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A

**THE STRING QUARTETS OF PETER SCULTHORPE**

**A STUDY IN STYLISTIC SYNTHESIS**

by

NICHOLAS MILTON

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Music  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Musical Arts, The City University of New York

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**Abstract**

**The String Quartets of Peter Sculthorpe:**

**A Study in Stylistic Synthesis**

by

Nicholas Milton

**Advisor: Professor Ruth DeFord**

The string quartets of Peter Sculthorpe demonstrate an extraordinary process of stylistic synthesis. Drawing upon a limited variety of musical elements and an abundance of non-European source material, Sculthorpe has forged an individual musical style in which foreground and background aspects exhibit an overall consistency of approach that reflects not only the methodology of their musical application but also the conception and fundamental spirit of their creation.

A biographical overview oriented towards the works for strings provides the essential background for a detailed historical exposition—complete with musical examples drawn from the extant material and numerous unpublished sketches—of the works for string quartet. A fundamental compositional approach—the notion of duality—is examined in detail in a variety of background manifestations in the music for string

quartet. Subsequent stylistic observations are supported by musical examples drawn mostly from the literature, including secondary musical sources; three distinct stylistic approaches are identified. Further delineations of compositional material are suggested by the identification of three distinct songlines that appear through much of the music. The synthesis of these various elements, especially within a language of an austere compositional range, supports the thesis of a body of work that exhibits a remarkable degree of stylistic sophistication.

## Acknowledgements

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

Peter Sculthorpe has been widely acknowledged as Australia's most important and influential composer.<sup>1</sup> Over the past sixty years, he has forged an individual musical style which has impinged upon the Australian national consciousness and which has shaped the history of twentieth-century music in Australia.<sup>2</sup> In his 1967 book on the evolution and possibilities of Australian music, Roger Covell wrote: "Of all younger Australian composers, [Sculthorpe] is the one who seems to have taken most seriously the notion of an Australian identity in music."<sup>3</sup> Some four decades later, Peter Sculthorpe is the one Australian composer whose music is accepted as a symbol of the nation.<sup>4</sup> In part because of his enormous impact upon the musical life of Australia, Wilfrid Mellers has suggested that "Peter Sculthorpe may be one of the most important of living composers."<sup>5</sup>

In an exclusive series of interviews and discussions with this writer,<sup>6</sup> Sculthorpe stated his belief that "the string quartet is one of the great achievements of Western

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<sup>1</sup> Michael Hannan, "Peter Sculthorpe," in *Australian Composition in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Frank Callaway and David Tunley (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1978), 136.

<sup>2</sup> James Murdoch, *Australia's Contemporary Composers* (Melbourne: Macmillan, 1972), 163.

<sup>3</sup> Roger D. Covell, *Australia's Music: Themes of a New Society* (Melbourne: Sun Books, 1967), 201.

<sup>4</sup> Jill Sykes, "Peter Sculthorpe at sixty," *Australian Performing Right Association Journal* 7 (October 1989): 6.

<sup>5</sup> Wilfrid Mellers, "New worlds, old wildernesses: Peter Sculthorpe and the ecology of music," *The Atlantic* 268 (August 1991): 94.

<sup>6</sup> The interviews the author conducted with Peter Sculthorpe continued over many years. The initial discussions about this study commenced around 1993, and have continued until 2003. The author has also been actively involved in a number of performances and recordings of the composer's music, as a conductor, violinist, and chamber musician; further informal contact with the composer during those sessions has also affected the substance of the paper. The most essential information from these interviews will eventually be organized into a separate paper for future publication.

civilization.”<sup>7</sup> He has also said that it is a favorite medium and that he would “ultimately like [his] very best music to be for string quartet.”<sup>8</sup> Certainly, the string quartet is a medium that Sculthorpe has returned to throughout his creative life. Aside from works for the concert hall, he has written music for films, television, and commercials, much of which uses a string quartet in some significant capacity.<sup>9</sup> Written over a period of some sixty years, Peter Sculthorpe’s works for string quartet constitute an oeuvre that provides a unique insight into the composer’s style. The composer himself has acknowledged the crucial importance of this medium in his own compositional history:

I think it's possible that my string quartets are either a summation of what I've been doing or at the beginning of a new period. I think the string quartet is always at a pivotal point in my life.<sup>10</sup>

In light of such statements and because no serious work had ever previously attempted to look at all of the music for string quartet, this study originated as a detailed examination of the music for string quartet. The notion that, through such a study, some important stylistic observations might also be made seemed reasonable. As a starting point, then, the basic historical facts of the string quartets needed to be compiled. No other source contains the sort of detailed information on Sculthorpe’s string quartets that is included in this study, and much of the information contained in this study may not be found in any secondary source. In fact, much of the music, especially from the early

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<sup>7</sup> Peter Sculthorpe, interviews by the author, 1993-2003, Sydney, Australia.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Deborah Hayes, *Peter Sculthorpe: a Bio-Bibliography* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1993), 35-86.

<sup>10</sup> Peter Sculthorpe, interviews by the author, 1993-2003, Sydney, Australia, 3.

quartets, has never been published. For the possibility of its inclusion here, the author is most grateful to the composer.

As work progressed, the study of six decades of creative inspiration within a single genre resulted in many startling stylistic discoveries to both the author and the composer. It became clear that a study of Sculthorpe's string quartets could constitute a companion that contained implications towards a general understanding of the composer's stylistic evolution. Using the music for string quartet as a point of origin, this study then also attempts to make some claims about Sculthorpe's stylistic language.

The paper is divided into three main parts:

I. Background — II. History — III. Analysis

After an introductory chapter (Introduction), Part I (Background) commences with chapter 2 (Biography). Although numerous sketches of the life and work of Peter Sculthorpe have already been published, the chapter briefly reviews the composer's essential biographical details. Because the evolution of Sculthorpe's musical style is linked to events and experiences in the composer's life, a fuller understanding of his music requires familiarity with the essential biographical information. This biographical section draws upon information from both primary and secondary sources in order to present as comprehensive a portrayal of the composer as possible within the scope of this paper. The resulting sketch of the composer's life, and especially his views on music and Australia, make a necessary companion to the historical and analytical observations that follow.

Part II (History) includes chapters 3 through 6. Chapters 3, 4, and 5 provide general commentary, including musical examples and incipits, on quartets 1-5, 6-10, and

11-15 respectively. Chapter 6 deals with the numerous additional works for the medium, drawing upon a range of compositional activity extending from about 1961 until the end of the twentieth century. The largely unpublished material used to formulate this section of the paper includes the composer's personal and lecture notes, and notes on extensive discussions with the author at the composer's home in Sydney over a ten-year period. This historical perspective of more than twenty works easily comprises the most complete companion to the string quartets currently available.<sup>11</sup>

Part III (Analysis) includes chapters 7 through 9, and presents an original system of stylistic organization. The chapters proceed from the general to the specific in terms of detailed analyses of Sculthorpe's music for string quartet.

In Chapter 7, the notion of dualism is discussed as an element of fundamental importance to Peter Sculthorpe's craft and musical thinking. Various applications of the principle are identified, and examples from the string quartet literature are given which illustrate these ideas. The application of dualism manifests itself across the entire range of the composer's music, and permeates the largest background structures as well as a number of foreground details.

Chapter 8 organizes elements of the composer's music into carefully delineated styles. The systematic organization of stylistic delineations this chapter proposes has been formulated during the author's discussions with the composer over several years. The chapter identifies three distinct musical styles—*Irkanda*, *Sun Music* and *Kakadu*. Music written in the *Irkanda* style is expressionistic and yearning, and seeks to describe the

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<sup>11</sup> Despite the large number of bibliographic citations in Hayes' 1993 bio-bibliography, only a few sources contain significant analytical studies. Though Hannan has examined much of the music, with a concentration on the works for piano, no study has been made on the string quartets as a single entity.

loneliness of the Australian landscape; it features specific intervallic and melodic motives. By contrast, the *Sun Music* style is extremely impressionistic, and seeks to convey specific sounds of the Australian bush, insects, and birds; aleatoric effects feature prominently. Music in the *Kakadu* style is extremely ritual in nature; Balinese figurations and Aboriginal ostinato patterns are often combined with one or another aspect of the other two styles, and thus the *Kakadu* style, while existing in a pure form, also manifests itself as a type of synthesis of the various styles. Each style is described with illustrative examples taken chiefly from works written for the string quartet genre. It is of course entirely typical of the twentieth century tradition for composers to look to sources outside of earlier western art music—especially traditions related to their personal heritage—for inspiration. The techniques illustrated in this chapter are therefore common to many twentieth-century composers such as Stravinsky, Bartók, and Messiaen; Sculthorpe's achievement obviously takes its place within this broader historical context, though a consideration of that context is beyond the scope of this study.

Chapter 9 introduces the ancient Australian Aboriginal notion of *Songlines* and identifies three distinct melodic and motivic patterns—*Chant*, *Lament*, and *Djilile*—that weave their way through much of Sculthorpe's music. As with the previous chapter, no previous study has attempted to examine the manifestations of these elements across a range of music of such scope in terms of both time and stylistic development.

Chapter 10 concludes the study and ties together some observations on the relationship between the composer's life, philosophy, and musical thinking.

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Peter Sculthorpe's reverence for the string quartet genre is of fundamental importance to his approach to the medium.<sup>12</sup> That the composer has composed string quartets throughout his creative life supports his belief that this particular genre must always be kept alive by new repertoire.<sup>13</sup> Sculthorpe wrote his first quartet in 1944, and is presently writing his sixteenth string quartet, to be given its Australian premiere in the Musica Viva national subscription series in 2004.<sup>14</sup> In addition to the numbered works, other string quartet essays, miniatures, and arrangements have appeared regularly over the last six decades.

Sculthorpe's works for string quartet include music written mostly for the concert hall, but also other compositions, arrangements and transcriptions, for films, television, and even commercials.<sup>15</sup> From 1994 through 1997, Australia's Goldner String Quartet recorded two volumes of the string quartets in the composer's presence for the Tall Poppies label,<sup>16</sup> and the internationally known Kronos and Brodsky Quartets have championed and embraced Sculthorpe's music with enthusiasm for many years.

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<sup>12</sup> Peter Sculthorpe, interviews by the author, 1993-2003, Sydney, Australia.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Recorded by the Austral String Quartet, Sculthorpe's *Alpine* (1974) (Hayes W130) was not screened by the advertising agency; the agency considered the sophisticated canonic treatment of the theme "too highbrow" for a cigarette commercial. Hayes, 62; Milton interviews transcript, 19.

<sup>16</sup> Peter Sculthorpe: Music for String Quartet: Volumes 1 and 2. Tall Poppies CDs TP089/TP090. Goldner String Quartet. 1996/1998.

**Table 1-1: Peter Sculthorpe: Music for String Quartet (1944-2003)**

<u>Numbered quartets:</u>	<u>Miscellaneous works:</u>
• String Quartet no. 1 (1944)	
• String Quartet no. 2 (1948)	
• String Quartet no. 3 (1949)	
• String Quartet no. 4 (1950)	
• String Quartet no. 5 (1959)	
	• <i>Irkanda IV</i> (1961/1991)
	• <i>Small Town</i> (1963/1980)
• String Quartet no. 6 (1965)	
	• <i>Morning &amp; Autumn Song</i> (1966-8)
• String Quartet no. 7 (1966)	
• String Quartet no. 8 (1968)	
• String Quartet no. 9 (1975)	
	• <i>Little Serenade</i> (1977)
	• <i>Journey Music</i> (1980)
• String Quartet no. 10 (1983)	
	• <i>Saibai</i> (1987/1994)
• String Quartet no. 11 (1990) ( <i>Jabiru Dreaming</i> )	
	• <i>Hill Songs</i> (1992)
	• <i>From Nourlangie</i> (1994)
• String Quartet no. 12 (1994) ( <i>From Ubirr</i> )	
• String Quartet no. 13 (1996) ( <i>Island Dreaming</i> )	
	• <i>Maranoa Lullaby</i> (1996)
• String Quartet no. 14 (1998)	
	• <i>A Little Love Song</i> (1998)
	• <i>Love Song</i> (1999)
	• <i>Djilile</i> (1999)
• String Quartet no. 15 (1999)	

The table above (Table 1-1), prepared in consultation with the composer, lists chronologically the works for string quartet composed in the sixty years since 1944. In

order to embrace a representative view of six decades of music, string quartet arrangements of other significant works and the composer's reconstructions of the early quartets are necessarily included in this study. The dates given for the various works therefore include, where appropriate, the date of original composition followed by the date of the subsequent reconstruction<sup>17</sup> or string quartet arrangement.

The following chapters draw almost exclusively on Sculthorpe's music for string quartet. Some exceptions to this general principle apply because Sculthorpe's compositions reveal a large amount of self-borrowing. Numerous writers have alluded to the composer's process of reworking, rearranging, refining, and perfecting limited amounts of musical material.<sup>18</sup> As James Murdoch observes,

...[An] almost shameless re-use of his previous compositions...[escapes] the stern charge of self-plagiarism and a seeming lack of invention because of his ability to discover new contexts for the cells of his musical sources.<sup>19</sup>

In part because of these interrelations among various works, the stylistic conclusions reached by this study may be applied as general analytical approaches to Sculthorpe's other works. The composer's suggestion—that the string quartets reflect pivotal creative moments—supports this thesis.

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<sup>17</sup> The reconstructions apply to the first five string quartets only.

<sup>18</sup> Michael Hannan, *Peter Sculthorpe: His Music and Ideas, 1929-1979* (St. Lucia, London and New York: University of Queensland Press, 1982), 48.

<sup>19</sup> Murdoch, 167.

## Chapter 2: Biography

Peter Sculthorpe is a composer whose philosophical approach to his art has been formulated by the details of his life. His search for an Australian aesthetic in music is a product of his feelings and circumstances growing up and living almost exclusively in the Australian artistic climate. A study of his stylistic evolution, therefore, cannot be made without some knowledge of the biographical circumstances that led to the artistic choices he has made. In the context of this study's concentration on style as seen in the works for string quartet, particular biographical elements that have special significance to those works are stressed.

Sculthorpe was born on April 29, 1929, in the city of Launceston, in the Australian island state, Tasmania.<sup>1</sup> His childhood was marked by a fascinating combination of isolation—remote not only from the rest of the world, but separated from the rest of Australia by Bass Strait—and publicity, finding himself the beloved child prodigy of the island community,<sup>2</sup> with his artistic conquests regularly reported by his mother and printed in the *Launceston Examiner*.<sup>3</sup> Far from disadvantaging the young musician, isolation became the foundation of Sculthorpe's musical endeavors, both in the development of his compositional style and in the mood and meaning of his works.

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<sup>1</sup> Andrew D. McCredie, "Sculthorpe, Peter (Joshua)," *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie; vol. 17, pp. 90-92 (London: Macmillan, 1980).

<sup>2</sup> Roger D. Covell, *Australia's Music: Themes of a New Society* (Melbourne: Sun Books, 1967), 200.

<sup>3</sup> Deborah Hayes, *Peter Sculthorpe: a Bio-Bibliography* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1993), 12.

His mother, Edna (née Moorhouse), who was born in Yorkshire and had been an elementary school headmistress, directed his attention towards painting and writing,<sup>4</sup> although she mainly “wanted him to be happy.”<sup>5</sup> His father, Joshua, was a sportsman whose General Store found its niche during the Great Depression selling fishing tackle and hunting gear.<sup>6</sup> A fourth-generation Australian and proud of his heritage,<sup>7</sup> Joshua encouraged Peter and his younger brother, Roger (b. 1932), to enjoy outdoor life;<sup>8</sup> Peter became his school’s champion swimmer at the age of twelve, and Joshua was overjoyed.<sup>9</sup>

Peter Sculthorpe’s musical education began at the age of seven<sup>10</sup> when he received his first piano lessons.<sup>11</sup> Having been taught the basic rudiments of musical notation in his first lesson, he “rushed home and wrote music all the week.”<sup>12</sup>

I’d been to art lessons and learnt how to draw. So when I went to music lessons I stupidly thought I was there to write music.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Michael Hannan, *Peter Sculthorpe: His Music and Ideas, 1929-1979* (St. Lucia, London/New York: University of Queensland Press, 1982), 1.

<sup>5</sup> Steve Meacham, “Music to his peers,” *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 23-24 November 2002, 31.

<sup>6</sup> James Murdoch, *Australia’s Contemporary Composers* (Melbourne: Macmillan, 1972), 165.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 163.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 165.

<sup>9</sup> Peter Joshua Sculthorpe, *Sun Music: Journeys and Reflections from a Composer’s Life* (Sydney: ABC Books, 1999), 17.

<sup>10</sup> Sculthorpe, *Sun Music*, 7.

<sup>11</sup> Peter Sculthorpe, “Sculthorpe on Sculthorpe,” *Music Now* 1 (February 1969): 8.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> Peter Sculthorpe, interviews by the author, 1993-2003, Sydney, Australia.

When he presented the result to his teacher at his second lesson, he had his knuckles rapped with a feather duster<sup>14</sup> because he had not practised.<sup>15</sup>

When Sculthorpe was fourteen, J.A. Steele (later to be Sculthorpe's lecturer at the University of Melbourne), who visited Launceston as an examiner for the Australian Music Examinations Board (AMEB), advised Sculthorpe's mother to find the boy a new teacher. His mother accordingly found him a teacher who was sympathetic to contemporary music and encouraged him to play other Australian compositions.<sup>16</sup> This teacher, Valerie Myer, was astonished by Sculthorpe's presentation of an "atonal" composition—minus key signature and bar-lines—and the boy's explanation that the world had run out of tunes. The teacher's frequently quoted reply has remained influential for the composer all of his life:<sup>17</sup> "Does God ever run out of faces?"<sup>18</sup> Sculthorpe studied with her for a year before moving to study at the Melbourne Conservatorium.<sup>19</sup>

Personal and artistic independence were hallmarks of the young Peter Sculthorpe. He recalls his father complaining to his mother: "Why is he always inside writing music; why isn't he outside with the other boys?" to which his mother replied: "There are

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<sup>14</sup> Hayes, 11.

<sup>15</sup> Meacham, "Music to his peers," 31.

<sup>16</sup> Murdoch, 164.

<sup>17</sup> "Sculthorpe on Sculthorpe," 8.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> David Cummings, ed., *International Who's Who in Music and Musician's Directory; in the Classical and Light Classical Fields*, 13th ed. (Cambridge: International Who's Who in Music and Melrose Press,

thousands of boys out there playing football, and only one in here writing music. We should be grateful.”<sup>20</sup> It is indicative of his nature that, involving himself in sport to please his father, Peter avoided team sports and instead chose competitive solo pursuits, becoming, as mentioned, a state swimming champion and the school’s top diver.<sup>21</sup>

Sculthorpe describes the music of his pre-university days—largely songs and piano pieces, with one dramatic work, “Fleur de Valle”—as inconsequential;<sup>22</sup> he was at that time more interested in literature and the visual arts than in music.<sup>23</sup> Indeed, he was under pressure from his schoolteachers to pursue writing as a career;<sup>24</sup> his father, ironically, would have preferred Peter to concentrate on the visual arts,<sup>25</sup> ideally as a commercial artist for obvious financial reasons.<sup>26</sup> Sculthorpe reasoned that his literary activities and his painting attempts had been merely a response to existing art forms.<sup>27</sup> In music, he felt he could be original and completely involved in his art,<sup>28</sup> by doing “something which was part of my experience of life and living.”<sup>29</sup>

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Ltd., 1992); s.v. “Sculthorpe, Peter.”

<sup>20</sup> Jill Sykes, “Sculthorpe at fifty,” *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 28 April 1979, 15.

<sup>21</sup> Hayes, 11.

<sup>22</sup> Covell, 203.

<sup>23</sup> Hayes, 11.

<sup>24</sup> “Sculthorpe on Sculthorpe,” 8.

<sup>25</sup> Hannan, 3.

<sup>26</sup> Sculthorpe, *Sun Music*, 18.

<sup>27</sup> “Sculthorpe on Sculthorpe,” 8.

<sup>28</sup> Hannan, 3.

<sup>29</sup> “Sculthorpe on Sculthorpe,” 8.

Sculthorpe's early influences, introduced to him through weekly music appreciation programs on the radio and occasional performances of the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra, included Debussy, Delius, and Vaughan Williams.<sup>30</sup> They appealed to him, he commented in 1980, "because much of their music is quite appropriate to the Tasmanian landscape."<sup>31</sup> Sculthorpe's fascination with the connection between music and landscape was fundamental to the development of his style.<sup>32</sup> His search for a sound that was appropriate to his geographical home was solidified by his departure from home in 1946, when his results in the annual AMEB exam gained him a scholarship to study at the Melbourne Conservatorium.<sup>33</sup>

Sculthorpe's view of the world broadened dramatically with his move to Melbourne. There he became acquainted with a different landscape. He was introduced to the music of Bartók, Schoenberg, Bloch, and other European composers. In particular, his love of Bloch was sparked off by that composer's depiction of a biblical wilderness that reminded Sculthorpe of the terrifying, unpopulated landscapes of the Australian wilderness.<sup>34</sup> His approach to Mahler was similar. Interviewed in 1980, the composer

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<sup>30</sup> Murdoch, 164.

<sup>31</sup> Hayes, 13.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>33</sup> Murdoch, 164.

<sup>34</sup> Frank Callaway and David Tunley, eds., *Australian Composition in the Twentieth Century* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1978), 136.

said: "When I left home and went to Melbourne and began to discover something of the ways of the world, I was drawn to the psycho-drama of the music of Mahler."<sup>35</sup>

Equally, Sculthorpe was interested in Edgard Varèse, but for different reasons.<sup>36</sup>

In his book, *Peter Sculthorpe: His music and Ideas 1929-1979*, Michael Hannan comments:

The importance of Varèse for Sculthorpe was more a matter of principle than of musical technique or aesthetic. In the course of his studies he had become aware that his teachers had a fixed notion of how a composer should be trained and of the kind of music he should write; he was comforted by the fact that Varèse...had probably asserted his independence under similar pressure. It was not that the Australian identified with Varèse's music, but that he, like Varèse, did not want to be inveigled into espousing anybody else's view of creative development.<sup>37</sup>

At university, Sculthorpe "adopted" performers to write for, including the violinist Wilfred Lehmann, who introduced Sculthorpe to the idiosyncrasies of string technique, and for whom Sculthorpe's most important works for solo violin have been written.<sup>38</sup> The process of "adopting" fellow students is one he advocated to his composition students at the University of Sydney. In a 1982 interview the composer commented: "I like to write for human beings. I can't write a work unless I know the

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<sup>35</sup> Hayes, 13.

<sup>36</sup> Wilfrid Mellers, "New worlds and old wildernesses: Peter Sculthorpe and the Ecology of Music," *The Atlantic* 268/2 (August 1991): 98.

<sup>37</sup> Hannan, 6.

<sup>38</sup> Nancy Uscher, "Peter Sculthorpe: responding to nature," *Strings* 5 (November/December 1990): 50.

performer, the instrument, and the player's strong and weak points."<sup>39</sup> Some years later, he added: "I would decline Rostropovich because I don't know him."<sup>40</sup>

His interest in piano dwindled as composition became his primary concern. Sculthorpe also took up the double bass, and played in a string orchestra under the direction of Henri Touzeau.<sup>41</sup> This orchestra performed several of Sculthorpe's early works, and according to Deborah Hayes, from this he "developed a lasting fondness for writing for string orchestra."<sup>42</sup> Indeed, he has said that strings are his "favourite medium to write for."<sup>43</sup>

Outside of his study, Sculthorpe found time to be involved in the British Music Society<sup>44</sup> and the Guild of Australian Composers.<sup>45</sup> He began to have his works performed, and critical attention was paid to his compositions.<sup>46</sup> Vocal music and the third and fourth string quartets received published critiques, with critics noting Sculthorpe's melodic prowess, and, importantly in support of the thesis of this paper, a

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<sup>39</sup> Laurie Strachan, "The composer's clef stick: art versus bums on seats," *The Weekend Australian Magazine*, 16-17 October 1982, 5.

<sup>40</sup> Uscher, 49.

<sup>41</sup> Hayes, 13.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Uscher, 50.

<sup>44</sup> Hayes, 99.

<sup>45</sup> Hannan, 5.

<sup>46</sup> The number of reviews in Hayes' book for this period indicates a marked increase in serious performances of the composer's music, in particular the early string quartets and some vocal music.

lack of thematic development in the music.<sup>47</sup> In 1950, just before Sculthorpe's return to Tasmania at the end of his studies, the eminent conductor Bernard Heinze showed his support for the young composer by organizing a concert consisting solely of the works of Peter Sculthorpe and Dorian le Gallienne.<sup>48</sup> According to Sculthorpe, Heinze's support was significant, and the many performances that he helped to organize were important to Sculthorpe's development as a composer.<sup>49</sup>

Sculthorpe's time in Melbourne was marked by frenetic activity and solid compositional development. He won the inaugural J. A. Steele Composition Prize in his first year at university,<sup>50</sup> and received second place in the 1948 Victorian School Music Association's Song Writing Competition. It should be noted that Melbourne at that time remained a largely conservative musical community.<sup>51</sup> Bernard Heinze introduced Melbourne audiences to recent French music, but the New Music Society, of which Sculthorpe was a member, was unable to secure the funds to bring John Cage to Australia.<sup>52</sup>

In 1948, Sculthorpe heard about Ernst Krenek's *Studies in Counterpoint*, had the book sent out from England, and began to explore serialism.<sup>53</sup> Working simply from

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<sup>47</sup> Hayes, 13.

<sup>48</sup> Hannan, 7.

<sup>49</sup> "Sculthorpe on Sculthorpe," 9.

<sup>50</sup> McCredie, "Sculthorpe, Peter (Joshua)," *New Grove*.

<sup>51</sup> Hannan, 7.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

Krenek's pedagogical guide, and without access to performances or even scores of the great serialist composers (having never heard a serialist work), Sculthorpe came to a crisis point with the style:

At one stage, I was experimenting on my own with serial composition. I was serialising notes, then rhythms, volume, timbre, and everything else, but I came to the conclusion that if I drove this to its logical end, the result would be silence. Besides, I had a feeling that all this had little to do with myself and that I was handling something quite alien. At that time, after reaching some sort of climactic stage, I began to clutch at the idea of being Australian most aggressively.<sup>54</sup>

In 1951, Sculthorpe returned to parochial Launceston, where he worked as a school music teacher and Adult Education lecturer before joining his brother in business.<sup>55</sup> They opened "a Huntin', Shootin' and Fishin' shop" in Launceston in 1952,<sup>56</sup> and the composer stayed in business for about five years.<sup>57</sup> During this period, he became deeply interested in the philosophy of Buddhism and practised yoga. Meanwhile, he continued his earlier experiments in serial music, still with the Krenek book as stimulus, until he reached the aforementioned crisis that caused a compositional "paralysis" for several years.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> "Sculthorpe on Sculthorpe," 9.

<sup>54</sup> Hannan, 29.

<sup>55</sup> "Sculthorpe on Sculthorpe," 9.

<sup>56</sup> Hannan, 9.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Murdoch, 165.

Having been exposed to and profoundly affected by Japanese music whilst a student in Melbourne, once he returned to Tasmania he began a private research project into the Tasmanian Aboriginal culture.<sup>59</sup> He was sadly unable to find much music—a few wax cylinder recordings were all he could locate—but his interest broadened to include mainland Aborigines,<sup>60</sup> and he began a collection of artifacts the details of which he hopes to publish someday.<sup>61</sup> He became aware of the fundamental connection in Australian Aboriginal culture between the land and the music, and became convinced that the modern Australian artist should seek a similar affinity.<sup>62</sup> This conviction was strengthened by his recognition of his own identity crisis—belonging to a transplanted musical culture, which bore no relationship to his roots as an Australian.

Sculthorpe managed to avoid complete isolation in Tasmania through meetings with the international touring artists who came to perform for the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC), including Victoria de los Angeles, Paul Badura-Skoda, and Isaac Stern.<sup>63</sup> Despite this, he recalled later that his twenty-fifth birthday celebrations were spent on his parent's bed where he “bawled [his] eyes out,” and remembers saying, “I’m a quarter of a century old and I have done nothing.”<sup>64</sup> This frustration led him to the

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Hannan, 9.

<sup>61</sup> Murdoch, 165.

<sup>62</sup> Hannan, 9.

<sup>63</sup> Hayes, 14.

<sup>64</sup> Sykes, 16.

decision to spend more time on composition, and less time in the fraternal business; with this, success came quickly.<sup>65</sup>

In 1954, Sculthorpe wrote his *Sonatina* for piano, in which he began to solidify his compositional language into what became his quite distinctive musical style. He submitted the piece to the ABC in 1954 and again two years later, but it was considered “far too modern to be programmed.”<sup>66</sup> Sculthorpe nevertheless submitted it to the International Society for Contemporary Music (ISCM) Festival jury in Melbourne;<sup>67</sup> it was selected for performance at the ISCM Festival in Baden-Baden in 1955.<sup>68</sup> Despite being reviewed as “naïve” and “folkloric” in contrast to the European music premiered at the festival,<sup>69</sup> the work achieved a success at the festival that rekindled Sculthorpe’s ambition to be a professional musician.<sup>70</sup>

Sculthorpe has indicated that the stylistic processes used in the *Sonatina* became the foundation of his mature musical language.<sup>71</sup> Michael Hannan recognizes the influence of Copland’s *Piano Sonata* (1941) on the *Sonatina*; in Copland, Sculthorpe finally recognized a composer who had overcome the same cultural crisis that the young Australian faced.

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<sup>65</sup> Hayes, 14.

<sup>66</sup> “Sculthorpe on Sculthorpe,” 11.

<sup>67</sup> Hayes, 15.

<sup>68</sup> “Sculthorpe on Sculthorpe,” 10.

<sup>69</sup> Hayes, 15.

<sup>70</sup> Murdoch, 165.

...what attracted Sculthorpe initially was the emotional effect of Copland's style. Its leanness, sparseness, and exposed dissonance seemed to the Australian to be antithetical to the fulsomeness of the Romantic composers and those twelve-tone composers he had heard. Furthermore, although Copland's style undoubtedly had the precision of the French tradition, it directed this away from the languidness that Sculthorpe associated with French music. It seemed to be un-European, a music which expressed the emotions of an American about America. Sculthorpe identified with it because it was easy to relate Australia to America. Both were new countries with similar histories; both were vast landmasses with immense largely unpopulated areas. It was therefore easy to conclude that the stylistic characteristic of Copland's Piano Sonata were not inappropriate to an Australian music, that, in fact, these qualities might be developed, and in the process become more Australian.<sup>72</sup>

Hannan has described the two basic styles of composition which begin to emerge in the *Sonatina*,<sup>73</sup> and which recur as the styles Sculthorpe has employed for much of his career in the ensuing decades.<sup>74</sup> He notes that "the fundamental difference [between the two styles] is tempo," and goes on to describe the slow style's emphasis on sustained melody and harmony, and the fast style's on percussively articulated melody.<sup>75</sup>

The *Sonatina* was followed by a piece in a completely different style: a string trio entitled *The Loneliness of Bunjil*, using a scale incorporating quarter-tones.<sup>76</sup> In this

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<sup>71</sup> "Sculthorpe on Sculthorpe," 9-10.

<sup>72</sup> Hannan, 30-31.

<sup>73</sup> Hannan, 32.

<sup>74</sup> Mellers, "New Worlds," 94.

<sup>75</sup> Hannan, 32.

<sup>76</sup> Michael Hannan and Wilfrid Mellers, eds., *Peter Sculthorpe: Faber Music Ltd. Composer Catalogue* (London: Faber Music, 1993), 10.

work,<sup>77</sup> Sculthorpe employed two-part counterpoint as a means of avoiding the harmonic problems caused by the use of a scale of twenty-four quarter-tones. The work is both finely structured and unique in its handling of melodic ideas, as Hannan's analysis suggests.<sup>78</sup> Although not listed in Nancy Uscher's article on Sculthorpe's string music,<sup>79</sup> this work provides evidence of a sophisticated musical craftsmanship.<sup>80</sup> Nevertheless, it is written in a style that Sculthorpe essentially ceased to use after this work, although we shall see that Sculthorpe's use of microtonal melodic and harmonic structures is manifested in the string quartets in a beautifully synthesized way.

In 1955, Sculthorpe wrote one of his most enduring and significant works, *Irkanda*, for solo violin.<sup>81</sup> An expressionistic outpouring synthesized with extraordinarily powerful rhythmic impulses, this work had an impact on the style of the string quartets that cannot be overlooked. Derived from the Aboriginal word for "a remote and lonely place," the title alludes to an expressive subtext that continues to be reflected in much of the composer's music.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> *The Loneliness of Bunjil* was first performed in 1960 by the London Haydn Trio in the Royal Festival Hall.

<sup>78</sup> Hannan, 38.

<sup>79</sup> Uscher, 51.

<sup>80</sup> Hannan, 40.

<sup>81</sup> After *Irkanda II* was so titled, *Irkanda* inevitably became *Irkanda I*.

<sup>82</sup> Murdoch, 166.

The next important step in Sculthorpe's career occurred in 1958 when he received the first Lizette Bentwich Scholarship from the University of Melbourne.<sup>83</sup> He decided to undertake post-graduate research at Oxford University.<sup>84</sup> His teachers there were Edmund Rubbra and Egan Wellesz; the former was deeply interested in the music and philosophy of the Orient, and the latter was the last survivor of the brilliant original group of Schoenberg pupils<sup>85</sup> which included Berg and Webern.<sup>86</sup> In general terms, the Oxford experience was somewhat negative because of the music faculty's stifling conservatism.<sup>87</sup>

Sculthorpe recalls:

Wellesz was editor of the then just published *Oxford History of Music* first volume. In the preface, he discusses Western music with a capital, but Oriental and Primitive music with a lower case. Aboriginal music isn't mentioned once. I said to him, "But what about Aboriginal music?" He said, "Oh, that's not important." That's so fallacious, so ridiculous. Here was a great authority on music, telling me it's not important. That helped strengthen my beliefs.<sup>88</sup>

Sculthorpe's current view—that composition probably cannot be taught—originated from his student experience at Oxford.<sup>89</sup> At Oxford, nevertheless,

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<sup>83</sup> Covell, 200.

<sup>84</sup> Hayes (p. 16) notes that he chose Oxford because it was "the 'fount of wisdom' in the mind of a university-trained Australian."

<sup>85</sup> Egan Wellesz was a Byzantine music scholar who edited the first volume of the *Oxford History of Music*.

<sup>86</sup> Murdoch, 166.

<sup>87</sup> Nicolas Slonimsky, *Baker's Biographical Dictionary of Musicians*, 8th ed. (New York: Schirmer Books, 1992), s.v. "Sculthorpe, Peter," 1675.

<sup>88</sup> James Barratt, "Personal notes," *QANTAS: The Australian Way Magazine* (December 1999): 36.

<sup>89</sup> Hayes, 17.

Sculthorpe sought to define his position as an artist only in relation to his own country.<sup>90</sup> He saw the futility of trying to stay abreast of his European and American contemporaries; instead, with the help of Rubbra in particular, he gained confidence in his own individual vision.<sup>91</sup>

Further, under the guiding influence of Wilfrid Mellers, a specialist on the relation between music and the society in which it arises, Sculthorpe began to understand the intellectual validity of his own musical path.<sup>92</sup> The themes of his music—a sparse landscape, the sun, and aboriginal culture—became crystallized in his style, and he increasingly depicted these themes in his works. The idea of a group of compositions linked by a theme, as in the *Irkanda* series and, later, the *Sun Music* series,<sup>93</sup> originated out of discussions and thinking during this period and represents a landmark in Sculthorpe's evolution.<sup>94</sup> His studies in form at Oxford led him to explore individual structural directions akin to the terrifying, unpopulated landscapes of his native country.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Andrew D. McCredie, *Musical composition in Australia* (Canberra: Advisory Board, Commonwealth Assistance to Australian Composers, 1969), 21.

<sup>91</sup> Hayes, 17.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Mellers, "New Worlds," (p. 95) suggests that the chronologically later and radically different cycle (*Sun Music*) was a necessary step for the composer to escape the emotional strain inherent in the extreme human distress depicted in the works of the *Irkanda* series.

<sup>94</sup> Mellers, "New Worlds," 95.

<sup>95</sup> Murdoch, 166.

In December 1960, Sculthorpe was called home to bid farewell to his dying father.<sup>96</sup> Initially he intended to complete his dissertation in Tasmania. His focus shifted with the subsequent death of that parent; he stayed in Tasmania as planned, but instead of completing his dissertation, wrote *Irkanda IV* for solo violin, percussion and strings, in memory of his father.<sup>97</sup> The loneliness and desolation of this music was intensified many times by the combination of his personal loss and the Tasmanian landscape in which he was writing,<sup>98</sup> and resulted in a work whose premiere marked the first occasion in Australia that his music had been acclaimed by critics and wholeheartedly accepted by an audience.<sup>99</sup>

Michael Hannan has pointed out that *Irkanda IV* owes a spiritual debt to Bloch's *Concerto for Violin and Orchestra*, including the modeling of the main theme on thematic material from Bloch's work.<sup>100</sup> However, there are also suggestions of Mahler in the piece, that composer having been a favourite of Sculthorpe's father.<sup>101</sup> The consistent use of the descending minor second provides the work with its sense of lamentation, and Hannan has demonstrated that a structure of motivic variation holds the work together.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Mellers, "New Worlds," 95.

<sup>97</sup> *Faber Catalogue*, 9.

<sup>98</sup> Covell, 205.

<sup>99</sup> Hayes, 19.

<sup>100</sup> In particular, the rhythmic and intervallic shaping of the first solo violin entrance (fig. 1) in the concerto is reminiscent of Sculthorpe's fondness for repetitious units. Ernest Bloch, *Concerto for violin and orchestra: Orchestral score* (London: Boosey & Hawkes, 1938), 3.

<sup>101</sup> Hannan (p. 50) suggests that Sculthorpe, in *Irkanda IV*, was attempting to produce music that his father might have liked.

