

<sup>17</sup> *Offertoire in D flat* (1875), Ashdown & Parry; *Grand offertoire in C* (1876), Ashdown & Parry; *Andante in A flat* (1876), Ashdown & Parry; *Andante in G* (1879), Ashdown & Parry; *Aspiration religieuses* (1883), Ashdown & Parry.

<sup>18</sup> *Motivo piacevole* (1883), Novello.

<sup>19</sup> *A stately measure; Military march in B flat* (1878), Ashdown.

<sup>20</sup> *Angelic whispers*, J. H. Fray; *The Collegians march in D* (1899), J. H. Fray.

A number of works referred to in contemporary nineteenth century writings are lost.<sup>21</sup> This is an area worthy of further research, as the total number of known works appears to be disproportionately small in comparison to the number of active musicians. The sea voyage to Australia from England took up to six months until the introduction of steam vessels in the mid-nineteenth century. It is likely that during the first half of the nineteenth century at least, organists would have had to supplement their own limited number of imported works with new works of their own composition. Isolated from Europe by a tyranny of distance,<sup>22</sup> early Australian composers lacked the opportunities of close communication afforded in Europe, which influenced the production of new music. The resultant lack of available composition in Australia created an immediate and captive market for composers. This isolation was, however, short-lived, as the development of Australian culture coincided with the industrial revolution, enabling the rapid transportation of physical and intellectual property, and was too short to promote any real semblance of national identity in the field of organ music, although some other artistic fields consciously developed an Australian identity. Thirty-one works from the nineteenth century have been documented.

### **The twentieth century**

By the turn of the nineteenth century, Australia's population had quadrupled in the space of fifty years, reaching four million. The standard of living was high in comparison to the rest of the world and demand for public entertainment was strong. The newly formed Commonwealth of Australia, which united the various colonies, and the egalitarian democratic government were important factors that led to increasing immigration.<sup>23</sup> The consequences of the Federation of States, the general vote, and a representative, independent government,<sup>24</sup> were among factors which led to a weakening of the cultural and socio-economic links between Great Britain, Europe and Australia to the advantage of both nationalism and multi-national cultures.<sup>25</sup>

### **Organ building**

The trends in the organ building and performance culture established in the nineteenth century continued until well into the twentieth century. In the early twentieth century major organ imports continued, including further instruments by Hill & Son, Henry Willis & Sons and Norman & Beard. These included the second Melbourne Town Hall organ, installed in 1929, amongst the largest built internationally between the two World Wars.<sup>26</sup> In the 1920s, theatre organs, built mainly by the American firms Wurlitzer and Aeolian, and the English firm Christie, were imported for moving picture theatres. A large audience was attracted to these theatres until the demise of silent films in the late 1920s.<sup>27</sup> The music improvised and written for such theatre organs remains a neglected area, and is surely worthy of further research.

The Great Depression of the 1930s and World War II disrupted organ building activity considerably. Following developments in Europe and America in the post-war years, increased interest in the *Orgelbewegung* led to important changes in organ building in Australia from the mid-1960s. The *Orgelbewegung* was established in Australia with the construction in 1965 of the Knox Grammar School Chapel instrument in Wahroonga, NSW, built by the

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<sup>21</sup> E. g. M. Younger's *March* referred to in Rushworth, p. 379.

<sup>22</sup> Geoffrey Blainey, *The Tyranny of distance: How distance shaped Australia's history*, Rev. ed., Sun Books, Melbourne, 1983.

<sup>23</sup> Clark, p. 116.

<sup>24</sup> Clark, p. 136.

<sup>25</sup> Roger Covell, *Australia's music: Themes of a new society*, Sun Books, Melbourne, 1967, pp. 55-65.

<sup>26</sup> One of the larger instruments was the 120 stop Steinmeyer organ built for Nidaros Cathedral in Trondheim, Norway, in 1930.

<sup>27</sup> David Kinsela, The organ in Australia, *Sydney Organ Journal*, winter 1998, p. 35.

self-taught Sydney organ builder Ronald Sharp (1929-).<sup>28</sup> The early exponents of *Orgelbewegung* principles, Sharp and Roger Pogson (1932-) quickly established the movement in Australia. The concurrently established organ festivals were partly inspired by the repertoire and sound possibilities afforded by these instruments, which in turn motivated composers, who were influenced by this new performance arena.

