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# Editorial

Most (but not all) of the articles collected in this double issue of *Context* have their genesis in the research strengths of the School of Music–Conservatorium, Monash University, and represent particularly the interests of the School’s research associates and graduate students, immediate past and present. We would like to thank the editorial committee of *Context*, especially Drs Suzanne Cole and Peter Campbell, for the opportunity to put the issue together, and for their support and advice as it took shape. Our special thanks to all those who have contributed to the volume: the authors, the referees and the production team at *Context*, especially Peter Campbell. Further thanks to Peter Campbell for preparing the interview with Joseph Twist, an emerging Australian composer who has met with substantial success in recent years, winning competitions and securing commissions to write new works for major organisations. The interview discusses his style, development and views on contemporary composition in Australia, and the associated composition gives readers a chance to examine a recent work in detail.

Julie Waters’ investigation of the anti-imperialist ideology informing the content and structure of Alan Bush’s *Byron Symphony* opens the issue. Bush’s symphony constructs Byron, the nineteenth-century English poet, as a political activist, and uses its historical program to highlight the composer’s view of contemporary issues. Bush’s communist commitment shaped his approach to the symphony’s subject matter, governing every aspect of the work from narrative structure to details of musical language. Ideology of a different kind informs the search for an ‘authentic’ Australian accent by female Australian country singers. Issues of authenticity cluster around the genre’s claim to be a ‘voice of the nation,’ despite its reliance on American models, but the deliberate use of low status language features—a covert prestige strategy—has historically been predominantly available to males. Graeme Smith explores the background to the gendering of the voice of Australian country music, and the recent emergence of broader Australian sung accents among its female performers. Similar issues of assumed masculine privilege underpin Nino Tsitsishvili’s attempt to discover whether any universal patterns of gender can be found cross-culturally in music. Hers is an ambitious undertaking, since mono-cultural studies are the ethnomusicological norm. But in fearlessly grasping this ideological and methodological nettle, she invites us to consider the evolutionary, biological, and social reasons underpinning the cognitive, creative, and performative differences between men’s and women’s music-making, and why almost every society with a highly-structured musical tradition shows male domination in musical activities.

This issue of *Context* is not themed but, as may be seen, themes emerge. In the next cluster of articles, various aspects of the immigrant experience are explored. Sarah Auliffe examines the music of Iranian diaspora communities in Australia and North America to embody Philip V. Bohlman’s evocative assertion that ‘music allows us both to enter into history and to exit from it’, or even to ‘exit into history.’ While emphasising the complexity and diversity that characterise the Iranian diaspora, Auliffe nonetheless exemplifies some of the ways in which Iranian pop music and its musicians and audiences have remembered or re-imagined Iran. Diaspora is only one strand of Aline Scott-Maxwell’s historical mapping of Australia’s musical engagement with Asia, since the focus in her article is on the degrees and varieties of interaction between

the host community and an imagined or actual 'Other.' As the author points out, Australia's preoccupation with Asia was kept alive through racially-constructed policy decisions from Federation onwards (most notably through the *Immigration Restriction Act* of 1901), and yet to date, in relation to the performing arts, theatre has received more attention than music. She proposes three varieties of cross-cultural communication through music—'imagined,' 'direct' and 'connective'—differentiated by historical setting and social context. John Whiteoak's article focuses on the intersection of one immigrant group with the mainstream community. He highlights the perceived affinity between musicians of Italian-Australian background and Hispanic musical styles and shows how these musicians and especially accordionists were able to fill the cultural vacuum created by an absence of practitioners from Spain or Latin America in the years before Australia embraced a more inclusive immigration policy.

Melbourne appears as a locale in several of the articles in this issue, but is the specific context for the articles by Simon Purtell and Clinton Green. Essentially different though these essays may seem to be, they yet share a common preoccupation with issues of pitch. Purtell is concerned with pitch as a system of tuning, and in particular with the vagaries of pitch practice in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The idea of heating the Melbourne Town hall organ for two weeks in order to lift its pitch, at the request of visiting celebrity conductor Sir Malcolm Sargent, may seem to be an acute manifestation of cultural cringe, but the quest for an international standard was far more complex, and the author shows the extremes to which visiting singers (particularly) were obliged to go in order to be able to perform at an accustomed and acceptable pitch. The standardisation of pitch notation comes under challenge in Sid Clayton's musical exploration of coincidence and indeterminacy in his composition *Yehudi*. As Green explains, Clayton, a Melbourne experimental composer, used chance and an adapted structure of a cricket scorecard to generate quasi-serialist pitch orderings and other musical elements. The result was a highly idiosyncratic music theatre piece in which magic and mystery also played their parts, exemplifying a radical fringe of *avant garde* experimentation in Melbourne in the 1960s.

This issue includes two reports on current research projects. Margaret Osborne discusses the goals of the project 'Creating Musical Futures in Australian Schools and Communities' that is currently underway at the Universities of Melbourne, Queensland and Western Australia, while Kent Windress describes how his interest in drumming led him first to Cuban *batá* and then, over the course of his three visits to Cuba, to initiation into the Afro-Cuban faith system called Santería. Though his essay is essentially autobiographical, Windress nonetheless considers reflexively some more general concerns of ethnomusicology and in particular the tensions and opportunities that flow from his movement from observing outsider to participating insider. The volume concludes with four reviews of recently released books by, or with relevance to the work of Australian researchers.

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Guest Editor