As in most of Sculthorpe's repertoire for stringed instruments, the open strings provide tonal centers around which the material is based.<sup>103</sup> The Glasgow Herald, in 1967, made the following comment about *Irkanda IV*:

Like most of Sculthorpe's music that is known in this country, it is strongly impressionistic. Indeed, the technique comes very close to that of a painting, blocks of sound being placed side by side in a manner that precludes the organic growth that usually forms the mainstay of musical composition.<sup>104</sup>

Earning a living in Australia remained difficult for Sculthorpe, and commercial music and film scores<sup>105</sup> punctuate his output during these years.<sup>106</sup> In 1963, much of Sculthorpe's music was presented at the Hobart Composer's Seminar,<sup>107</sup> and he was subsequently invited by Donald Peart to join the music faculty at the University of Sydney.<sup>108</sup>

In 1964, Sculthorpe received a commission in the form of the first Alfred Hill Memorial Award, administered by the Musica Viva Society.<sup>109</sup> This honor, of crucial importance in the composer's career, resulted in one of his most outstanding compositions, String Quartet no. 6. Following his success with this work, a number of

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<sup>102</sup> Hannan, 52.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 56.

<sup>104</sup> *Faber Catalogue*, 8.

<sup>105</sup> Covell, 204.

<sup>106</sup> Hannan, 15.

<sup>107</sup> Hayes, 20.

<sup>108</sup> Covell, 201.

commissions from significant organizations were received,<sup>110</sup> allowing the composer to “be more adventurous” and to experiment with various styles.<sup>111</sup> In 1965, Sculthorpe's growth resulted in a degree of professional recognition not before encountered. He became contracted to Faber Music Ltd.,<sup>112</sup> was awarded a Harkness Fellowship,<sup>113</sup> and was promoted to Senior Lecturer in Music at the University of Sydney.<sup>114</sup> As a Harkness Fellow at Yale University in 1965,<sup>115</sup> he was baffled by the American veneration of European culture at the expense of its own, and returned to Australia in 1967, even more determined to free his music of non-Australian/Australasian elements.<sup>116</sup>

In his continuing search for a satisfying, mature style, Sculthorpe became interested in Australia's neighbor, Asia.<sup>117</sup> He felt that many of his compositions still retained European notions of melody, form, and texture, and wished to purge his music of these elements. In a musical allegory to Australia's vast, dry, and desolate landscape, Sculthorpe reduced the motivic, melodic, and harmonic content of his music.<sup>118</sup> To

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<sup>109</sup> Murdoch, 17.

<sup>110</sup> Covell, 207.

<sup>111</sup> Murdoch, 18.

<sup>112</sup> Faber Music was a new publishing company whose only other composer at that time was Britten. (Murdoch, 18-19).

<sup>113</sup> *Faber Catalogue*, 5.

<sup>114</sup> Murdoch, 19.

<sup>115</sup> McCredie, “Sculthorpe, Peter (Joshua),” *New Grove*, 90.

<sup>116</sup> Murdoch, 19.

<sup>117</sup> Andrew Ford, “Peter Sculthorpe at sixty,” in *Speaking of music: a selection of talks from ABC Radio by eminent musicians, composers and conductors*, ed. Jan Balodis and Tony Cane: 186-209 (Sydney: ABC Enterprises, 1990), 193.

compensate for undesirable resultant structural and musical weaknesses, he incorporated elements of Asian and aboriginal cultures, such as Balinese rice-pounding rhythms and central Australian aboriginal tribal dances and rituals.<sup>119</sup>

Beginning in 1967, this integration of styles is apparent in works such as *Sun Music III* (1967) and *String Quartet Music*, later entitled *String Quartet no. 8* (1969), the latter being the result of a Radcliffe Award commission.<sup>120</sup> In 1968, he wrote *Tabuh Tabuhan* for wind quintet and percussion, imitating Indonesian Gamelan sounds.<sup>121</sup> This work signaled another stylistic change, alternating Gamelan-inspired sections with unmetered sections. The unmetered sections involved extended instrumental techniques for the wind instruments, which sought to imitate bird-song.<sup>122</sup>

In 1970, Peter Sculthorpe, then a Reader in Music at the University of Sydney following another promotion in 1969, was awarded the Member of the British Empire (MBE) designation for services to Australian music; towards the end of 1971, he was appointed Visiting Professor at the University of Sussex.<sup>123</sup> His Sussex stay continued through 1973, during which time he was involved chiefly with his only opera, *Rites of*

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<sup>118</sup> Peter Joshua Sculthorpe, "The 1993 Stuart Challender Memorial Lecture" (Australian Broadcasting Corporation: Eugene Goossens Hall, ABC Ultimo Centre, Sydney, 11 March, 1993), unpublished speech: personal library, Peter Sculthorpe, Sydney, 3-4.

<sup>119</sup> McCredie, "Sculthorpe, Peter (Joshua)," *New Grove*, 91.

<sup>120</sup> Slonimsky, *Baker's dictionary*.

<sup>121</sup> Ford, "Peter Sculthorpe at sixty," 196.

<sup>122</sup> Callaway and Tunley, *Australian Composition in the Twentieth Century*, 139.

<sup>123</sup> Hannan, 21.

*Passage*, written for the opening of the Sydney Opera House in 1974.<sup>124</sup> The period after *Rites of Passage* saw Sculthorpe become more involved with Balinese and aboriginal music, though his creativity was evidently somewhat sporadic. Despite this, he was awarded an Australia Council grant in 1975, freeing him from his teaching responsibilities at the University of Sydney for three years.<sup>125</sup>

A new work, which gave inspiration for a further cycle of borrowings, was *The Song of Tailitnama* for soprano, six cellos, and percussion, based on an Aboriginal text from T.G.H. Strehlow's *Songs of Central Australia*,<sup>126</sup> at one point, his favourite among his own compositions. Sculthorpe furthered his exploration of instrumental possibilities to write *The Song of Tailitnama*. "Performers can be most helpful with this," he commented in 1990.<sup>127</sup> "Cellist Aldo Parisot discovered a whistle created by rubbing the wood on the back of the cello. And he wasn't even worried about his instrument, a Stradivarius!"<sup>128</sup> Sculthorpe arranged sections of this work in 1981 as *Tailitnama Song* for chamber ensemble (including the Aboriginal instrument the didjeridu), and then again in 1991 for violin and piano.<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> Hayes, 24.

<sup>125</sup> Hannan, 23.

<sup>126</sup> Jonathan Mills, "Landscapes: the music of Peter Sculthorpe," unpublished essay: personal library, Peter Sculthorpe, Sydney.

<sup>127</sup> Andrew Ford, "As simple as that: Peter Sculthorpe," in *Composer to Composer: Conversations about Contemporary Music*: 38-44 (St. Leonards, N.S.W.: Allen & Unwin, 1993), 41.

<sup>128</sup> Uscher, 50.

<sup>129</sup> Hayes, 280.

The ensuing several years saw the creation of String Quartet no. 9 (1975), *Alone* (1976) for solo violin (which requires the performer to whistle or hum while playing), and the *Lament for Strings* (1976). In 1977, he composed his acclaimed *Port Essington* for string trio and string orchestra.<sup>130</sup> This piece and his music over the next few years, including the extraordinary *Mangrove* (1979) for orchestra<sup>131</sup> would all display a mastery of virtuosic instrumental idioms,<sup>132</sup> reaching a pinnacle in the *Requiem* (1979) for solo cello.<sup>133</sup>

Sculthorpe has been the recipient of numerous important awards over a period of some thirty-five years. Some of the more important of these are mentioned below. In 1977, Sculthorpe was made an Officer of the Order of the British Empire (OBE). In 1980, he received an honorary Doctor of Letters degree from the University of Tasmania,<sup>134</sup> and in 1989, he was honored with doctorates from the University of Sussex and the University of Melbourne. In 1990, Peter Sculthorpe was awarded an Order of Australia, and in 1991, he was elected Fellow of the Australian Academy of the Humanities.<sup>135</sup> In 1996, Griffith University conferred upon him the degree Doctor of the University. He

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<sup>130</sup> *Who's Who*.

<sup>131</sup> Hayes, 32.

<sup>132</sup> "The 1993 Stuart Challender Memorial Lecture," 10.

<sup>133</sup> Mellers, "New Worlds," 96.

<sup>134</sup> *Who's Who*.

<sup>135</sup> Slonimsky, *Baker's dictionary*.

also was awarded the highly prestigious R. M. Johnston Award from the Royal Society of Tasmania—the first time the award has been given to a non-scientist.<sup>136</sup>

Sculthorpe has been honored not only for the intellectual and creative aspect in his works, but also for their essential appeal and popularity. In 1980, he was awarded Best Original Film Score by the Australian Film Institute, for his score for the *Manganinnie*,<sup>137</sup> and in 1985, he won the Australasian Performing Rights Association (APRA) award for the Most Performed Australian Serious Work, for his *Piano Concerto* (1983).<sup>138</sup> In 1991, a recording of his orchestral music won the Australian Record Industry Award (ARIA) for Best Classical Music Release, and in 1993, he became the first composer to be awarded the APRA Ted Albert Award for Outstanding Services to Australian Music. In 1994 a concert of his music in Kakadu National Park, which included the orchestral work *Kakadu* (1988), won him the Brolga Award for Tourism, and in the same year, he was given the Sir Bernard Heinze Award for outstanding services to Australian music.<sup>139</sup> A recording of his music for string orchestra also won the Australian Record Industry Award for best classical release in 1996 and two awards at the Inaugural Soundscapes Classical Music Awards in 1997. The premiere CD recording of *Sun Music I-IV* by the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra won the 1997 Australian Record Industry Award for best classical release.

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<sup>136</sup> *Faber Catalogue*.

<sup>137</sup> Hayes, 31.

<sup>138</sup> *Faber Catalogue*.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*

In 1998, Peter Sculthorpe had the honour of being elected one of Australia's One Hundred Living National Treasures.<sup>140</sup> Following his 1999 retirement from the University of Sydney, where he had had been Professor of Musical Composition (Personal Chair), he was appointed Emeritus Professor. In 2001, the year of the hundredth anniversary of Federation, he was elected by the Australian Federal Government as the Australian Achiever of the Year<sup>141</sup> and was also honoured as Distinguished Artist 2001 by the International Society of the Performing Arts. As the flow of acclaim and awards continues for Peter Sculthorpe, however, there is no sense of deceleration in his musical output.<sup>142</sup> In an April 2002 ceremony in New York, Sculthorpe was elected to Foreign Honorary Membership of the American Academy of Arts and Letters—the only living Australian so honoured.<sup>143</sup> In 2003, Sculthorpe was awarded the prestigious Centenary Medal for his astonishing contribution to Australian music and society.<sup>144</sup> As this paper is written, he is completing a Requiem Mass, a centerpiece for inclusion in the 2004 Adelaide International Festival of the Arts.<sup>145</sup>

Nearing his 75th birthday, Peter Sculthorpe continues his work as a composer. He has succeeded in creating a music to which a uniquely Australian essence is imparted, incorporating many ethnological influences into his own structural and rhythmic

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<sup>140</sup> Meacham, "Music to his peers," 31.

<sup>141</sup> *Faber Catalogue*.

<sup>142</sup> Meacham, "Music to his peers," 31.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>144</sup> Peter Sculthorpe, interviews by the author, 1993-2003, Sydney, Australia.

constraints and concepts, mirroring the multicultural face of modern Australia. His music has made a gradual progression towards an art form that effortlessly combines many stylistic elements that represent the composer's ideas of 'Australianism'. The music for string quartet is a convincing representation of this synthesis.

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<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

### Chapter 3: String Quartets 1-5

The early string quartets that form the body of this chapter have not received a great deal of attention, either by performers or scholars, in part because of lack of availability of the essential source material. Nevertheless, these early works are extremely important for the light they cast on the quartets that follow and the subsequent synthesis of the composer's mature compositional style. Part of the difficulty arises from the composer's subsequent reworking of much of the musical material used in the early quartets into later manifestations. This chapter discusses the various compositional histories, surviving materials, and pertinent material related to the following works:

- String Quartet no. 1 (1944)
- String Quartet no. 2 (1948)
- String Quartet no. 3 (1949)
- String Quartet no. 4 (1950)
- String Quartet no. 5 (1959)

The impact of hearing his first string quartet performed in Tasmania was a thrilling experience for the composer. In a 1996 interview, the composer suggests that this early fascination with the genre of the string quartet may also have been supported by his subsequent experiences and friendships in Melbourne.

Because I tend to be a fairly practical person, I have never liked writing music to put in a drawer. My best friend when I was a student was Wilfred Lehmann and Wilfred had a string quartet made up of students at the [Melbourne] Conservatorium. Because I was always attracted to the genre and because there was a string quartet there, I started

writing for Wilfred. That's really what started the string quartet mode of thinking.<sup>1</sup>

As a student, Sculthorpe was also required to write a string quartet movement in the style of Beethoven every week. This discipline, Sculthorpe believes, may have created in him a desire to compose something very different: "If the assignment had been an imitation of Bartók's style, however, I'm sure I would have found it an exciting project."<sup>2</sup>

Sculthorpe wrote numerous works before 1944 and generally considers them juvenilia.<sup>3</sup> In the works written from 1944 through to 1959, remarkable stylistic similarities to the "mature" works manifest themselves to a substantial degree. These quartets, although usually ignored by comparison with the more celebrated works, warrant particular attention. None of the first five quartets has been published in its entirety,<sup>4</sup> and no complete performances of the first four quartets have been presented since 1950.<sup>5</sup> In several cases, compositions underwent numerous reworkings as piano works before subsequently being reworked as string quartets. In some of these cases, the string quartet material in its original form is not available, and the piano work therefore becomes the primary source material for that string quartet.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Milton, Sculthorpe interviews: complete transcript, 1.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Hayes, xii.

<sup>4</sup> Only extracts survive from some of these early works, and the musical material in many cases was revised and incorporated into other works, as detailed later in this and the subsequent three chapters.

<sup>5</sup> Graeme Skinner, "Peter Sculthorpe: Music for String Quartet: Volume 2," CD liner notes (Tall Poppies CD TP090; Goldner String Quartet, 1997), 3.

<sup>6</sup> In the case of String Quartet no. 2 (cast in one movement), the entire work in its earlier manifestation as a piano piece has been studied.

### String Quartet no. 1

String Quartet no. 1 was completed in January or February of 1944, Sculthorpe's last year at Launceston Grammar School, and the year before he commenced his studies at the University of Melbourne.<sup>7</sup> Drawn from several of the composer's song settings of English pastoral poetry,<sup>8</sup> as well as from the slow movement of the Sonata no. 1, the string quartet was written especially for Joyce Ball, a violinist and music teacher in Launceston, Tasmania.<sup>9</sup> Her quartet, which included her two sisters (Ada and Bess Ball, the latter a cellist in the ABC Tasmanian Orchestra) and another violinist, gave the first private performances of the work. Though Sculthorpe had hoped that Ball's quartet would play the work at a concert, it was never publicly performed in those early years and was subsequently lost.<sup>10</sup>

After the composer reconstructed part of the quartet for the Tall Poppies recording, *Little Song* from String Quartet no. 1 was given its first public performance at London's Wigmore Hall in 1997, some fifty-three years after it was written.<sup>11</sup> The composer recalls the impact of hearing this first string quartet being played, albeit privately, for the very first time:

I was so overwhelmed at hearing my music played by the string quartet that I was absolutely speechless. I was thrilled. I'd never heard a string quartet before.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Milton, Sculthorpe interviews: complete transcript, 9-10.

<sup>8</sup> Skinner, "CD liner notes, volume 2," 3.

<sup>9</sup> Milton, Sculthorpe interviews: complete transcript, 9.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 9-10.

<sup>11</sup> Sculthorpe, *Sum Music*, 12.

<sup>12</sup> Milton, Sculthorpe interviews: complete transcript, 10.

In his 1999 autobiography, Sculthorpe related his reaction to hearing part of that same work again, in its first public performance: “I almost burst into tears.”<sup>13</sup>

Although the complete music for String Quartet no. 1 is lost, various sources provide a solid impression of the musical language used by the composer.<sup>14</sup> In particular instances, melodic fragments from these other works made their way in their entirety into the string quartet. The main musical material appears in the following distinct sources:

1. *Winter Woodland* (n.d. [pre-1943?])<sup>15</sup>
2. Slow Movement<sup>16</sup> from Sonata no. 1 (1943)<sup>17</sup> (Hayes W6)
3. Settings of English pastoral poetry<sup>18</sup> (1944-45)<sup>19</sup>
4. *Aspatia's Song* (1944)
5. *Prelude to a Puppet Show* (1944-45)
6. *Little Song* from String Quartet no. 1 (1944/1996)

<sup>13</sup> Sculthorpe, *Sun Music*, 12.

<sup>14</sup> String Quartet no. 1 is not included in Hayes's study because the work's date of composition predates the book's works list (ranging from 1945 through to 1992) and because the work was never mentioned in print. Nevertheless, the material of the work helps clarify the origins of Sculthorpe's stylistic development.

<sup>15</sup> The surviving manuscript for *Winter Woodland* takes the form of an incomplete two-page penciled sketch. The numerous changes of meter perhaps provide a clue as to why this version of the music was not completed. The later three versions all display a more sophisticated compositional technique.

<sup>16</sup> Though a multi-movement work was conceived, no other movements were written.

<sup>17</sup> The 1945 date of composition for this work as given in Hayes is incorrect. According to this author's interviews with Sculthorpe, the work was composed in 1943. This is supported by the composer's own markings on the original manuscript.

<sup>18</sup> These song settings include but are not limited to *Aspatia's Song*, as detailed separately. Details of the other songs are not available, but the setting of *Aspatia's Song* was among the material used in 1996 to reconstruct the part of String Quartet no. 1 which was recorded for Tall Poppies.

<sup>19</sup> Skinner, “CD liner notes, volume 2,” 3.

The composer recalls that the three-movement String Quartet no. 1 represented an attempt to paint a picture of Tasmania. It contained fairly rhythmic passages and dissonant harmonies.<sup>20</sup> Elements of bitonality and repeated patterns are characteristic for the work. The slow movement<sup>21</sup> of the Sonata no. 1, in particular, is one of the main sources that inspired and found its way into the first string quartet (example 3-1). The composer's numerous sketches and various reworkings of this music indicate that the work's aesthetic contained many aspects that appealed to him strongly. Further, the composer was somewhat haunted by an obsessive quality of the melody.<sup>22</sup>

**Example 3-1: Sculthorpe, Slow Movement, Sonata no. 1, *Allegretto* (mm. 1-9)**

*Allegretto*

pp in a classical manner. mp

soft pedal throughout if desired.

mf

cresc. f

<sup>20</sup> Milton, Sculthorpe interviews: complete transcript, 17.

<sup>21</sup> There were no other movements.

<sup>22</sup> Milton, Sculthorpe interviews: complete transcript, 9.

Reconstructed in 1996 from his setting for strings of *Aspatia's Song*,<sup>23</sup> the string quartet score of *Little Song* represents another important document to the early work (example 3-2). The melodic line has a pentatonic flavor and features intensive use of intervallic combinations of major seconds and minor thirds.

Example 3-2: Sculthorpe, *Little Song*, String Quartet no. 1, mm. 1-4.

Lento (♩ = c. 54)

con sord.

Violin I

*p*

Violin II

con sord.

*p*

Viola

con sord.

*p*

Violoncello

con sord.

*p*

\* Slurs indicate phrasing, not bowing.

4

*mf*

<sup>23</sup> See Hayes, 38. *Aspatia's Song*, for voice and piano (Hayes W26).

Inspired by a 17th-century lyric from Beaumont and Fletcher, *Little Song* reflects one of the young composer's favourite places: the historic graveyard of the Anglican church at Longford:<sup>24</sup>

*Lay a garland on my hearse / Of the dismal yew;  
Maidens willow branches bear; / Say, I died true.  
My love was false, but I was firm / From my hour of birth,  
Upon my buried body lie, / Lightly gentle earth.*<sup>25</sup>

The short musical fragment constituting *Little Song* is simply textured, with a tonal language that combines pentatonic melodic aspects with harmonies that reflect the melodic pentatonicism but also make abundant use of chromatic mediant relationships. The free rhythmic abandon of the first violin part effectively counter-balances the weighted chordal harmonies of the other instruments.<sup>26</sup>

The musical sources and material pertinent to a discussion of String Quartet no. 1 contain a wide variety of the stylistic elements that appear as important features of the composer's mature style. These elements appear in these early sources as undeveloped melodic and harmonic patterns. The accompanimental pattern shown in example 3-1, for example, contains the ritualistic approach that becomes an essential stylistic fingerprint of the *Kakadu* style. The rhythmic freedom shown in example 3-2, notably in the first violin's syncopated melody, becomes an essential component of the composer's style.

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<sup>24</sup> Skinner, "CD liner notes, volume 2," 4.

<sup>25</sup> Sculthorpe, *Little Song*, preface.

<sup>26</sup> Although no clear details are given as to which part of the string quartet the material was used, the composer has pointed out to this author particular passages that he recollects were of importance in various manifestations in the quartet. This study is the only one that draws upon these early manuscript materials to find early evidence of the composer's stylistic origins.

## String Quartet no. 2

The one-movement String Quartet no. 2, like its predecessor, has a rather complicated genesis. The piece originated as *Short Piece for Pianoforte No. 2* (1945).<sup>27</sup> A careful refinement entitled *Short Piece for Piano (No. 1)* (1945) was completed in Tasmania in September 1945 and dedicated to the composer's English teacher, Wilfrid Tenniswood.<sup>28</sup> Sculthorpe recalled the background to the dedication as follows:

One day Wilfrid (Tenniswood) heard me practising and he came to my room and asked me whose music I was playing; I said, "mine, of course." He was so excited that he organized my first broadcast with his ABC connections. Wilfrid became a lifelong friend.<sup>29</sup>

At the request of Wilfred Lehmann,<sup>30</sup> the string quartet was reworked from the piano piece in Melbourne in 1948:

I turned the piano piece into a string quartet because I believe that good ideas are hard to come by and if I have what I think is a good idea, then I'll arrange it or rewrite it and use it again.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Hayes W5.

<sup>28</sup> Hayes W7.

<sup>29</sup> Milton, Sculthorpe interviews: complete transcript, 10. Chapter 2 (particularly pp. 15-16) of the autobiography, *Sun Music*, expands somewhat upon some of the details about the composer's relationship with Tenniswood.

<sup>30</sup> As mentioned elsewhere, Wilfred Lehmann was to become Sculthorpe's most important musical interpreter in the next decade.

<sup>31</sup> Milton, Sculthorpe interviews: complete transcript, 10.

Sculthorpe recalls String Quartet no. 2 as “a brief, fairly rhythmic, rather bitonal work.”<sup>32</sup> Although all of the string quartet material is lost, *Short Piece for Piano (No. 1)* reveals remarkable levels of motivic unity, especially in respect to rhythmic figures and gestures. The main musical material sets up *ostinato* patterns that foreshadow an important compositional approach that achieves mature stylistic fruition only many years later. Example 3-3 below demonstrates some of the work’s distinctive rhythmic energy; more than half of the measures of the example feature exactly the same rhythmic pattern, and the indication for the passage to be played “rather mechanically” also suggests a type repetitive aesthetic. These aspects of the style of the passage are similar to elements of Sculthorpe’s ritualistic approach—inspired by the Australian aboriginal culture—favored by the composer much later in his life. An early review<sup>33</sup> of the work’s performance by Sculthorpe’s fellow students<sup>34</sup> at Melbourne’s Fine Arts Society<sup>35</sup> also noted that “the brief String Quartet no. 2 showed a considerable ability in the more extended forms of musical expression.”<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Skinner, “CD liner notes, volume 2,” 4.

<sup>33</sup> Melbourne: August 1948.

<sup>34</sup> Skinner, “CD liner notes, volume 2,” 4.

<sup>35</sup> The first violinist on that occasion was Wilfred Lehmann.

<sup>36</sup> Hayes, 149.

Example 3-3: Sculthorpe, *Short Piece for Piano (No. 1)*, mm. 1-9.<sup>37</sup>

The musical score for Example 3-3 is presented in three systems, each with two staves. The first system begins with a tempo marking 'vivaciously.' and a dynamic marking 'mf-f.'. The second system is marked 'rather mechanically.'. The third system is marked 'mp'. The notation includes various rhythmic values, accidentals, and dynamic markings.

The composer has observed that by the time he composed *String Quartet no. 2* from the piano work, he was not writing music like that anymore; rather, he was writing music that is far more conservative.

I was starved for music in Tasmania. It took me years to track down the Debussy Preludes, for example. So much was inaccessible that I think I went off on my own track. When I got to Melbourne and suddenly read textbooks, books on harmony, Bach Chorales, it was a completely new experience. My stylistic change after *String Quartet no. 2* wasn't so much the Conservatorium knocking out the wild part of me; I was eagerly embracing all of this conventional conservatory stuff.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>37</sup> The noteheads without the stems in the left-hand part of this example seem to be a notational aberration, perhaps suggesting a greater emphasis be given these pitches by the performer.

<sup>38</sup> Milton, Sculthorpe interviews: complete transcript, 5, 10.

### String Quartet no. 3

First performed in 1949 for the Guild of Australian Composers in Melbourne, the String Quartet no. 3 was originally cast in three movements: *Pastorale*, *Interlude*, and *Fantasy*. The *Pastorale* was reworked the following year to make up the central movement of String Quartet no. 4,<sup>39</sup> and the manuscript of the *Fantasy* is lost.<sup>40</sup> The slow movement of String Quartet no. 3, *Interlude*, constitutes the only surviving portion of that work which was not itself subsequently readapted. This *Interlude* was an arrangement of Sculthorpe's setting of Robert Herrick's poem *To Meddowes* (figure 3-1). Composed in April 1947, the setting for three unaccompanied female voices was performed at the Melbourne Conservatorium in October of the same year.<sup>41</sup> The composer's 1996 reconstruction of the string quartet, which also draws upon a second version<sup>42</sup> of the song for soprano and strings,<sup>43</sup> reinstates the title of the original vocal music (example 3-4).<sup>44</sup>

Figure 3-1: Herrick: *To Meddowes*<sup>45</sup>

<p>TO MEDDOWES</p> <p>YE have been fresh and green, Ye have been fill'd with flowers : And ye the walks have been Where maids have spent their houres.</p>	<p>You have beheld, how they With wicker arks did come To kisse, and beare away The richer couslips home.</p> <p>Y'ave heard them sweetly sing, And seen them in a round : Each virgin, like a spring, With hony-succles crown'd.</p>	<p>But now, we see, none here, Whose silv'rie feet did tread, And with dishevell'd haire, Adorn'd this smoother mead.</p> <p>Like unthrifts, having spent Your stock, and needy grown, Y'are left here to lament Your poore estates, alone.</p>
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<sup>39</sup> Hayes, 40.

<sup>40</sup> Sculthorpe: "I don't remember the *Fantasy* movement of SQ3 at all, and no materials or sketches can be found." (Milton interviews transcript, 11).

<sup>41</sup> Hayes, 98.

<sup>42</sup> *To Meadows*, arr. soprano and strings (1947) (Hayes W28).

<sup>43</sup> Skinner, "CD liner notes, volume 2," 4.

<sup>44</sup> Milton, Sculthorpe interviews: complete transcript, 11.

<sup>45</sup> This copy of the poem is from Sculthorpe's personal library. No bibliographical citation is available.

Example 3-4: Sculthorpe, *To Meadows*, String Quartet no. 3, mm. 1-7.

By April 1947, Sculthorpe had spent a year in Melbourne. A more adept craftsmanship clearly characterizes this music. The composer acknowledges the strong English influence of Vaughan Williams and Delius,<sup>46</sup> and a more conservative approach to harmony makes itself apparent (example 3-5). The idea of duple against triple meter at a variety of foreground levels in this predominantly 6/8 meter work also establishes a

<sup>46</sup> Having stated these influences, the composer added: "...though I don't really hear much Delius, except perhaps the last chord, which is not quite but almost something Delius might have done." (Milton interviews transcript, 11).

compositional issue that is balanced in the middle ground by the 4/8 section of the piece.<sup>47</sup>

Example 3-5: Sculthorpe, *To Meadows*, String Quartet no. 3, mm. 12-23.

The musical score consists of three systems, each with four staves. The first system shows the beginning of the piece with dynamics *mf* and *mp*. The second system shows a crescendo (*cresc.*) and a piano (*p*) dynamic. The third system shows a piano (*p*) dynamic and a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic.

The reviewer of a 1949 performance of String Quartet no. 3 commented that the work “showed definite creative promise, but lacked thematic development.”<sup>48</sup>

<sup>47</sup> The composer’s own performance of the work, as a piano reduction, also emphasizes this among other aspects of the composition. Tape 4, Milton interviews transcript, 11.

<sup>48</sup> Hayes, 150.

Considering the thrust of parts of this paper, it is significant that early critics often mentioned a lack of thematic development in Sculthorpe's music and suggested that he did not understand development. The composer assents:

... because it's true. I was never interested in development. That's one of the reasons that I don't like Beethoven; it's those dreadful development sections. I've never been interested in development. I have to find other ways to extend my music: usually by some forms of addition.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Milton, Sculthorpe interviews: complete transcript, 11.

### String Quartet no. 4

The three movements of String Quartet no. 4 are titled *Prelude*, *Pastorale*, and *Country Dance*;<sup>50</sup> the outer movements now exist only in short score.<sup>51</sup> The inscription at the beginning of the quartet reads: “Recollections of holidays spent in a country village in Tasmania.”<sup>52</sup> Sculthorpe recalls:

I was a student at the University of Melbourne. I stayed all year, and I went back to Tasmania for the holidays and cut cane. Going back, I was seeing Tasmania through English pastoral eyes.<sup>53</sup>

The work was first performed in June 1950 in the rooms of the British Music Society in Melbourne.<sup>54</sup>

As mentioned above, the *Pastorale* movement from String Quartet no. 3 was reworked during the first part of 1950. Although no other solid information about the chronology of the various versions is available, the numerous realizations of the movement—as a piano reduction, short score, and five distinct versions for string quartet—demonstrate Sculthorpe’s meticulous craftsmanship.<sup>55</sup> In particular, the quartet

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<sup>50</sup> Hayes, 40.

<sup>51</sup> Hayes (p. 40) actually indicates that the final movement, *Country Dance*, is missing; the composer has, however, kindly located a copy of his original 13-page short score for this movement.

<sup>52</sup> Hayes, 40.

<sup>53</sup> Milton, Sculthorpe interviews: complete transcript, 12.

<sup>54</sup> Hayes, 40.

<sup>55</sup> Among the sketches of the *Pastorale* movement, an inscription in the composer’s hand heads one incomplete piano realisation: “A farewell to ‘Mount Esk’, which is to become a monastery...” Another copy of the movement is prefaced with one of the composer’s own verses: “In the meadow/Let us lie;/The trees whisper/And birds cry/In the meadow/Let us lie:/We shall sleep there./You and I.”

versions reveal subtle voicing adjustments and varied, imaginative instrumental treatments (example 3-6).

Example 3-6: Sculthorpe, *Pastorale*, String Quartet no. 4, mm. 1-8.

Poco lento ( $\text{♩} = \text{c. } 84$ )

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Violoncello

mf

mp

①

5

1

*sul tasto*

*p*

*sul tasto*

*p*

*sul tasto*

*p*

*sul tasto*

*p*

Vln I

Vln II

Vla

Vc.

Even at this early stage in his career, the composer carefully balanced the four instrumental parts. On an observation that the second violin part not only created an interesting counterpoint but was also in itself a primary voice within the texture, Sculthorpe commented:

I might have done something like that after I'd written the piece because I always check the parts carefully, for voice leading and so on. The viola part sometimes needs to be transposed up or down, and I try to make all the parts interesting. There is a tendency to give the most interesting material to the first violin most of the time.<sup>56</sup>

A 1950 review of one of the many performances<sup>57</sup> of the work noted the piece's thin texture.<sup>58</sup> Sculthorpe has commented that he has always set out to be stark and austere in his music: "I've tried to strip it down rather than extend it."<sup>59</sup>

One of the most remarkable discoveries a study of the various sketches and the subsequent final version for string quartet reveals is the constant and meticulous attention to small details. That the composer, even at such a young age, reworked and refined his writing constitutes a notable similarity to a compositional approach that is an intrinsic part of his style to this day. The *Country Dance* movement reveals several significant examples of stylistic and melodic elements that were to become hallmarks of Sculthorpe's mature style over the next five decades. Perhaps because of evident fine workmanship, the String Quartet no. 4 was among the works that Sculthorpe presented for assessment in his final year composition class in 1950.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Milton, Sculthorpe interviews: complete transcript, 12.

<sup>57</sup> On the number of performances of this work, Sculthorpe commented: "I do remember that during that last year in Melbourne, String Quartet no. 4 really got a lot of performances - far more than are listed in Hayes's book." Milton, Sculthorpe interviews: complete transcript, 11.

<sup>58</sup> Hayes, 150.

<sup>59</sup> Milton, Sculthorpe interviews: complete transcript, 11.

<sup>60</sup> Skinner, "CD liner notes, volume 2," 5.

### String Quartet no. 5

Having received the Lizette Bentwich Scholarship from the University of Melbourne,<sup>61</sup> Sculthorpe commenced post-graduate research at Oxford University in 1958. His studies inspired confidence in his own individual vision, and he began to embrace the intellectual validity of his own musical path: forging the definition of his position as an artist in relation to his own country.<sup>62</sup> The *Irkanda* and *Sun Music* styles would provide the composer with some of the basic elements he needed to create an Australian identity.

The genesis of String Quartet no. 5 is somewhat convoluted. The composer's first realized conception of the string quartet work was titled *Irkanda II* (example 3-7). Dedicated to Wilfred Lehmann, who was then also in England serving as leader of the Birmingham Symphony Orchestra,<sup>63</sup> *Irkanda II* was written especially for submission into the 1959 Royal Concert Trust Fund Composer's Competition.<sup>64</sup> The piece was awarded the First Prize.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Roger D. Covell, *Australia's Music: Themes of a New Society* (Melbourne: Sun Books, 1967), 200.

<sup>62</sup> Andrew D. McCredie, *Musical Composition in Australia* (Canberra: Advisory Board, Commonwealth Assistance to Australian Composers, 1969), 21.

<sup>63</sup> Skinner, "CD liner notes, volume 2," 5.

<sup>64</sup> Milton, Sculthorpe interviews: complete transcript, 16. The competition was conducted under the auspices of the Australian Musical Association, London (Hayes, 44). The composer recalls that the submitted work did not necessarily have to be a string quartet; it follows that, already at that early point in his career, Sculthorpe considered string quartets a compositional medium of significance (Milton, Sculthorpe interviews: complete transcript, 16).

<sup>65</sup> Hayes, 44.

Example 3-7: Sculthorpe, *Irkanda II* (1959), mm. 1-12.

**IRKANDA II**

for String Quartet

by Peter Sculthorpe

**TEMPO I. very slowly.**

*espressivo.*

*p.* *sul c.*

*pp.* *sul tasto*

*sul c.*

*poco rall.* **TEMPO I. molto accel.**

*mp.* *sul c.*

*modo ordinario* *sul tasto*

*p. cresc.*

For a 1960 performance at Lincoln College in Oxford,<sup>66</sup> Sculthorpe composed a short prologue to the work. From that time onwards, *Irkanda II* became known as String Quartet no. 5. String Quartet no. 5 (*Prologue + Irkanda II*) was subsequently withdrawn as the material from *Irkanda II* was refined and reworked in *Irkanda IV*.<sup>67</sup>

<sup>66</sup> This performance took place on February 29, 1960 (Skinner, 5) in the concert series organized by Egon Wellesz, Sculthorpe's supervisor.

<sup>67</sup> Milton, Sculthorpe interviews: complete transcript, 16.

At the time of composition, Sculthorpe was living with Wilfrid Lehmann and his wife in Birmingham; the violinist had a string quartet made up of members of the Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, and Sculthorpe wrote *Irkanda II* with this specific group of players in mind.<sup>68</sup> The aspect of a compositional approach in which the performers are known to the composer, foreshadowed in the earlier quartets, today remains a crucial component of Sculthorpe's creative method.

In a remarkable foreshadowing of his mature stylistic synthesis, Sculthorpe based the prologue for *Irkanda II* on material used originally in the second song of the *Sun* song-cycle, as shown in examples 3-8 and 3-9.

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

Example 3-8: Sculthorpe, *Sun* (1958): II. *Tropic*, mm. 29-38.

Co-lumns — dark and soft,

with expression.

Sun-black men, Soft shafts, — sun-brea-thing

mouths Eyes — of ye-llow, gol-den sand as

friction-al, as pe-ri-lous, ex- plo-sive as brim-stone.

mf.

acc.

molto rall.

Example 3-9: Sculthorpe, *Prologue* from String Quartet no. 5, mm. 17-29.

The image displays a musical score for Example 3-9, Sculthorpe's *Prologue* from String Quartet no. 5, measures 17-29. The score is presented in three systems, each with four staves (Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Cello/Double Bass).

**System 1 (Measures 17-20):** The first system begins at measure 17, marked with a boxed number '2'. The dynamics are *poco f* for all parts. The music features a rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes.

**System 2 (Measures 21-24):** The second system starts at measure 21. The dynamics are *poco f* for the first two staves and *poco f* for the last two. The music includes triplets and a *cresc.* (crescendo) marking. The dynamics change to *molto espress.* (molto expressive) for the first two staves and *f* (forte) for the last two.

**System 3 (Measures 25-29):** The third system begins at measure 25, marked with a boxed number '3'. The dynamics are *f* for all parts. The music features a rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes.

The two contrasting styles—*Irkanda* and *Sun Music*—are therefore incorporated in one work, although the stylistic juxtaposition does not occur simultaneously. The utilization of different compositional style at various points of the work forms the basis of Sculthorpe's mature compositional rhetoric.

Sculthorpe's landmark conception—a group of compositions linked together by a theme—materialized for the first time with the composition of *Irkanda II*. He had composed *Irkanda*,<sup>69</sup> his most important solo violin work, in Australia in 1955. In *Irkanda*, Sculthorpe “tried to express the loneliness of Australian life in the outback.”<sup>70</sup> The series continued with *Irkanda III*, for piano trio, and then with the reworking of *Irkanda II* which came to be known as *Irkanda IV*. At Oxford in 1958, he continued his search for an individual Australian voice with the song cycle, *Sun*, on words by D.H. Lawrence.<sup>71</sup> Material from both of these works was to appear in various important works over the next period. Elements of the basic language of both of these conceptual approaches constitute the composer's mature philosophical and stylistic synthesis. The *Sun* and *Irkanda* styles, therefore, originated as part of the composer's thinking at this time.

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<sup>69</sup> Hayes W62 and W74, respectively.

<sup>70</sup> Milton, Sculthorpe interviews: complete transcript, 16.

