

Abstracts

The Influence of Dr A.E. Floyd as Music Critic and Broadcaster on Musical Culture in Australia, 1915–1974

Ian Burk, MMus, University of Melbourne, 2001

Alfred Ernest Floyd arrived in Australia from the United Kingdom in February 1915 to take up an appointment as Organist and Master of the Choristers at St Paul's Cathedral in Melbourne. Floyd devoted his professional life to the performance and promulgation of music. From the time of his arrival in Australia he exerted an enormous influence as educator, teacher, lecturer, examiner, adjudicator, organist, choir-trainer, writer, composer, music critic and broadcaster.

Floyd brought the music at St Paul's to a pinnacle of musical performance and professionalism. At St Paul's he trained many who later went on either to establish musical careers or to become active and useful amateur musicians. The focus of his promotion of music for all was education in the widest sense. This he undertook through the various media (press, radio and television) and through public lectures and music appreciation classes. As music critic for *The Argus* and as a broadcaster Floyd established a significant following as a commentator and entertainer, and he was influential in shaping public taste in music and attitudes towards music.

His work in schools, particularly at Melbourne Church of England Girls' Grammar School and at the Methodist Ladies' College, engendered a joy of making and listening to music, and many past pupils of these institutions have strong and fond memories of his classes and visits.

The legacy of Floyd's personal papers now housed in the Grainger Museum at the University of Melbourne, radio archives, newspapers, journals, and the reminiscences of those who worked with him professionally, provided the material for an examination of his influence on Australian music culture from his arrival in Australia in 1915 until shortly before his death in 1974.

Issues in the Critical Reception of Ethel Smyth's Mass and First Four Operas in England and Germany.

Elizabeth Jane Kertesz, PhD, University of Melbourne, 2000

The composer Ethel Smyth (1858-1944) claimed that sex discrimination had prevented her from succeeding as a composer, and she cast much of the blame on the press. This study examines the critical reception of Smyth's Mass and first four operas in England and Germany, with a focus on their premieres. It evaluates Smyth's claims, and places the works more broadly in context, tracing the processes by which they gained performance, and the circumstances of the productions. Rich and multiple interpretations are made possible by reading from different perspectives, allowing the complexity of critical commentary and the subtle intersection of concerns with gender, nationalism and style to be revealed. Despite the pervasiveness of gender bias in the reviews, there is much more to the critical reception of Smyth's music than the way in which it represents her in relation to patriarchal stereotypes of femininity.

Performances researched include the Mass's premiere in 1893 and its revival in 1924, and the early productions of *Fantasio*, *Der Wald*, *The Wreckers* and *The Boatswain's Mate*. These operas were composed with hopes of performance both in England and Germany, and therefore provide the best case studies for an examination of press reception in these two countries, notwithstanding the fact that the first was performed only in Germany and the fourth only in England. The reviews are interpreted in light of the different contexts that affected critics' perceptions: local circumstances, contemporary politics and knowledge about the composer. Chapter 1 explores the significance of Smyth's biography and autobiography and Chapter 2 traces each work from composition to performance, examining the challenges Smyth faced and her responses to them. Smyth's connections with royalty and aristocracy, both in England and Germany, were of great assistance to her, and this has hitherto been insufficiently acknowledged. Smyth's music elicited a diverse range of praise and criticism from critics, and the last three chapters focus on issues of gender, discussion of the libretti and music of the operas, and national preoccupations.

The complex question of gender in the Smyth criticism includes the problem of the woman composer, definitions of femininity and masculinity and the effect of Smyth's feminism and persona on reception of her music. Critical writings rarely included detailed technical discussion of the music, but libretto and comedy, text-setting and orchestration all received attention. The division of Smyth's career between England and Germany led to her being seen as foreign in both countries, and the performance of her music contributed to nationalist debates about the selection of repertoire. The division between English and German critics is most marked in their attribution of influence on Smyth's operas. German critics distinguished various styles and genres in Smyth's music and were perceptive in recognising the underlying eclecticism of her mature voice. Smyth's countrymen knew she had studied in Germany and persisted in hearing this influence in her scores, although some allowed that she was contributing to the formation of an English voice.