### City Organists and performance repertoire

Regular concerts by City Organists remained a significant form of public entertainment until World War II.<sup>29</sup> It was a stable cultural activity, well supported by the public.<sup>30</sup> Approximately one fifth of the repertoire comprised of transcriptions from orchestral works, until symphony orchestras were established in the 1920s.<sup>31</sup> Interestingly, almost no contemporary or Australian compositions were performed at these concerts. In 1934 William McKie (1901-1984), the third City Organist of Melbourne, performed two works, *Melody* and *Processional*, both written in 1912 by Fritz Hart (1874-1949).<sup>32</sup> These were the only Australian compositions performed at Melbourne Town Hall concerts. Similarly, only a very few Australian works were performed by the Sydney City Organist's concerts during this period.<sup>33</sup> The last Sydney City Organist was Ernest Truman (1870-1948), who continued the set traditions by playing repertoire "designed to appeal rather than educate".<sup>34</sup>

### Organ composition in the twentieth century

As documented in the online catalogue, at least 1050 Australian organ compositions were written between 1866 and 2002.

Period	1866-1899	1900-1949	1950-1969	1970-2002	Total
Number of compositions	31	71	147	801	1050
Active composers	26	31	51	176	258*

Table 1 Compositions and composers of organ composition in Australia 1866-2002, totals by period.

\*Shows the sum of composers 1866-2002.

As Table 1 shows, the number of Australian composers writing organ works has been in proportion to the number of extant works, and within the given time frames there has been a gradual increase in line with population growth, although the 1970s marked the beginning of an extraordinary flowering of organ composition in Australia. One of the characteristics of organ composition in Australia has been that few composers have written a significant number of works, and that non-organists have written a large proportion of these works. 206 of a total of 258 known composers of Australian organ music have written fewer than five works; this characteristic has been

<sup>28</sup> Beaverstock, p. 14.

<sup>29</sup> Smith, p. 41.

<sup>30</sup> John Maidment, The king of instruments in Victoria: a short account. In *Musical heirs - a celebration*. Programme for 'Melbourne International Festival of Organ and Harpsichord', Melbourne, 1985, p. 13.

<sup>31</sup> Smith, Appendix B.

<sup>32</sup> Smith, Appendix B; Peter Tregear, *Fritz Bennicke Hart: An introduction to his life and music*, unpublished master's thesis, University of Melbourne, Parkville, 1993, p. xi.

<sup>33</sup> Rushworth, pp. 398-401.

<sup>34</sup> Rushworth, p. 397.

especially apparent since the 1970s. This ‘dilettantism’ has created a wide diversity of compositional styles in Australian organ composition, and has possibly encouraged a relatively large number of composers to compose for the organ.

### Selected composers

Although some compositions were written in the western states of Australia prior the 1970s, the vast majority of works were written on the eastern seaboard, reflecting the areas of greatest artistic activity in general and the demographic centre of the country. Three musicians, Ernest Truman, Fritz Hart and A.E. Floyd (1877-1974) assumed particular significance in the first half of the twentieth century, all associated with large romantically-voiced organs. Although their collective compositional output was modest, it is representative of the period, showing musical language and grammar based upon conservative European models.

Ernest Truman was born in England and studied in Leipzig, before immigrating to Australia, where he composed two works for organ, both published. He was Sydney City Organist from 1909 to 1935 and composed a number of large-scale works for orchestra, choir and organ of some repute.<sup>35</sup>

Fritz Hart composed four organ works between 1908 and 1948. Hart was the director of the Albert Street Conservatorium from 1914 to 1937, and the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra from 1927 to 1937.<sup>36</sup> Although a prolific composer he wrote just four unpublished organ works. These were written for his friend and colleague A.E.H. Nickson (1876-1964).<sup>37</sup>

Alfred Ernest Floyd was organist of St Paul’s Cathedral, Melbourne, from 1915 until 1947. Through both regular recitals and weekly radio programs, Floyd was influential in promoting conservative organ and choral music to a wide audience. The organ works and performances of Floyd and his contemporaries, broadcast on Floyd’s own radio programs, would have reached a large audience.<sup>38</sup> Subsequent organists at St Paul’s Cathedral have also been active composers to varying degrees. Colin Ross (1911-1993), Lance Hardy (1907-1993) and H. June Nixon (1942-) have contributed a number of works.