<sup>71</sup> On the significance of the cycle, Sculthorpe commented: “In a sense, Wilfrid Mellers was my first composition teacher. When I went to England in the fifties, I was exposed to all kinds of music like Charles Ives and John Cage that I'd never had an opportunity to hear in Australia. I think Wilfrid was interested in me because I had a completely different view of the world, an antithetical sort of view. As you can see from his writing, his concern is with a composer's vision. He tried to get out of me what I was really on about and that's really what helped channel me. One of the things he discovered I was on about was that, while I loved D. H. Lawrence as a writer, it was his writings about the sun—passages that I must have read in stories and poems—that really captured my imagination and that I liked best. Wilfrid said to me that I should obviously be writing about the sun.” (Milton, Sculthorpe interviews: complete transcript, 14).

Lehmann led a number of performances of *Irkanda II* in Birmingham during the first part of 1960.<sup>72</sup> One reviewer found in the work “an often effective austerity of expression and a generous degree of sharp rhythmic contrasts.”<sup>73</sup> Sculthorpe himself recognizes an immense technical improvement from the fourth to the fifth string quartets:

I agree that there is an immense jump from String Quartet no. 4 to String Quartet no. 5, especially rhythmically. My approach to style was almost set. *Irkanda IV* finally brought it all together.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Hayes, 151-2 (Hayes B 29-31).

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 151.

<sup>74</sup> Milton, Sculthorpe interviews: complete transcript, 17.

#### Chapter 4: String Quartets 6-10

The central string quartets that form the body of this chapter reveal an extraordinary variety of musical styles. They are:

- String Quartet no. 6 (1965)
- String Quartet no. 7 (1966)
- String Quartet no. 8 (1968)
- String Quartet no. 9 (1975)
- String Quartet no. 10 (1983)

The emotionally charged String Quartet No. 6 was inspired by passages of D. H. Lawrence's novel *Kangaroo* and the death of a close friend of the composer. String Quartet no. 7 is a short and intense one-movement work that represents a dramatic revolt against Sculthorpe's expressionistic style. One of Sculthorpe's most celebrated works, the five-movement String Quartet no. 8 juxtaposes music of searing intensity with energized ritualism derived from the figurations of Balinese rice-pounding ceremonies. String Quartet no. 9 includes passages derived from a tone row and juxtaposes musical styles from a number of sources. String Quartet no. 10 is cast in five movements that alternate serene *Chorales* with what the composer calls *Sun Songs*.

Although Sculthorpe's mature stylistic synthesis is foreshadowed in the earliest works of the genre, it is in these works—written over a twenty-year period—that the essential elements of the composer's mature stylistic language are characterized. That all of these works are regularly played and acknowledged as among the composer's masterpieces is testimony to the growing sophistication of his compositional approach.

### String Quartet no. 6

As a result of winning the first Musica Viva Alfred Hill Memorial Award, Sculthorpe was commissioned to write a piece of chamber music for inclusion in Musica Viva's Australian concert series.<sup>1</sup> Sculthorpe's work on String Quartet no. 6 was begun late in 1964 and completed early in 1965; the Austral String Quartet gave the work's first performance in a Musica Viva subscription concert in the Sydney Town Hall in April 1965.<sup>2</sup>

Passages from Lawrence's novel *Kangaroo* provide inspiration for some of the more emotionally intense music of String Quartet no. 6. The work was completed shortly after the suicide of Bonnie Drysdale, wife of the esteemed Australian artist Russell Drysdale. Sculthorpe recalled his feelings from the period: "It was very tragic; I was the last person to speak to her."<sup>3</sup> In a 1997 interview, he added "it was during the course of writing [the work] that I decided I wanted to dedicate it to Bonnie."<sup>4</sup>

String Quartet no. 6 is cast in three contrasted movements. Sculthorpe has described the opening of the sixth quartet as "tense and introspective, almost funereal"<sup>5</sup>; the first movement broods and sighs in a slow threnody that rises to a quivering climax and then subsides to a single note in the cello. The second movement, which owes a small

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<sup>1</sup> Peter Sculthorpe, Composer's note: String Quartet no. 6 (Personal library, Peter Sculthorpe, Sydney).

<sup>2</sup> Hayes, 48.

<sup>3</sup> Milton, Sculthorpe interviews: complete transcript, 19.

<sup>4</sup> Skinner, "Pete and Tass: Sculthorpe and Drysdale," 36. Drysdale later wrote in a letter to Sculthorpe: "... [this gesture] brought me to tears; it is such beautiful music."

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

debt to Bartók,<sup>6</sup> is hard and rhythmic in its outer sections; in its central section, the basic motives of the work are transformed into tensely clipped cries of anguish. The last movement draws out the motives of the work in “yearning, melodic lines, until all tension is resolved.”<sup>7</sup>

String Quartet no. 6 also draws upon a wealth of material from a variety of other sources. The first movement of the work uses material from the *Piano Sonata* (1963), subsequently withdrawn from circulation by the composer. The opening cello statement (example 4-2) is a minor 3rd oscillation taken from the first measures of the *Piano Sonata* (example 4-1).

Example 4-1: Sculthorpe, *Piano Sonata*; I. very slowly, mm. 1-4.

The image shows a musical score for the first four measures of the Piano Sonata, I. very slowly. The score is written for piano and includes dynamic markings such as 'poco rall.', 'inf.', 'cresc.', and 'dim.'. The notation shows a minor 3rd oscillation in the first measures. The score is written for piano and includes dynamic markings such as 'poco rall.', 'inf.', 'cresc.', and 'dim.'. The notation shows a minor 3rd oscillation in the first measures.

<sup>6</sup> David Psalter, “Two reviews.” (Personal library, Peter Sculthorpe, Sydney).

<sup>7</sup> Peter Sculthorpe, Composer’s note: String Quartet no. 6.

Example 4-2: Sculthorpe, String Quartet no. 6: I. *Lento molto*, mm. 1-5.

Violin1 *mf* *cresc.* *ff angoscioso* *con sord.* *pizz.* *rall.*

Violin2 *ff angoscioso* *mf*

Viola *ff angoscioso* *pizz.* *con sord.*

Cello *mf angoscioso* *cresc.* *f molto* *arco*

The second movement of the string quartet (example 4-5) contains numerous references to both the first movement of *Irkanda III* (example 4-3) and the second movement of the *Piano Sonata* (example 4-4).

Example 4-3: Sculthorpe, *Irkanda III*: I. *very slowly*, mm. 1-6.

Violin... *mf* *pizz.*

Cello... *mf*

Piano... *very slowly* *p. cresc.* *molto accel.* *briskly*

both hands 5 va. lower

Example 4-4: Sculthorpe, *Piano Sonata*: II. *rather slowly*, mm. 1-5.

rather slowly.  $\text{♩} = c. 50$

Violin... *f.* *ff.* *hard: percussive.*

Piano... *f.*

molto accel. *briskly*

both hands 5 va. lower

Example 4-5: Sculthorpe, String Quartet no. 6: II. *Lento*, mm. 1-6.

The last movement of the quartet constitutes “the emotional heart of the piece.”<sup>8</sup>

It draws upon music from *The Laying Waste*, the first movement of *Prophecy*, a 1958 work for voices and piano with text from the Book of Isaiah. For Sculthorpe, the text symbolizes the wasting of human life and the destruction of a landscape. The quartet movement (example 4-7) also reworks material from the third song of the *Sun* song cycle (1958), *Desire goes down into the sea* (example 4-6).

<sup>8</sup> Milton, Sculthorpe interviews: complete transcript, 20.

Example 4-6: Sculthorpe, *Sun: III. Desire goes down into the sea*, mm. 1-8.

very slowly.

mp.

I have no de-sire —

5 va.

mp.

a-ny more to-wards wo-man or man, — bird, beast —

— or crea-ture or thing.

poco rall.

R.H.  
L.H.

R.H.  
L.H.

## Example 4-7: Sculthorpe, String Quartet no. 6: III. mm. 11-20.

With the composition of String Quartet no. 6, Sculthorpe made a conscious effort to “turn [his] back on the expressionistic kind of music written by Bloch and Mahler.”<sup>9</sup> In his autobiography, the composer suggests that String Quartet no. 6 was a summing-up of his *Irkanda* style music.<sup>10</sup> The three movements are constructed out of motives bearing aspects of anguish and loneliness. Roger Covell noted that “the strong and intimately tragic emotions of the music were unmistakable at its first performances.”<sup>11</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>10</sup> Sculthorpe, *Sun Music*, 96.

<sup>11</sup> Roger Covell, “Sculthorpe quartet gets prompt printing,” *Sydney Morning Herald* (30 April 1966).

### String Quartet no. 7

The Ellen Battell Stoeckel Trust of Norfolk, CT, commissioned String Quartet no. 7 in 1966 for the Yale Summer School of Music,<sup>12</sup> during Peter Sculthorpe's stay at Yale University as Composer-in-Residence.<sup>13</sup> The work was first performed by the Yale String Quartet at the Yale University Summer School of Music concert in July 1966.<sup>14</sup>

The program for the first performance of the work<sup>15</sup> clarifies that String Quartet no. 7 was originally titled *Teotihuacan*, a name that refers to the Mexican town of that name famous for its great "slope and platform pyramids" of the Sun and the Moon.<sup>16</sup>

Sculthorpe explains:

At that time, I was very involved in Mexican culture, though I had not had much exposure to Mexican music. I have always loved reading about ancient Mexican civilizations, so much so that, at the time, I was going to write an opera based on an ancient Mexican sacrifice with Christopher Wallace-Crabbe,<sup>17</sup> who was also on a Harkness Fellowship. Chris did write some of a libretto, but it never got finished.<sup>18</sup>

The inspiration of the sun, which had started to enter Sculthorpe's thinking with the *Sun* song cycle, here found a slightly different manifestation. Consuming thoughts of the sun

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<sup>12</sup> Hayes, 51.

<sup>13</sup> Peter Sculthorpe, Composer's note: String Quartet no. 7 (Personal library, Peter Sculthorpe, Sydney).

<sup>14</sup> Hannan and Mellers, eds. *Peter Sculthorpe: Faber Music Composer Catalogue* (1993), 10.

<sup>15</sup> Norfolk Concerts: Yale University Summer School of Music and Art (July 29, 2966). Peter Sculthorpe, Composer's file: String Quartet no. 7 (Personal library, Peter Sculthorpe, Sydney).

<sup>16</sup> Teotihuacan, near Mexico City, was the center of what may be called the Classical Period in Mexican culture, beginning around the last century B.C. The pyramids are among the first known structures to be based on the idea of the slope and platform (Milton, Sculthorpe interviews: complete transcript, 19).

<sup>17</sup> Christopher Wallace-Crabbe is now Professor of Australian literature at the University of Melbourne.

<sup>18</sup> Milton, Sculthorpe interviews: complete transcript, 21.

infused Sculthorpe's basic compositional approach to this quartet, generating a radically different musical style.

In writing the string quartet, I had thoughts of Mexico in my mind, thoughts of the sun, sun civilizations, and sun culture, and the idea of the pyramids of the sun and the moon.<sup>19</sup>

Seeking to imbue his music with a uniquely Australian aesthetic, Sculthorpe's fascination with the Sun and his subsequent studies of Japanese and Mexican cultures might themselves be considered an extension of his search for a musical language. In an unpublished lecture, "Concerning Music and the Sun", delivered to the Jung Society in Sydney during the first part of this decade, Sculthorpe draws upon a range of cultures, including African pygmies, American Indians, ancient Egyptians, and music of Japanese *gagaku*, Boulez, Delius, and Webern, to demonstrate Jung's assertion that the cult of the sun has played some part in most cultures.<sup>20</sup> Nevertheless, deciding that the work was more relevant to Australia than to Mexico,<sup>21</sup> Sculthorpe later changed the name of the quartet to *Red Landscape*, after a canvas by Russell Drysdale.<sup>22</sup> String Quartet no. 7 emerged still later as a title for the work "to make life simpler."<sup>23</sup> The work was slightly revised in 1995.

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Peter Sculthorpe, "Concerning Music and the Sun," (Personal library, Peter Sculthorpe, Sydney), 3-10.

<sup>21</sup> Milton, Sculthorpe interviews: complete transcript, 21.

<sup>22</sup> Skinner, "Pete and Tass: Sculthorpe and Drysdale," 37. The canvas, *Red Landscape*, was dedicated to Peter Sculthorpe (Milton, Sculthorpe interviews: complete transcript, 21).

<sup>23</sup> Milton, Sculthorpe interviews: complete transcript, 21.

This string quartet clearly represents a dramatic revolt against Sculthorpe's earlier aesthetic, which he has variously described as "expressionistic" or *Irkanda* style music. Its importance stems from a quite different aspect to the composer's style that now manifested itself in works inspired by the sun. This new stylistic element "seemed to usher in a period of sound pieces, with glissandos and effects."<sup>24</sup> Graeme Skinner has described the work as "a *Sun Music* in all but name."<sup>25</sup> The work was later orchestrated, expanded, and reworked to become *Sun Music IV* (1967),<sup>26</sup> perhaps the most austere of the *Sun Music* series.<sup>27</sup>

String Quartet no. 7 is a short and intense work in one movement; its structure is dictated by a refrain of slow glissandi. The high sustained notes in the music represent the platform at the peaks of the pyramids (example 4-8).<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Peter Sculthorpe, Composer's note: String Quartet no. 7 (Personal library, Peter Sculthorpe, Sydney).

<sup>25</sup> Graeme Skinner, "Peter Sculthorpe: Music for String Quartet: Volume 1," CD liner notes (Tall Poppies CD TP089; Goldner String Quartet, 1996), 5.

<sup>26</sup> Peter Sculthorpe, Composer's note: String Quartet no. 7 (Personal library, Peter Sculthorpe, Sydney). In his personal notes for the work, Sculthorpe recalls his decision to rework *Teotihuacan*: "Somehow I felt that I wanted to do more with this piece. The odd thing is that I'm now not certain which I prefer."

<sup>27</sup> The actual scheme of the composition's various reworkings is actually somewhat more complicated than the scope of these comments suggest. The work was reworked for string orchestra for a performance of the Astra Chamber Orchestra and given the title *Sun Music III*. It was subsequently withdrawn, and the title of *Sun Music III* was given to a work for full orchestra composed in 1967. Some months later, the musical material of this quartet was then reused in the composition of *Sun Music IV* (Skinner notes; Hayes, p. 52.)

<sup>28</sup> Milton, Sculthorpe interviews: complete transcript, 6.

Example 4-8: Sculthorpe, String Quartet no. 7, fig 5 through fig 6.

The musical score is divided into three systems, each containing four staves (Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Cello/Double Bass). The notation includes various dynamics and performance instructions:

- System 1:**
  - Violin I: *mp dim.*
  - Violin II: *mp dim.*
  - Viola: *p*
  - Cello/Double Bass: *pp*, *dim.*, *ppp*
- System 2:**
  - Violin I: *mf cresc.*, *f*, *f dim.*, *n (vn)*
  - Violin II: *pp*, *mf cresc.*, *f*, *f dim.*, *n (vn)*
  - Viola: *pp*, *mf cresc.*, *f*
  - Cello/Double Bass: *ppp*, *mf ad libitum*, *f*
- System 3:**
  - Violin I: *p cresc.*, *f cresc.*
  - Violin II: *n (vn)*, *p cresc.*, *f cresc.*
  - Viola: *f dim.*, *n (vn)*, *p cresc.*, *f cresc.*
  - Cello/Double Bass: *f dim.*, *p cresc.*, *f cresc.*

The tempo marking *molto accel.* is located between the second and third systems.

The emotional climax of the work (fig. 4) is reached at the approximate midpoint of the work, having been approached and departed from relatively steadily in a way that reflects a pyramid-effect as applied to the emotional intensity of the piece (example 4-9).

Example 4-9: Sculthorpe, String Quartet no. 7, fig 4 (mm. 1-10).

The musical score for Sculthorpe's String Quartet no. 7, figure 4 (measures 1-10), is presented in two systems of four staves each. The first system (measures 1-10) shows a dynamic progression from piano (*p*) to mezzo-forte (*mf*) to fortissimo (*ff*) and back to mezzo-forte (*mf*). The second system (measures 11-20) shows a dynamic progression from piano (*p*) to piano molto dimesso (*p molto dim.*) and then to pianissimo (*ppp*). A *molto rall.* marking is present between the systems.

Further, certain sections of the score suggest, visually, the shapes of the pyramids (example 4-10).<sup>29</sup>

Example 4-10: Sculthorpe, String Quartet no. 7, fig 8 (mm. 1-10)

Significantly, the 1995 revision removes some of the more obvious examples of this aspect of the composition, perhaps because the Mexican aspect of the work, as manifested in these visual pyramids, had by then been overtaken in importance by the application of primarily Australian stimuli.

<sup>29</sup> Peter Sculthorpe, Composer's note: String Quartet no. 7 (Personal library, Peter Sculthorpe, Sydney).

### **String Quartet no. 8**

Commissioned by the Radcliffe Trust for the 1969 Music Award, String Quartet no. 8, originally entitled *String Quartet Music*<sup>30</sup>, was first performed by the Allegri Quartet on January 15, 1970, in London's Wigmore Hall.<sup>31</sup> The preliminary selection of the Radcliffe Music Award was among 114 composers who submitted specimens of their chamber music.<sup>32</sup> Four finalists were then commissioned to write a new quartet each.<sup>33</sup> Although the Allegri Quartet, who played for the competition, indicated a preference for Sculthorpe's *String Quartet Music*, the four works were duly announced as joint winners by a jury composed of Britten, Musgrave, and Searle.<sup>34</sup>

In a recent interview, Sculthorpe described part of what he had set out to do with the writing of the composition:

I was looking for ways to develop a style that derived from other parts of the world in order to offset all the European elements that are and always will be.<sup>35</sup>

The work is cast in a palindromic 5-movement structure (Slow - Fast - Slow - Fast - Slow), and draws significantly upon material from Colin McPhee's *Music in Bali: A Study in Form and Instrumental Organization in Balinese Orchestral Music*. The fast sections, marked *Risoluto*, are based on the idiom of *ketungan*; this is the music which

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<sup>30</sup> The 1974 edition of the work is titled *String Quartet Music*; in the 1978 publication, the name has been changed to String Quartet no. 8. Peter Sculthorpe, Composer's files: String Quartet no. 8 (Personal library, Peter Sculthorpe, Sydney).

<sup>31</sup> Hayes, 55.

<sup>32</sup> T.H. Naisby, "Classics," (periodical unknown) (11 March 1972).

<sup>33</sup> The other composers were Sebastian Forbes, Robert Sherlaw Johnson, and Elizabeth Maconchy. (Personal library, Peter Sculthorpe, Sydney).

<sup>34</sup> Stephen Walsh, "Magnetic Stockhausen," *The Observer* (18 January 1970).

<sup>35</sup> Milton, Sculthorpe interviews: complete transcript, 6.

accompanies rituals of Balinese rice pounding.<sup>36</sup> Indeed, as Sculthorpe has indicated with respect to String Quartet no. 8, the Bali influence is incredibly strong at various levels of compositional activity, but especially in the two fast movements, and the composer acknowledges that this was due to the impact of McPhee's book. As he elaborates: "I don't want the second movement to sound like rice-pounding; that was just my inspiration."<sup>37</sup>

At the opening of the second movement, as example 4-11 shows, the violins establish a steady rhythmic pulse, known as the *ngijengin*.<sup>38</sup>

Example 4-11: Sculthorpe, String Quartet no. 8, 2<sup>nd</sup> movement, mm. 1-12.

The musical score for Example 4-11 shows the first 12 measures of the second movement. It is arranged for four staves: Violin 1, Violin 2, Viola, and Violoncello. The violins play a steady rhythmic pulse with 'col legno' markings. The viola and cello play pizzicato accompaniment. Dynamics include f, mp, and mf.

<sup>36</sup> Graeme Skinner, "Peter Sculthorpe: Music for String Quartet: Volume 1," CD liner notes (Tall Poppies CD TP089; Goldner String Quartet, 1996), 6.

<sup>37</sup> Milton, Sculthorpe interviews: complete transcript, 12.

<sup>38</sup> Graeme Skinner, "Peter Sculthorpe: Music for String Quartet: Volume 1," CD liner notes (Tall Poppies CD TP089; Goldner String Quartet, 1996), 6.

As Sculthorpe has noted, this is the actual rice-pounding “beat” made by the women workers, and the composer heard an actual recording of this part of the ritual that influenced him strongly.<sup>39</sup> Against this basic pattern, the viola and cello provide various offbeat effects; in McPhee’s book, these decorations, provided by the men, are described as *candetan*.<sup>40</sup>

Since 1995, the second movement of this quartet has acquired a performance tradition that has until now not been formalized in print or even in a recorded document.

As Sculthorpe described the evolution of this tradition:

I really like the way the Kronos is playing it now, with the second movement about as fast as it can go. But it has always worried me that the rice-pounding section is too short. In 1995 when I heard it, it was over so quickly. I suggested the repeats, and I am now very satisfied. They do the repeat even when playing the work in its entirety.<sup>41</sup>

In the second movement’s central slow section, marked *Calmo*, the repeated eighth notes in the viola and cello suggest the rhythmic tolling of the Balinese popular *arja* theater song. The *Irkanda* style violin melodies weaving through the Balinese texture therefore represent a manifestation of the fusion of these two distinct facets of the composer’s style: in the following example, the viola’s steadily monotonous, syncopated *ostinato* contrasts effectively with the free expressionism of the violins: an elaborate melody punctuated by plaintive sighs (example 4-12).

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<sup>39</sup> Peter Sculthorpe, Composer’s note: String Quartet no. 8 (Personal library, Peter Sculthorpe, Sydney).

<sup>40</sup> Graeme Skinner, “Peter Sculthorpe: Music for String Quartet: Volume 1,” CD liner notes (Tall Poppies CD TP089; Goldner String Quartet, 1996), 6.

<sup>41</sup> The repeats in the second movement suggested by the composer are as follows: the whole opening section until figure 4 is repeated, then the music between figures 4 and 7 is played once only, and the section from figures 7 through 9 is repeated once, before playing until the end of the movement.

Example 4-12: Sculthorpe, String Quartet no. 8, 2<sup>nd</sup> movement, fig 5, (mm. 1-12).

The musical score is presented in four systems, each with four staves. The first system is marked 'poco rall.' and 'Calmò (♩ = c. 46)'. The first staff (Violin I) begins with a 'poco rall.' and 'mp' dynamic. The second staff (Violin II) has 'mp' and 'arco' markings. The third staff (Viola) has 'mp' and 'con sord. arco' markings. The fourth staff (Cello/Double Bass) has 'mp' and 'pizz.' markings. The score includes various dynamics such as 'p', 'mp', 'ppp', 'cresc.', and 'dim.', as well as performance instructions like 'arco' and 'con sord.'.

Within the palindromic structure of the work, the work's fourth movement balances the energy of the second movement quite deliberately. Immediately noticeable is the similarity of rhythmic patterns between these movements. Nevertheless, a progression during the course of the work results in the fourth movement in a style that is at once far more complex. Each voice carries elements of previously suggested materials, yet the combination of these textures is seemingly effortless. The rice pounding pulse set up by

the violins in the second movement now manifests itself quite delicately between viola and cello, with all of the instruments exploring a greater range of tonal and instrumental effects in the later movement (example 4-13).

Example 4-13: Sculthorpe, String Quartet no. 8, 4<sup>th</sup> movement, mm. 5-14.

Contrasting with the precise rhythmic energy of the second and fourth movements, the three slow movements of the work are freely notated. Sculthorpe attempted to create a feeling of improvisation by infusing many basic instrumental gestures with various aleatoric elements. Even durational indications to the players leave

room for interpretation (example 4-14). Each of the three slow movements begins with the solo cello.

Example 4-14: Sculthorpe, String Quartet no. 8, 1<sup>st</sup> movement, opening

*Con dolore*

Vlo.

*sf* *molto cresc.* *ff* *mf* *dim.* *pp*

*pizz.*

*c. 3"*

*mp* *pizz.* *molto cresc.*

*f* *sub. p* *pp* *molto cresc.*

*ff* *sub. p* *pizz.* *molto dim.* *mp*

Attempts to create bird song and other non-traditional effects subsequently permeate the solo texture (example 4-15).<sup>42</sup>

Example 4-15: Sculthorpe, String Quartet no. 8, 1<sup>st</sup> movement, fig. 2.

The musical score is arranged in systems. The top system includes Violin 1 (Vln. 1), Violin 2 (Vln. 2), and Viola (Vla.). The bottom system includes Violoncello (Vcllo.).

- Vln. 1 and Vln. 2:** Both parts are marked *Dolcissimo* and *liberamente*. They begin with a *pp* dynamic.
- Vla.:** The Viola part features a *molto rapidamente* section with a *cresc.* marking.
- Vcllo.:** The Cello part includes a *pizz.* (pizzicato) section marked *ff*, followed by an *(arco)* section with a *dim.* marking and a *c. 3"* (crescendo) bracket.
- Violin 1 and 2 (Lower Systems):** These parts show a dynamic progression from *mf* to *mp* to *p*, ending with *molto dim.* and *fpp*.
- Viola (Lower System):** This part shows a dynamic progression from *mf* to *dim.* to *fpp*.
- Vcllo. (Lower System):** This part includes a *cresc.* marking, a *con sord.* (con sordina) section, and a *p* dynamic.
- Section 3:** A section marked **3** *Con dolore* begins in the Cello part, with dynamics of *mp* and *dim.*
- Final System:** The Cello part concludes with a *pizz.* section, followed by dynamics of *pp*, *p*, *dim.*, and *fpp*.

<sup>42</sup> Chapter 8 of this paper isolates a number of specific examples of bird songs among the composer's writing for string quartet within the context of what I am identifying as a *Sun Music* style.

The third movement rises to the spiritual climax of the work, with the pivotal cello reaching an exquisitely tortured line against the dynamically turbulent trills of the other three instruments (example 4-16).

Example 4-16: Sculthorpe, String Quartet no. 8, 3<sup>rd</sup> movement, fig. 2.

Con dolore

The musical score for Example 4-16 consists of two systems of four staves each, representing the Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Cello parts. The first system is marked "Con dolore" and includes performance instructions such as "pizz." (pizzicato) and "arco" (arco). The Cello part is particularly prominent, showing a tortured line with many trills and dynamic fluctuations. The second system continues the piece, featuring a "con sord." (con sordina) instruction. The score includes various dynamics such as *mf*, *mp*, *p*, *cresc.*, *ff*, *molto dim.*, *fpp*, and *f*.

The third movement of the string quartet (example 4-18) reinstates a manifestation of the central melodic idea of Sculthorpe's Sonata for Unaccompanied Violin (example 4-17).

Example 4-17: Sculthorpe, *Sonata for Unaccompanied Violin*

Five Aspects of a Slow Theme; Aspect 3, mm. 1-5

*Kather slowly.* III

arco. mp. with much warmth.

Example 4-18: Sculthorpe, *String Quartet no. 8; Movement III, fig. 4-conclusion.*

4

mp dim. fff sul pont. mp

con sord. arco mf senza vibr. fff

ord. senza sord. senza sord. senza sord.

mp fff dim. fff

mp fff dim. fff

mp fff dim. fff

c. 4'

In a lecture note among the composer's personal papers, the following comment clarifies his approach to the curiously and perhaps only apparently sparse emotional aesthetic of the work.

The scarcity of climaxes, and the work's symmetrical shape, which could never function as an intense dramatic structure, are indicative of a compositional aim which has obsessed me. I have constantly tried to purge the European heroic gesture from my music.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Peter Sculthorpe, Composer's note: String Quartet no. 8 (Personal library, Peter Sculthorpe, Sydney).

### String Quartet no. 9

String Quartet no. 9, written in 1975, was dedicated to the Austral String Quartet, which had performed several of Sculthorpe's works, including the first performance of the sixth string quartet and the Australian premiere of the eighth.<sup>44</sup> The work was commissioned by the Musica Viva Society of Australia with assistance from the Music Board of the Australia Council.<sup>45</sup> The composer inscribed the work: "To the Austral String Quartet and to the memory of Ronald Ryder."<sup>46</sup>

On this period of his life and how this work impacted it, Sculthorpe commented to this author during our extended series of interviews:

Those years were not a very good period in my life creatively, and I don't know why. It was in 1976 that I moved here to Holdsworth Street and I think maybe I needed a change. I had got to a point that I didn't quite know where I was heading musically. String Quartet no. 9 was important to me. After I wrote it, I thought it was better than String Quartet no. 8; perhaps because it was so important to me, I gave it more worth than it deserves. Certainly, with this work, I was getting over a slump. Looking back, it was probably like my version of a mid-life crisis. There is no doubt that the music written after that time is my best music, and since then, I've never not known where I was going.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Hayes, 48.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 62.

<sup>46</sup> Sculthorpe, String Quartet no. 9 (London: Faber Music, 1978), 1.

<sup>47</sup> Milton, Sculthorpe interviews: complete transcript, 23.

The structure of the work is: A (Introduction), B, C, B', A' (Coda). Of these sections, A, C and A' are basically slow, with the chant-like, three-note theme first heard in the introduction flowering into what amounts to a twelve-note elegy in the central section. The quick music of the inner parts of the quartet's structure features an extremely stark harmonic framework centered on the pitches of G and A flat (example 4-19).

Example 4-19: Sculthorpe, String Quartet no. 9, fig 4 (mm. 1-14).

④ Molto preciso (♩ = ca. 144)

pizz. ppp (pizz.) arco pppp arco: quasi col legno ppp arco ppp arco ppp arco

Sculthorpe has commented that String Quartet no. 9 juxtaposes and combines his typical yearning *Irkanda* style music with passages derived from Australian Aboriginal sources.<sup>48</sup> In the B sections, the pulse is maintained by an intricate series of overlapping *ostinati* that are based in part on melodies transcribed by Trevor Jones in Berndt's *Aboriginal Man in Australia* (example 4-20).<sup>49</sup> This style of ritualistic repetition also

<sup>48</sup> Hayes, 62.

<sup>49</sup> Ronald M. and Catherine H. Berndt, eds. *Aboriginal Man in Australia: Essays in Honour of Emeritus Professor A. P. Elkin* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1965).

stems from some of the writing from his theater work *Rites of Passage*,<sup>50</sup> written for the opening of the Sydney Opera House in 1973.<sup>51</sup>

Example 4-20: Sculthorpe, String Quartet no. 9, fig 5 (mm. 1-14).

The image displays two systems of musical notation for a string quartet. The first system consists of four staves (Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Cello/Double Bass). A circled number '5' is placed above the first measure of the Violin I staff. Performance markings include 'pizz.' (pizzicato) and 'arco' (arco). The second system continues the notation, with markings for 'pizz.', 'arco: quasi col legno', and 'arco'. The notation includes various rhythmic values and articulation marks.

Uniquely within Sculthorpe's quartet writing, the central section is derived from a tone row that the composer had previously used in a university teaching situation.

Example 4-21: Tone row used in Sculthorpe's String Quartet no. 9.

The image shows a single staff of music containing a tone row. The notes are: G4, A4, Bb4, C5, D5, Eb5, F5, G5, Ab5, Bb5, C6, D6, Eb6, F6, G6. The notes are written as half notes on a treble clef staff.

<sup>50</sup> Milton, Sculthorpe interviews: complete transcript, 14.

<sup>51</sup> Hayes, 60.

In fact, the slow music of String Quartet no. 9 had been written some years earlier when Sculthorpe was teaching at the University of Sussex. He had given a project to the class to write a piece of music based on a tone row. Although Sculthorpe used the tone row within the context of a class on Webern, the tone row (example 4-21) is not by Webern and is, in fact, entirely un-Webernian.<sup>52</sup>

I knew what sort of music the students would write, so I decided to write something that was quite beautiful to show that you don't have to be restricted to wild dissonance or spiky music.<sup>53</sup>

He liked his piece so much that he decided to use it for something later:

When I was writing String Quartet no. 9, I wanted some slow music, and I remembered the piece I had written in Sussex, so I incorporated that into the quartet.<sup>54</sup>

The other movements of the quartet did not use the row, though Sculthorpe included insect sounds in which he could incorporate most of the notes in chromatic order in order, he suggests, to make "some kind of connection in [his] mind."<sup>55</sup>

The pitches manifest themselves most directly in the section beginning at figure 9, most notably in the chords in the viola and cello (example 4-22). Once the accompanimental pattern has been established in the lower voices, Sculthorpe repeats it a number of times; the violins explore the colours of the harmonies with increasing rhythmic activity and an extremely limited melodic range.

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<sup>52</sup> It embeds two consonant triads (E-flat, B, F-sharp and A-flat, D-flat, E) and is intervallically quite varied, with the first six intervals all representing different interval classes; both of these characteristics make this series unlike any row ever used by a Webern.

<sup>53</sup> Milton, Sculthorpe interviews: complete transcript, 6.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

Example 4-22: Sculthorpe, String Quartet no. 9, fig 9, (mm. 1-14).

⑨ Calmo ( $\text{♩} = \text{ca. } 56$ )  
arco sul tasto

arco sul tasto

arco sul tasto

sul tasto

con sord.

ord.

ord.

etc.

Sculthorpe has commented that, when transferring the earlier composition to the string quartet, several liberties were taken quite deliberately. As he put it, “I no longer thought of it in terms of serial music.”<sup>56</sup> As with so much of the writing for string quartet, however, an “old world element”, albeit one that is quite drastically altered, infuses itself into the composition’s inspiration.<sup>57</sup>

Perhaps the dedication to the Austral String Quartet also inspired the composer to quote from himself in writing this work. The close association between the players of the Austral Quartet and String Quartet no. 6, as reflected in the similar melodic shape of examples 4-23 and 4-24, might support such a hypothesis. Sculthorpe has acknowledged a distinct spiritual connection between these two works.

<sup>56</sup> Milton, Sculthorpe interviews: complete transcript, 23.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

Example 4-23: Sculthorpe, String Quartet no. 6, last five bars.

molto rall. e dim.

*p* molto calmo niente

*p* molto calmo niente

*p* molto calmo niente

*p* molto calmo niente

Example 4-24: Sculthorpe, String Quartet no. 9, 2 measures before fig. 23.

*f* *dim.* *mf* *mp*

*f* *dim.* *mf* *mp*

*accco f* *dim.* *mf* *mp*

*f* *dim.* *mf* *mp*

Ronald Ryder, commemorated specifically in the dedication, was the second violinist in the Austral String Quartet. This quartet is a work, like much of the composer's *Irkanda* style music, about the landscape and, specifically, a lonely figure in the landscape.<sup>58</sup> According to Sculthorpe, the nature of the dedication to Ryder is the reason the second violin goes above the first at the end of the work (example 4-25). This was a conscious attempt to portray the memory of this particular second violinist in the

<sup>58</sup> Peter Sculthorpe, Composer's note: String Quartet no. 9 (Personal library, Peter Sculthorpe, Sydney).

work. Ryder had died after Sculthorpe had written the work, and he adjusted the music to suggest, as he put it, “Ron ascending to heaven.”<sup>59</sup>

Example 4-25: Sculthorpe, String Quartet no. 9, fig 23-conclusion.

The musical score is presented in two systems, each with four staves. The first system is marked "a tempo" and begins with a circled "23". The dynamics are marked *mf* and *mp*. The second system is marked "rall. poco a poco" and features a gradual deceleration. The dynamics are marked *p*, *dim.*, and *pp*, leading to "al niente" for all parts. A vertical copyright notice "Sydney 1975" is on the right.

<sup>59</sup> Milton, Sculthorpe interviews: complete transcript, 23.

### **String Quartet no. 10**

Commissioned and written for the Kronos Quartet, Sculthorpe's String Quartet no. 10 was given its first performance in San Francisco on April 8, 1983.<sup>60</sup> String Quartet no. 10 is cast in five distinct movements:

- I. Sun Song
- II. Chorale
- III. Interlude
- IV. Chorale
- V. Sun Song

In part because of the nature of the commission, and the fact that the work was to receive its first performance in San Francisco, Sculthorpe was eager to employ significant musical influences in this work that identified with and were inspired by sources relating to the West Coast of the United States. He therefore decided to use specific and quite varied source material relating to the music and dance of the Pueblo Indian.<sup>61</sup> Sculthorpe recalls: "much of the basic material is based on elements of specific songs of the Pueblo Indians."<sup>62</sup>

Sculthorpe attempted to infuse another American influence into the work, imagining an aural aesthetic reminiscent of United States west coast rock music:

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<sup>60</sup> Hayes, 73.

<sup>61</sup> The books in question, each containing transcribed musical examples, are as follows: Natalie Curtis, ed. *The Indians' book: an offering by the American Indians of Indian lore, musical and narrative, to form a record of the songs and legends of their race* (New York: Dover Publications, 1968).

Gertrude Prokosch Kurath, *Music and Dance of the Tewa Pueblos*, Museum of New Mexico Research Records: No. 8 (Sante Fe: Museum of New Mexico Press, 1970).

Frances Densmore, *Yuman and Yaqui Music*, Bureau of American Ethnology: Bulletin 110 (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institute, 1932; reprint, New York: Da Capo Press, 1972).

I had decided that I wanted the last movement to be improvised—basic material upon which Kronos would base the improvisation. I wanted it to sound like early Grateful Dead. When I got to San Francisco about four days before the concert they said they don't like improvising; they like the music to be absolutely through-written. They would be happy with improvising smaller sections, but certainly not a whole movement. They said they knew the pianist from Grateful Dead, Tom Costanten, and suggested I call him so we could together come up with something. I phoned Tom and we arranged a meeting for the next day. The next day came, and Tom couldn't make it; he kept putting off our meeting. Finally, it came to the day of the concert; I was still feeling fairly confident that we could do something even on the day of the concert. We met for lunch, and he talked at great length about his lessons with Berio and Stockhausen; he kept looking at his watch, and then said he was going away on a holiday and would have to leave me with a student, Christopher. So there we were; I said to Christopher, "All right, we need a piano, table and chair, and let's get to work." We slogged away all afternoon, and finished in the nick of time. The first performance was that night, and it went wonderfully well.<sup>63</sup>

The original conception for the last movement, therefore, is quite different from the final version that appears in the printed edition. The improvised single page (example 4-26), though not a part of the work as it currently stands, is given here because of its unique position as the only almost completely improvised movement among any of the quartets.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Milton, Sculthorpe interviews: complete transcript, 24.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 8-9

<sup>64</sup> It would be interesting for a quartet to revisit this original conception in the future. Until now, this page has never been published, and I am grateful to the composer for making such an important document available to me.