The mélodies of Francis Poulenc: The integral relationship between piano and voice in interpreting images and prosody.

Elizabeth Scarlett, PhD, Monash University, 2000

One hundred and thirty-seven *mélodies* were composed over a span of forty-two years from 1918–1960. Thus, the song genre, extant for most of Poulenc's composing life, offers a substantial platform for research into his compositional techniques.

The composer and his most constant performer and lecturer in this repertoire, Pierre Bernac, differentiated between the *chanson* (a popular song) and the *mélodie* (a serious art song, akin to German lieder). It is from the latter collection that one hundred compositions, representative of the time span and his preferred poets, are selected for examination.

Poulenc attracted both ardent admirers and disparaging critics. At the distance of thirty-three years after his death, it is possible to re-assess these conflicting positions by examining his aims and methods of composition through the medium of scores, letters, diaries and interviews, alongside related information from friends, colleagues and critics. There has also been a new release in 1994 of hundreds of letters formerly privately held which have enhanced and expanded the opportunity to investigate the music of Poulenc.

Poulenc's assiduous attention to the crafting of musical detail transformed the poets' words and images into a seamless realisation between piano and voice. The song genre in the hands of Francis Poulenc shows him at the highest degree of compositional excellence, combining inspiration and careful crafting.

The Dark Corner: A Study of the Dynamic Dialectic between Women Composers and the Australian Orchestral Milieu.

Ruth Lee Martin, PhD, Australian National University, 2001

This thesis is an exploration of Australian women composers' interaction with their orchestral world. The purpose is to gain an understanding of the socio-cultural forces which impact upon women's participation as orchestral composers, and to understand the ways in which women composers impact upon their orchestral environment. It has also been my intention to draw attention to specific problems women composers encounter in the orchestral sphere, and to investigate the way in which the socio-cultural elements are manifest within the musical works themselves. The methodology which forms the basis of this study draws on a wide range of theoretical and methodological perspectives, most specifically feminism and postmodern theory. The thesis relies on the basic presupposition that music is essentially a social construct, and as such, like language, it reflects the gender bias of our society on many levels and in many ways. The orchestral world is particularly susceptible to bias due to its longstanding associations with power and prestige.

The first part of the study examines the topic from a broad cultural basis, beginning with an overview of women as orchestral composers and examining assumptions which have hindered their progress. In Chapter Three, statistical data was used to indicate the situation of female orchestral composers within Australia and confined, for the most part, within the

boundaries of Australian contemporary music. The second part of the thesis contextualises eight orchestral women composers and attempts to understand how they position themselves within the Australian orchestral context by documenting their individual methods of negotiating the orchestral milieu through a representative work. In Part Three, three orchestral works were selected for analysis as socialised, cultural artefacts. The analyses tease out the composer's relationship to culture articulated within the work itself, and examine the way in which the work can act as a cultural force by reflecting ideas back into the culture. In each of the three works, the women composers, in a sense, authenticate themselves within the male-dominated orchestral world of musical composition by writing works which are, in some way, strongly related to the 'feminine'. I include my own experiences as a composer within the thesis with an original orchestral work, *Gair Na Mara*.

Some of the findings to come out this study demonstrate that in building a composing career, networking and self-promotion play crucial roles, yet in these areas women have often been disadvantaged. Women composers have not (and still do not) have the same access to those with power and influence in the musical world, and due to gendered socialisation they are not always well equipped to negotiate the orchestral world. It is of concern to note that under 20% of Australian composers are female, and that only 10% of Australian women composers are writing orchestral works. I argue that this is due, in part, to the fact that women composers have so few established role models.

In conclusion, I argue that there is an onus of responsibility on males operating in the orchestral milieu to support and facilitate the entry of their female colleagues into a rich and full participation.