The only Australian work by Joseph Muset (Muset-Ferrer) (1889-1957), *A litany of Loreto* (1931-1943), is one of the very few works written specifically for liturgical use. Muset was a Spanish born priest who taught at St Patrick’s College in Manly in the 1930s and early 1940s. This massive work was dedicated to the Director of Music at St Patrick’s Cathedral, Melbourne, Dr Percy Jones (1914-1992). More recent composers deriving much of their inspiration from Christianity are Christopher Willcock (1947-) and Philip Nunn (1961). Willcock has written nine works for organ. His first, *Christus factus est* (1976), is frequently performed as meditation music for liturgical purposes, and has featured in Australian organists Graham Cox’s and Douglas Lawrence’s recital repertoires in Europe.<sup>39</sup> Nunn has written twenty-two works for the organ since his first acknowledged work from 1979. A composition student of Nigel Butterley (1935-), Nunn was commissioned to compose a number of secular works in Melbourne before he became a Benedictine monk at Ealing Abbey, London in 1993. Since then, his output for organ has been inspired by plainchant and Catholic liturgy.

In contrast to the nineteenth century, many Australian composers of the twentieth century, although born in Australia, later immigrated to Europe, Canada and America. Nevertheless, they have usually maintained firm links to

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<sup>35</sup> Rushworth, p. 397.

<sup>36</sup> Tregear, 1993, p. 88.

<sup>37</sup> Peter Tregear, “Hart, Fritz Bennicke”, in W. Bebbington, (ed.), *The Oxford companion to Australian music*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1997, p. 260.

<sup>38</sup> Lindsay O’Neill, Personal interview, 21 September 1993.

<sup>39</sup> Graham Cox, Email to the author, 18 August 2000.

their home country. Percy Grainger (1882-1961) wrote seven works that were transcribed for organ by Grainger or with Grainger's approval. The transcribed works were written between 1905 and 1940, and include *The immovable do* (1933-1940). Grainger's compositions, all are published secular concert works, were the first Australian compositions to be performed extensively overseas.

Harold (Barrie) Cabena (1933-) studied in Melbourne with A.E.H. Nickson, possibly the most influential teacher of organ and lecturer in music in Melbourne during the first sixty years of the twentieth century.<sup>40</sup> Cabena immigrated to Canada in 1957, where he has composed over 120 works for organ, including 43 sonatas of varying scale, and a series of six *Homages*, each comprising of up to 30 short works dedicated to composers, students and colleagues. He has composed and published more works for organ than any other Australian. None of Cabena's acknowledged works were written in Australia.<sup>41</sup> A significant number of Cabena's works have resulted from commissions, mainly from private individuals, but also from universities, churches, music festivals and government departments.<sup>42</sup>

Malcolm Williamson (1931-2003), Master of the Queen's Musick since 1975, has written ten important works for the organ, as well as five works for organ and other instruments.<sup>43</sup> Although influenced by Messiaen's Catholic philosophy, his works contain an eclectic colouring influenced by jazz and popular music.<sup>44</sup> Williamson's output was written mainly for quasi-sacred contexts, although his solo organ works are mainly virtuosic pieces for large instruments.<sup>45</sup> Andrew Newcombe (1970-), a Melbourne born composer who studied with Brenton Broadstock and Lawrence Whiffin, immigrated to England in 1997. He has written a large number of works, ranging from two cycles on the life of Christ, to a collection of 24 *Mantras* (1990-2001), minimalistic works ranging in length from 45 seconds to over 10 minutes.

Colin Brumby (1933-) studied in Melbourne and in Europe with Philipp Jarnach in Spain and Alexander Goehr in England. Brumby has written fourteen works for organ. He is one of Australia's most performed, recorded, commissioned and awarded composers.<sup>46</sup> His best known work for organ, *Captain Logan's fancy* (1988), was commissioned by and dedicated to David Kinsela. Mainstream and film composer Michael Easton (1954-) has had a large number of works commissioned and published overseas in fields other than organ music. His six works for organ include the internationally popular *Young person's guide to the organ* (1995), a work that demonstrates the colours and techniques of the instrument in a loose parody of the Benjamin Britten's (1913-1976) pedagogical work *A young person's guide to the orchestra* (1946).<sup>47</sup>

During the 1970s, a number of important avant-garde works were written for the Melbourne International Festival of Organ and Harpsichord and similar organ festivals across Australia. MIFOH in particular provided a forum for the presentation and promotion of organ works to an extent that was unique in Australia. With fiscal support from the Australian government through the ABC, and, from the 1970s, the Australia Council, mainstream composers were motivated to explore other mediums. Aside from this change from sacred to secular patronage,

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<sup>40</sup> Howard Hollis, "Nickson, A. E. H.", in W. Bebbington, (ed.), *The Oxford companion to Australian music*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1997, p. 423.