Example 4-26: Sculthorpe, String Quartet no. 10, V. Original version

Sun Song

*This is the basis for an improvisation in the manner of rock music; there should be improvisation in all parts, & the melody should not be restricted to violins. The eight bar repetitions x 3 may be repeated x 4, & the whole should be repeated, in order that each instrument in turn may play an accompanied cadenza. The work should be faded out at the end.*

Ad libitum (♩ = c. 120)

X 3 (vary melody upon repetition)

The first, third and fifth movements of this quartet had their origins in previously published music by the composer.<sup>65</sup> The outer movements of the quartet were transformed from the main musical material of *Sun Song*, a recorder quartet composed in

<sup>65</sup> These connections are not otherwise mentioned in the literature on the quartets.

1976.<sup>66</sup> Before appearing in the string quartet, the melody of the recorder quartet next appeared in *Cantares*, a work for 10 guitars and string quartet; it reached its final form in the first, third, and fifth movements of String Quartet no. 10 some seven years after it was first conceived.<sup>67</sup>

The musical material from the recorder quartet (example 4-27) manifests itself in the quartet's first, third, and fifth movements in starkly differing ways. Note in example 4-28 below also the transformation of the accompaniment in the string quartet to incorporate a far more dramatic, expressionistic harmonic underpinning. The resultant plaintive and yearning aesthetic is quite typical of Sculthorpe's *Irkanda* style music.

Example 4-27: Sculthorpe, *Sun Song*, for recorder quartet, mm. 1-10.

*Estatico* (♩ = c. 72)

<sup>66</sup> Sculthorpe, *Sun Song: for recorder quartet* (1976), in *The Recorder Book: forty-four pieces for recorder collected by Steve Rosenberg* (Wellington, NZ: Price Milburn Music, 1976), 38-39.

<sup>67</sup> Hayes, 69.

Example 4-28: Sculthorpe, String Quartet no. 10, I. *Sun Song*, mm. 1-10.

The musical score for Example 4-28 is for Sculthorpe's String Quartet no. 10, I. *Sun Song*, measures 1-10. It features four staves: Violin 1, Violin 2, Viola, and Cello. The piece is in 4/4 time and is divided into two sections. The first section, 'Estatico', has a tempo of approximately 96 beats per minute and is marked *f*. The second section, 'più mosso', has a tempo of approximately 132 beats per minute and is marked *pp*. The score shows the first ten measures of the piece, with the first five measures in the 'Estatico' section and the last five measures in the 'più mosso' section.

In providing a dramatic foil to the *Chorale* movements, the *Interlude* movement of this quartet functions much like the outer movements. Indeed, the melodic material is based on similar melodic cells, although the treatment within this central movement is vastly different, in terms of tempo, rhythm, and mood (example 4-29).

Example 4-29: Sculthorpe, String Quartet no. 10, III. *Interlude*, fig. 4 (mm. 1-10).

The musical score for Example 4-29 is for Sculthorpe's String Quartet no. 10, III. *Interlude*, figure 4, measures 1-10. It features four staves: Violin 1, Violin 2, Viola, and Cello. The piece is in 4/4 time and is marked *f*. The score shows the first ten measures of the piece, which are characterized by a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes and sixteenth notes, often grouped in pairs or fours. The score is marked *f*.

The ritualistic quality of the *Interlude*, with its drive and sharp “wood stick”-like accented interjections, is typical of music Sculthorpe associates with Australian Aboriginal influences (example 4-30).<sup>68</sup>

Example 4-30: Sculthorpe, String Quartet no. 10, III. *Interlude*, opening.

**Risolute (♩=c.132)**

As with several of the *ostinato* patterns in String Quartet no. 9, the *chorales* in String Quartet no. 10 are based on the chorales in *Rites of Passage*. That Sculthorpe borrows so frequently from himself perhaps indicates the validity of the suggestion that stylistic fingerprints throughout his music are extraordinarily pervasive.

Sculthorpe lends extraordinary unity to the overall compositional style by matching patterns between melody and harmony. The most striking intervallic contour of the *Sun Song* melody is the opening ascending leap of a perfect fifth; Sculthorpe typically underscores the interval in the accompanimental lines also (example 4-31).

<sup>68</sup> Milton, Sculthorpe interviews: complete transcript, 24.

Example 4-31: Sculthorpe, *Sun Songs*, for recorder quartet, mm. 1-5.

Interestingly, String Quartet no. 10 is the Sculthorpe work the Kronos Quartet plays the least. Sculthorpe suggests this is “because they prefer the Australian-inspired music.”<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Sculthorpe, *Sun Music: journeys and reflections from a composer's life* (Sydney: ABC Books, 1999), 106.

### Chapter 5: String Quartets 11-15

The last five quartets exhibit a growing synthesis of stylistic elements. They are:

- String Quartet no. 11 (*Jabiru Dreaming*) (1990)
- String Quartet no. 12 (*From Ubirr*) (1994)
- String Quartet no. 13 (*Island Dreaming*)  
for mezzo-soprano and string quartet (1996)
- String Quartet no. 14 (1998)
- String Quartet no. 15 (1999)

The fusion and juxtaposition of various elements, foreshadowed in the earlier quartets, becomes a basic compositional approach in these five contrasted works. Most importantly, the inspiration for each of the works derives from musical or cultural sources closely associated with Australasia. The two-movement String Quartet no. 11, subtitled *Jabiru Dreaming*, draws upon Australian Aboriginal source material transcribed by a French exploratory expedition in 1824. String Quartet no. 12, also known as *From Ubirr*, features a didgeridu and transcribes material from the orchestral work *Earth Cry* and one of Sculthorpe's most celebrated compositions, *The Song of Tailitnama*, a setting of northern Aranda Aboriginal text. The musical source material of String Quartet no. 13, for mezzo-soprano and string quartet, derives from ideas and texts suggested by the music of the Torres Strait Islands. The work is subtitled *Island Dreaming*. String Quartet no. 14 is a four-movement work concerned with the island state of Tasmania, and the specific subtext of one of its most tragic Aboriginal legends. The five-movement String Quartet no. 15 draws upon songs belonging to the Simori people of western New Guinea.

**String Quartet no. 11 (*Jabiru Dreaming*)**

String Quartet no. 11 was commissioned by Musica Viva Australia for the Kronos Quartet,<sup>1</sup> and completed in Sydney in February 1990.<sup>2</sup> The work was given its first performance<sup>3</sup> by the Kronos Quartet at the 1988 Adelaide Festival.<sup>4</sup> The work was known only as String Quartet no. 11 until the Kronos Quartet, to whom the work is dedicated, requested an Aboriginal title well after the first performance;<sup>5</sup> the work subsequently became known as *Jabiru Dreaming*.<sup>6</sup> The word *Jabiru* is the Aboriginal name for a species of stork that has a distinctive and quite funny gait.

If you could see the stork, it seems to be walking forwards and backwards at the same time. Some sections of the rhythmic construction of the quartet really suggest the gait of a *jabiru*. I thought it was only in my mind, but several people have commented that it's an appropriate image.<sup>7</sup>

In the composer's own words:

*Jabiru Dreaming* itself is a rock formation near the East Alligator River in Kakadu National Park. While the rock is regarded as sacred, there is nothing forbidding about it. On the contrary, it seems to beckon and welcome. The works that refer to it don't seek to depict the rock formation, nor any part of the landscape that inspired them. For the matter

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<sup>1</sup> Hayes, 82.

<sup>2</sup> Graeme Skinner, "Peter Sculthorpe: Music for String Quartet: Volume 2," [CD liner notes: Tall Poppies CD TP090: Goldner String Quartet, 1998], 1.

<sup>3</sup> According to the composer's autobiography, *Sun Music*, the work was finished "just minutes" before its premiere; he gave the members of the quartet the final versions of their parts as they were about to walk on to the stage. (Sculthorpe, *Sun Music*, 260).

<sup>4</sup> Hayes, 82.

<sup>5</sup> Milton, Sculthorpe interviews: complete transcript, 19.

<sup>6</sup> Of two well-known ensembles that perform this work frequently, the Brodsky Quartet always performs it as String Quartet no. 11 and the Kronos Quartet always calls it *Jabiru Dreaming*.

<sup>7</sup> Milton, Sculthorpe interviews: complete transcript, 25.

they don't seek an Australian-ness of sound. They are, simply, a testament to my own Australian-ness.<sup>8</sup>

String Quartet no. 11 is a work in two movements. The first is quick and ritual-like, culminating in birdsong (example 5-1).<sup>9</sup>

Example 5-1: Sculthorpe, *Jabiru Dreaming*, 1<sup>st</sup> mvt. mm. 1-9

The second movement (example 5-3) is based upon an Aboriginal melodic fragment collected by a member of the Baudin exploratory expedition and published in an atlas in Paris in 1824 (example 5-2).<sup>10</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Peter Sculthorpe, *Sun Music: Journeys and Reflections from a Composer's Life* (Sydney: ABC Books, 1999), 260.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> Sculthorpe, "What is Australian Music?" [Lecture notes (1982)] Personal library, Peter Sculthorpe, Sydney.

Example 5-2: Baudin expedition transcription: Chant

1. Chant.

The musical score for Example 5-2, titled 'Chant', is presented in three staves. The first staff begins with a treble clef and a 2/4 time signature. The melody consists of eighth and sixteenth notes, with some notes beamed together. The second staff continues the melody, featuring several half notes with fermatas. The third staff concludes the piece with a final cadence, ending on a whole note.

Example 5-3: Sculthorpe, Jabiru Dreaming, 2nd mvt. opening measures

The musical score for Example 5-3, titled 'Jabiru Dreaming, 2nd mvt. opening measures', is a complex score with multiple staves. The top staff is marked 'Ad libitamento (♩ = 60)'. It includes dynamic markings such as *dim.*, *p*, and *mf*. The score features various rhythmic patterns, including eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests. A circled '1' indicates a first ending. The bottom staff is marked 'movimento per metà (♩ = 60)' and ends with a *dim.* marking.

Melodic invention was a significant compositional force behind the writing of the work.

According to the composer, the first movement represents “an attempt to find the spirit of the landscape in the way that the Aborigines feel about the landscape.”

In writing String Quartet no. 11, I deliberately set out to write a melody in the first movement that I thought would capture something of the spirit of the landscape in my terms, in my view. I also recall copying down didjeridu rhythm patterns from a book, and I used those rhythms in the cello part.<sup>11</sup>

Sculthorpe has recently come to regard String Quartet no. 11 as being a very important work within his output, primarily because “it seemed to open a door to a new music.”

My present belief as a composer is that I am very concerned about world overpopulation. If we have doubled our population by the middle of the next century, I think that science will probably solve the food and energy problems. Of that I have no doubt, but what concerns me is the compounding of hatred and despair. Already there is so much hatred, and when that is compounded, it just horrifies me. I feel that in spite of all that knowledge, what I must do as a composer is try to uplift others. *Jabiru Dreaming* is the first work in which I consciously try to do this. I don't want to write music about hatred and despair. I think that as an Australian living in a country where the quality of life is still pretty good, I can honestly do that, and I think that is what I must do. In String Quartet no. 11, I am consciously attempting to write joyful music.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Milton, Sculthorpe interviews: complete transcript, 6.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

**String Quartet no. 12 (From Ubirr)**

The background to String Quartet no. 12 is somewhat complicated. The Kronos Quartet wanted to commission Sculthorpe to write a work for string quartet and didjeridu. Unfortunately, the patron said he would be agreeable only if the work were for string quartet only, therefore not with didjeridu. Sculthorpe recalls:

David [Harrington]<sup>13</sup> was upset and said he'd try to find someone else, and then I said I'd get somebody to support it. I phoned Musica Viva and several people, and everybody said, well, if it were string quartet, but not with didjeridu. I had so much on my plate, but I still wanted to write something for Kronos. About to write a string quartet for nothing since we could not find anyone to commission it, I asked myself: "What have I got that I could arrange for string quartet, and I suddenly thought of *Earth Cry*."<sup>14</sup>

The 1986 one-movement orchestral piece *Earth Cry* (examples 5-4 and 5-6), therefore, was transformed and reworked quite significantly to become String Quartet no. 12 (example 5-5 and 5-7).

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<sup>13</sup> First violinist of the Kronos Quartet.

<sup>14</sup> Milton, Sculthorpe interviews: complete transcript, 4.

Example 5-4: Sculthorpe, *Earth Cry*, mm. 1-4

Flute (Fl.)

Clarinet (Cl.)

Bassoon (B.)

Oboe (Ob.)

Violin (V.)

Viola (Vi.)

Cello (C.)

Double Bass (Cb.)

Violin (V.)

Viola (Vi.)

Cello (C.)

Double Bass (Cb.)

Violin (V.)

Viola (Vi.)

Cello (C.)

Double Bass (Cb.)

Violin (V.)

Viola (Vi.)

Cello (C.)

Double Bass (Cb.)

1.R.

poco f

f

poco f

poco f

poco f

f

mf

Dam-tam: on rim

3

3

Flute (Fl.)

Clarinet (Cl.)

Bassoon (B.)

Oboe (Ob.)

Violin (V.)

Viola (Vi.)

Cello (C.)

Double Bass (Cb.)

Violin (V.)

Viola (Vi.)

Cello (C.)

Double Bass (Cb.)

Violin (V.)

Viola (Vi.)

Cello (C.)

Double Bass (Cb.)

Violin (V.)

Viola (Vi.)

Cello (C.)

Double Bass (Cb.)

poco f

div

poco f

Example 5-5: Sculthorpe, String Quartet no. 12, mm. 1-8

Adagio (♩ = c. 60)

Viol. 1

Viol. 2

Viola

Vcllo

Dbl. Bass

poco f

pizz.

aspirato.

Example 5-6: Sculthorpe, Earth Cry, mm. 21-28

Andante (♩ = c. 100)

21 Chinese cymbal

mp

Andante (♩ = c. 100)

Viol. 1

Viol. 2

Viola

Vcllo

Dbl. Bass

f

cresc.

cresc.

(uniso.)

pizz.

Example 5-7: Sculthorpe, String Quartet no. 12, fig. 3 (mm. 1-8)

Even the genesis of the earlier work was somewhat convoluted. At the time of writing *Earth Cry*, Sculthorpe has noted there were extraordinary demands on his time. Knowing that the work would not be completed in time for the scheduled first performance, he decided to rework an earlier piece, *The Song of Tailitnama*,<sup>15</sup> written in 1974.<sup>16</sup>

Scored for soprano, six cellos, and percussion, *The Song of Tailitnama* is a setting of Northern Aranda Aboriginal text<sup>17</sup> from a rock wallaby song associated with an Aboriginal totemic area in central Australia (examples 5-8 and 5-9).<sup>18</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Hayes, 61.

<sup>16</sup> Sculthorpe, Notes on *Earth Cry*. Personal library, Peter Sculthorpe, Sydney.

<sup>17</sup> Transcribed by T. G. H. Strehlow in Ronald M. and Catherine H. Berndt, eds. *Aboriginal Man in Australia: Essays in Honour of Emeritus Professor A. P. Elkin*; 285-374 (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1965).

<sup>18</sup> Hayes, 61.

Example 5-8a: Sculthorpe, *The Song of Tailitnama*, extract 1

c. 1'00

Sopr. *ppp*

Vlc. 1 *ppp*

Vlc. 2 *ppp*

Vlc. 3 *ppp*

Vlc. 4 *ppp*

Perc. 1 *ppp*

Perc. 2 *ppp*

Music of early morning

Play the water gong, producing as many different kinds of sounds as possible; in addition, play the guiro, sand block and woodchimes.

Hold the water gong; make splashing noises in water.

*p* *cresc. poco a poco*

(♩ = c.56)

pizz. *liberamente*

*p* *dim.* *ppp*

pizz. *liberamente*

*p* *dim.* *ppp*

pizz. *liberamente*

*p* *dim.* *ppp*

pizz. *liberamente*

*p* *dim.* *ppp*

Chinese cymbal

(soft sticks)

*f* *lasciar vibrare*

*pp cresc.* *mf/p* *dim.* *ppp*

Example 5-8b: Sculthorpe, *The Song of Tailitnama*, extract 2

The musical score is divided into two systems. The first system includes the following parts:

- SOPRANO:** Features a melodic line with dynamics *pp* and *p*, and accents marked with 'a'.
- VIOLONCELLO:** Consists of six staves. Dynamics include *pp* and *ppp*. The instruction *liberamente* is written across several staves.
- PERCUSSION:** Includes a *Crotale* part with dynamics *pp* and *p*.

The second system includes the following parts:

- Sopr.:** Continues the vocal line with dynamics *mp* and *dim.*, and accents marked with 'a'.
- Vic.:** Consists of six staves. Dynamics include *p* and *pp*. The instruction *liberamente* is written across several staves. The instruction *sul tasto* appears on the fifth and sixth staves.
- Perc. 1:** Features a *Tam tam (soft sticks)* part with a dynamic of *mp*.

Example 5-9: Sculthorpe, *The Song of Tailitnama*, fig. 3 (mm. 1-12)

Con precisione (♩ = c.112)

Vlc. 2 col legno *p*

Vlc. 5 col legno *p*

Vlc. 1 arco *mf*

Vlc. 2 arco *mf*

Vlc. 3 arco *mf*

Vlc. 4 (pizz.) *mf*

Vlc. 5 arco *mf*

Vlc. 6 (pizz.) *mf*

Perc. II (Chinese cymbal) *p*

The verses concern the glowing of the mountains, the coming of the dawn and the singing of the Ilbirbia bluebirds as they soar to the sky.<sup>19</sup>

As with String Quartet no. 11, Sculthorpe's philosophical approach to *Earth Cry* was noteworthy. Written at a time when Sculthorpe was extremely concerned about the obscurity of a national identity and pervasive commercialization in the culture, *Earth Cry* is a work that addresses the need, in Sculthorpe's own words, "to attune ourselves to this continent, to listen to the cry of the earth, as the Aborigines have done for many thousands of years."<sup>20 21</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Peter Sculthorpe, *The Song of Tailitnama* (London: Faber Music, 1985).

<sup>20</sup> Hayes, 76.

The original name of the quartet was *From Ubirr*.<sup>22</sup> Ubirr is a large rocky outcrop in Kakadu National Park, in northern Australia. It houses some of the best and most varied Aboriginal rock painting in the country.<sup>23</sup> Many of the paintings have been proven the earliest-known graphic expressions of the human race. They clearly demonstrate a caring relationship with the environment, and the Aboriginal belief that the land owns the people, not the people the land.<sup>24</sup>

The musical material of String Quartet no. 12 appears in versions both with and without didjeridu.<sup>25</sup> When performed without the didjeridu, it is generally called String Quartet no. 12; when performed with didjeridu, it is usually known as *From Ubirr*,<sup>26</sup> although the titles are interchangeable and this is generally left up to the performer.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Among Sculthorpe's unpublished materials in his personal file for *Earth Cry*, a loose sheet of paper with a poem entitled *Song of Earth* by an Aboriginal poet, Munganye, eloquently distills the essence of the Aborigine's relationship with their land. It includes the following passage:

*"Earth Mother, she cry,  
and call to us.  
You hear what she say?  
Then listen good,  
with heart down low on ground.  
'Listen to my song,' she sing.  
'Now. Before it ends'..."*

<sup>22</sup> Sculthorpe, *Sun Music*, 106.

<sup>23</sup> Sculthorpe, *From Ubirr: for string quartet and didjeridu*, [Faberprint copy] (London: Faber Music, 1994).

<sup>24</sup> Milton, Sculthorpe interviews: complete transcript, 31.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>26</sup> This work has also appeared in performance as *Ubirr Song*.

<sup>27</sup> Complicating matters still further, String Quartet no. 14 was originally given the title of String Quartet no. 12. When it was decided that *From Ubirr* should also be a numbered string quartet, the later quartet was renumbered as String Quartet no. 14.

Also somewhat interchangeable is the pitch of the didjeridu. The didjeridu pitched on low A constitutes Sculthorpe's preferred version. For the first performance in Europe, however, there was a problem obtaining an appropriate instrument.

I wanted the central part to be accompanied by a didjeridu on the low A. That's not so hard to get in Australia, but very hard to get outside of Australia. For the first performance in London, Kronos was having trouble getting a decent one in A, so I decided to put it all up a minor third.<sup>28</sup>

Although the string quartet is, in many ways, an exact transposition of *Earth Cry*, there are some extremely important distinctions between the two versions. These are touched upon later in this paper within the context of the discussion of various types of pitch symbolism.

The first performance of the work, at the Barbican Centre in London, was a sensation.<sup>29</sup> One reviewer wrote that the Sculthorpe work "managed to touch another level of experience. To start, the didgeridoo [sic] buzzed away on its base note as the strings rhapsodized. But what rhapsodizing! Sculthorpe made his getaway from post-war modernism early enough to be utterly secure in his language. The lyrical flow, ever changing yet always the same, drew playing of full-hearted passion."<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Milton, Sculthorpe interviews: complete transcript, 17.

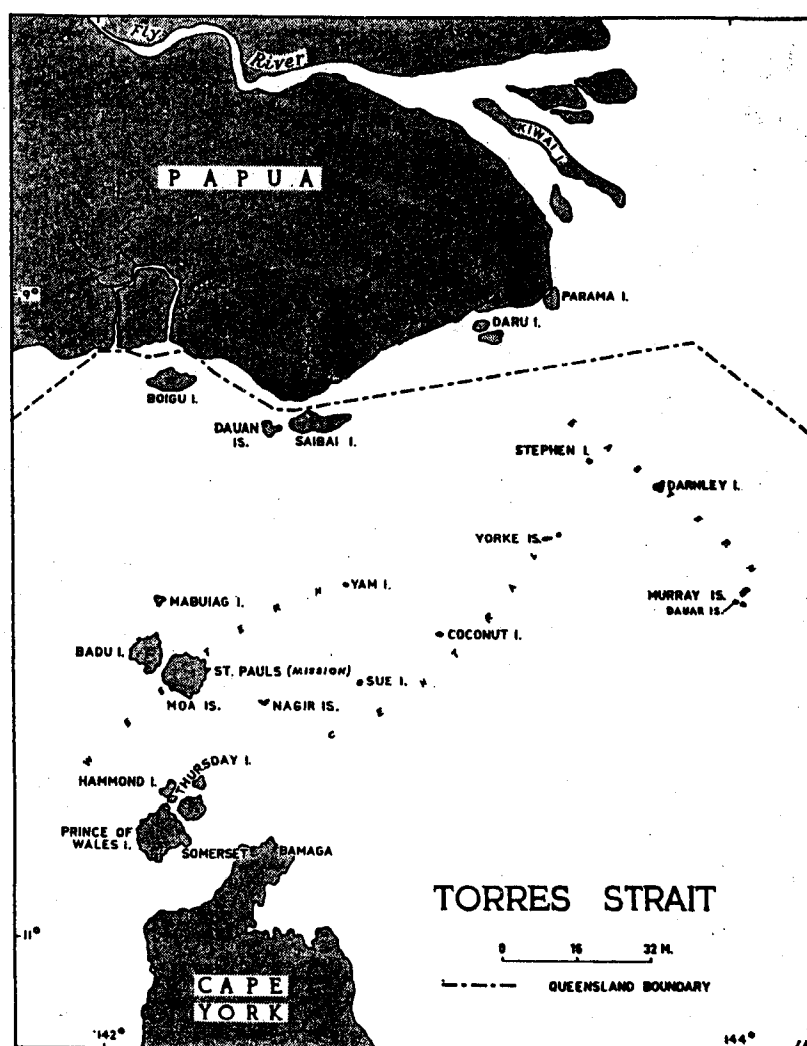
<sup>29</sup> Sculthorpe, *Sun Music*, 106.

<sup>30</sup> Robert Maycock, "A problem of attitude," *The Independent* (25 July 1994).

**String Quartet no. 13 (Island Dreaming) for mezzo-soprano and string quartet**

String Quartet no. 13, composed in 1996, is a work based upon ideas suggested by the musics of the Torres Strait Islands.<sup>31</sup> In these islands (figure 5-1), the cultures of aboriginal Australia and Papua New Guinea, as well as Indonesia, are brought together as one.<sup>32</sup> The mythology and texts from this region are, like the people, concerned mostly with the sea and sea-change.<sup>33</sup>

**Figure 5-1: Torres Strait**



<sup>31</sup> Peter Sculthorpe, interviews by the author, 1993-2003, Sydney, Australia.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ronald Vermeulen, "Island Dreaming: String Quartets by Peter Sculthorpe, [CD liner notes, Vanguard Classics 99215: Brodsky Quartet/Anne Sofie von Otter, 2000], 7.

The quartet is scored for string quartet and mezzo-soprano. The text, sung in its indigenous language, was culled from poetry both modern and archaic. According to Sculthorpe, some of the words have almost lost their meaning.<sup>34</sup>

I - ma - na - we	See, the dark water!
Ma - lu	
I - ma - na - we	See, the deep water!
Ma - lu - ka - e	
Zu - gu - ba - be	The morning star
Ka - de - pa - e	Shines from afar:
Wa - i - a	Waia.
Zu - gu - ba - be	The morning star,
La - ga - nu - we	Home from windward,
Ka - de - pa - e	Shines from afar,
La - ga - nu - we	Home from windward:
Wa - i - a	Waia.
Ta - bu - na - bu	Come, let us row,
Ta - bu - na - bu	Where waters run!
No - rem - na - bu - na	Come, let us go
Mi - ko - ke - mi	To reef and sun.
Mi - ko - ke - mi	
Si - ir - em - na - bu - na	
Tu - ge We - ge	Low tide, tide low;
Tu - ge We - ge	High tides soon flow:
Wa - i - a	Waia. <sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Peter Sculthorpe, interviews by the author, 1993-2003, Sydney, Australia.

<sup>35</sup> Sculthorpe, String Quartet no. 13 (*Island Dreaming*) (London: Faber Music, 2001).

String Quartet no. 13 (*Island Dreaming*) was written for the Brodsky Quartet and Anne Sofie von Otter to take on their European tour in 1996,<sup>36</sup> and they gave its first performance in Paris on 3 December 1996.<sup>37</sup>

Cast in one extended movement, the quartet is structured in a sectionalized form (A-B-A'-B'-AB). The opening free passage (A) transforms into a more rhythmically strict, repeated *Poco estatico* section (B). The opening material returns, albeit in an increasingly involved manifestation (A'), and the second section, now *Molto estatico* is reinstated (B'). In the final climactic section (AB), various elements are combined and juxtaposed in a free and joyous repeated section that ends at the top of an extended *crescendo*.

The work progresses from the simplest of openings (example 5-10). The style of the opening section combines an almost improvisational vocal line with string writing that proceeds from a single note, through aleatoric water/wind effects, to a syncopated, regularized cello line punctuated by plaintive violin gestures.

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<sup>36</sup> Sculthorpe, *Sun Music*, 165.

<sup>37</sup> Peter Sculthorpe, interviews by the author, 1993-2003, Sydney, Australia.

Example 5-10: Sculthorpe, String Quartet no. 13, mm. 1-9

Misterioso ( $\text{♩} = c.92$ )

1 **1** L'istesso tempo

Voice: *pp* I - ma - na - we Ma - lu Ma - lu *p* I - ma - na - we Ma -

Violin 1: *pp* *pp sempre*

Violin 2: *pp* *cresc.* *mf* *dim.*

Viola: *pp* *cresc.* *mf* *dim.*

Cello: *pp* *cresc.* *mf* *dim.* *p*

Lyrics: - lu Ma - lu Ma - lu ka - e a

Lyrics: Zu - gu - ba - be We -

*sul pont.*

The *estatico* sections feature more complexity in their juxtapositions of elements (example 5-11). The range of the vocal line is extended along with the subtle textural shift, and the rhythmic diminution across all lines reflects the increasing musical drama of the passage.

Example 5-11: Sculthorpe, String Quartet no. 13, mm. 71-79.

71 **8** Molto estatico (♩ = c. 92) *poco f* *sostenuto*  
Ta - bu - na

74 *mp* *poco f* *poco f* *poco f*  
- bu - Ta - bu - na

77 *col legno* *p* *liberamente* *ord.* *poco f*  
- bu - No - rem - na - bu - na

2nd time only

In the final climax (example 5-12), accompanimental figurations predominate the interest of the texture, and the vocal line has been absorbed quite deliberately into the overall wash of sound and colour.

Example 5-12: Sculthorpe. String Quartet no. 13, mm. 111-conclusion.

14

111

12

*mf*

*mf*

*mf*

*mf*

*mf*

*mf* *cresc. poco a poco*

*mf* *cresc. poco a poco*

*mf* *cresc. poco a poco*

*mf* *cresc. poco a poco*

*arco*

*mf* *cresc. poco a poco*

114

*f*

*ff*

Wa-

117

Wa - i - a

*ff*

*ff*

*ff*

*ff*

*ff*

**String Quartet no. 14**

Commissioned by the Launceston Chamber Music Society, String Quartet no. 14 was completed in 1998 and given its first performance in Launceston, Tasmania, on 5 March 1998. The work, which is concerned with the composer's feelings about mountainous landscapes in northern Tasmania, is cast in four movements. Slightly revised in September 2000, the movements are cast as follows:

- |                                 |  |
|---------------------------------|--|
| I. Prelude                      | <i>Poco inquieto</i> <sup>38</sup>                       |
| II. In The Valley <sup>39</sup> | <i>Solenne</i> <sup>40</sup>                             |
| III. On High Hills              | <i>Con tenerezza; Calmo; Con tenerezza</i> <sup>41</sup> |
| IV. At Quamby Bluff             | <i>Inquieto; Come preghiera; Calmato</i> <sup>42</sup>   |

String Quartet no. 14 is the first work in almost fifty years in which Sculthorpe has chosen to write quite specifically about the places of his youth, and the first time he has named movements after such places.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> First version: *Tranquillo*.

<sup>39</sup> First version: *From Legges Tor*.

<sup>40</sup> First version: *Risoluto*.

<sup>41</sup> First version: *Come deduta a volo d'ucello; Calmo; Come deduta a volo d'ucello*.

<sup>42</sup> First version: *Inquieto; Come cantica; Calmato*.

<sup>43</sup> Martin Ball, "Reflexions [sic] on Peter Sculthorpe's String Quartet no. 12." *Siglo* (1999?): 15.

The short *Prelude* introduces some of the work's basic material (example 5-13). The intricacies of the improvisational and highly idiomatic accompanimental figures in the first violin, viola, and cello are balanced by a strained and typically static melodic gesture in the second violin. This melody opens with a distinctive descending augmented fourth that is further supported by the viola's accompanimental gesture.

Example 5-13: Sculthorpe, String Quartet no. 14, 1<sup>st</sup> mvt. mm. 1-4

**Poco inquieto** (♩ = c. 72)

Violin I  
*p/mf second time*  
*sim.*  
*sul G*

Violin II  
*p/mf second time*  
*sempre in rilievo*

Viola  
*p/mf second time*  
*sim.*

Violoncello  
*p/mf second time*

*cresc.*  
*mf/f second time*

The same falling interval opens the second movement, *In The Valley*, which is somber and somewhat threatening, like the rocky peak itself (example 5-14).

Example 5-14: Sculthorpe, String Quartet no. 14, 2nd mvt. mm. 1-5

Solenne ( $\text{♩} = \text{c. } 66$ )

The starkly contrasted third movement, *On High Hills*, is calmly lyrical, a recollection of much-loved places, its melody originally conceived in the composer's schooldays (example 5-15).

Example 5-15: Sculthorpe, String Quartet no. 14, 3rd mvt. mm. 1-4

Con tenerezza ( $\text{♩} = \text{c. } 66$ )

The large Scottish immigrant population of Tasmania inspired Sculthorpe to use a traditional Scottish melody to evoke the image of a Scottish settler (example 5-16).<sup>44</sup>

Example 5-16: Sculthorpe, String Quartet no. 14, 3rd mvt. mm. 16-23.

The fourth movement revisits the opening material of the quartet. *At Quamby*

*Bluff*, the longest of the four movements, concerns a dark episode in Australia's history.<sup>45</sup>

When I was very young, my father told a story about Quamby Bluff, a rather forbidding mountainous outcrop in northern Tasmania. There, according to legend, colonial government soldiers once drove a tribe of Aborigines to the bluff's edge. The Aborigines had the choice of being shot, or jumping. They chose the latter, and as they jumped, they cried out, "Quamby! Quamby!" (Save me! Save me!)<sup>46 47</sup>

<sup>44</sup> Peter Sculthorpe, interviews by the author, 1993-2003, Sydney, Australia.

<sup>45</sup> Sculthorpe, *String Quartet no. 14* (London: Faber Music, 1998).

<sup>46</sup> Sculthorpe, *Sam Music*, 162.

In writing this work, Sculthorpe was attempting to compose the kind of string quartet that he longed to write in his youth: a work of innocence, free from the influences that were to enter his later music.<sup>48</sup>

While writing [the fourth movement (example 5-18)], recalling Quamby, I kept thinking to myself: did it have to be, did it really have to be? When I'd almost completed the movement I discovered that, without realizing it, I'd based the music almost entirely upon Beethoven's motto theme, *Muss es sein?* (Must it be?) (example 5-17), from the last movement of his very last quartet.<sup>49</sup>

Example 5-17: Beethoven, "Muss es sein" motto.<sup>50</sup>

DER SCHWER GEFASSTE ENTSCHLUSS.

Grave. Allegro.

Muss es sein? Es muss sein! Es muss sein!

Grave ma non troppo tratto.

<sup>47</sup> This same narrative script informs Judith Wright's *Nigger's Leap: New England*, and Peter Carey refers to it in the first chapter of *Oscar and Lucinda*, where "Darkie's Point" is the site for an identical action. Neither Lyndall Ryan in *The Aboriginal Tasmanians* nor Lloyd Robson in his exhaustive *A history of Tasmania* mentions this alleged massacre - though they each attest that in January 1828, thirty members of the Peerapper were shot and thrown off a hill at Cape Grim in the far northwest of the island (Ball, "Reflexions," 16).

<sup>48</sup> Peter Sculthorpe, interviews by the author, 1993-2003, Sydney, Australia.

<sup>49</sup> Sculthorpe, *Sun Music*, 162.

<sup>50</sup> Beethoven, *String Quartet* op. 135.

Example 5-18: Sculthorpe, String Quartet no. 14, 4th mvt. mm. 53-58

7 Come preghiera (♩ = c. 48)

53

*p*  
senza vibr.

*p*  
senza vibr.

*p*

*p*

56

*pp*

*pp*

*pp*

*pp*

The notion of cultural memory is central to this quartet. Sculthorpe contrasts his own recollections of happy childhood holidays in tranquil surroundings with the brutal tragedies that haunt those same places.<sup>51</sup> This is an extremely poignant and effective manifestation of dualism, one of the most prevalent background elements of the composer's style.

<sup>51</sup> Ball, "Reflexions," 18.

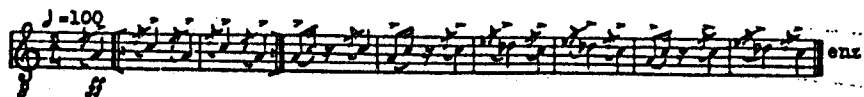
### String Quartet no. 15

Sculthorpe's String Quartet no. 15 was commissioned by the Melbourne International Chamber Music Competition, for performance during the Third Competition and Festival, 10-18 July 1999. It is dedicated to Joan and Ken Tribe. String Quartet no. 15 is based upon a sequence of songs belonging to the Simori mountain people of Western New Guinea. The particular songs are discussed in some detail in *Music in New Guinea* by the Dutch ethnomusicologist Jaap Kunst.<sup>52</sup> For the most part, the descriptions given by him dictate the structure and scalic material of each movement of the quartet (example 5-19).

#### Example 5-19: Jaap Kunst, *Music in New Guinea*, Ex. 10

##### SIMORI

- A. *Yu*: cry of joy; a war cry: shouted at feasts and also for amusement. This cry is made up of sounds of which no notation can be made. The sounds might be mistaken for the screeching of parrots or the screaming of apes.



The work consists of five short movements, played almost without break. The movements are each given concise titles that impart something of the spirit of each work,

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<sup>52</sup> Jaap Kunst, *Music in New Guinea* [Three Studies: Verhandelingen van het Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde; Deel 53], translated by Jeune Scott-Kemball (Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1967).

at the same time referring to the annotations of the ethnomusicological text where appropriate. In Kunst's study of the native music of western New Guinea, the material that seems to have been the main inspiration for the work is described as *Wani*. According to the author, as well as being used when there is dancing in the village, it is music to be sung at pig feasts as a song of welcome and when people make a journey together. The motivic material annotated in the study features grace notes which are at one time a minor third higher or lower than the tone following, at another, a minor or major second higher.<sup>53</sup>

I. A Song for Dancing (example 5-20).

Example 5-20: Sculthorpe, String Quartet no. 15, 1<sup>st</sup> mvt. mm. 1-8

Ritmico (♩ = c. 126)

Violin I *p*

Violin II

Viola *p*

Violoncello *p*

Violin I *cresc.* *f* *pesante*

Violin II *f*

Viola *cresc.* *f*

Violoncello *cresc.* *f*

<sup>53</sup> Kunst, *Music in New Guinea*, 116-7.

## II. An Exorcism (example 5-21).

Example 5-21: Sculthorpe, String Quartet no. 15, 2<sup>nd</sup> mvt. mm. 1-6

**Drammatico** ( $\text{♩} = \text{c. } 144$ )

*poco sinistro*  
arco

*p*

*molto cresc.*

**4**

*f*

arco

*ben marcato*

*f*

## III. A Song for Mourning (example 5-22).

Example 5-22: Sculthorpe, String Quartet no. 15, 3<sup>rd</sup> mvt. mm. 1-4

**Con tristezza** ( $\text{♩} = \text{c. } 56$ )

*p*

con sord.

*p*

pizz.

*p*

pizz.

*p*

## IV. A Love Song (example 5-23).

Example 5-23: Sculthorpe, String Quartet no. 15, 4<sup>th</sup> mvt. mm. 1-3

*Calmo* ( $\text{♩} = \text{c. } 66$ )

Vln I  
Vln II  
Vla  
Vc.

(con sord.)  
(2) (0)  
*mp*

con sord.  
(2) (0)  
*mp*

con sord.  
*mp*

con sord.  
pizz.

(3) (2)  
*sim.*

The final movement again draws inspiration directly from Kunst's book (example 5-24).

Example 5-24: Jaap Kunst, *Music in New Guinea*, Ex. 11

## V. A Cry of Joy (example 5-25)

Example 5-25: Sculthorpe, String Quartet no. 15, 5<sup>th</sup> mvt. mm. 1-7

Ritmico (♩. = c. 112)

The musical score consists of two systems of four staves each. The first system (measures 1-4) is marked 'Ritmico' with a tempo of ♩. = c. 112. The Violin I part is mostly rests. The Violin II part starts with a *f* dynamic, marked 'col legno', and then moves to *mf*. The Viola and Violoncello parts start with a *f* dynamic and then move to *mf* and *p* respectively. The second system (measures 5-7) shows a change in dynamics to *p/f second time* for the Violin parts and *f second time* for the Viola and Violoncello parts. The Violin II part is again marked 'col legno'.

String Quartet no. 15 does not set out to imitate Simori music. Rather, the work is Sculthorpe's personal response to it. Unlike the Simori sequence of songs, for instance, the five movements of the quartet are motivically related. Falling minor thirds, heard at the very outset, are especially important, as are rising and falling fifths. Furthermore, the movements are harmonically related; and the harmonies employed are characteristic of Sculthorpe's style. Also characteristic are figurations suggesting the Indonesian *gamelan*, as well as rhythms associated with northern Australian Aboriginal music. Both can be found in the traditional music of New Guinea.

### Chapter 6: Miscellaneous works

In addition to the fifteen numbered quartets, Sculthorpe has written numerous other works for the medium. The list below includes transcriptions of significant works for other instrumental combinations (*Irkanda IV*, *Small Town*), original quartet miniatures (*Little Serenade*, *Journey Music*, *Hill Songs*, *A Little Love Song*, *Djilile*), transcriptions of sections from other works (*Saibai*, *Morning Song* and *Autumn Song*, *From Nourlangie*), and works for quartet with another instrument or voice (*Maranoa Lullaby*, *Love Song*).

- *Irkanda IV* (1961/1991)<sup>1</sup>
- *Small Town* (1963/1980)<sup>2</sup>
- *Morning Song* and *Autumn Song* (1966, 1968)
- *Little Serenade* (1977)
- *Journey Music* (1980)
- *Saibai* (1987/1994)
- *Hill Songs* (1992)
- *From Nourlangie* (1994)
- *Maranoa Lullaby*: for mezzo-soprano and string quartet (1996)
- *A Little Love Song* (1998)
- *Love Song*: for guitar and string quartet (1999)
- *Djilile* (1999)

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<sup>1</sup> 1991 refers to the year of the string quartet version of *Irkanda IV*,

<sup>2</sup> In the case of *Small Town*, 1980 refers to the year of the string quartet version of the work by David Matthews. Uniquely in this dissertation, the string quartet version of the work is by a composer other than Peter Sculthorpe. The work's philosophical importance and the harmonic language synthesized in the composition make its inclusion in this study informative.

### *Irkanda IV*

Sculthorpe completed the score of *Irkanda IV* in Launceston, Tasmania, in June 1961. Written to mark the death of his father, it was originally scored for solo violin, 1 percussion (bass drum, tom tom, gong, 2 suspended cymbals, triangle) and strings.<sup>3</sup> As has been previously mentioned, the premiere<sup>4</sup> of *Irkanda IV* marked the first occasion in Australia that critics and audiences had unanimously acclaimed Sculthorpe's music.<sup>5</sup> One Australian critic headlined his review of an *Irkanda IV* performance with the words: "This music evokes Australia's loneliness."<sup>6</sup> Though otherwise not mentioned in the literature, the tragic death of the child of Sculthorpe's close friend Wilfrid Mellers constituted a highly charged emotional factor reflected in the work's composition.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Hayes, 46.

<sup>4</sup> Wilfred Lehmann and the Astra Chamber Orchestra first performed the work in Melbourne in August 1961.

<sup>5</sup> Max Oldaker, "This music evokes Australia's loneliness," *Examiner* (2 September 1961).

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> "Wilfrid Mellers was then a lecturer at the University of Birmingham. Because he had written so much on American music and American composers, Copland and Cage in particular, it was organised that he would be Andrew Mellon Professor of Music at the University of Pittsburgh. When it came to filling out the forms for both Peggy and Wilfrid to go to the States, there were questions about Communism and former associations with the party. Peggy had joined after the war when many young people joined the Communist party, had soon lost interest, but did honestly have to mention this in her application. It was finally decided that if an act of Congress could not prove that this housewife was an enemy to the United States, and if she had a child born in the United States, her record would be automatically erased because the child would be an American. The U.S. Congress could not prove that she was an enemy and, by an incredible coincidence, she was pregnant, and so I went to see them off at Heathrow and there was great excitement. In the meantime, my father was dying of cancer and I had to come home. I was visiting my father and he was not far from death; I came home from the hospital and there was a letter from Wilfrid saying that Peggy's boy had died and so they had had to return to England. I was so moved by my father dying, the baby's death, and Wilfrid having to leave America that I sat down at the piano and played the melodic line of the song, *Sun in me*. This became the piece I wrote in memory of my father, *Irkanda IV*, and that is why I dedicated the string quartet arrangement to Wilfrid." (Milton, Sculthorpe interviews: complete transcript, 14).

Sculthorpe has said, “the reason [*Irkanda IV*] was my best piece through that point in my life is because there was all this emotion poured into it.”<sup>8</sup>

Perhaps because of the work’s universal appeal, it exists in numerous versions. In addition to the version for string quartet (example 6-1), two other arrangements have been made: one for strings and percussion (without solo violin), and another for flute with string ensemble. The string quartet arrangement of *Irkanda IV*, made at the suggestion of David Harrington (Kronos Quartet), was dedicated to Wilfrid Mellers, whose tragic loss had in some ways inspired the composition of the original version of the piece.

Example 6-1: Sculthorpe, *Irkanda IV*, string quartet version, mm. 1-10.

The image shows a musical score for the string quartet version of *Irkanda IV*, measures 1-10. The score is written for four staves (Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Cello/Double Bass). It begins with the tempo marking "lento (♩ = c. 60)" and the performance instruction "con desiderio pieno di malinconia". The first system contains measures 1-4, and the second system contains measures 5-10. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings like "mp" and "p".

<sup>8</sup> Milton, Sculthorpe interviews: complete transcript, 14-15.

On the difference between these two versions of the piece, Sculthorpe has said:

It's a bit like the difference between the string sextet and string orchestra versions of *Transfigured Night*. The string sextet has more intensity and is more personal. Certainly, a lot of emotional stuff was poured into it.<sup>9</sup>

The Australian Music Fund published *Irkanda IV* in 1964 as an arrangement for strings and percussion.<sup>10</sup> Sculthorpe explains:

After the work was first performed and after its success, the Myer Music Foundation wanted a version which would sell better. They said that it would be more serviceable and would get more performances if it were for string orchestra and percussion rather than with the solo violin.<sup>11</sup>

The original version of *Irkanda IV* uses much material from the song cycle *Sun*, as well as String Quartet no. 5 (*Irkanda II*).<sup>12</sup> Indeed, Sculthorpe agrees that *Irkanda IV* may be considered the culmination of the growing stylistic sophistication from the fourth and fifth string quartets: "The style was almost set; *Irkanda IV* brought it together."<sup>13</sup> In arranging the string quartet version of *Irkanda IV*, however, the composer did not revisit the earlier quartet. The transformation of material from *Irkanda II*, nevertheless, is striking and quite explicit (examples 6-2 and 6-3).

<sup>9</sup> Milton, Sculthorpe interviews: complete transcript, 15.

<sup>10</sup> Hayes, 48.

<sup>11</sup> Milton, Sculthorpe interviews: complete transcript, 17.

<sup>12</sup> Although Hayes (p. 46) indicates that the work also uses material from the *Sonata for Viola and Percussion*, this is incorrect (Milton, Sculthorpe interviews: complete transcript, 19).

<sup>13</sup> Milton, Sculthorpe interviews: complete transcript, 17.

Example 6-2: Sculthorpe, *Irkanda II*, mm. 1-6.

TEMPO I. *Very slowly*  
Capressivo.  
p. sul G.  
pp. sul tasto  
sul C  
pizz. sul. TEMPO I. *molto accel.*  
mp. modo ordinario sul G. sul tasto  
p. cresc.

Example 6-3: Sculthorpe, *Irkanda IV*, mm. 1-5.

con sord. pizz. arco  
Solo Violin  
div. Violin I  
con sord. p Violin II  
con sord. p Viola  
pizz. arco Cello  
pizz. arco mp Doublebass  
Percussion Bass drum p

According to Michael Hannan,<sup>14</sup> *Bloch's Concerto for Violin and Orchestra* strongly influenced *Irkanda IV*; Hannan demonstrates that Sculthorpe loosely modeled the main theme on thematic material from Bloch's work.<sup>15</sup> As examples 6-4 and 6-5 show, the main influence seems to have been mostly the characteristic rhythmic patterns of the concerto:

Example 6-4: Bloch, *Concerto for Violin and Orchestra*, 1<sup>st</sup> mvt. mm. 6-10.<sup>16</sup>

The image shows a musical score for measures 6-10 of the first movement of Ernest Bloch's *Concerto for Violin and Orchestra*. The score is arranged in a system with five staves. From top to bottom, the staves are for Timpani (Timp.), Violino principale (Violino), Viola, Violoncello (Vcllo), and Contrabasso (Cb.). The Violino part is the most prominent, featuring a melodic line with dynamics *p.* and *pp.*, and markings *misterioso* and *dolce*. The Viola, Vcllo, and Cb. parts provide harmonic support, with the Vcllo and Cb. parts marked *pp.*. The tempo is marked *Moderato*. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

<sup>14</sup> Hannan, *Peter Sculthorpe: his music and ideas, 1929-1979*, 51.

<sup>15</sup> In particular, the rhythmic and intervallic shaping of the first solo violin entrance (fig. 1) in the concerto is reminiscent of Sculthorpe's fondness for repetitious units. Ernest Bloch, *Concerto for violin and orchestra* [Orchestral score] (London: Boosey & Hawkes, 1938), 2.

<sup>16</sup> Ernest Bloch, *Concerto for violin and orchestra* [Orchestral score], 2.

Example 6-5: Sculthorpe, *Irkanda IV*, mm. 6-10.

There are also, however, clear suggestions of Mahler in *Irkanda IV*, the great symphonist having been the favourite composer of Sculthorpe's father. Hannan suggests that Sculthorpe, in *Irkanda IV*, was attempting to produce music that his father might have liked.<sup>17</sup> Sculthorpe's personal notes for the piece agree that the march-like sections in the work are "quite Mahlerian."<sup>18</sup> In disagreement with a 1967 Glasgow Herald comment that referred to *Irkanda IV* as "strongly impressionistic,"<sup>19</sup> Sculthorpe stated:

<sup>17</sup> Hannan, *Peter Sculthorpe: his music and ideas, 1929-1979*, 50.

<sup>18</sup> Milton, Sculthorpe interviews: complete transcript, 16.

<sup>19</sup> Hannan and Mellers, eds., *Peter Sculthorpe: Faber Music Ltd. Composer Catalogue* (London: Faber Music, 1993), 8.

I consider *Irkanda IV* to be an expressionistic work, and a very European piece, even though people say it sounds uniquely Australian, whatever that means. It was my best piece to that point because finally materials that I had used in the *Sun* song cycle and in *Irkanda II* came to fruition. It was also important because it was the first time I had real applause and unanimous critical acclaim; for a composer, that is important.<sup>20</sup>

The consistent use of the descending minor second within the context of the motivic gesture heard at the outset of the work provides the piece with a sense of what Sculthorpe describes as “a ritual lamentation.”<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Milton, Sculthorpe interviews: complete transcript, 16.

<sup>21</sup> Peter Sculthorpe, Composer’s note: *Irkanda IV for solo violin, strings and percussion* (Personal library, Peter Sculthorpe, Sydney).

### *Small Town*

*Small Town* was originally the central movement of Sculthorpe's *The Fifth Continent*, a 1962 work for speaker and orchestra composed expressly for radio.<sup>22</sup> The five movements of *The Fifth Continent* are: *Prologue*, *Outback*, *Small Town*, *Pacific*, and *Epilogue*. The speaker introduces each movement; the narrative, concerning the coming of a man to Australia and his feelings for the country, was extracted from D.H. Lawrence's novel *Kangaroo*.<sup>23</sup> Scored for strings, harp, percussion, oboe, and trumpet, the work includes directives that apply to the occasional use of continuous tapes of didjeridu and high wind.<sup>24</sup> The composer's scoring and the compositional style of *The Fifth Continent* consciously attempt to "evoke a feeling of distance and loneliness."<sup>25</sup> Within the larger work, the *Outback* and *Pacific* movements contain "clashing dissonances."<sup>26</sup> By way of contrast, *Small Town* functions as "a light interlude."<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Max Oldaker, "Writing a symphony is arduous work," *Examiner* (17 August 1963).

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> Hayes, 47.

<sup>25</sup> Peter Sculthorpe, Composer's note: *The Fifth Continent* (Personal library, Peter Sculthorpe, Sydney).

<sup>26</sup> Milton, Sculthorpe interviews: complete transcript, 18.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

*Small Town* exists in a number of other versions. A chamber orchestra arrangement of *Small Town* was composed in 1976.<sup>28</sup> The string quartet version of *Small Town* originated as a suggestion<sup>29</sup> from composer David Matthews (example 6-6).<sup>30</sup> A close friend of Sculthorpe's, Matthews made his arrangement from the chamber orchestra version in 1980<sup>31</sup> especially for the Petra<sup>32</sup> String Quartet, with whom he became acquainted on a trip to Tasmania.<sup>33</sup>

Example 6-6: Sculthorpe, *Small Town*, string quartet version, mm. 1-5.

<sup>28</sup> Hayes, 64.

<sup>29</sup> Milton, Sculthorpe interviews: complete transcript, 17.

<sup>30</sup> The music of David Matthews (b. 1943) makes an important contribution to contemporary British musical life. It represents a continuation of, rather than a challenge to, the great European tradition, and more specifically the tradition of twentieth-century British music. It places a strong emphasis on melodic lines, on purposeful harmonic movement, and on what has been called "a Romantic generosity of expression." He has composed four symphonies and six string quartets; his complete catalogue of works represents a considerable body of achievement. (Extracted from Anthony Burton, "David Matthews at 50," *David Matthews: Faber Music Ltd. Composer Catalogue*. (London: Faber Music, 1993).

<sup>31</sup> Hayes, 170.

<sup>32</sup> The quartet was so named in honor of the daughter of one of Australia's most distinguished composers, Larry Sitsky.

<sup>33</sup> Sculthorpe recalled: "David has written several string quartets himself. When he comes to stay, we're both writing music constantly. We both love string quartets, so [the *Small Town* arrangement] was the natural thing to do." (Milton, Sculthorpe interviews: complete transcript, 17).

The portions of Lawrence's text that inspired *Small Town* appear at the head of the score:

It was a wonderful Main Street, and...out of the wind.  
There were several large but rather scaring brown hotels,  
with balconies all round: there was a yellow stucco church  
with a red-painted tin steeple, like a weird toy: there were  
high roofs and low roofs, all corrugated iron: and you came  
to an opening and there...were one or two forlorn  
bungalows inside their wooden palings, and then the void.

...the memorial to the fallen soldiers...had "Lest we forget"  
for a motto. Carved on the bottom step it said "Unveiled by  
Grannie Rhys." A real township monument, bearing the  
names of everyone possible: the fallen, all those who  
donned khaki, the people who presented it, and Grannie  
Rhys.<sup>34</sup>

Sculthorpe wanted the music of *Small Town* to sing of all small Australian towns. His note to the published edition reads:

This *Small Town* description above is of Thirroul, where  
Lawrence lived in the early "twenties." While the town is  
now very much changed, the war memorial remains just as  
it was in Lawrence's day.<sup>35</sup>

*Small Town* is cast in three main parts; the first section depicts the town; the second, which includes the *Last Post*, reflects the war memorial, and the third part is "a suggestion of the sea."<sup>36</sup> A relatively straightforward harmonic pattern manifests itself in this work, and the composer uses the progression for a significant reason. Sculthorpe underpinned *Small Town* with the harmonic progression of *Heart and Soul*, a favourite

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<sup>34</sup> Sculthorpe, *Small Town: for chamber orchestra* (1963/1976) [Orchestral score] (London: Faber Music, 1981).

<sup>35</sup> Peter Sculthorpe, "Composer's note" in *Small Town: for chamber orchestra*.

<sup>36</sup> Peter Sculthorpe, Composer's note: *Small Town* (Personal library, Peter Sculthorpe, Sydney).

tune of painter Russell “Tass” Drysdale’s (example 6-7).<sup>37</sup> Seeking to depict the Australianism of a small town, Sculthorpe turned to Drysdale, the artist from whom he “learned about the land and the landscape, and the lonely figure in the landscape.”<sup>38</sup>

The 1976 chamber orchestra arrangement of *Small Town* mentioned above was dedicated to Drysdale.<sup>39</sup>

Example 6-7: Sculthorpe, *Small Town*, string quartet version, mm. 7-18.

This progression, in a variety of motivic, melodic, and harmonic manifestations, appears as an occasional stylistic element in much of Sculthorpe’s music.

Another element that appears in *Small Town* is the melancholy *Last Post*; this memorial to the war reflects Lawrence’s narrative and the town (example 6-8).

<sup>37</sup> Graeme Skinner, “Pete and Tass: Sculthorpe and Drysdale,” *ABC Radio 24 Hours* (August 1997): 34-8.

<sup>38</sup> Milton, Sculthorpe interviews: complete transcript, 18.

<sup>39</sup> Hayes, 64.

Example 6-8: Sculthorpe, *Small Town*, string quartet version, fig 8 (mm. 1-8).

In the original, two trumpets play the “Last Post,” one on and one off stage, accompanied by a distant drum roll (example 6-9).

Example 6-9: Sculthorpe, *Small Town*, orchestral version, fig 8 (mm. 1-6)<sup>40</sup>

<sup>40</sup> Sculthorpe, *Small Town: for chamber orchestra*.

### Morning Song and Autumn Song

Two companion pieces, *Morning Song* and *Autumn Song* have similar compositional backgrounds. Though not specifically grouped with one another, the composer has indicated that future publication should probably combine the two compositions as parts of one larger entity. Both works have been arranged for string quartet and other combinations. Sculthorpe originally composed both works in 1965 for a song cycle to words by Roger Covell, *South by Five* (Hayes W92),<sup>41</sup> for girls' voices and instruments.<sup>42</sup>

#### Example 6-10: Sculthorpe, *Morning-Song for the Christ Child*, mm. 1-6.<sup>43</sup>

Lento tranquillo e semplice (♩ = c. 54)

SOPRANO

ALTO

TENOR

BASS

*molto sostenuto mp*

*molto sostenuto mp*

*molto sostenuto mp cresc.*

*mp teneramente*

1. The quilt-ted sea is gone like rain, Gone

2. A thin tree grows in star-lit thirst, Old

La La La La La La La

La La La La La La La

La La La La La La La

La La La La La La La

<sup>41</sup> The title, *South by Five*, alludes to Australia: the fifth, southern continent.

<sup>42</sup> Peter Sculthorpe, Composer's note: *Morning Song; Autumn Song* (Personal library, Peter Sculthorpe, Sydney).

<sup>43</sup> Sculthorpe, *Morning-Song for the Christ Child: for unaccompanied mixed chorus* (London: Faber Music, 1966).

*Morning Song for the Christ Child*<sup>44</sup> was adapted from *South by Five* in 1966 in response to a request from Faber Music for a Christmas carol (example 6-10).<sup>45</sup> At the time, Sculthorpe was staying at Yaddo, an artist's colony in New York State; rather appropriately, the piece was written during a heavy snowfall.<sup>46</sup> The music is nevertheless more concerned with green-ness and growth than it is with coldness and snow; the evocative words by Roger Covell suggest this:

The quilted sea is gone like rain,  
Gone and never found again.

A thin tree grows in starlit thirst,  
Old and deep and past all hurt.

Green morning sleeps, the sky is sown,  
Kind and calm and all alone.<sup>47</sup>

A piano duet version of *Morning Song*, published in *Four Little Pieces for Piano Duet* (1979)<sup>48</sup> was written for a concert to celebrate the composer's 50th birthday. For that occasion, Sculthorpe's program note indicated a desire to present "overtly melodious music."<sup>49</sup> The string quartet arrangement of *Morning Song* arrangement came into

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<sup>44</sup> The original title of the piece was simply *Morning Song*, the Christmas aspect having been added especially for the publisher (Milton, Sculthorpe interviews: complete transcript, 24).

<sup>45</sup> Milton, Sculthorpe interviews: complete transcript, 24.

<sup>46</sup> Peter Sculthorpe, Composer's note: *Morning Song; Autumn Song* (Personal library, Peter Sculthorpe, Sydney).

<sup>47</sup> Peter Sculthorpe, *Morning-Song for the Christ Child: for unaccompanied mixed chorus* (London: Faber Music, 1966).

<sup>48</sup> Hayes reference number: W149

<sup>49</sup> Hayes, 67.

existence for the Austral String Quartet's 1972 recording of the seventh and eighth quartets (example 6-11).<sup>50</sup>

Example 6-11: Sculthorpe, *Morning Song*, string quartet version, mm. 1-10.

**Lento tranquillo e semplice** ( $\text{♩} = \text{ca. } 54$ )

Violin 1

Violin 2

Viola

Cello

*mp* *cresc.* *mf* *mp*

*molto sostenuto* *mp* *molto sostenuto* *mp*

*teneramente* *pp* *mp*

Sculthorpe's personal papers show that *Morning Song*, though in no sense oriental, is based on a Balinese scale.<sup>51</sup> Stylistic elements and specific musical figurations drawn from various Balinese influences and source material appear throughout Sculthorpe's music.

<sup>50</sup> The Austral String Quartet championed Sculthorpe's music in Australia and abroad for over a decade from 1965 (Skinner, "Peter Sculthorpe: Music for String Quartet," 5).

<sup>51</sup> Peter Sculthorpe, Composer's note: *Morning Song; Autumn Song* (Personal library, Peter Sculthorpe, Sydney).

Like its companion piece, the original version of *Autumn Song* is a short work for unaccompanied mixed choir (example 6-12). The text includes references to the sun and the landscape:

Lost land on a lost shining sea  
the leaves were dark on the kissing tree.

Lost land now the hard wind has come  
leaves in the dust with a rusty sun

Lost land on fire in sudden flame  
the leaves are ash and blown away.<sup>52</sup>

Example 6-12a: Sculthorpe, *Autumn song*, mixed chorus version, mm. 1-12.

The musical score is arranged in six staves. The top five staves are for the vocal parts: SOPRANO, ALTO, TENOR, BARITONE, and BASS. The bottom staff is for the PIANO, with the instruction '(for rehearsal only)'. The tempo is marked 'Lento calmo (♩ = c. 66)' and the mood is 'rall.'. The Tenor part has lyrics 'Ah Ah Ah Ah Ah' and the Bass part has 'Ah'. The Piano part is marked 'mp dim.'.

Example 6-12b: Sculthorpe, *Autumn song*, mixed chorus version, cont.

- a tempo *pp*

Ah Ah

*p semplice*

Lost land on a lost shi-ning sea the leaves were

*p*

La La La La

*p*

La La La La

*p*

La La La La

*poco rall.* - - - - - *a tempo*

Ah La La La La La La La La

*mp*

dark on the kis-sing tree...

*p*

La La La La La La La (or Mm)

*p*

La La La La La La La (or Mm)

*p*

La La La La La La La (or Mm)

*p*

La La La La La La La La

*p*

La La La La La La La La

*p*

La La La La La La La La

<sup>52</sup> Peter Sculthorpe, *Autumn Song for the Christ Child: for unaccompanied mixed chorus* (London: Faber Music, 1972).

*Autumn Song* was arranged for the strings of the Australian Chamber Orchestra in 1986 (Hayes W184), and for string quartet in 1994 (example 6-13).<sup>53</sup>

Example 6-13: Sculthorpe, *Autumn Song*, string quartet version, mm. 1-9.

The musical score consists of two systems of four staves each. The first system includes staves for Violin 1, Violin 2, Viola, and Cello. The tempo is marked "Lento calmo" with a quarter note equal to approximately 56 beats per minute. The first section is marked "rall." and the second section is marked "a tempo" and "poco rall.". Dynamics include piano (p), pianissimo (pp), and mezzo-piano (mp). The second system includes staves for Violin 1, Violin 2, Viola, and Cello. The tempo is marked "a tempo" and "poco rall.". Dynamics include piano (p), pianissimo (pp), and mezzo-piano (mp).

<sup>53</sup> Though the string orchestra arrangement is missing, Sculthorpe believes the string quartet version is identical, apart from the bass part. (Milton, Sculthorpe interviews: complete transcript, 24).

*Little Serenade*

Sculthorpe has described the *Little Serenade* as a “song of innocence,” an optimistic miniature with a “yearning, expressionistic quality.”<sup>54</sup> Originally known as “Cora’s theme,”<sup>55</sup> Sculthorpe wrote the melody specifically to be featured as the main theme of the film *Age of Consent*, directed by Michael Powell in 1968.<sup>56</sup> In the film, the music of “Cora’s theme” was to appear as chamber music scored for wind ensemble. Shortly before the New York premiere of the film, it was discovered that some parts of the sound track recording were flawed.<sup>57</sup> The decision was made that parts of the score needed to be re-recorded. At the time, however, Sculthorpe was living in a Zen Buddhist monastery in Japan; unaware of the problem, he was unable to respond to the many requests for the music. Finally, an English composer wrote a new score at very short notice.

The Sydney<sup>58</sup> String Quartet, which was making a recording in 1977 of various “serenades,” asked Sculthorpe if he could provide them with a “serenade” for inclusion on the recording. Sculthorpe transformed “Cora’s theme” from the original film music into an extended version for string quartet especially for the recording, and the *Little*

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<sup>54</sup> Peter Sculthorpe, interviews by the author, 1993-2003, Sydney, Australia.

<sup>55</sup> Milton, Sculthorpe interviews: complete transcript, 24.

<sup>56</sup> The film was shot on the Great Barrier Reef. Ronald Vermeulen, “Island Dreaming: String Quartets by Peter Sculthorpe, [CD liner notes] (Vanguard Classics 99215: Brodsky Quartet/Anne Sofie von Otter, 2000), 5.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Depending on the source, either the Sydney or conceivably the Austral String Quartet made the original request to Sculthorpe.

*Serenade* was born (example 6-14). In 1992, the work was inscribed “to Anne and Mal,” the composer’s niece and husband.<sup>59</sup>

Example 6-14: Sculthorpe, *Little Serenade*, mm. 1-9.

**Lento con tenerezza** (♩ = c.88)

Un. 1

Un. 2

Vla.

Uc.

**I** **Piu mosso**

*pizz.* *p*

*poco cresc.*

*mp*

*mp*

*mp*

*mp*

<sup>59</sup> Hayes, 64.

A delicate reference to Russell Drysdale's favourite harmonic progression, *Heart and Soul*, permeates much of the work's foreground structure (example 6-15). The rhythmic and agogic pulse of the four-measure progression, however, is blurred: the partial pedal tone suggested in the cello's *pizzicati* as well as syncopations in the first violin and viola impart a degree of ambiguity.

Example 6-15: Sculthorpe, *Little Serenade*, mm. 29-38.

The image displays two systems of musical notation for Example 6-15. Each system consists of four staves. The top staff in each system is marked '8va' and contains a rapid, repetitive melodic line. The second staff contains a more melodic line with some syncopation. The third and fourth staves provide harmonic support, with the bottom staff featuring a cello part with 'pizzicati' (pizzicato) markings. The music is in a 4/4 time signature and features a complex harmonic structure with a prominent four-measure progression.

*Journey Music from Manganinnie*

Peter Sculthorpe's music for the film *Manganinnie* won the Australian Film Institute's 1980 Best Original Music Award and the 1980 "Sammy" presented by the Australian TV and Film Awards for Best Theatre Music.<sup>60</sup> Sculthorpe scored the *Manganinnie* music for piano, solo cello and string quartet. Produced by the Tasmanian Film Corporation, the film is set in Tasmania in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It tells the story of an Aboriginal woman, Manganinnie. During an attack by Europeans, her husband is killed and Manganinnie becomes separated from the rest of her tribe when they flee from the campsite, in fear of their own lives. Manganinnie, with the tribe's perpetual fire that she has managed to salvage, sets out in search of her people.<sup>61</sup>

The string quartet extract from the film that Sculthorpe expanded and calls *Journey Music* accompanies parts of this search (example 6-16). It is music of passionate yearning and anguish, but filled with optimism and hope. Desiring so much to be reunited with her people, Manganinnie finally finds them, just in time to see the last of her tribe shot.

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<sup>60</sup> Ava Hubble, "Sculthorpe's music of anguish and passion," *24 Hours* (February 1981): 8.

<sup>61</sup> Milton, Sculthorpe interviews: complete transcript, 24.

Example 6-16: Sculthorpe, *Journey Music*, mm. 1-8.

The musical score consists of four staves: Violin 1, Violin 2, Viola, and Cello. The tempo is marked 'Dolce' with a metronome marking of quarter note = 60. The key signature has three flats. The score is divided into two systems. The first system contains measures 1 through 4. The second system contains measures 5 through 8. Measure 1 begins with a first violin line marked 'p' and a triplet of eighth notes. Measure 2 continues the first violin line. Measure 3 features a triplet of eighth notes in the first violin and a single eighth note in the viola, both marked 'p'. Measure 4 continues the first violin line. Measure 5 features a triplet of eighth notes in the first violin. Measure 6 continues the first violin line. Measure 7 features a triplet of eighth notes in the first violin and a single eighth note in the viola, both marked 'p'. Measure 8 ends with a first violin line marked 'cresc.'.

An Aboriginal mood and cultural aesthetic is suggested by the didjeridu-like drone effect at figure 2 (example 6-17). The incorporation of this element creates a quite unusual stylistic juxtaposition intrinsic to the work's effect.

Example 6-17: Sculthorpe, *Journey Music*, mm. 13-24.

Musical score for measures 13-16. The score is written for four staves (Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Cello/Double Bass). Measure 13 is marked with a box containing the number '2'. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat), and the time signature is 3/4. Dynamics include *cresc.*, *mf*, and *arco*. The Cello/Double Bass part is marked *arco* and *mf*. There are triplets in measures 13, 14, and 15.

Musical score for measures 17-20. The score is written for four staves (Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Cello/Double Bass). Measure 17 is marked with a box containing the number '3'. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat), and the time signature is 3/4. Dynamics include *cresc.*, *f*, and *dim.*. The Cello/Double Bass part is marked *cresc.* and *f*. There are triplets in measures 17, 18, and 19.

Musical score for measures 21-24. The score is written for four staves (Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Cello/Double Bass). Measure 21 is marked with a box containing the number '3'. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat), and the time signature is 3/4. Dynamics include *mf*. There are triplets in measures 21 and 22.

Saibai

*Saibai* for string quartet (example 6-18) had its origins in a work composed in 1987 entitled *Songs of Sea and Sky*, for clarinet and piano.<sup>62</sup>

Example 6-18: Sculthorpe, *Saibai*, mm. 1-8.

1 **Molto sostenuto** (♩ = c. 66)

Violin 1

Violin 2

Viola

Cello

*mp con piet *

*mp con piet *

5

*Songs of Sea and Sky* was inspired by a traditional melody from *Saibai*, an island just south of Papua New Guinea, in Torres Strait (see fig. 5-1 in the previous chapter for a map of Torres Strait).<sup>63</sup> Although some traditional Torres Strait music still survives in its original form, most of what has survived as part of the culture is strongly influenced by

<sup>62</sup> Milton, Sculthorpe interviews: complete transcript, 8.

<sup>63</sup> Sculthorpe, *Songs of Sea and Sky* (London: Faber Music, 1991).

the religious music introduced by missionaries in the nineteenth century.<sup>64</sup> Nevertheless, its themes are still predominantly of sea voyages, flights of birds and changes in sea and sky.<sup>65</sup> Jeremy Beckett collected the melody used in *Songs of Sea and Sky* on the island of Saibai in May 1961 (example 6-19).<sup>66</sup>

Example 6-19: Trevor Jones, trans. *Traditional Music of Torres Strait*, Ex.2.1 (a)<sup>67</sup>

The musical score consists of several staves. The top staff is a vocal line with lyrics: "We ye-hung-a a---re-ma (etc.)". The second staff continues the vocal line with lyrics: "we ye-bung-a". The third staff continues with lyrics: "re-ma a-we a ze-e-i nu-ka ze-e-i (etc.)". The fourth staff is a piano accompaniment with dynamics like *p* and *f*. The fifth staff is another piano accompaniment with dynamics like *p* and *f*. The sixth staff is a drum accompaniment with a 6/8 time signature. Below the main score, there are two alternative versions: "Scale-structures" and "Alternative rhythmic interpretation", both in 6/8 time.

<sup>64</sup> Milton, Sculthorpe interviews: complete transcript, 26.

<sup>65</sup> Sculthorpe, *Songs of Sea and Sky*, preface.

<sup>66</sup> Jeremy Beckett, comp., *Traditional music of Torres Strait* [Music Analysis and transcriptions by Trevor A. Jones] (Sydney: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, 1963[?]), 18.

<sup>67</sup> Beckett, *Traditional music of Torres Strait*, 18.

In *Songs of Sea and Sky*, Sculthorpe set the touching melody in a variety of manifestations; it forms the main melodic material of the “Mission Hymn” section, the spiritual climax of the work (example 6-20).<sup>68</sup>

Example 6-20: Sculthorpe, *Songs of Sea and Sky*, mm. 104-109.

The image displays two systems of musical notation. The first system, labeled '104', consists of a vocal line on a single staff and a piano accompaniment on two staves. The piano part includes the instruction 'mp con piet '. The second system, labeled '107', continues the vocal and piano parts with the instruction 'mp'. The music is written in a key signature of three flats and a 4/4 time signature.

The dualism inherent in the musical transformation of the Torres Strait island melody into a Christian mission hymn parallels the spiritual transformation of the islanders into Christians. Sculthorpe’s interpretation is typically modest:

I’ve since discovered that the Torres Strait islanders do love their hymns, and they seem to enjoy being Christians, so maybe what I was doing was just reflecting what exists.<sup>69</sup>

<sup>68</sup> Sculthorpe, *Songs of Sea and Sky*, 9-11.

<sup>69</sup> Milton, Sculthorpe interviews: complete transcript, 26.

As with much of his music, a social consciousness lies behind the composer's artistic choice to fuse two apparently disparate melodic statements. Sculthorpe articulated his views on the gradual disintegration of the island culture as follows:

The Catholics and Anglicans, between them, have totally destroyed Torres Strait island culture. I was trying to make that statement. But again, we have that problem, what can one say in music? Music can't make political statements. Maybe it could if I were less subtle about it: if I maybe had a melody and totally destroyed it. But I want to make music.<sup>70</sup>

In the original version of *Songs of Sea and Sky*, the clarinet part in the mission hymn section featured birdcalls over the gloriously comforting sonorities of the hymn.<sup>71</sup>

Sculthorpe decided to add instead a rather dissonant counterpoint instead—"almost as though the music is yearning to be what it was in its original form." When the clarinet finally takes over the main melody in the "Mission Hymn" section of *Songs of Sea and Sky*, the accompaniment in triplets was intended by the composer to spiritually suggest Bach's *Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring* (example 6-21).<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Sculthorpe, *Songs of Sea and Sky*, 9.

<sup>72</sup> Milton, Sculthorpe interviews: complete transcript, 26.

Example 6-21: Sculthorpe, *Songs of Sea and Sky*, mm. 116-122.

The image displays three systems of musical notation for Example 6-21. The first system, measures 116-118, features a vocal line in the upper staff with lyrics "con pietà" and piano accompaniment in the lower staves. Dynamics include *pp*, *mf sempre*, and *con pietà*. The second system, measures 119-120, shows piano accompaniment with a *mf* dynamic. The third system, measures 121-122, continues the piano accompaniment. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, ties, and triplets.

*Saibai* for string quartet is a transcription of the “Mission Hymn” portion of the clarinet work. In the string quartet version, the clarinet melody in its entirety did not work effectively, and the omission of this counterpoint makes for a fascinating study in transformational synthesis. The counterpoint with triplets suggesting Bach’s *Jesu, Joy of Man’s Desiring*, however, does appear in the string quartet version (example 6-22).

Example 6-22: Sculthorpe, *Saibai*, mm. 17-30.

17 *mf sempre* *con piet * **2** *sim.*

21

24

27 **3** *meno mosso* *mp* *p* *dim.* *sim.* *p* *dim.* *p*

Sculthorpe also used the same melody in an effective hymn setting for a supplement to *The Australian Hymn Book* (example 6-23).<sup>73</sup>

Example 6-23: Sculthorpe, *Saibai, Australian Hymn Book*, pp. 66-67.

*Baba keriba ike*

1 Fa - ther, now we come, well know - ing  
we shall not be turned a - way;  
Life e - ter - nal, life be - stow - ing, strength - en,  
cheer us as we pray.

- 2 All things that give profit to us  
as your people we may claim;  
and your Son has made the promise:  
you will hear us in his name.
- 3 We shall watch and pray and labour  
through your Spirit's strengthening grace,  
listening for your words of favour,  
living as before your face.

4 In reproof and disappointment  
let us understand your will;  
in all things of your appointment  
we shall know and love you still.

5 May our hearts be always open  
to your answers to our prayer;  
in our joy, our tribulation,  
we shall know and greet you there.

<sup>73</sup> Sculthorpe, No. 32: *Saibai—Baba keriba ike* (1987), in *Sing Alleluia: a supplement to the Australian Hymn Book* (London: Collins Liturgical Publications, 1987), 66.

### Hill Songs

Both of the *Hill Songs* were written to mark celebrations in Sculthorpe's brother's family in Launceston.<sup>74</sup> Sculthorpe has always associated Tasmania with, among other things, hills, and the title of these songs was borrowed from Percy Grainger, although Grainger was inspired by Scotland in his similarly evocative pair.<sup>75</sup>

The accompaniment of the *Hill Songs* incorporates strings of harmonic sixths, often moving in conjunct motion. In attempting to inject a Tasmanian flavour into these works, the composer reverted to one of his favourite compositional techniques as a youth:

Taking myself back to when I was a boy, I think the reason for all the sixths is that I used to like writing sixths, not melodically but strings of sixths as two-part chords. I used to like writing chains of them. I think in some way they represented Tasmania to me; I do not know why or how, but I guess it does not matter.