<sup>41</sup> Cabena, April, 2000.

<sup>42</sup> H. (Barrie) Cabena, *Unpublished list of works for organ*, Ontario, April, 2000.

<sup>43</sup> Philip Gearing, *Malcolm Williamson's organ symphony: An analysis of serial technique*, Unpublished master's thesis, University of Queensland, St Lucia, 1989, p. 5.

<sup>44</sup> Gearing, p. 5.

<sup>45</sup> Henderson, 1999, p. 642.

<sup>46</sup> Royston Gustavson, "Brumby, Colin James", in W. Bebbington, (ed.), *The Oxford companion to Australian music*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1997, p. 80.

<sup>47</sup> Robert Ampt, Letter to the author, 28 October 2000.

composers in Australia became more aware of their position in the international organ compositional theatre through this festival. Ron Nagorcka (1948-), a student of avant-garde composers Keith Humble (1927-1995) and Ian Bonighton (1942-1974), and an organ student of Sergio de Pieri (1932-), has written a number of works notable for producing published critical comment in daily newspapers. Humble and Bonighton, along with colleague Felix Werder (1922-), were amongst the leading composers for the organ in the 1970s, showing a new path towards a renewed and vitalised organ repertory in Australia.<sup>48</sup> Their works were deliberately confrontational in a variety of idioms that were contemporarily fashionable, in stark contrast to most earlier works.<sup>49</sup> Nagorcka's early organ compositions use aleatoric forms, graphic notational systems, and all utilise the colour possibilities of the instrument through unusual registrations, instrumental combinations and tessituras. Nagorcka has written twelve works for organ.

Relatively few Australian women have composed for the organ. Of 258 known composers, seventeen have been women. Amongst the better known are Dulcie Holland (1913-2000), Moneta Eagles (1924-), Anne Carr-Boyd (1938-), H. June Nixon, Moya Henderson (1941-) and Rosalie Bonighton (1946-). One of the reasons for the general recognition of these composers is due in part to a large number of their works receiving publication. Current research has not uncovered organ works by indigenous Australian composers.

### **Publishing and recording**

Few Australian organ works have been published, fewer still in Australia. The majority of the surviving pre-1950 works were, while only a small proportion of post-1950 works have been published. An anthology of Australian contemporary organ music, edited by David Kinsela and entitled *Organ Australis: Australian organ music for home, church and concert hall*, containing works by Colin Brumby, Nigel Butterley (1934-), Anne Carr-Boyd and Moya Henderson, is the only collection of Australian organ music published to date. More recently, small publishing houses such as that run by the Morton brothers in Brisbane have supported a small number of works. However, in addition to formally published editions, facsimile editions released by the Australian Music Centre of organ works by represented member composers have improved the accessibility of a number of works.

A somewhat greater number of Australian organ works have been published overseas. The works of Edgar Bainton (1880-1956), Percy Grainger, George Thalben-Ball (1896-1987), William McKie, Colin Ross (1918-1993), Albert Arlen, (1915-1993), Felix Werder (1922-), Keith Humble (1927-1995), Barrie Cabena, Larry Sitsky (1934-), H. June Nixon, Rosalie Bonighton, Graeme Koehne (1956-), Gordon Kerry (1961-) and Malcolm Williamson have been published variously in Europe, Canada and America. Possibly the most performed and certainly the most recorded Australian work, both in Australia and overseas, has been Graeme Koehne's *Gothic toccata*, also known as *Toccata Aurora* (1983). It was composed at the instigation of David Kinsela in his conscious attempt to develop an Australian organ repertory.<sup>50</sup>

The recording of Australian organ music for public release has been sporadic. Move Records in Melbourne released two important LP recordings in the 1970s (recently re-released on CD), featuring new music performed at St Patrick's Cathedral.<sup>51</sup> Through the *Anthology of Australian music on disc*, some organ works, such as Stephen Leek's (1959-) composition *At times stillness...* (1985) and Larry Sitsky's *Seven meditations on symbolist art* (1974), both recorded

<sup>48</sup> Sergio de Pieri, Personal interview. 12 September 1993.

<sup>49</sup> Sergio de Pieri, Personal interview. 12 September 1993.