*Hill Song No. 1* was written as a late wedding present for the composer's brother, Roger, and his second wife, Patricia (example 6-24).<sup>76</sup> It was first performed in March 1992 at the wedding of the composer's niece, Anne, to her husband, Malcolm Wilson.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Milton, Sculthorpe interviews: complete transcript, 24.

<sup>75</sup> Graeme Skinner, "Peter Sculthorpe: Music for String Quartet: Volume 2," [CD liner notes] (Tall Poppies CD TP090: Goldner String Quartet, 1998), 2.

<sup>76</sup> Hayes, 85.

<sup>77</sup> As mentioned previously, in the same year, Sculthorpe inscribed his *Little Serenade* of 1977 to the same pair on this wedding.

Example 6-24: Sculthorpe, *Hill Song No. 1*, mm. 1-12.

*Molto sereno* (♩ = c. 65)

The musical score is presented in three systems. The first system, marked with a circled '1', shows the beginning of the piece with a tempo of 'Molto sereno' and a quarter note equal to approximately 65 beats per minute. It features a piano (*p*) dynamic and a pizzicato (*pizz. p*) instruction. The second system includes an *arco* instruction. The third system, marked with a circled '2', shows a change in dynamics to mezzo-forte (*mf*) and includes a *pizz.* instruction.

Sculthorpe wrote *Hill Song No. 2* the same year<sup>78</sup> for his niece, Elizabeth, who was to be married the following year (example 6-25).<sup>79</sup> The second work of the pair, based on an unused sketch from many years previously, was deliberately written with a Scottish flavour because his niece was particularly attached to her maternal grandmother who was born in Scotland.<sup>80</sup> That the soaring hills of Tasmania as well as the craggy

<sup>78</sup> Although Skinner's notes for the recording date this work 1993, the year of the first performance, it was actually written the same year as the first of the *Hill Songs*.

<sup>79</sup> The first performance of *Hill Song No. 2* took place in September 1993.

<sup>80</sup> Skinner, "Music for String Quartet: Volume 2," 3.

peaks of Scotland could both be represented by the same music was a happy coincidence for the composer. Sculthorpe agrees that a distinct yearning quality, seemingly at odds with the peaceful harmonic underpinning, injects the *Hill Songs* with a degree of disquiet.<sup>81</sup>

Example 6-25: Sculthorpe, *Hill Song No. 2*, mm. 1-20.

1      Semplice (♩ = c. 58)

Violin 1

Violin 2

Viola

Cello

mf

mf

pizz.

1

5

p

9

pp

p

p

p

<sup>81</sup> Milton, Sculthorpe interviews: complete transcript, 24.

**From Nourlangie**

*From Nourlangie* was written in 1994, and derives its primary material from Sculthorpe's concerto for guitar, *Nourlangie*,<sup>82</sup> composed in 1989. As a preface to the score, Sculthorpe describes the background to the work:

In 1989, I made my first visit to Kakadu National Park, in the north of Australia. Looking out across the great floodplains there, I could see abandoned sites of early white settlement, the Arafura Sea, Torres Strait and, in my imagination, the islands of Indonesia. The musics of these places, and of Kakadu itself, fused in my mind.<sup>83</sup>

Alterations and elaborations of two different motifs make up the main thrust of the music of the guitar work. The second motif, heard immediately after the first, is based upon a Torres Strait dance-song (example 6-26).<sup>84</sup>

Example 6-26: Trevor Jones, *Traditional Music of Torres Strait*, Ex.2.3 (a)<sup>85</sup>

The image shows a musical score for guitar, consisting of six staves. The first staff begins with a tempo marking '♩ = approx. 112(♩)' and a dynamic marking '(p on tobacco rim)'. A bracket labeled 'Tapping:' spans the first two staves, with a first ending bracket above the second staff. The score features various rhythmic patterns, including triplets and sixteenth notes, and ends with a double bar line.

<sup>82</sup> The guitar concerto takes its name from an enormous rock monolith in the park.

<sup>83</sup> Sculthorpe, *From Nourlangie*, [Faberprint copy] (London: Faber Music, 1994).

<sup>84</sup> Sculthorpe, *Nourlangie*, [Faberprint copy] (London: Faber Music, 1989).

<sup>85</sup> Jeremy Beckett, *Traditional music of Torres Strait*, 22.

It is later transformed into a long, joyful, masterfully shaped lyrical statement  
(example 6-27).<sup>86</sup>

Example 6-27: Sculthorpe, *Nourlangie*, fig. 11.

The musical score for Example 6-27, Sculthorpe's *Nourlangie*, figure 11, is presented in two systems. The first system includes parts for Flute (Fl.), Clarinet in B-flat (Cl. Bb.), Oboe 1 (Ob. 1), Oboe 2 (Ob. 2), Viola (Vla.), Violoncello (Vc.), and Contrabass (Cb.). The second system includes parts for Flute (Fl.), Clarinet in B-flat (Cl. Bb.), Oboe 1 (Ob. 1), Oboe 2 (Ob. 2), Viola (Vla.), Violoncello (Vc.), and Contrabass (Cb.). The score features various musical notations including dynamics (p, mf, pp), articulation (acc., arco), and performance instructions (Poco allargato, solo, albramente, tutti). The tempo is marked *Poco allargato* (1 = 6.50). The score is written in 3/4 time and includes various musical notations such as slurs, accents, and dynamic markings.

<sup>86</sup> Roger Covell, "Pleasures of a peppery baton and an exquisite guitar," *Sydney Morning Herald* (1 November 1989), 15.

The work for string quartet consists of three statements of the transformed melody, preceded by a short introduction (example 6-28). Based on an extended pentatonic scale and deriving its essential shapes from a musical example in Beckett's *Traditional music of Torres Strait*,<sup>87</sup> this ecstatic melody, according to Sculthorpe, stems from his belief that "Australia is one of the few places on earth where one can honestly write straightforward, joyful music."<sup>88</sup>

Example 6-28: Sculthorpe, *From Nourlangie*, mm. 1-11.

The musical score for Example 6-28 is arranged in three systems. The first system features four staves for string quartet (Violin 1, Violin 2, Viola, and Cello) with the tempo marking "Molto sostenuto (♩ = c. 84)". The second system includes a piano accompaniment with a "dolce" marking and dynamics "pp" and "sim.". The third system continues the piano accompaniment with markings "(pizz.)", "arco", and "liberamente".

<sup>87</sup> Example 2: 3 (a) in Beckett, *Traditional music of Torres Strait*, 22.

<sup>88</sup> Hayes, 81.

**Maranoa Lullaby: for mezzo-soprano and string quartet**

In *Maranoa Lullaby*, for mezzo-soprano and string quartet, composed in 1996, Sculthorpe uses an Aboriginal melody from the Maranoa district in northern Queensland (example 6-29).<sup>89</sup>

**Example 6-29: Sculthorpe, *Maranoa Lullaby*, mm. 1-10.**

**Teneramente** ( $\text{♩} = \text{c.86}$ )

Voice: Mum-ma War-run-no Mur-ra Wa-thun-no Mum-ma War-run-no  
 Violin 1  
 Violin 2  
 Viola  
 Cello

6  
 Mur-ra Wa-thun-no Mum-ma War-run-no Mur-ra Wa-thun-no Mum-ma War-run-no Mur-ra Wa-thun-no  
 mp dolce

<sup>89</sup> Peter Sculthorpe, interviews by the author, 1993-2003, Sydney, Australia.

The melody is one of a number collected in northern Australia by Dr. H. O. Lethbridge and published in Melbourne in 1937.<sup>90</sup> Sculthorpe has had a special fondness for this particular melody since the early forties, and has said: "It was inevitable that I should make an arrangement of it."<sup>91</sup> Arthur S. Loam supplies the melody in the Lethbridge edition with a piano accompaniment.<sup>92</sup>

According to Lethbridge, the mother sings her child to sleep with the simple text:

Mum - ma War - run - no	Sleep as darkness falls;
Mur - ra Wa - thun - no	Mother watches over you. <sup>93 94</sup>

In the published edition, Dr. Lethbridge states that, while the lullaby was sung, the mother rocked her baby to sleep in a bark cradle, using her foot to avoid stooping.<sup>95</sup>

Sculthorpe has suggested that Loam, in his harmonization of the melody, may have been influenced by Percy Grainger's settings of northern European folk songs.<sup>96</sup> Kirsti Harms and the Goldner Quartet gave the first performance of *Maranoa Lullaby* in the Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney on 26 November 1996.

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<sup>90</sup> The publisher was Allan & Co., but further bibliographical information is not available.

<sup>91</sup> Peter Sculthorpe, interviews by the author, 1993-2003, Sydney, Australia.

<sup>92</sup> Sculthorpe, *Maranoa Lullaby* (London: Faber Music, 2001).

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Lethbridge's poetic translation is given in the Brodsky recording as follows: Sleep as falls the dark, / In your bed of bark; / None shall harm you, dear, / Mother watches near. (Vermeulen).

<sup>95</sup> Sculthorpe, *Maranoa Lullaby*.

<sup>96</sup> It is possible that Loam was exposed to these during Grainger's visit to Australia several years before the arrangement was made (Vermeulen, 7).

**A Little Love Song**

*A Little Love Song* (example 6-30) is a companion piece to the composer's *Little Serenade* (1977).

**Example 6-30: Sculthorpe, *A Little Love Song*, mm. 9-14.**

The musical score for 'A Little Love Song' (measures 6-14) is presented in four staves. The top staff is Violin I, the second is Violin II, the third is Viola, and the bottom is Cello/Double Bass. The piece is in 3/4 time. Measure 6 begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic and a *pizz.* instruction for the Cello/Double Bass. The Violin I part has a melodic line, while the Cello/Double Bass provides a rhythmic accompaniment. Dynamics include *p*, *poco cresc.*, and *mp*. The score concludes at measure 14.

The genesis of *A Little Love Song* is straightforward. In 1998, the Brodsky Quartet asked Sculthorpe, along with a number of other composers, to write a variation upon the “Ode to Joy”, from the last movement of Beethoven’s *Symphony No. 9*,<sup>97</sup> a melody about which Sculthorpe made the following comment:

<sup>97</sup> Sculthorpe, *A Little Love Song* (London: Faber Music, 1999).

I must confess that this melody had always seemed to me to be somewhat commonplace. Outside the context of the symphony, however, it revealed itself to be one of much tenderness, a melody that is as perfect as any composer could wish to write.<sup>98</sup>

Within the context of the conception of *A Little Love Song*, Sculthorpe later discovered that he was able to harmonise the melody using the *Heart and Soul* harmonic plan from his *Little Serenade*, conceived some twenty-five years earlier (example 6-31).

Example 6-31: Sculthorpe, *Little Serenade*, mm. 9-14.

The image displays a musical score for Example 6-31, consisting of two parts. The upper part is a vertical arrangement of four staves, each marked with a mezzo-piano (*mp*) dynamic. The top staff shows a melody in treble clef. The second staff shows a single note with a slur. The third and fourth staves show a complex harmonic accompaniment with many notes and slurs. The lower part of the image shows a full four-staff musical score for measures 9-14. The top staff is the melody, and the bottom three staves provide a detailed harmonic accompaniment with various rhythmic patterns and slurs.

<sup>98</sup> Peter Sculthorpe, interviews by the author, 1993-2003, Sydney, Australia.

The introductory material as well as the counterpoint from the early work, with some slight adjustments, also made its way into *A Little Love Song* (examples 6-32 and 6-33).

Example 6-32: Sculthorpe, *Little Serenade*, mm. 1-5.

Musical score for Example 6-32, Sculthorpe's *Little Serenade*, measures 1-5. The score is for four instruments: Un. 1 (Violin I), Un. 2 (Violin II), Vla. (Viola), and Uc. (Violoncello). The key signature is one flat (B-flat) and the time signature is 4/4. The music begins with a *p* (piano) dynamic. Un. 1 and Vla. play a melodic line with a slur over the first two notes of the second measure. Un. 2 plays a rhythmic accompaniment of eighth notes. Uc. plays a simple bass line.

Example 6-33: Sculthorpe, *A Little Love Song*, mm. 1-5.

Musical score for Example 6-33, Sculthorpe's *A Little Love Song*, measures 1-5. The score is for four instruments: Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Violoncello. The key signature is one flat (B-flat) and the time signature is 4/4. The music begins with a *p* (piano) dynamic. Violin I and Viola play a melodic line with a slur over the first two notes of the second measure. Violin II plays a rhythmic accompaniment of eighth notes. Violoncello plays a simple bass line.

The work is dedicated to the Brodsky Quartet

**Love Song: for guitar and string quartet**

Example 6-34: Sculthorpe, *Love Song*, mm. 1-4.

Calmo (♩ = c. 84)

The musical score shows the following details:

- Guitar:** Treble clef, key signature of two sharps (F# and C#), 4/4 time. Measures 1-4 contain a melodic line starting with a forte (*f*) dynamic. A triplet of eighth notes is marked in measure 4.
- Violin I and II:** Treble clef, key signature of two sharps, 4/4 time. All staves are empty.
- Viola:** Alto clef, key signature of two sharps, 4/4 time. All staves are empty.
- Violoncello:** Bass clef, key signature of two sharps, 4/4 time. Measures 1-3 are empty. Measure 4 contains a single note with a pizzicato (*pizz.*) marking and a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic.

In its original form as a work for guitar and orchestra, the Darwin International Guitar Festival commissioned *Love Song*. The Darwin Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Martin Jarvis, with John Williams, soloist, first performed it on 12 July 1997.

In the words of the composer:

*Love Song* is a calm, straightforward work, filled with thoughts of friends and friendly places. Its music grows from the falling intervals played by the guitar at the outset.<sup>99</sup>

<sup>99</sup> Sculthorpe, *Love Song: for guitar and string quartet* (London: Faber Music, 1999).

In one movement, the work consists of five sections. Forming an arch, the first section is expanded in the last (example 6-35).

Example 6-35: Sculthorpe, *Love Song*, mm. 97-102.

7 *l'istesso tempo*

97

Guit. *mf* *mp*

Vln I *mp*

Vln II *mp*

Vla *mf* *mp*

Vc. *dim.* *mf* *mp*

100

Guit. *mf* *mp*

Vln I *mp*

Vln II *mp*

Vla *mf* *mp*

Vc. *mf* *mp*

The second section mirrors the fourth (example 6-36).

Example 6-36: Sculthorpe, *Love Song*, mm. 11-16.

9

Guit. *p* *legato*

Vln I con sord. *p*

Vln II con sord. *p*

Vla con sord. *p*

Vc. con sord. arco *p*

13

Guit. *p*

Vln I

Vln II

Vla

Vc.

The third section of the work, at the center, acts as an interlude between the outer pairs (example 6-37).

Example 6-37: Sculthorpe, *Love Song*, mm. 41-48

3 **più mosso** ( $\text{♩} = \text{c. } 100$ )

The musical score consists of two systems. The first system covers measures 41 to 44, and the second system covers measures 45 to 48. The guitar part is in the treble clef, while the string quartet parts (Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Violoncello) are in their respective clefs. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, accents, and dynamic markings. The tempo marking 'più mosso' is enclosed in a box at the top of the first system.

The arrangement for string quartet and guitar was made especially for Slava Grigoryan and members of the Goldner String Quartet.<sup>100</sup>

<sup>100</sup> Peter Sculthorpe, interviews by the author, 1993-2003, Sydney, Australia.

Djilile

The musical material of *Djilile* for string quartet is directly based upon an indigenous chant from Arnhem Land, in northern Australia (example 6-38). Its title, *Djilile*, translates as “whistling-duck on a billabong”. Sculthorpe has made numerous arrangements of the chant, from solo instrument to full orchestra, and the melody appears in an abundance of texturally contrasted manifestations throughout the composer’s writing.

Example 6-38: Sculthorpe, *Djilile*, mm. 1-12

Cantando (♩ = c. 54)

The musical score for Example 6-38, Sculthorpe's *Djilile*, mm. 1-12, is presented in 3/8 time. The tempo is marked *Cantando* with a quarter note equal to approximately 54 beats per minute. The score is for string quartet, featuring Violin 1, Violin 2, and Viola. The music begins with a *p* (piano) dynamic. Measure 10 includes a first ending bracket. The score concludes with a *p* dynamic in measure 12.

Completed in Sydney in November 1999,<sup>101</sup> the arrangement of *Djilile* for string quartet was made especially for the Brodsky Quartet, for the recording *Island Dreaming* with Anne Sofie von Otter.<sup>102</sup> The string quartet version consists of four statements of the chant separated by interludes and followed by a brief coda. The closing section of the work, as shown in example 6-39, features fragmentation of the main melodic material.

Example 6-39: Sculthorpe, *Djilile*, mm. 61-66.

The musical score for Example 6-39 consists of two systems of four staves each, representing Violin 1, Violin 2, Viola, and Violoncello. The first system covers measures 61 to 63. Measure 61 is marked with a box containing the number 7 and the tempo instruction 'meno mosso', and a dynamic marking of 'mf'. Measure 62 is marked 'dim.' and measure 63 is marked 'mf'. The second system covers measures 64 to 66. Measure 64 is marked with a dynamic of 'p'. The score shows the fragmentation of the main melodic material across the instruments.

<sup>101</sup> Sculthorpe, *Djilile: for string quartet* (London: Faber Music, 1999).

<sup>102</sup> For programmatic reasons, it was decided not to include the string quartet arrangement on the Brodsky recording, but Sculthorpe was “pleased to make another version” of a melody for which he has such a special fondness (Peter Sculthorpe, interviews by the author, 1993-2003, Sydney, Australia).

## Chapter 7: Dualism

...a universal principle that is fundamental to my work  
...is the concept of duality.<sup>1</sup>

Sculthorpe has himself thus identified the principle of dualism as an aspect that is fundamental to his musical imagination. Throughout this chapter, the terms “dualism” and “duality” are used interchangeably. This chapter places the concept of duality historically within the composer’s life and stylistic maturation and identifies numerous telling examples of the principle as it manifests itself in and through the composer’s unpublished and other writings. The discussion of the dualities does not necessarily correspond with a chronological organization of the quartets. Rather, various types of dualities are identified and musical examples, taken mostly from the string quartets, then illustrate the concepts under discussion.

Many of the dualities explored function at several levels. The notion of dualism as it applies to geography, for example, applies to the composer’s approach to his relationship with the mainland (Tasmania/mainland Australia), his approach to Europe (Australia/Europe), and even his approach and feelings about the culture of Mexico (Australia/Mexico), whose Pyramids of the Sun and Moon at Teotihuacan influenced String Quartet no. 7 (sun/moon). Ultimately his approach to Australasia—incorporating the cultures of Indonesia (especially Bali), Japan, Papua New Guinea, and other Pacific

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<sup>1</sup> Sculthorpe, “The 1993 Stuart Challender Memorial Lecture (Australian Broadcasting Corporation: Eugene Goossens Hall, ABC Ultimo Centre, Sydney, 11 March, 1993), personal library, Peter Sculthorpe, Sydney, 2.

islands of the Torres Strait—manifests itself as the most enduring geographical dualism inherent in his mature style. Further, the duality of northern hemisphere with southern hemisphere extends to the composer's absorption with "Old World"/"New World."

In Sculthorpe's art, the basic dualism of melody and rhythm extends to other opposing concepts: bird song and ritual, song and dance, sky and earth, sea and sky, slow and fast. The use of these notions and their association with specific programmatic texts then leads to further dualisms including those between body/spirit and reality/unreality. One of the most important dualities in Sculthorpe's music arises from the opposition of the landscape and humanity. This specific dualism connects two of the composer's most distinct stylistic approaches.

One further example of an element of dualism manifests itself with the identification of what will be explained as the "Kepler" motive. Appearing at foreground levels across much of the music and thus transcending some of the composer's more distinctly stylized writing, the motive symbolizes some of the composer's most emotional responses to his surroundings. In addition to the numerous dualities discussed within this chapter, the basic philosophical underpinning to the composer's artistic aesthetic draws inspiration from the theses and antitheses of sun/moon, yin/yang, Buddhism/Shintoism, and idealism/materialism.

The *Oxford Dictionary* defines dualism as a theory recognizing two independent principles.<sup>2</sup> In the composer's thinking, the concept actually evokes a different view. For Sculthorpe, the principle of dualism—as it applies to his music, his philosophical outlook, and to various artistic predispositions in his life—suggests more than the coexistence of two seemingly disparate entities. Rather, the laws of the Hegelian dialectic provide a starting point for Sculthorpe's world and artistic view: one concept (thesis) inevitably generates its opposite (antithesis); their interaction, usually by simple juxtaposition rather than by fusion, leads to a new concept (synthesis).

In some senses, the most dramatic one to affect Sculthorpe is a geographic duality, which exists on two planes. The duality involving Europe and Australia is not only concerned with the enormous geographical and philosophical chasm that separates the island continent from Europe and can, though not necessarily, by extension incorporate America. It also touches upon a richly textured canon of musical tradition and knowledge. In whichever art form they have chosen, Australians thus inevitably need either to incorporate and acknowledge or to consciously ignore the distinction between these two worlds. As an Australian born in Tasmania, the island state off the southern tip of mainland Australia, Sculthorpe inherited another level of duality.

That small stretch of water, Bass Strait, causes a many-layered feeling of separation between mainland Australians and us (Tasmanians).<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> H.W. and F.G. Fowler, eds., *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English (based on The Oxford Dictionary)* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1956).

<sup>3</sup> Sculthorpe, Stuart Challender Memorial Lecture, 2.

The theory of two opposing ideas existing in a piece of music is, of course, common to much Western music. The sophisticated structure of sonata form, for example, balances upon, at the very least, a clearly established tonal duality; mostly, this duality extends also to thematic material, and often to compositional style and other elements as well. The notion of duality as it appears consistently in the music of Peter Sculthorpe, however, presents perhaps a richer and more encompassing manifestation of the concept. Elements of duality embrace his art form in an astonishingly versatile way, impacting the smallest and most detailed foreground elements, as well as a work's most significant background structure. Sculthorpe has emphasised that his string quartets in particular manifest a tendency towards a musical synthesis which yearns for the intellectual and emotional climates of Europe, perhaps in part because of the nature of the genre.<sup>4</sup>

Sculthorpe has stressed that he was unaware of when he “first began using [the] notion of duality.”<sup>5</sup> He does suggest that his early and deliberate use of two-part counterpoint represents a manifestation of applied dualism.<sup>6</sup> Many of the early string quartets are simply elaborations of this basic principle. The earliest surviving quartet at once starkly establishes dualisms of melody and accompaniment, activity and inactivity, and even a rhythmic duality juxtaposing on-beat chordal playing with syncopated melodic activity (example 7-1). Harmonically, a contrast between tertial chords and a distinctly

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<sup>4</sup> Sculthorpe, “String Quartet no. 9: notes,” personal library, Peter Sculthorpe, Sydney.

<sup>5</sup> Sculthorpe, Stuart Challender Memorial Lecture, 3.

<sup>6</sup> Sculthorpe, “*The Song of the Earth*: some personal thoughts,” unpublished essay (Personal library, Peter Sculthorpe, Sydney).

non-tonal melody supports the hypothesis that such an approach to dualism is inherent even in this early work.

Example 7-1: Sculthorpe, *Little Song*, String Quartet no. 1, mm. 1-4.

Violin I  
Violin II  
Viola  
Violoncello

con sord.  
p  
con sord.  
p  
con sord.  
p  
con sord.  
p

\* Slurs indicate phrasing, not bowing.

mf

The composer's earliest works were indeed almost solely concerned with the comforting pastoral vistas of Tasmania. Nevertheless, even at this early time, the architectural challenges for builders and architects from the northern hemisphere to adjust to the southern hemisphere's northern sun may have contributed to the composer's

awareness of duality.<sup>7</sup> In his autobiography, he writes: “It took several generations to overcome English habits, to accept that in the southern hemisphere the sun shines from the north, not the south.”<sup>8</sup> He credits this early observation and a subsequent lifelong fascination with Georgian architecture among his early influences towards an artistic aesthetic that embraced the notion of duality across a multiplicity of guises.<sup>9</sup>

The often quite severe balance in my music stems very directly, I believe, from my love of many Tasmanian houses.<sup>10</sup>

Written in 1955, the music of *Irkanda I* springs from two ideas and their implications. On the original manuscript of the work, then called just *Irkanda*, the composer wrote:

Melody: bird song; song; sky.  
Rhythm: ritual; dance; earth.<sup>11</sup>

Melody and Rhythm are obviously dualities. Sculthorpe extends the constraints of these dualities to encompass the formal distinctions between the dualities of sky and earth, song and dance, bird song and ritual. The composer thus establishes a language in which freedom of bird song, for example, forms an antithesis to the formality of ritual.

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<sup>7</sup> In the Challenger Lecture, Sculthorpe also commented on his sense of unease with some of Tasmania’s noble Georgian houses; many of them have southern facades resplendent with windows, but no windows on the northern side.

<sup>8</sup> Peter Sculthorpe, *Sum Music: Journeys and Reflections from a Composer’s Life*, 10.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>11</sup> Sculthorpe, “*Irkanda*, Sonata for violin alone” original (unpublished) manuscript, 1955, personal library, Peter Sculthorpe, Sydney.

In the *Piano Sonatina* of 1954, based upon the Aboriginal legend of Yoonecara's journey,<sup>12</sup> Sculthorpe's slow, still music attempts to portray a spiritual journey rather than a physical one. The music of the second movement reflects the mystical land beyond the setting sun, and the third movement the reality of Yoonecara's return. Thus, the work is concerned with the dual natures of body and spirit, physical and spiritual, reality and unreality, as manifested in distinct musical sections that are fast or slow, still or agitated, harmonically stable or melodically yearning.

It was during his studies at the University of Melbourne that Sculthorpe's views on dualism in music began to crystallise.

I found myself drawn more and more to the harsher landscapes of mainland Australia, to the desert and the wilderness. Eventually, the Australian landscape became one of the major concerns of my music.<sup>13</sup>

Clearly, he was torn between the landscapes of Tasmania and the Australian mainland.

Later, he was torn between Australia and Europe, and even later between Australia and Asia. Part of Sculthorpe's musical style evolved from his attempt, initially, to give life to the Australian landscape, through the sun and the sounds of nature: birds, insects, and the bush. Coupled inextricably to that style is music that incorporates a human dimension, mirrored through loneliness, resignation, and death.

In the late fifties, Sculthorpe went to Oxford. It was perhaps inevitable that various concepts of duality in his art found voice in many of his compositions from this

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<sup>12</sup> Hayes, *Peter Sculthorpe: a Bio-Bibliography*, 41.

<sup>13</sup> Sculthorpe, Stuart Challender Memorial Lecture, 4.

period as the composer necessarily confronted the two antipodal, geographical, physical, meteorological, cultural, and musical worlds of Europe and Australia. He wrote: "Upon my return from Oxford, I was not sure how I regarded myself. I was torn between the New World and the Old."<sup>14</sup> In his note for the *Sonata for Viola and Percussion* (1960), Sculthorpe writes:

The work was written with feelings of longing for Australia and with feelings of apprehension towards Asia.<sup>15</sup>

The work is structured as a double set of variations; one of its musical ideas is a yearning Mahlerian melody and the other a forceful rhythmic figure. Elements that oppose one another, from musical material at the foreground level to instrumental timbres and the physical interplay between performers, infuse much of the work.

The construction of String Quartet no. 8 embodies duality from the largest background view to the work's most intricate details. The quartet is cast in five succinct movements. Immediately apparent is the clearly sectionalised distinction between slow and fast music. In advocating an interpretational approach that is either improvisational or extremely rigid, the composer's printed directions for performance also emphasize the freedom of the slow movements as opposed to the more rigorous formality of the fast sections.

Even within the slow movements (I, III and V), dual properties highlight various aspects of the structure. The opening cello monologue (example 7-2) at once highlights the

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<sup>14</sup> Sculthorpe, "The Song of the Earth" essay.

<sup>15</sup> Hayes, 45.

voice of the individual in contrast with the other voices that enter at figure 2 (example 7-3). Within this passage, however, various elements suggest further applications. The left hand pizzicato notes, which increasingly manifest themselves within the texture, create a disturbing interruption to the flowing melodic line. Further, even within the yearning solo outpouring, the use of grace notes hints at a second level of tessitura striving for release.

Example 7-2: Sculthorpe, String Quartet no. 8, 1<sup>st</sup> mvt. opening measures

Con dolore

Vlc.

*ff* *molto cresc.* *ff* *mf* *dim.* *ppp*

*pizz.*

c. 3''

*mp* *pizz.* *molto cresc.*

*f* *sub. p* *ppp* *molto cresc.*

*ff* *sub. p* *f* *molto dim.* *mp*

*pizz.*

If the music of the opening represents the lonesome figure in the Australian landscape, the music of figure 2 is the sound of the bush: insect and bird sounds flow in and around the continuing texture of the solo cello. Changes to this pattern occur almost unnoticeably, as the inflections of the various nature sounds undergo subtle transformations, perhaps in response to the presence of humanity. Ultimately, the

sounds of nature disappear as the work embarks upon its next manifestation: the ritual of dance and the formality of rhythm.

Example 7-3: Sculthorpe, String Quartet no. 8, 1<sup>st</sup> mvt. fig. 2-conclusion.

**2** *Dolcissimo*

Vln. 1 *liberamente*  
*ppp*

Vln. 2 *liberamente*  
*ppp*

Vla. (G) *molto rapidamente*  
*ppp* *cresc.*

Vla. (arco) *ppp* *pizz.* *ff* *dim.* *ppp*  
c. 3"

*mf* *mp* *p* *molto dim.* *ppp*

*mf* *f* *mp* *p* *molto dim.* *ppp*

*mf* *dim.* *ppp*

*cresc.* *mf* *dim.* *ppp* *con sord.* *p* *cresc.*

**3** *Con dolore*

*mp* *mf* *dim.*

*ppp* *p* *dim.* *ppp*

*pizz.* *ppp*

Sculthorpe has said that this work's second movement was inspired by the rice-pounding rhythms of Balinese tradition, as researched and notated by Colin McPhee.<sup>16</sup> The two violins share an exciting *col legno* eighth-note motion that contrasts with the explosive pizzicati of the viola and cello, mirroring the cello's *arco/pizzicato* alternations from the opening movement. A calm central section, prepared by a *rallentando* that disguises a sophisticated, composed rhythmical diminution, offsets the energetic outer sections: the duality of slow and fast now reversed. The interest of the *arco/pizzicati* duality also increases. Pizzicato interruptions initially retain their former role, but then, at figure 6, take on a more agitated rhythm, preparing and then responding to the flowering of the violin duet. This occurs when the first violin takes over the melody initially introduced by the second violin after figure 5 and the second violin takes up an ostinato figure (example 7-4).

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<sup>16</sup> Peter Sculthorpe, interviews by the author, 1993-2003, Sydney, Australia.



Perhaps most crucially, String Quartet no. 8 can be viewed as a work that confronts European elements by attempting to impart non-European elements. The soulful and expressive moments in this piece contrast almost violently with music that is completely antithetical to that musical tradition. Thus, old world is juxtaposed with new world. The other dualities are a reflection and recognition of this central synthesis.

With String Quartet no. 8, I was looking for ways to develop a style that derived from other parts of the world to offset all the European elements that are and always will be.<sup>17</sup>

A strong element of duality manifests itself again strongly in String Quartet no. 9. As mentioned in chapter 4, the starting point for the composition of the first, third, and fifth movements was a harmonic framework based on a tone row. While he was visiting Professor of Music at the University of Sussex, Sculthorpe wrote the following passage to demonstrate how a tone row might be melodically and harmonically manipulated (example 7-5).<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Michael Hannan, *Peter Sculthorpe: His Music and Ideas, 1929-1979*, 185.

Example 7-5: Sculthorpe, String Quartet no. 9, fig. 14 until 9 measures after fig 15.

Cast, like its predecessor, in a five-part sectional format, the quartet presents sharply defined dualities. The “European” tone-row sections of the work contrast with the faster music that derives from Australian Aboriginal sources.<sup>19</sup> The contrast between European and Australian music is consistently underscored by further dualities. The instrumental techniques employed, for instance, reflect the sectionalized structure of the musical

<sup>19</sup> Peter Sculthorpe, interviews by the author, 1993-2003, Sydney, Australia.

material. The two fast sections maintain their pulse through an intricate series of overlapping ostinati.<sup>20</sup>

String Quartet no. 10 also takes as its starting point the central duality of Europe and Australia, albeit in a starkly different way.

It could be said that the New World, in the *Sun Songs* and the *Interlude*, is juxtaposed with the Old, in the quiet homophonic strains of the *Chorales*.<sup>21</sup>

The “New World” of String Quartet no. 10, however, harbors another duality; for the first time in his string quartet music, Sculthorpe draws on musical materials from the American edge of the Pacific Rim. In his note for the work, Sculthorpe comments:

In writing for the Kronos Quartet, it seemed fitting to use source material associated with the West Coast of the United States. The outer movements...and the *Interlude* incorporate transformations of motives and rhythms found in songs of the Pueblo Indian.<sup>22</sup>

In support of the geographical duality inherent in the use of such source material, Sculthorpe juxtaposes harmonies and rhythms that lend credence to this central issue. Despite a foreground level of activity that is involved and contrapuntally quite sophisticated, the slow rate of harmonic change in the *Sun Songs* suggests the breadth of the Australian landscape.<sup>23</sup> The more complex harmonies of the “Old World” Chorales, conversely, move much more rapidly.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> The ostinati are based on melodies transcribed by Trevor Jones in R.M. and C.H Berndt's *Aboriginal Man in Australia* (Sydney, 1965). Hayes, 62.

<sup>21</sup> “Composer’s note,” in Sculthorpe, “String Quartet no. 10 (1983)” (London: Faber Music, 1983).

<sup>22</sup> Hayes, 73.

<sup>23</sup> Peter Sculthorpe, interviews by the author, 1993-2003, Sydney, Australia.

In the first *Sun Song*, the instrumental realisation of the melodic line favours a transparent texture that supports the background harmonic treatment. In the first movement, for example, the accompanimental gestures, which often contain relatively complex ostinato patterns, at no time obscure the first violin line that carries the main melody exclusively throughout (example 7-6).

Example 7-6a: Sculthorpe, String Quartet no. 10, 1<sup>st</sup> mvt. mm. 73-82.

The image displays two systems of musical notation for a string quartet. Each system consists of four staves, representing the first violin, second violin, viola, and first cello. The first system covers measures 73 to 76, and the second system covers measures 77 to 80. The first violin part is the most prominent, featuring a melodic line with various ornaments and slurs. The other instruments provide accompaniment with complex, often ostinato patterns. The notation includes various note values, rests, and dynamic markings such as *mf* and *f*.

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<sup>24</sup> Hayes, 73.

Example 7-6b: Sculthorpe, String Quartet no. 10, 1<sup>st</sup> mvt. mm. 83-87.

Musical score for Example 7-6b, showing four staves of music for a string quartet. A circled number 7 is placed above the first staff. The music features intricate, interwoven lines with various articulations and dynamics.

By contrast, both Chorale movements feature an intricately joined instrumental texture in which the voices together realise a far more complex homogeneity of expression (example 7-7).

Example 7-7a: Sculthorpe, String Quartet no. 10, 4<sup>th</sup> mvt. mm. 1-16.

Musical score for Example 7-7a, showing two systems of four staves each for a string quartet. The first system includes dynamics like *p* and *f*, and markings like *(pizz.)* and *arco*. The second system is marked with a circled number 1. The music consists of block chords and simple melodic lines.

Example 7-7b: Sculthorpe, String Quartet no. 10, 4<sup>th</sup> mvt. mm. 17-24.

The image shows a musical score for a string quartet, consisting of four staves. The score is marked with a circled '2' at the beginning. The music is written in a style that emphasizes discrete gestures and textures, with some notes marked with a 'p' (piano) dynamic. The overall structure of the music is designed to create visual patterns on the page, particularly diagonal lines that resemble pyramids.

A duality between astronomical objects, through the Mexican influence of the Pyramids of the Sun and Moon at Teotihuacan, provided the original inspiration for String Quartet no. 7.<sup>25</sup> A short, intense work in one movement, the quartet is constructed from blocks of discrete gestures, colours and textures, most notably a section with glissandi and visual representations of pyramids (example 7-8),<sup>26</sup> and a more formally restricted passage that features a four-bar repeated gesture (example 7-9).

<sup>25</sup> Sculthorpe, "String Quartet no. 7: Notes," personal library, Peter Sculthorpe, Sydney.

<sup>26</sup> As notated, the *glissandi* in this section form diagonal, pyramid-like patterns on the page.

Example 7-8: Sculthorpe, String Quartet no. 7, mm. 19-28.

Example 7-8: Sculthorpe, String Quartet no. 7, mm. 19-28. The score is in G major and 4/4 time. It features four staves: Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Cello/Double Bass. The first system (mm. 19-21) shows the Violin I staff with dynamics *fp* and *arco (vn)*, Violin II with *fp* and *arco (vn)*, and Viola and Cello/Double Bass with *fp* and *arco*. The second system (mm. 22-24) shows the Violin I staff with dynamics *mf* and *cresc.*, Violin II with *cresc.*, and Viola and Cello/Double Bass with *cresc.* and *mf*. The third system (mm. 25-28) shows the Violin I staff with dynamics *mf molto cresc.*, Violin II with *cresc.* and *mf molto cresc.*, and Viola and Cello/Double Bass with *cresc.* and *mf molto cresc.* The score includes various performance instructions such as *senza vib.*, *con vib.*, *ord.*, *sub. p*, *cresc.*, and *mf molto cresc.*

Example 7-9: Sculthorpe, String Quartet no. 7, mm. 37-46.

Example 7-9: Sculthorpe, String Quartet no. 7, mm. 37-46. The score is in G major and 4/4 time. It features four staves: Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Cello/Double Bass. The first system (mm. 37-40) shows the Violin I staff with dynamics *fp* and *arco*, Violin II with *p* and *pizz.*, and Viola and Cello/Double Bass with *mp* and *p*. The second system (mm. 41-44) shows the Violin I staff with dynamics *p* and *pizz.*, Violin II with *p* and *pizz.*, and Viola and Cello/Double Bass with *p* and *pizz.* The third system (mm. 45-46) shows the Violin I staff with dynamics *p* and *pizz.*, Violin II with *p* and *pizz.*, and Viola and Cello/Double Bass with *p* and *pizz.* The score includes various performance instructions such as *arco*, *pizz.*, *p*, *mp*, and *mf*.