<sup>50</sup> David Kinsela, Personal interview, 29 September 2000.

<sup>51</sup> *Reverberations one*, Music for organ, synthesizers and brass by Ian Bonighton, Keith Humble, Ron Nagorcka, and Felix Werder, Move Records MSLP 3008, Melbourne, 1973; *Reverberations two*, Music for organ, didjeridu, voices and electronics by Ron Nagorcka, James Penberthy and Felix Werder, Move Records MSLP 3025, Melbourne, 1979.

by Ralph Morton<sup>52</sup>, have achieved wider currency. Since 1989 two CD recordings which focus on Australian organ music have been released by David Rumsey<sup>53</sup> and David Kinsela.<sup>54</sup> An increasing number of recordings of Australian works have appeared since the 1980s. Australian works are typically included in conjunction with major repertoire as a form of nationalistic tokenism, although some composer anthologies have been produced. Much repertoire needs to be re-discovered if our organ culture is to be perpetuated and developed. One informative area for research is the investigation of the related fields of performance culture and pedagogical influences through research into contemporary recordings and writings.

### Conclusion

It is clear from the foregoing material that Australian organ culture has changed significantly since the nineteenth century. Early Australian organ building and composition emulated European, predominantly English models. The importance of the organ in the musical culture of the nineteenth century leading up to the years prior to World War II as an instrument used both as a means of providing mass entertainment, and as an instrument associated with ecclesiastical functions, cannot be overstated. During this time, the organ provided one of the few forms of public music making in Australia. The function and use of the instrument changed in the twentieth century largely in tempo with societal changes. In the secular sphere the demand for popular and cheap entertainment for the masses waned with the advent of sound-tracked movies and symphony orchestras and a growing interest in that national pastime of ours, sport. The focus has shifted gradually from mass entertainment to an esoteric use of the technical and sound possibilities of the instrument, both in historically aware performance and in organ building. At the same time, the organ has retained its role as an accompanying and liturgical used in churches, although even this role is under serious threat.

The composition of organ music in Australia appears to have been relatively sporadic up until the second half of the twentieth century. Just over one hundred Australian organ compositions have been discovered from before 1949. This seems to be remarkably few, especially in light of the regular and popular secular organ concerts of this period, and also in regard to the vast number of church musicians throughout Australia, who composed the majority of the existing works from this period. Due to their performance context, the majority of works composed before the 1970s were conservative in style and musical language. The primary inspiration and encouragement since 1970 has come from outside the church, specifically from organ festivals and public and private commissions. This has led to enormous an increase in compositional output of organ music by Australian composers. While there are works of somewhat spurious quality throughout the history of Australian organ composition, a high proportion of the catalogued works have a stylistic integrity and personality of their time. There is considerable room for further research into this corpus of works, which should be a greater source of pride for all Australians.

The limited number of Australian organ compositions published and recorded and indeed performed and re-performed in Australia may be linked to Australian organists' awareness (or lack thereof) and current negative attitudes towards our national compositional culture. While the market for organ music is relatively small in Australia, the conscious promotion and distribution of Australian organ music could increase its commercial viability, especially in the international marketplace. The relatively few organists who do perform Australian works do so largely for one or more of two reasons:

1. Supporting personal contacts or consciously supporting Australian music

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<sup>52</sup> *Anthology of Australian music on disc*, Ralph Morton, St John's Cathedral, Brisbane, CSM 8, 1989.

<sup>53</sup> *Chrysalis: 35 years of Australian organ music*, David Rumsey, organ, MBS 36 CD, Sydney, 1996.

<sup>54</sup> *Organ Aurora*, David Kinsela, organ, Southern Cross Records, SCCD 1022, 1989.

## 2. Repertoire expansion or variation

Seen in isolation these factors are typical for performance cultures around the world. However, as stated above, the level of awareness both in Australia and globally by the public and by composers and organists themselves is remarkably low. Seen in comparison to established organ cultures such as those of Northern Europe, there is much to be done in promoting Australian composition and the organ as a musical instrument.

The online catalogue of Australian organ composition is a living project, intended to be a resource for both performers and musicologists. Any corrections, comments and additions are welcome at any time. Plans are already underway to include publication details, manuscript locations and a discography. A number of alternatives connected to accessibility are also under consideration, including a national collection of works, possibly housed by a university library.

The online catalogue may be accessed at <http://home.vicnet.net.au/~ohta/>

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