In *Red Landscape*, an early version of the work, a distinct four-measure interlude (mm. 15-18) forms a bridge within and between these passages (example 7-10).<sup>27</sup>

Example 7-10: Sculthorpe, *Red Landscape*, mm. 13-18

The image shows a musical score for four staves, likely representing a string quartet. The music is in 3/4 time and features a variety of rhythmic patterns and dynamics. Key markings include 'p' (piano), 'mf' (mezzo-forte), 'f' (forte), and 'pizz.' (pizzicato). There are also some performance instructions in parentheses, such as '(b)'. The score is divided into measures, with some measures containing rests or specific articulation marks.

Interestingly, in the 1995 revision of String Quartet no. 7, Sculthorpe either replaces or omits the repeated four-bar section from *Red Landscape*. Effectively, these changes solidify the sectionalised structure of the musical conception. The duality between the free section and the more structured section therefore manifests itself far more strongly.

The notion of duality also manifests itself in the composer's responses to performances of his own music. He responds most positively to performances of his music that are passionate, exciting, and exaggerated, or conversely, classical, cool, objective, detached and pristine;<sup>28</sup> he does not much like interpretations in the middle.

I hadn't heard String Quartet no. 6 for several years, and then I heard a performance in Russia. The performance was so "over-the-top" it was unbelievable, and I've been absolutely sold on Russian string playing ever since.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>27</sup> The various versions and titles of String Quartet no. 7 are discussed elsewhere in this paper.

<sup>28</sup> In numerous recording sessions and performances with the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra since 1996, most recently recording a CD of new music for the ABC Classics label (June 6-8, 2000), the composer's responses consistently reflect this particular observation.

<sup>29</sup> Peter Sculthorpe, interviews by the author, 1993-2003, Sydney, Australia.

About a performance approach to String Quartet no. 10, he said: "I think String Quartet no. 10 is a fairly pristine work, and should therefore be played that way; if not, then it should be played really over-the-top."<sup>30</sup> This personal taste constitutes another application of duality to Sculthorpe's musical style and aesthetic. The European, old-world tradition of passion and fire in performance contrasts with a new world interpretation that is accurate, cool, pristine and pure. Both interpretations may be equally valid; indeed, both may co-exist within a single performance.

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<sup>30</sup> Milton, Sculthorpe interviews: complete transcript, 15.

Sculthorpe usually does not attempt to unite the multiplicity of dualities in his music. Mostly, they just co-exist. Sculthorpe's work, *Port Essington*, constitutes one of the few and most important examples where this is not entirely the case. Written in 1977, *Port Essington* depicts the story of the attempted settlement of the remote outpost of Port Essington in the Northern Territory.<sup>31</sup> An ever-present string orchestra represents the bush (example 7-11).

Example 7-11: Sculthorpe, *Port Essington*, 1<sup>st</sup> mvt. mm. 1-8.

Con ferocità (♩: c.112)

Violins I  
Violins 2  
Violas  
Cellos  
Doublebasses

Vln.1  
Vln.2  
Vla.  
Vc.  
Db.

<sup>31</sup> Two settlement attempts were made: the first in 1824, later abandoned, and a second in 1838, abandoned in 1849. Sculthorpe, *Port Essington* (1977) [Orchestral score] (London: Faber Music, 1980).

A solo string trio playing what appears to be nineteenth century salon music represents the settlement (example 7-12).

Example 7-12: Sculthorpe, *Port Essington*, 2<sup>nd</sup> mvt. mm. 1-14.

**4** *Alla marcia* (♩ = c.92)

Vln.1  
Vln.2  
Vlc.  
Db.

Vln.1  
Vln.2  
Vlc.  
Via.  
Db.

*sempre p*

*poco rall.*

**5** *Con grazia* (♩ = c.92)

Vln.1  
Vln.2  
Vlc.  
Via.  
Db.

*dim. a niente*

After numerous unheeding statements, the string trio becomes more and more engulfed by the string orchestra. Towards the end, however, in a section marked “Farewell”, the string orchestra and the string trio tentatively and poignantly join together, if only for a moment (example 7-13).

Example 7-13: Sculthorpe, *Port Essington*, 5<sup>th</sup> mvt, mm. 11-16.

The musical score for Example 7-13 consists of three systems of staves for Violin I (Vln. I), Violin II (Vln. II), Viola (Via.), and Double Bass (Db.).

- System 1 (Measures 11-16):** Marked *poco rall.*. Dynamics include *sempre pp* and *dim. a niente*.
- System 2 (Measures 17-21):** Marked **21 a tempo**. Dynamics include *dim.* and *mp*.
- System 3 (Measures 22-26):** Marked *espressivo*. Dynamics include *mp*, *unis. pizz.*, *dolce ma risonante*, and *pizz.*

Sculthorpe wanted to suggest, “if the New world can adapt to the Old, then the Old can adapt to the New.”<sup>32</sup> Ultimately, the work’s dualities are incompletely reconciled; the string orchestra, the bush, whispers the work’s final haunting movement.

One other distinct dualism manifests itself in Sculthorpe’s music to an extraordinary degree. Sculthorpe refers to it as Kepler’s music for the planet Earth, and suggests that the two notes (G and A flat) represent in his mind a dualism.<sup>33</sup> In light of the composer’s suggestion, it seems appropriate, therefore, to acknowledge and discuss this manifestation, albeit of quite a different interpretation of dualism. Some years before composition began upon *Rites of Passage*, Sculthorpe became interested in the once-held belief that the planets made music as they moved through the heavens.<sup>34</sup> In the early part of the seventeenth century, the astronomer Kepler, a contemporary of Shakespeare,

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<sup>32</sup> Sculthorpe, Stuart Challender Memorial Lecture, 10.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> For further reading on Music of the Spheres, the most important sources are the following:  
 John D. Barrow, *The artful universe: the cosmic source of human creativity* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1995).  
 Max Caspar, *Kepler* (London: Abelard-Schuman, 1959; reprint, New York: Dover Publications, 1993).  
 J. L. E. Dreyer, *A history of astronomy from Thales to Kepler* (Rev. ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1906; reprint, New York: Dover Publications, 1953).  
 Joscelyn Godwin, *Harmonies of heaven and earth: mysticism in music from antiquity to the avant-garde* (Rochester, VT: Inner Traditions, 1995).  
 Joscelyn Godwin, *Music and the occult: French musical philosophies, 1750-1950* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 1995).  
 Huntley, H. E. *The divine proportion: a study in mathematical beauty*. New York: Dover Publications, 1970.  
 Jamie James, *The music of the spheres: music science and the natural order of the universe* (New York: Grove Press, 1993).  
 Johannes Kepler, *Epitome of Copernican astronomy; Harmonies of the world*, translated by Charles Glenn Wallis (New York: Prometheus Books, 1995).  
 Kathi Meyer-Baer, *Music of the spheres and the dance of death: studies in musical iconology* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1970; reprint, New York: Da Capo Press, 1984).  
 Claude V. Palisca, *Humanism in Italian Renaissance musical thought* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985).  
 Edward Rothstein, *Emblems of mind: the inner life of music and mathematics* (New York: Avon Books, 1995).  
 William A. Wallace, ed. *Reinterpreting Galileo* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1986).

computed what he believed to be the Music of the Spheres. His music for planet Earth is G to A flat, and then back to G, a tiny dolorous palindrome. Upon discovering the Kepler motive in Sussex, Sculthorpe decided to inject this idea of the Earth into much of his music. The pitches have permeated almost all his music since that time. According to Sculthorpe, many of the works are like extended songs, both sorrowful and joyful, songs for this earth, and for the survival of this planet.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> In the interview, he continues: "I still treasure my vocal score of *The Song of the Earth*, even though it belongs to my youth, to my beginnings as a composer. I must confess that after these beginnings, the work receded in its importance to me. Upon reading about Kepler, however, I suddenly recalled, in delight, the opening of 'The Farewell'. The extraordinary sound of the C pedal is followed by an introduction in two part counterpoint. The lower part, in thirds, is the sound of planet Earth: G to A flat returning to G. In the course of the movement, the heart-wounding appoggiatura, A flat to G, grows into perhaps the most inspired music, and the most forward-looking, that Mahler ever wrote."

The following musical examples, drawn from a range of works over some sixty years, however, make a strong case for Sculthorpe's proclivity for these particular pitches among the output for string quartet. Written long before Sculthorpe knew about the Kepler premise, String Quartet no. 6 is dominated by the pitches A flat and G (examples 7-14, 7-15, and 7-16).

Example 7-14: Sculthorpe, String Quartet no. 6, I. *Lento molto*, fig. 2.

dim. e molto rall. - - [2] a tempo  
senza sord.

senza sord.

mp legato e più angoscioso

mp legato e più angoscioso  
senza sord.

mf senza sord.

pizz. arco mp legato e

mp legato e più angoscioso

poco rall. - - -  
pizz.

mf

mf

più angoscioso

pizz. arco mf

piangendo cresc.

mf

Example 7-15: Sculthorpe, String Quartet no. 6, II. *Lento*, mm. 1-12.

Lento ( $\text{♩} = \text{c. } 60$ ) molto accel. - - - - - **5** Con moto ( $\text{♩} = \text{c. } 144$ )

*mp* *deciso* *p* *f* *deciso* *f* *deciso* *mp* *deciso*

*arco* *pizz.* *arco*

Example 7-16: Sculthorpe, String Quartet no. 6, II. *Lento*, fig. 15 (mm. 1-8).

*deciso* *deciso* *ff* *molto decisivo*

Sculthorpe became aware of Kepler's theory in 1971, so he was certainly conscious of the significance of this particular dualism when he wrote String Quartet no. 9 in 1975. In this work, the viola's motor rhythm and the other instruments' interjections are centered firmly on the same pitches (example 7-17).

Example 7-17: Sculthorpe, String Quartet no. 9, fig. 4

The musical score for Example 7-17, Sculthorpe, String Quartet no. 9, fig. 4, is presented in two systems. The first system is marked with a circled '4' and the tempo 'Molto preciso (♩ = ca. 144)'. The score includes the following performance instructions: 'pizz.' (pizzicato) for the first violin, 'ppp (pizz.)' for the second violin, 'arco' for the first violin, 'arco: quasi col legno' for the viola, and 'ppp' for the cello/double bass. The second system continues the piece with 'arco' for the first violin, 'pizz.' for the second violin, and 'arco' for the first violin.

In String Quartet no. 7, written some five years before the composer became aware of Kepler's musical representation, the same pitches are stressed in the work's second violin part (example 7-18). Sculthorpe ensures that all non-pizzicato chords incorporate only these pitches, and accents further highlight the importance of the notes.

Example 7-18: Sculthorpe, String Quartet no. 7, mm. 37-41.

Two passages from String Quartet no. 11 firmly ally themselves with this particularly compelling dualism (examples 7-19 and 7-20).

Example 7-19: Sculthorpe, String Quartet no. 11, I. *Deciso*, fig. 5.

Example 7-20: Sculthorpe, String Quartet no. 11, II. *Liberamente*, fig. 6.

The image displays two systems of musical notation for a string quartet. Each system consists of four staves. The first system includes a circled number '6' in a box, likely indicating a specific measure or figure. The notation is dense, with many notes and rests, and includes various musical markings such as slurs, accents, and dynamic markings like 'p' and 'f'.

In the synthesis of a distinctive compositional approach, Sculthorpe's use of the pitches G and A-flat dominates the foreground texture within the parameters established by the stylistic context.

Sculthorpe has said that he has “felt for a long time that the pitches fit [his] style.”<sup>36</sup> As with the presence of the Kepler motive, Sculthorpe has said that when he became “aware of the extent of the presence of duality” in his work, he then used it, frequently, in a deliberate manner.<sup>37</sup> Examples are pervasive throughout the composer's output, and consistently through the works for string quartet as well. Many of these applications manifest themselves in particular aspects of the composer's basic styles.

<sup>36</sup> Milton, Sculthorpe interviews: complete transcript, 2.

<sup>37</sup> Sculthorpe, Stuart Challender Memorial Lecture, 7.

Philosophically and artistically, the notion of opposites gives Sculthorpe's music a great deal of tension. The personal qualities the music possesses clearly derive in part from this extremely prevalent yet quite specific stylistic fingerprint.

### **Chapter 8: Style**

The country we Australians live in has an austere simplicity and our music should be long and flat, to match that.<sup>1</sup>

Sculthorpe thus identifies his concept of an Australian musical aesthetic. The composer achieves aspects of that simplicity through a synthesis of various stylistic elements and approaches. Having explored the concept of dualism across Sculthorpe's work, a more specific exploration of the stylistic synthesis evident in Sculthorpe's music may be observed through the composer's use of three distinct stylistic approaches. In general, these styles do not occur in his music simultaneously. Rather, passages composed in a particular style of music, or elements of a specific stylistic approach, may manifest themselves successively in a particular work. So pervasive is the notion of dualism in Sculthorpe's style that it is possible to identify two clearly defined background stylistic approaches towards much of the music. The musical concepts explored at various structural levels may be considered a manifestation of one the following two stylistic approaches:

**Expressionism: *Irkanda* style**

**Impressionism: *Sun Music* style**

These styles are essentially opposites and therefore do not occur simultaneously in the music. Examples of these stylistic approaches to substantial passages appear pervasively through much of the music for string quartet. The two styles may appear in pure form, but elements of them are also found independently of the pure styles. Often, within the context of a single work, a passage in one style will be followed by a passage in another.

Additionally, a third distinct compositional element manifests itself undeniably throughout the composer's music. I propose to identify this stylistic approach as:

**Ritualism: *Kakadu* style**

The presence of the *Kakadu* style transcends the presence of *Irkanda* and *Sun Music* styles; it may be present and is indeed often identifiable within the strict confines of music typical of the other styles. Indeed, as several of the musical examples in this chapter demonstrate, the *Kakadu* style may be observed in combination and in juxtaposition with the elements of the other two styles. It is this aspect of the *Kakadu* style that most strongly supports an interpretation that attributes an aspect of synthesis to the style. The *Kakadu* style often appears as a foreground entity; figurations derived from Balinese and Australian Aboriginal sources serve as inspiration for this particular stylistic characterization. Incidentally, many examples of the particular aspects of the *Kakadu* style in Sculthorpe's music predate by many years his discovery and subsequent use at a conscious level of the particular source materials. The *Kakadu* style appears quite pervasively throughout Sculthorpe's music for string quartet, and especially in the later compositions, often in combination with the other styles. I would suggest that the Hegelian dialectic of synthesis is therefore furnished by the *Kakadu* style: the *Irkanda* and *Sun Music* styles flourish within the framework of the ritualism inherent in the *Kakadu* style.

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<sup>1</sup> James Barratt, "Personal notes." *QANTAS: The Australian Way Magazine*. (December 1999): 36.

### Thesis: *Irkanda* style - Expressionism

The *Irkanda* stylistic approach relates to music that consists of yearning, soulful melodies, freely explored harmonic colours, and an improvisational approach to rhythmic patterns and structures. It derives from Sculthorpe's feelings towards humanity, a touch of nostalgia for the old-world of Europe, and a love of song in many forms. The word *Irkanda* derives from the Aboriginal word for "a remote and lonely place." This expressive subtext is reflected in much of the composer's music.<sup>2</sup> According to the composer, this style of music is European, Mahlerian, and distinctly expressionistic in intention. The decision to identify an *Irkanda* style does not require excessive justification. Sculthorpe himself has recently acknowledged<sup>3</sup> an essential stylistic approach to the *Irkanda* series of works.<sup>4</sup> A friendship begun in 1962 with Australian painter Russell Drysdale—so often obsessed with the empty and harsh outback—further reinforced Sculthorpe's vision, through European eyes, of a lonely, desolate place.<sup>5</sup>

The *Irkanda* style exhibits an absorbingly unified approach to the intervals of minor seconds and minor thirds, often in a variety of combinations. This predilection for minor third plus semitone is a dominant feature of the *Irkanda* style. Depending largely on context and dramatic aesthetic, the music often also exhibits a tendency to open up

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<sup>2</sup> Murdoch, 166.

<sup>3</sup> Sculthorpe, *Sun Music: journeys and reflections from a composer's life*, (Sydney: ABC Books, 1999), 101.

<sup>4</sup> These include *Irkanda I* for solo violin, *Irkanda II* (now entitled String Quartet No. 5), *Irkanda III* for piano trio, and *Irkanda IV* for solo violin, string orchestra and percussion.

<sup>5</sup> Barratt, "Personal notes," 36.

into combinations of one or more of the following related trichords: M3 +semitone, m3+whole tone, M3+whole tone.

A compelling example of the *Irkanda* style of music presents itself in the opening measures of *Irkanda IV*. In example 8-1, note the solo violin's limited yet melodic material using the pitches of D, F, and G-flat. For the purposes of this discussion, I shall identify any similar trichord consisting of a minor second plus a minor third, within the span of a major third, as 'X.' Accompanying the solo violin's opening gesture, an organization of pitches based on the same intervallic structure (G, A-flat and C-flat in the viola and violins) completes another manifestation of X.

Example 8-1: Sculthorpe, *Irkanda IV*, mm. 1-5.

**Lenio** [♩ = c.60], *con desiderio pieno di malinconia*

The musical score shows the following parts and markings:

- Solo Violin:** *con sord.*, *pizz.*, *arco*, *mp*. Notes D, F, and G-flat are circled and marked with 'X'.
- Violin I:** *con sord.*, *div.*, *p*. Notes G, A-flat, and C-flat are circled and marked with 'X'.
- Violin II:** *con sord.*, *p*.
- Viola:** *con sord.*, *p*. Notes G, A-flat, and C-flat are circled and marked with 'X'.
- Cello:** *pizz.*, *arco*, *mp*.
- Doublebass:** *pizz.*, *arco*, *mp*. Notes G, A-flat, and C-flat are circled and marked with 'X'.
- Percussion:** *Base drum*, *p*.

Although it might seem that the E-flat in the first violin part represents a departure from X, closer examination would suggest that its harmonic connection is with the D of the

solo violin and the C-flat of the viola, later reinforced by the cello. Within the context of larger excerpts of the music, the distinction between the minor third and augmented fourth/major third is often blurred. The major third (E-flat/G) of the first violin part finally becomes the outer boundary of X with the introduction of an E-natural in the double bass, as shown at measure 5 in the above example.

The distinctive intervallic properties of X make up the core of one of Messiaen's scales of limited transposition, and the same trichord is also much utilized by Schoenberg, Webern, and Berg.<sup>6</sup> Sculthorpe's predilection for the harmonic and melodic possibilities of the trichord may therefore be seen as part of an established western music tradition; however his use of X is quite individual in its limited application to music written in the specific *Irkanda* style. In other styles of writing, even within the same work, Sculthorpe will completely abandon the harmonic and melodic implications that arise from manipulation of X. Another example from the same work (example 8-2) supports the suggestion that the basic intervallic constraints, when they occur, are nevertheless extraordinarily consistent:

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<sup>6</sup> Straus, *Introduction to post-tonal theory*, 31, 36, 87.

Example 8-2: Sculthorpe, *Irkanda IV*, fig. 4 (mm. 1-8).

The image shows a musical score for Example 8-2, consisting of six staves. The top staff is the solo violin, marked 'legato' and 'sub. mp'. The other five staves are for other instruments, marked 'pizz.' and 'arco'. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, accents, and dynamic markings. The first staff has a 'legato' marking and a 'sub. mp' dynamic. The second staff has a 'pizz.' marking and a 'p' dynamic. The third staff has a 'pizz.' marking and a 'p' dynamic. The fourth staff has a 'pizz.' marking and a 'p' dynamic. The fifth staff has a 'pizz.' marking and a 'p' dynamic. The sixth staff has a 'pizz.' marking and a 'p' dynamic. The score also includes slurs, accents, and dynamic markings like 'arco' and '(Tom. tom.)'.

In the eight measures of the above example, the solo violin outlines six distinct manifestations of X as shown.

Although the *Irkanda* style may be most clearly identified by the specific intervallic relationships, passages often feature an approach to rhythm that mirrors the style's expressionistic origins. Rhythmically, the *Irkanda* style is characterized by an avoidance of downbeats and an improvisational quality that, particularly in moments of increased rhythmical activity, often stresses a 'short-long' division of the beat, as in example 8-3.

Example 8-3: Sculthorpe, *Irkanda IV*, fig. 5 (mm. 1-7).

⑤ Lento [ $\text{♩} = c. 60$ ] *con desiderio pieno di malinconia* *dim. e rall. . . .*

The score consists of five staves for strings and two for percussion. The top staff is the first violin, followed by the second violin, viola, and cello. The percussion part includes Gong and Small cymbal. The score is marked with dynamics such as *f*, *mf*, and *ff*. The percussion part includes markings for *Gong* and *Small cymbal*. The string parts include markings for *div.*, *pizz.*, *arco*, and *con sord.*

The opening cello pitches of String Quartet no. 6 (example 8-4) also outline X, and the rhythmic patterns are consistent with what has been suggested is a typical *Irkanda* style.

Example 8-4: Sculthorpe, String Quartet no. 6, 1<sup>st</sup> movement, mm. 1-5.

The score consists of four staves for strings: Violin 1, Violin 2, Viola, and Cello. The score is marked with dynamics such as *mf*, *cresc.*, *ff*, and *f molto*. The cello line is marked with *arco* and *pizz.*. The score is marked with *rall.* and includes markings for *con sord.* and *pizz.*

The second movement of the same work again is built upon fragments consistent with the same intervallic makeup. The viola passage (example 8-5) at the beginning of the second movement provides a compelling example, although the rhythm differs from what I have previously described as typical of the *Irkanda* style. As the marked example shows, the E-F cello line functions within the confines of X at a number of levels. In combination

with the prominent A-flat and G of the viola part, the E in the cello makes up perhaps the primary manifestation of X (A-flat, G, E). Together with the A-flat only of the viola, however, both notes (E and F) of the cello part also make up another transposition of X (E, F, A-flat), an interpretation that becomes explicit in the cello part alone in measures 11 and 12, as indicated.

Example 8-5: Sculthorpe, String Quartet no. 6, 2<sup>nd</sup> movement, mm. 1-12.

The image displays a musical score for Example 8-5, Sculthorpe, String Quartet no. 6, 2<sup>nd</sup> movement, mm. 1-12. The score is written in 4/8 time and consists of two systems of staves. The first system shows measures 1-5, with a box around measure 5. The second system shows measures 6-12. Handwritten annotations include 'X' marks, circles around notes, and dynamic markings like 'mp deciso', 'f deciso', and 'pizz'. A circled '5' is above the first system.

It has already been noted that the major third which manifests itself as the outer boundary of the X appears in various guises. In example 8-6 below, the first violin's two semitonal utterances at figure 18 end on G and E-flat respectively. A closer examination shows that in fact the four pitches of these bars constitute two statements of the X which

are related by inversion around the dyad B/C. That the second of these forms (G, E, E-flat) is identical with the opening pitches of the cello's first movement entrance (example 8-4) supports my observation of the pervasiveness of the style's extremely limited intervallic constraints.

Example 8-6: Sculthorpe, String Quartet no. 6, 3rd movement, fig 18 (mm. 1-5).

The slow movement from Sonata no. 1, dating from 1943, is one of the works that provided fundamental musical material for the first string quartet. Well over ten years before Sculthorpe first wrote a work with the subtitle of *Irkanda*, many of the style's basic intervallic directions and inherent structural components are clearly discernible. A melodic cell outlining X (C-sharp, A, B-flat) characterizes the central *Allegretto* shown in example 8-7 below. The simultaneous, accompanimental realization of X (F-sharp, A, B-flat) maps onto the melodic manifestation by inversion around the dyad A/B-flat. Significantly, the semitone manifests itself yet again as the inversional pivot around which the various statements of X are manipulated.

Example 8-7: Slow Movement from Sonata no. 1, *Allegretto* (mm. 1-6).

*Allegretto*

pp in a classical manner. mp

soft pedal throughout if desired.

mf

The rhythmic freedom of *Little Song* from String Quartet no. 1 (example 8-8) features an extremely rigid avoidance of downbeats throughout, but the predilection towards thirds and seconds could not be more obvious. The harmonic connection, though somewhat less direct, is suggested by the chromatic mediant relationship of the opening two chords.

Example 8-8: Sculthorpe, *Little Song*, (mm. 1-2).

Violin I *p*

Violin II con sord.

Viola *p* con sord.

Violoncello *p* con sord.

The D major and F major chords combine to form two statements of X (D, F, F-sharp and A, F-sharp, F), related by inversion around the F/F-sharp dyad. A semitone is again suggested by the inversional properties of the statements. Only a C-sharp is needed to complete the logical extension of X suggested by the F major chord; the entire work rigidly avoids all C-sharps whatsoever, until the penultimate note of the solo in the second last measure (m. 10) of the work (example 8-9).

Example 8-9: Sculthorpe, *Little Song*, (mm. 10-11).

Thus, a longer-range manifestation of the X is realized simultaneously with a chordal setting in m. 10 outlining X (B-flat, A, F-sharp). This final chord is particularly interesting for it maps onto the primary opening manifestation by inversion around the C-sharp/D dyad. The inversion index of the two relationships creates a background X between the tonal centers suggested by the inversional properties of the intervallic clusters.

That Sculthorpe was unaware of such relationships between what he considered a much later development in his music and the early quartet is indisputable. Sculthorpe

expressed his astonishment at what he agreed were extraordinary motivic connections between String Quartet no. 1 and various later manifestations of *Irkanda* style music.

It must be subconscious. It's fabulous. I'm very excited; I couldn't have made a more startling connection if I'd tried to.<sup>7</sup>

The piano work that formed the basis of the second string quartet also appears to outline X in its opening sonorities. In the opening measures of the work, shown in example 8-10 below, the outer pitch parameters (F in the top voice, and a repeated pattern of E and G-sharp in the lower part) constitute the main harmonic underpinning of the opening section of this work.

Example 8-10: Sculthorpe, Short Piece for Piano No. 1, mm. 1-6.

The musical score for Example 8-10 is presented in two systems. The first system contains measures 1 through 3, and the second system contains measures 4 through 6. The right-hand part (RH) is marked with a dynamic of *mf-f* and the instruction "rather mechanically." The left-hand part (LH) is marked with a tempo of *2* and the instruction "vivaciously." The score shows a consistent F in the upper voice and a repeated pattern of E and G-sharp in the lower voice, which underpins the harmonic structure of the opening section.

In the central section of the same work, the distinct intervallic elements are isolated.

Different instrumental manifestations of the semitone are explored in the right hand in measures 26 and 30 and in the left hand in 27-28 and 31-32. The minor third is expressed

<sup>7</sup> Milton, Sculthorpe interviews: complete transcript, 10.

in the right hand at measures 27-28 and 31-32. The phrasing supports the analysis. An overview of the bass part in measures 26-28 and 30-32 reveals X in multiple simultaneous manifestations at the perfect fifth, as shown in example 8-11 below.

Example 8-11: Sculthorpe, Short Piece for Piano No. 1, mm. 25-32.

The opening of the first *Chorale* in String Quartet no. 10 (example 8-12) again restates X. In addition to the two lines of the first violin that horizontally reproduce two versions of the same intervallic combinations (top line: F-sharp, E-flat, G; bottom line: G, B, B-flat), the verticalised sonorities simultaneously make up two further forms of X, mapping onto one another by inversion around the E/F dyad.<sup>8</sup> The philosophical thread of the *Irkanda* style is further suggested by the notion of a *chorale*. This quartet, as discussed in the previous chapters, alternates between *Sun Songs* and *Chorales*; the *Chorale* movements suggest the old-world of Europe, and the *Sun Songs* are inspired by music expressing something with a complete lack of human influence.

<sup>8</sup> The pitch sets within the inversional conclusions almost always contribute to further background manifestations of the *Irkanda* style harmonic language.

Example 8-12: Sculthorpe, String Quartet no. 10, II. Chorale, mm. 1-8.

II CHORALE

Con pietà (♩ = c. 108)

Notice also in the above example that the pizzicato gesture in the viola requires the pitch of B to complete X. It occurs in measure 8 in the cello. In the final trichord of the work (B-flat, B, D), as shown in example 8-13, X is stated yet again.

It is essentially in the alternation and play between the intervals of a second and third that Sculthorpe achieves such an extraordinary variety of implications. The incorporation of the additional semitone to X forms a tetrachord consisting in total of two semitones and one each of a major second, minor third, and major third, all within the span of a perfect fourth. This tetrachord, identified for the purposes of this paper as 'Y,' is present throughout *Irkanda* style musical writing, and we shall see that it features also prominently in the *Kakadu* style as well. At figure 4 (example 8-13), the chords in the cello and second violin state the tetrachord Y in its purest forms (violin 2: E, E-flat, D, B; cello: D, E-flat, E, G), related by inversion around the pitch E-flat. The same tetrachord, incidentally, makes its first explicit appearance in the work in measure 5, shown in example 8-12 above, a measure texturally stressed by the first entrance of the viola.

Example 8-13: Sculthorpe, String Quartet no. 10, II. Chorale, fig 4 to conclusion.

The image shows a musical score for a string quartet. It consists of four staves. The top staff is marked with a circled '4' and a 'f' dynamic. The second staff has a circled 'f' and a circled 'Y' interval. The third staff has a circled 'f' and a circled 'X' interval. The bottom staff has a circled 'f' and a circled 'Y' interval. The score is annotated with 'con sord.' and 'senga sord.' markings.

A detailed examination of the string quartet music reveals an extraordinarily proliferation of this basic intervallic construction, influencing both foreground and background harmonic and melodic structures. In musical examples supporting the analysis of the *Kakadu* style, further manifestations of the basic *Irkanda* interval groups (X and Y) present themselves in combination with the typical figurations of the *Kakadu* style; their contextual treatment in these cases is often quite distinct from the examples suggested above.

**Antithesis: *Sun Music* style - Impressionism**

A second style of musical writing derives its main artistic impetus from the composer's thoughts of the Australian landscape, the sun, and the sounds of insects and the bush. It is a distinct and quite deliberate style in which Sculthorpe seeks to give his impression of the pure sounds of nature, free of humanity and free therefore of any European influence. Sculthorpe agrees that his *Sun Music* style is more concerned with colour and timbre, and less concerned with melody: "in fact, it's not concerned with melody at all."<sup>9</sup> Because the composer has, as with *Irkanda*, composed a specific series of works<sup>10</sup> embodying his ideas about this style, the style may be identified for the purposes of this study as the *Sun Music* style. From a practical viewpoint, the style is distinguished by aleatoric effects, often employing glissandi and specialized instrumental effects such as *col legno*, playing behind the bridge, and so on. The imitation of the sounds of bird or insects features as one of the main elements in the style.<sup>11</sup> Unlike the *Irkanda* style, the *Sun Music* style does not have distinctive intervallic concerns; rather, the incorporation of special and often unusual instrumental effects, generally imitating the Australian landscape, constitutes the primary focus of the style. Indeed, in discussion with the author, Sculthorpe has acknowledged that what he thinks of as a *Sun Music* approach has appeared in his later music in "the sections with birds."<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Milton, Sculthorpe interviews: complete transcript, 19.

<sup>10</sup> The series of *Sun Music* works includes, but is not limited to, *Sun Musics I-IV*.

<sup>11</sup> Obviously, Messiaen made serious use of bird song well before Sculthorpe employed these effects in his writing.

<sup>12</sup> Milton, Sculthorpe interviews: complete transcript, 20.

On the notion of a philosophical and compositional approach to the *Sun Music* style, Sculthorpe comments that his concern was with representations of Australia in multifaceted conceptions. Nevertheless, the style also manifests itself clearly in works about or inspired in some way by the sun cultures of Japan and Mexico. For Sculthorpe's music drawing upon non-European influences, however, the inspiration is often the Sun, usually—and increasingly through his output—as it applies to Australian culture, but also the Sun as an element of various non-Australian cultures.<sup>13</sup> Music related in particular to the Shinto religion and the ancient sun cultures of Mexico is always written in a style that is distinct from the *Irkanda* style just discussed.<sup>14</sup>

Some of the most obvious examples of the *Sun Music* style may be drawn from the string quartet that was later reworked to become *Sun Music IV*, namely String Quartet no. 7, formerly known as *Red Landscape*. Even the earlier title<sup>15</sup> immediately makes the case for music that is at once seeking to give an impression of a desolate landscape. This string quartet clearly represents a dramatic revolt against Sculthorpe's earlier aesthetic.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> In our discussions, Sculthorpe said the following: "Something that I would like to explore in a lecture or in writing is the way that Australian composers have been restoring divinity to the Sun, restoring the Sun its original power. The *Sun Music* series is not only about a benevolent sun, but also about the sun as a destroyer."

<sup>14</sup> Milton, Sculthorpe interviews: complete transcript, 6.

<sup>15</sup> Chapter 4 provides details of the origins of the various titles for the work as well as the progression of this particular work into the orchestral composition *Sun Music IV*.

<sup>16</sup> Milton, Sculthorpe interviews: complete transcript, 21.

Its importance in the present discussion stems from Sculthorpe's belief that this quartet "is the only one dealing almost exclusively with the Sun Music aspect."<sup>17</sup>

The very opening of String Quartet no. 7 (example 8-14) shows a compositional and stylistic approach that is at once quite different from what we have examined and identified as being typical of the *Irkanda* style. Tortured glissandi in the strings represent the pyramids of an ancient Mexican sun culture, both in sound and in their appearance on the printed page.

Example 8-14: Sculthorpe, String Quartet no. 7, mm. 1-12.

The musical score for Example 8-14 consists of two systems of four staves each. The first system (measures 1-4) shows the initial dynamics and articulation for each instrument. The second system (measures 5-12) continues the piece with various dynamic markings and articulation symbols. The notation includes glissandi and tremolos, particularly in the lower strings, which are described in the text as 'tortured glissandi'.

<sup>17</sup> Milton, Sculthorpe interviews: complete transcript, 21.

Somewhat later, the specific dynamic indications create the illusion perhaps of an approaching and then departing swarm of insects (example 8-15). The culmination of the passage, as shown in the last four measures of the following example, is characterized by percussive and aggressive moments in all four parts, as directed by the *sul ponticello* indications, the short glissandi in various directions, and as punctuated by accents in all of the parts.

Example 8-15: Sculthorpe, String Quartet no. 7, fig. 3 (mm. 1-12).

The musical score for Example 8-15 is presented in two systems, each with four staves. The first system (measures 1-12) features dynamics starting at *pp* and *ppp*, with *cresc.* markings leading to *mf dim.* in the final measures. *sul pont.* markings are present above the first and second staves. The second system (measures 13-16) begins with *pp molto cresc.* and *f* dynamics, followed by *ord.* markings and *sul pont.* markings in the final measures. A *poco rall.* marking is placed between the two systems.

Later on, the effects in the quartet are far more dramatic. At figure 5, as shown in example 8-16 below, wavering, rapid glissandi make individual entrances over a sustained trill in the cello. Dynamics are carefully structured for maximum effect. Extremely high sustained notes transform themselves into rapidly repeated notes, all within a logically organized dynamic sequence. Finally, the culmination of this passage is an explosion of the most

forceful and aggressive screeching tones, with all instrumentalists stretched to the limit of their tessitura.

Example 8-16: Sculthorpe, String Quartet no. 7, fig. 5 (mm. 1-24).

The musical score is presented in four systems, each containing four staves (Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Cello/Double Bass). The notation includes various dynamics and performance instructions:

- System 1:** Dynamics include *mp dim.*, *pp*, *p*, *dim.*, and *ppp*. There are also markings for *tr* (trills) and *pp* in the Cello/Double Bass part.
- System 2:** Dynamics include *mf cresc.*, *pp*, *mf cresc.*, *mf ad libitum*, *f*, and *f dim.*. There are also markings for *ppp* and *mf ad libitum* in the Cello/Double Bass part, and *vn* (violin) markings in the Violin parts.
- System 3:** Dynamics include *p cresc.*, *f cresc.*, *p (vn)*, *f dim.*, *p (vn)*, *p cresc.*, and *f cresc.*. There are also markings for *f dim.* and *p cresc.* in the Cello/Double Bass part.
- System 4:** Dynamics include *molto cresc.* and *fff con tutta la forza*. This system features a dense texture of chords and is marked with *fff* in the Cello/Double Bass part.








The work concludes (example 8-17) with a gradually disappearing *sul ponticello* effect and a dynamic disintegration that evaporates from *fff* to *ppp* in the space of the last six measures of the work.

Example 8-17: Sculthorpe, String Quartet no. 7, fig. 9 (mm. 1-6).

ord.		sul tasto	
<i>f</i> molto dim.		<i>mp</i> molto dim.	<i>ppp</i>
ord.		sul tasto	
<i>f</i> molto dim.		<i>mp</i> molto dim.	<i>ppp</i>
ord.		sul tasto	
<i>f</i> molto dim.		<i>mp</i> molto dim.	<i>ppp</i>
ord.		sul tasto	
<i>f</i> molto dim.		<i>mp</i> molto dim.	<i>ppp</i>

The *Sun Music* style is likewise an integral part of the compositional make-up of String Quartet no. 8, as the directions for performance (figure 8-1) immediately indicate:

Figure 8-1: Sculthorpe, String Quartet no. 8: Directions for Performance

	Any very high note.
	Harmonic, played between bridge and tailpiece on string indicated.
	Percussive sound, produced by tapping <i>col legno</i> on tailpiece.
	Sustained sound, duration indicated by length of ligature.
	Rapid repetition of given figure.
	Whispering sound, produced by lightly rubbing bow up and down on open strings.
	Quarter-tone trill.

In movements I, III and V, the placing of notes within the time-scale may be interpreted with a little freedom.

All *col legno* strokes should be as short as possible; an alternative bow may be used in II and IV.

*Liberamente* always means that players should be rhythmically independent of each other.

Indeed, the central portion of the opening movement (example 8-18) quite unexpectedly breaks forth into bird sounds in the upper three instruments. The composer has repeatedly identified this style of aleatoric writing as an attempt to create the sounds of birds. Insect sounds are similar, but differ in their more limited basic tessitura, and a less melodic instrumental aesthetic.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>18</sup> The distinction between bird sounds and insect sounds is quite blurred. If the composer himself has made a distinction between the two, that difference is identified specifically. The overall effect is nevertheless an attempt to create the sounds of the bush. As shown in several of this chapter's examples and figures, some effects specifically identify the particular bird sound or effect the composer is seeking. Other examples of the style are deliberately unspecific.

Example 8-18: Sculthorpe, String Quartet no. 8, I. fig. 2-fig. 3.

The musical score for Example 8-18 consists of four staves: Violin 1 (Vln. 1), Violin 2 (Vln. 2), Viola (Vla.), and Violoncello (Vcl.). The score is marked 'Dolcissimo' and 'liberamente' for the violins. The Viola part features a 'molto rapidamente' section with a 'cresc.' marking. The Vcl. part includes a 'pizz.' section and a 'dim.' section. The score concludes with a 'con sord.' marking and a 'cresc.' marking.

Similar effects occur just prior to the end of the work (example 8-19). The effect of the bird song is now specifically enlarged, and its treatment is more fully realized. Where in the previous example only the viola explored the harmonics of the top register, now both of the violins join with the viola in an exploration of bird song within the harmonic series, a ghostly and quite magical effect made even more effective by the diminuendo that ends the passage. The final dualism between freely improvised chordal *pizzicatti* and a *con sordino* major seventh/semitone in the first violin bring the work to its mysterious close.



The shocking and quite unexpected effects in the central section of String Quartet no. 9 provide another example of the way the *Sun Music* style captures a section of music in an otherwise quite expressionistic movement. Directly after a languorous section of great beauty inspired by a tone row, Sculthorpe launches into the following passage (example 8-20). The triplet figure and subsequent interjections in the cello, to be played *col legno* and on the tailpiece for even greater dramatic effect, are typical of the composer's *Sun Music* stylistic approach.

Example 8-20: Sculthorpe, String Quartet no. 9, fig. 17 (mm. 1-8).

In String Quartet no. 11, a work specifically inspired by the idea if not the sounds of Kakadu National Park, it is not surprising that the cello is given some glissando effects which are even more dramatic coming as they do immediately after a *col legno* utterance that had been set up from the beginning of the work (example 8-21).

Example 8-21: Sculthorpe, String Quartet no. 11, I, fig. 2 (mm. 7-9).

Some measures later (example 8-22), the other three instruments explore what the composer has identified to this author as distinctly deliberate insect sounds.

Example 8-22: Sculthorpe, String Quartet no. 11, I. fig. 6 (mm. 1-8).

The first movement ends with typical *Sun Music* style figurations in the violins and cello (example 8-23). That these specific effects often manifest themselves, as we have seen, as either a single instrument against three others or as three against a single instrument, serves to highlight and bring their effect into even sharper focus.

Example 8-23: Sculthorpe, String Quartet no. 11, I. final measures

In attempting to incorporate the sounds of the Australian bush into his music even more viscerally, Sculthorpe uses a didjeridu in String Quartet no. 12. The directions for

the instrument's initial entrance (figure 8-2) set the tone for the aural landscape

Sculthorpe wishes to produce.

Figure 8-2: Sculthorpe, String Quartet no. 12, fig. 2, didjeridu directions

In String Quartet no. 13, the *Sun Music* style manifests itself in an extremely effective way. Just after the words in the text that describe the wind washing across the water and the lights of the stars as they shine the way home, Sculthorpe introduces for the first time in the work a number of instrumental effects that suggest the freedom of the wind (example 8-24).

Example 8-24: Sculthorpe, String Quartet no. 13, mm. 65-70.

In String Quartet no. 14, Sculthorpe's directions in the score request "seagull-like sounds" from the cellist (example 8-25). The directions that Sculthorpe gives closely match George Crumb's notation for what he calls a "seagull effect" in *Vox Balaenae* (Voice of the Whale), composed in 1971.<sup>19</sup> The effect appears in that composition, also for the cello, in variation one, with a footnote that describes precisely how to produce it.<sup>20</sup>

Example 8-25: Sculthorpe, String Quartet no. 14, III. (mm. 1-4)

Con tenerezza (♩ = c. 66)

The musical score consists of four staves. The top two staves are for Violin I and Violin II, both in treble clef. The third staff is for Viola, in alto clef. The bottom staff is for Cello, in bass clef. The key signature has two sharps (F# and C#), and the time signature is 3/4. The tempo is marked 'Con tenerezza' with a quarter note equal to approximately 66 beats per minute. The score shows measures 1 through 4. In measure 1, the violins play a half note, and the cello plays a half note. In measure 2, the violins play a half note, and the cello plays a half note. In measure 3, the violins play a half note, and the cello plays a half note. In measure 4, the violins play a half note, and the cello plays a half note. The dynamic markings are *mf* in measures 1 and 2, *mf dim.* in measure 3, and *p* in measure 4. The cello part in measure 4 is marked *f* and *liberamente*. There is a '15' written above the cello staff in measure 4, possibly indicating a finger number or a specific technique.

\* Seagull-like sounds. These are played with the fourth finger, lightly touching the string, beginning an octave above the given note and keeping the same spacing of the hand throughout the glissandi.

At the end of the movement, other bird sounds are added to the effect (example 8-26). A single instrument, in this case the viola, continues its solitary monologue. This dualism creates a unique and quite specific auditory dimension in the landscape suggested by the multifaceted bird sounds.

<sup>19</sup> *Vox Balaenae* (Voice of the Whale) was completed in June, 1971, and was premiered by the New York Camerata, for whom it was composed, on March 17, 1972 at The Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. Crumb was inspired to compose the work by listening to recorded songs of the humpback whale, whose evocative and previously unknown songs or whistles came to symbolize the endangered natural world.

Example 8-26: Sculthorpe, String Quartet no. 14, III. (mm. 69-76).

\* Short glissandi from any high note;  
players should be independent of each other.

The conclusion of the fourth movement of String Quartet no. 15 also includes a potent example of the *Sun Music* style. As can be seen in example 8-27, the specific instrumental realization is similar to example 8-26. Here, however, all metrical pulse has been removed, and twenty seconds of the effect is an extraordinary gesture at the end of a movement in which no hint of bird song in a similar stylistic approach has been manifested. In fact, the following example is the sole appearance of bird song in the work. Its effect, supported by its placement at the end of the penultimate movement, suggests a spiritual climax in a work that is otherwise almost entirely ritualistic.

<sup>20</sup> George Crumb, *Vox Balaenae* (Voice of the Whale) for Three Masked Players (New York: C. F. Peters Corp., 1972).

Example 8-27: Sculthorpe, *String Quartet no. 15, IV.* (m. 61).

⑥ Come volo d'uccello  
c.12" c.8"

Vln I  
poco f  
dim. poco a poco  
a niente  
p  
(quick upward glissandi from any high notes)  
(glissando trill)

Vln II  
poco f  
dim. poco a poco  
a niente  
p  
(quick downward glissandi from any high notes)  
(quarter-tone trill)

Vla  
a niente

Vc.  
poco f  
dim. poco a poco  
p  
(seagull-like sound)

A final compelling example of the *Sun Music* style is provided by *From Nourlangie*. Like *String Quartet no. 11*, this work draws specific inspiration from a feature in Kakadu National Park. Sculthorpe's characteristic seagull effect is again suggested in the cello (example 8-28), but is now followed on by a viola figuration that suggests a different, answering type of bird song. The continuing figurations in the other voices serve, as before, to bring the bird sounds into sharp relief.

Example 8-28: Sculthorpe, *From Nourlangie*, mm. 8-15.

pp  
p  
allegro  
liberamente  
arco  
liberamente

As with several of the other examples we have seen, the seagull effect comes again at the very end of the work (example 8-29). Sculthorpe uses the distinctive *Sun Music* stylistic passages to add a layer of structural rhetoric to an otherwise unchanging and austere aural landscape.

Example 8-29: Sculthorpe, *From Nourlangie*, closing measures.

The image displays two systems of musical notation for the closing measures of 'From Nourlangie' by Peter Sculthorpe. The first system consists of four staves. The top staff is a vocal line with a long, sustained note that ends with a fermata. The second staff is a piano accompaniment with a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes. The third and fourth staves are bass lines. The second system also consists of four staves. The top staff is a vocal line with a long, sustained note that ends with a fermata. The second, third, and fourth staves are piano accompaniment parts, each marked with a forte dynamic (*forte f*). The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

**Synthesis: Kakadu style - Ritualism**

A third style that manifests itself in the music for string quartet is a style Sculthorpe associated initially with Balinese figuration and subsequently with music influenced by the rituals of Australian aboriginal culture. The Balinese figuration usually incorporates repetitive patterns of three or four notes that repeat without regard to the prevailing rhythmic scheme. The Aboriginal ritualism is less complex, usually incorporating repetition of one or two notes in a chant-like *ostinato*. Music that is composed in the *Kakadu* style can also be a mixture and synthesis of both Balinese and Australian ritualistic gestures, as the composer's own individual approach to these two sub-groupings has been fused. The most distinctive feature of a general *Kakadu* style is a type of *ostinato* repetition. Interestingly, the figurations and repeated gestures often appear in and as an accompanimental voice, but are later revealed to contain the essential substance of the melodic interest. Rather than specific or particular interval groupings, the style is therefore most often distinguished by repeated, ritualistic figurations, as shown in various manifestations in the examples below. Although the ritual aspects of the style can and do exist in isolation, the notion of stylistic synthesis is supported by the fact that elements of the *Kakadu* style mostly manifest themselves in combination with either the *Irkanda* or *Sun Music* styles.

In the composer's material for the first string quartet (example 8-30), the elements of the *Kakadu* style are immediately noticeable in the accompaniment of the central section of *Prelude to a Puppet Show*. The main melodic material of the example—and indeed the harmonic framework of the accompaniment itself—outlines various

manifestations of X, as previously shown in example 8-7. Thus, example 8-30 shows a synthesis of *Irkanda* and *Kakadu* styles. The overriding effect of the ritualism lends predominance to the *Kakadu* style, and the *Irkanda* harmonies and melodies become almost incidental to the primary musical thrust of the passage.

Example 8-30: Sculthorpe, *Prelude to a Puppet Show*, mm. 17-24.

In the central section of *Country Dance*, (example 8-31), the left hand ostinato pattern prefigures the ritualism of music from much later in his oeuvre. Note a pattern that changes quite slowly within music that is quick and energetic. This style of ritualism is distinctly Aboriginal, with a single note providing an ongoing rhythmic underpinning. Having set up a pattern, the unexpected change from a compound metrical approach to two measures in simple meter (mm. 95-96) and occasional accents achieve surprising variety within such an austere accompanimental pattern.

Example 8-31: Sculthorpe, *Country Dance*, mm. 83-106.

The musical score for Example 8-31 consists of three systems of staves. The first system includes a treble clef staff with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a common time signature (C). The tempo marking is 'a tempo'. The first system also includes a bass clef staff with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a common time signature (C). Performance markings include 'p. cresc.' and 'broadly.'. The second system continues the musical notation. The third system includes a treble clef staff with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a common time signature (C). Performance markings include '100' and '2.'. The score concludes with a final measure marked '90'.

In *Irkanda II*, the cello figuration throughout example 8-32 is typical of the *Kakadu* style. Note once again that the Aboriginal ritualism of the cello's two repeated notes appears in this section of the work against music in the other instruments that has previously been identified as *Irkanda* style.

Example 8-32: Sculthorpe, *Irkanda II*, mm. 11-18.

The musical score for Example 8-32 consists of three systems of staves. The first system includes a treble clef staff with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a common time signature (C). The tempo marking is 'TEMPO II briskly...'. The first system also includes a bass clef staff with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a common time signature (C). Performance markings include 'p. cresc.', 'mf.', and 'a punta d'arco'. The second system continues the musical notation. The third system includes a treble clef staff with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a common time signature (C). Performance markings include 'modo ordinario.'. The score concludes with a final measure marked '100'.

In a related example from somewhat later in the work (example 8-33), the same stylistic approach appears in the cello and viola, now with an increasingly complex realization. The cello's repetitive patterns continue as before, but another layer of repetition has been added in the viola. The increased complexity of the viola's rhythmic pattern is balanced by a reduction of intervallic possibilities; the viola part creates a great deal of interplay and interest with just one note, repeated in a three-measure pattern.

Example 8-33: Sculthorpe, *Irkanda II*, mm. 95-106.

The musical score for Example 8-33 consists of four staves: Violin I, Violin II, Cello, and Viola. The key signature is one flat (B-flat major/D minor) and the time signature is 3/4. The score shows a complex interplay of rhythmic patterns, particularly in the cello and viola parts. The viola part features a repetitive three-measure pattern of a single note. The score includes various performance instructions such as 'arco.', 'al talone', 'pizz.', and 'arco n n'. The piece concludes with a double bar line and the instruction 'senza fine'.

A more complex example from the same work may be seen in the example 8-34, in which harmony and accents are altered. Their respective placements within the bar are given different realizations by changes of time signatures. In the four measures before figure 2, for example, a basic two-note gesture achieves significant complexity through the inclusion of rests, cross-beaming, and three changes of time signature. The economical interjections during these measures in the first violin part add yet another layer of interest. Once again, the prevailing *Kakadu* style ritualism of this passage is contrasted by *Irkanda* style music in the first violin (figure 2) in a rhythmic guise that seems to have been affected by the ritualism it follows.

Example 8-34: Sculthorpe, *Irkanda II*, mm. 25-36.

The musical score for Example 8-34, Sculthorpe, *Irkanda II*, mm. 25-36, is presented in two systems. The first system consists of four staves: two for the violin (top two staves) and two for the piano (bottom two staves). The violin parts feature a complex rhythmic pattern with rests, cross-beaming, and three changes of time signature. Annotations include 'arco', 'pizz.', and 'modo ordinario'. The piano part includes 'pizz.' and 'arco' markings. The second system also consists of four staves, continuing the complex rhythmic patterns and time signature changes. Annotations include 'arco', 'pizz.', and 'pp'.

In a final example from *Irkanda II*, the inner voices repeat various gestures within an extremely austere and intervallically limited range. At the beginning of example 8-35, the first semitonal gesture of three measures is repeated once. The notes are retained in the next phrase, but the gesture is subsequently shortened to two measures and repeated once. Finally, the essential phrase in any horizontal sense is disintegrated: simultaneously, the harmonic range is enlarged, and a two note gesture over two measures is repeated once with the same rhythmic outlook but with the notes reversed in the subsequent iteration. The addition of notes in measures 55-58 subtly alters the feel of Aboriginal ritualism to Balinese ritualism. This provides an example in which the Balinese and Aboriginal approaches to the *Kakadu* style are synthesized and fused quite deliberately.

Example 8-35: Sculthorpe, *Irkanda II*, mm. 45-62.

The musical score for Example 8-35, Sculthorpe's *Irkanda II*, mm. 45-62, is presented in three systems. The first system consists of three staves. The top staff begins with a dynamic marking of *p.* and includes the instruction *arco*. The middle and bottom staves also feature *arco* markings. The second system continues with three staves, starting with *pp.* and including *mf* and *cresc.* markings. The third system also has three staves, beginning with *piz.* and including the instruction *al tallone*. The notation includes various rhythmic values, beams, and accents, illustrating the Balinese approach to *Kakadu* style.

The Balinese approach to *Kakadu* style is often most distinctive when a repeated figure is grouped, by accents, beaming, or time signature, in a way that throws relief onto different notes within the gesture. In the following example from the sixth string quartet (example 8-36), the three-note cello gesture is grouped with four notes under each stem bracket, and accents at the beginning of each group further emphasize that alignment of the rhythmic structure. The background repetition of the cello part is one reiteration of a

six-measure figure. Within that, at least four or five different levels of repetition manifest themselves.

Example 8-36: Sculthorpe, String Quartet no. 6, 2<sup>nd</sup> movement, fig. 14 (mm. 1-14)

14 *Con moto* ( $J = c. 144$ )

*f deciso*

*f deciso*  
*tr*

*f deciso*

*f > deciso*

*molto cresc. e rall.*

*tutta la forza*

*tutta la forza*

*tutta la forza*

*tutta la forza*

One of Sculthorpe's most important Balinese-inspired works is the eighth string quartet. In the second movement of that work (example 8-37), a four-note figure is repeated in a variety of repetitive sequences. At a foreground level, a grouping by beam and with accents suggests a six-note gesture. This effect immediately achieves the *Kakadu* style figuration. After the first six bars, in which a larger scale repetition is supported by an abrupt dynamic change and interjections in the viola and cello, the unit is normalized, albeit for only two measures. After these two bars, the unit in the more complex rhythmic pattern returns. The viola is now more involved in the rhythmic drama, and *col legno* and *pizzicato* effects reinforce that. As shown in this example, the overall effect of these repetitive variations is of extraordinary unity and simplicity and the most gradual, almost minimalistic change.

Example 8-37: Sculthorpe, String Quartet no. 8, 2<sup>nd</sup> movement, mm. 1-18.

Risoluto (♩ = c.120)

The musical score consists of three systems of staves for Violin 1, Violin 2, Viola, and Violoncello. The first system (measures 1-6) shows the initial entry of the four-note figure with 'col legno' and 'pizz.' markings. The second system (measures 7-12) includes 'cresc.' markings and further 'col legno' and 'pizz.' effects. The third system (measures 13-18) features 'dim.' markings and a boxed measure 14. The overall texture is minimalist and rhythmic.

A similar effect manifests itself in the parallel fourth movement of the same work, but now realized in the viola and cello (example 8-38).

Example 8-38: Sculthorpe, String Quartet no. 8, 4<sup>th</sup> movement, mm. 35-44

The image displays two systems of musical notation for a string quartet. The first system consists of four staves: Violin I (top), Violin II, Viola, and Cello (bottom). The second system also consists of four staves: Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Cello. The notation includes various rhythmic values, accidentals, and performance instructions such as 'pizz' (pizzicato) and 'col legno' (col legno). Dynamic markings like 'ppp' and 'p' are also present. The music is written in a standard staff format with a treble clef for the violins and a bass clef for the viola and cello.

The repeated figuration typical of the *Kakadu* style occurs in a number of guises. As we have seen in the previous examples, the aspects of certain cross rhythms are typical of a Balinese approach to the style. Examples 8-39 and 8-40, from String Quartet no. 9, feature repetition and a conscious approach to ritualism in a style, according to the composer, inspired quite specifically by the rhythms and repetitions of Australian aboriginal music. In example 8-39, for example, *Kakadu* style repetition occurs in the viola and cello. The primary repeated elements are two notes, but a relaxation of the strict confines shown in previous examples is quite noticeable.

Example 8-39: Sculthorpe, String Quartet no. 9, fig. 4 (mm. 1-14)

4 Molto preciso (♩ = ca. 144)

ppp (pizz.) arco pppp arco: quasi col legno ppp

arco pizz. arco

In example 8-40, the synthesis of styles opens up a little more. The elements of the *Kakadu* style are quite evident in the lower three voices. The cello line, however, exhibits a greater variety of pitches and octave transposition possibilities, and that freedom is also reflected in a subtly less controlled and less rigid rhythmic pattern in the second violin and viola.

Example 8-40: Sculthorpe, String Quartet no. 9, fig. 20 (mm. 1-8)

20

mf pizz. molto cresc. arco pizz. arco

mf arco: quasi col legno molto cresc. molto cresc. molto cresc. arco pizz. arco

mf molto cresc.

Throughout his oeuvre, the various stylistic approaches to the ritualism of the *Kakadu* style blend in Sculthorpe's music. The important stylistic approach that distinguishes the *Kakadu* style does not seem to adhere to a specific timeline within the composer's output. Certainly, the consciously incorporated examples of Balinese

figuration appear around the time of String Quartet no. 8 and the Australian aboriginal ritual somewhat later. As can be seen in the following examples from some of the later numbered works, however, the *Kakadu* style in various more specifically oriented manifestations appears throughout the quartets.

In String Quartet no. 10, the third movement opens with a viola passage written in typical *Kakadu* style (example 8-41). This features repetition influenced by an Australian aboriginal approach to the style. There is no real sense of cross rhythm as exemplified with more Balinese style figurations. Nevertheless, the ritualism is absolute and clearly defined as a general stylistic approach. Although it is inspired by what Sculthorpe thinks of as Australian aboriginal style, it is really Sculthorpe's own unique blend of ritualistic approaches.

Example 8-41: Sculthorpe, String Quartet no. 10, 3<sup>rd</sup> movement, mm. 1-15.

Risolute (d.c. 132)

The musical score consists of three systems of staves. The first system has a Viola staff on top and a Cello/Bass staff on the bottom. The second system continues the Cello/Bass part. The third system continues the Cello/Bass part and includes a circled '1' above the final measure. The music is characterized by a repetitive eighth-note pattern with accents and slurs, typical of the Kakadu style.

In example 8-42, the lower three voices complement the first violin melody in music written in what I am identifying as *Kakadu* style. The typical Balinese figuration is clearly distinguished by repeated patterns of four note groups, though the repetition is

not at all strict. It is as if Sculthorpe has synthesized his own approach to the primary repetitive aspect of the style.

Example 8-42: Sculthorpe, String Quartet no. 10, 5<sup>th</sup> movement, fig. 6 (mm. 1-8)

The musical score for Example 8-42 consists of four staves. The top staff is for Violin I, the second for Violin II, the third for Viola, and the fourth for Cello/Double Bass. The tempo is marked 'piu mosso (♩ = c. 152)'. The music features a prominent repetitive rhythmic pattern in the lower strings, with the violins playing a more melodic line. The overall texture is dense and rhythmic.

The opening of String Quartet no. 11 (*Jabiru Dreaming*) provides two examples of *Kakadu* style writing. The opening viola gesture, for example, features classic *Kakadu* ritualism (example 8-43).

Example 8-43: Sculthorpe, String Quartet no. 11, 1<sup>st</sup> movement, mm. 1-9.

Some measures later, the *Kakadu* style has now infected the other voices. In example 8-44, the viola figuration continues as before. Now, however, the music in the first violin part incorporates Balinese figuration in its traditional Sculthorpe manifestation. The second violin and cello voice repeated interjections, varying in length depending on interpretation. Thus, although one particular type of ritualism may be distinguished, the primary effect is of various levels of repetition within different ostinato gestures and a generally ritualistic approach.

Example 8-44: Sculthorpe, String Quartet no. 11, 1<sup>st</sup> movement, mm. 16-21.

In String Quartet no. 12, we can see the same basic approach in the following example. In the first three systems of example 8-45, *Kakadu* style repetition is set up in various guises in the lower three voices. When the first violin enters, it is with the typical Balinese figuration that is intrinsic to the style: here, a three-note figure repeated across a four-note grouping.

Example 8-45: Sculthorpe, String Quartet no. 12 (*From Ubirr*), fig. 4, mm. 1-16.

The image displays a musical score for String Quartet no. 12, specifically figures 4 and 5. It consists of four systems of music, each with four staves. The first system (Fig. 4) shows the lower three voices (violin I, violin II, and viola) with complex rhythmic patterns. The second system continues this texture. The third system (Fig. 5) introduces the first violin with a characteristic Balinese three-note figure repeated across a four-note grouping. The fourth system continues the piece with similar textures. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings like 'dim.'.

In String Quartet no. 13, the accompaniment in the viola section, especially from measure 21 or so, is written with a Balinese figuration typical of the *Kakadu* style (example 8-46).

Example 8-46: Sculthorpe, String Quartet no. 13 (*Island Dreaming*), mm. 19-24.

19 2 Poco elastico (♩ = c.92) *mf*

22 *col legno\** *p*

2nd time only

*liberamente* *(mf)*

At the work's climax (example 8-47), the *Kakadu* style hinted at in example 8-46 bursts forth in glorious abandon. Each voice features its own individual ritualism, but the composer freely manipulates the patterns to allow for almost indiscernible harmonic change. These harmonic shifts are effectively illusionary because of the way they occur within the strict repetitive parameters of the style.

Example 8-47: Sculthorpe, String Quartet no. 13 (*Island Dreaming*), mm. 105-110.

The image displays a musical score for Example 8-47, consisting of two systems of music. The first system, starting at measure 105, features a vocal line in the upper staff with the lyrics "Tu" and "ge". The vocal line is marked *pp* and includes a long, sustained note. Below the vocal line are four staves for a string quartet, each marked *pp*. The second system, starting at measure 108, features a vocal line with the lyrics "We" and "ge a". The vocal line is marked *mf* and includes a long, sustained note. Below the vocal line are four staves for a string quartet, each marked *pp*. The string quartet accompaniment in both systems consists of rhythmic patterns in the upper voices and more melodic lines in the lower voices.

In String Quartet no. 14, the writing in *Kakadu* style is not as immediately apparent as in some of the other works we have seen. Yet, elements of the style permeate throughout the work. The aesthetic of the style, for example, is clearly established by the inner voices in example 8-48, taken from the work's third movement.

Example 8-48: Sculthorpe, String Quartet no. 14, 3<sup>rd</sup> mvt., *On High Hills*, mm.11-15.

The musical score for Example 8-48 consists of four staves. The first staff (Violin I) begins with a dynamic marking of *(mp)* and a slur over the first two measures. The second staff (Violin II) has a dynamic marking of *p*. The third staff (Viola) also has a dynamic marking of *p*. The fourth staff (Cello) has a dynamic marking of *p* and a *pizz.* marking. The score is divided into two systems, with the second system starting at measure 12. The key signature has two sharps (F# and C#), and the time signature is 4/4.

An extraordinary variety of manifestations of *Kakadu* style writing appear throughout String Quartet no. 15. This work derives much inspiration from Papua New Guinean source material, and Sculthorpe's manipulations of *Kakadu* style figurations dominate throughout. Note the Balinese figuration in the first violin in example 8-49, and the way in particular it complements the various repeated figures in the other two voices.

Example 8-49: Sculthorpe, String Quartet no. 15, 1<sup>st</sup> mvt., mm.21-24.

The musical score for Example 8-49 consists of four staves. The first staff (Violin I) is marked *sul tasto* and *p*. The second staff (Violin II) is also marked *sul tasto*. The third staff (Viola) is marked *sul tasto* and *p*. The fourth staff (Cello) is marked *sul tasto* and *p*. The score is divided into two systems, with the second system starting at measure 21. The key signature has two sharps (F# and C#), and the time signature is 4/4.

This musical content opens up later in the movement (example 8-50), and the second violin adds yet another layer of complexity within the stylistic constraints.

Example 8-50: Sculthorpe, String Quartet no. 15, 1<sup>st</sup> mvt., mm. 53-60.

In the third movement of the same work (example 8-51), the opening passage sets up a variety of rhythmic gestures, repeating over and about themselves.

Example 8-51: Sculthorpe, String Quartet no. 15, 3<sup>rd</sup> mvt., mm. 1-4.

Similarly, the fourth movement opens with a plaintive gesture in the second violin that hints at Balinese figuration (example 8-52). The first violin then takes up the suggestion as the movement gets underway.

Example 8-52: Sculthorpe, String Quartet no. 15, 4<sup>th</sup> mvt., mm. 1-6.

*Calmo* (♩ = c. 66)

The musical score consists of two systems of staves. The first system includes Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Violoncello. Violin I enters in measure 1 with a half note G4, marked *mp*. Violin II enters in measure 1 with a half note F4, marked *mp*. Viola and Violoncello are silent in measure 1. In measure 2, Violin I plays a half note G4, marked *mp*. Violin II plays a half note F4, marked *mp*. Viola and Violoncello remain silent. In measure 3, Violin I plays a half note G4, marked *mp*. Violin II plays a half note F4, marked *mp*. Viola plays a half note G4, marked *mp*. Violoncello plays a half note F4, marked *mp*. The second system includes Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Violoncello. Violin I enters in measure 4 with a half note G4, marked *mp*. Violin II plays a half note F4, marked *mp*. Viola plays a half note G4, marked *mp*. Violoncello plays a half note F4, marked *mp*. In measure 5, Violin I plays a half note G4, marked *mp*. Violin II plays a half note F4, marked *mp*. Viola plays a half note G4, marked *mp*. Violoncello plays a half note F4, marked *mp*. In measure 6, Violin I plays a half note G4, marked *mp*. Violin II plays a half note F4, marked *mp*. Viola plays a half note G4, marked *mp*. Violoncello plays a half note F4, marked *mp*.

The Balinese figuration so typical of the *Kakadu* style continues throughout the movement, and culminates with the following passage (example 8-53).

Example 8-53: Sculthorpe, String Quartet no. 15, 4<sup>th</sup> mvt., mm. 43-45.

Even simple accompanimental gestures take on special significance when viewed with sensitivity towards the *ostinato* elements of the *Kakadu* style. In example 8-54, for instance, taken from *Morning Song*, the second violin and viola provide a ritual atmosphere with their pulsing eight notes that is quite distinct yet motivically related to the first violin's melodic line.

Example 8-54: Sculthorpe, *Morning Song*, mm. 20-29.

The gentle harmonies of the main theme of *Little Serenade* are realized by *pizzicato* pulsations in the cello, almost reminiscent of a Balinese figuration, and the most delicate interweaving counterpoint in the viola (example 8-55). The viola pattern repeats quite freely, blurring the strong beats with constant and overriding syncopated figures. The extremely limited range of the counterpoint creates the illusion of an extremely slowly changing harmonic environment.

Example 8-55: Sculthorpe, *Little Serenade*, mm. 9-14.

The image shows a musical score for four staves. The top staff is marked 'Piu mosso' and 'mp'. The second staff is marked 'mp'. The third staff is marked 'mp'. The bottom staff is marked 'mp'. The music features a complex interweaving counterpoint in the viola and cello parts, with a descending tetrachord pattern in the first three bars of each unit.

The viola and cello parts in *Saibai* contain frequently repeated four- and eight-bar passages, with only the tiniest variational changes (example 8-56). Within the viola part, the first three bars of each unit contain free repetitions of the descending tetrachord. Over the twelve bars, elements are added in the other two voices, but the sense of *ostinato* carries the music effortlessly forward. This is not at all Balinese figuration, nor Aboriginal. Yet, it is a stylistic approach that derives from both, and thus a good example of a *Kakadu* style element.

Example 8-56: Sculthorpe, *Saibai*, mm. 1-16.

Molto sostenuto ( $\text{♩} = \text{c. } 66$ )

Violin 1

Violin 2

Viola

Cello

*mp con piet *

*mp con piet *

*mp*

*pp*

*p*

*mp sempre*

*mp sempre*

*mp sempre*

A final example for the *Kakadu* style is taken from *Djilile* (example 8-57). At measure 16, the main tune is accompanied by a delicate counterpoint in the viola, a figure that repeats at a variety of foreground levels. Later in the work, other figurations are introduced in all of the instruments that are treated with a similar repetitive and *ostinato*-like approach.

Example 8-57: Sculthorpe, *Djilile*, mm. 16-18.

The image shows a musical score for measures 16-18 of Sculthorpe's *Djilile*. It consists of four staves: Violin 1 (Vln. 1), Violin 2 (Vln. 2), Viola (Vla.), and Violoncello (Vc.). The music is marked *mp* (mezzo-piano). The Violin 1 part features a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes. The Violin 2 part has a similar melodic line, often in parallel motion with the first violin. The Viola part plays a repetitive eighth-note pattern, serving as a counterpoint. The Violoncello part provides a harmonic foundation with long, sustained notes.

The three distinct stylistic approaches identified in Sculthorpe's music for string quartet illustrate the thesis that the styles do not at all manifest themselves within a certain period. An examination of the larger contexts of many of these compositions reveals that the stylistic approaches manifest themselves with extraordinary predominance across the music from all of the quartet music, in various guises. Though there is an extremely subtle variation within the *Kakadu* style in particular, the overriding observation suggests that elements of all three styles have synthesized within the composer's output in the most controlled and natural way.

## Chapter 9: Songlines

The Ancients sang their way all over the world. They sang the rivers and ranges, salt-pans and sand dunes. They hunted, ate, made love, danced, and killed: wherever their tracks led they left a trail of music. They wrapped the whole world in a web of song.

(Bruce Chatwin: *The Songlines*)<sup>1</sup>

I came to feel that I was making pathways through my music with lines of song.

(Peter Sculthorpe: *Sun Music*)<sup>2</sup>

Bruce Chatwin's book, *The Songlines*, begins with an investigation into the labyrinth of invisible pathways that meander all over Australia. To Europeans, they are known as "Dreaming Tracks" or "Songlines;" the Aboriginal people call them "Footprints of the Ancestors" or the "Way of the Law." As Chatwin describes in his book, Aboriginal Creation myths tell of the legendary totemic beings who had wandered over the continent in the Dreamtime, singing out the name of everything that crossed their path—birds, animals, plants, rocks, water-holes—and so singing the world into joyful existence.<sup>3</sup> Aborigines believe that the totemic ancestor of each species creates itself from the mud of the primordial waterhole. It takes a step forward and sings its name, the opening line of a song. It takes a second step, singing a comment upon the first line, so completing a linked couplet. It then sets forward on a journey across the land, footfall after footfall, singing

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<sup>1</sup> Bruce Chatwin, *The songlines* (London: Picador, 1988), 81-82.

<sup>2</sup> Peter Joshua Sculthorpe. *Sun Music: journeys and reflections from a composer's life* (Sydney: ABC Books, 1999), 256.

<sup>3</sup> Chatwin, *The songlines*, 2.

the very world into existence. Tribal elders know where those imaginary lines are all over Australia.<sup>4</sup>

Although Sculthorpe had long alluded to Aboriginal myths and titles in compositions, it wasn't until the 1980's that indigenous melodies were consciously incorporated into his work.<sup>5</sup> The composer became fascinated with the concept primarily through reading Chatwin's book in 1987. He began to use the term to describe a deliberate compositional approach in which specific melodies threaded their way through his works like lines of song. As the Aboriginals of a particular clan attributed deep personal significance to a particular totemic being, so Sculthorpe attaches a great deal of meaning to specific lines of song. The fusion of particular songlines into his style affected his attitude not only to the direction his music was taking him but also to the musical path he had traveled.<sup>6</sup>

I took certain Aboriginal ideas that I really liked and started to use them, and it's like I'm making my own songline. They weave their way through pieces of mine, just like song lines weaving their way through the land singing the world into existence. So, they sing my pieces into existence.<sup>7</sup>

The absorption of these songlines into Sculthorpe's musical style represents a distinct and remarkable aspect of stylistic synthesis. Although the composer's conscious use of a songline takes precedence over the existence of an incidental similarity to one,

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<sup>4</sup> Milton, Sculthorpe interviews: complete transcript, 8.

<sup>5</sup> James Barratt, "Personal notes," QANTAS: The Australian Way Magazine (December 1999): 36.

<sup>6</sup> Sculthorpe. *Sun Music: journeys and reflections*, 256.

<sup>7</sup> Milton, Sculthorpe interviews: complete transcript, 27.

perhaps the most extraordinary discovery is the appearance of basic elements of the three songlines in compositions written decades before the composer had been exposed to the Aboriginal material. Intrinsic melodic elements of the songlines clearly distinguish aspects of many of the composer's early works. All three songlines subsequently connected with some reverberation of those melodies in the composer's artistic imagination. A comprehensive survey of the string quartets reveals elements and varied complete manifestations of the three songlines known as *Chant*, *Lament*, and *Djilile*.

### Chant

In the early nineteenth century, a French exploratory expedition led by Baudin collected three Aboriginal melodic fragments. These were published in an atlas in Paris in 1824, and presented as a kind of Europeanised miniature suite under the title *Musique des Naturels*.<sup>8</sup> Sculthorpe was profoundly inspired by the series of melodies transcribed in the atlas. Though he does not recall when he first viewed this atlas, he carefully copied the page with the musical examples in immediate recognition of the importance and personal relevance of the material. The page in question presents three musical examples obtained and presumably transcribed from the musics of Aboriginal people by the Baudin expedition to Australia during the years 1800-1804 (example 9-1). The Aboriginal *Chant* is the first of the three transcribed melodies, the others being *Air de Danse* and *Cri de Ralliement*. The *Chant* is the only example of the three without associated words or verbally produced sounds.

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<sup>8</sup> Péron and Freycinet, *Voyage de Découvertes aux Terres Australes 1800-1804: Atlas* 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Paris, 1824).

Example 9-1: *Chant, Air de Danse, and Cri de Ralliement.*<sup>9</sup>

1. *Chant.*

Three staves of musical notation in 2/4 time. The first staff is a treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The second and third staves are also treble clefs. The melody consists of eighth and quarter notes, ending with a fermata on the final note.

2. *Air de Danse.*

Four staves of musical notation. The first staff is for 'Femmes' (Women) in treble clef, with lyrics: 'e e Cou - gi Luumba Luumba e e Cou - gi Luumba Cou - gi.' The second staff is for 'Hommes' (Men) in bass clef, with lyrics: 'pouhé pouhé pouhé pouhé pouhé pouhé pouhé pouhé pouhé pouhé pouhé pouhé.' The third and fourth staves are for 'Femmes' and 'Hommes' respectively, with double bar lines indicating repeated rhythmic patterns.

3. *Cri de Ralliement.*

One staff of musical notation in bass clef, 2/4 time. It features three measures of a simple melody with lyrics: 'Cou - - hé', 'Cou - - hé', and 'Cou - - hé'.

*Louise et Armand Lamourant.*

*M<sup>re</sup> Em<sup>e</sup> Aubert sculp.*

NOUVELLE-HOLLANDE : N<sup>os</sup> Galles du Sud.

MUSIQUE DES NATURELS.

<sup>9</sup> Péron and Freycinet, *Voyage de Découvertes aux Terres Australes 1800-1804.*

Although the degree of authenticity is unknown, the *Chant* does reflect a commonly found structure of certain Aboriginal melodies. Despite a relatively simple repeated structure, the *Chant* songline exhibits some notable features of pitch and rhythm. Each measure of *Chant* either retains its pitch throughout the measure or descends. Similarly to numerous Aboriginal melodies, the entire example outlines a descent of an octave from G to G. Despite the overall repetitive phraseology of *Chant*, the foreground level of repetition reveals sophisticated variation of limited musical material. The first four-measure phrase outlines the descent of a perfect fourth from G to D. The second four measures repeat the same pitch descent in a rhythmically modified variation in which the D is reached already by the second measure of the phrase and is punctuated with a fermata; the last two measures of this phrase re-emphasize the final cadential gesture, both with fermatas. This entire four-measure cadential unit is then repeated, the fermatas again emphasizing the descent of a perfect fourth. The second tetrachord of the scale is prepared by repeated measures (mm. 13-14) that ease the pitch level down to C; the final four-measure phrase completes the scale with a descent from C to G reminiscent of the first four measures of the piece. At a foreground level, the musical material displays a remarkable degree of unity, and measures three and four contain the basic melodic and rhythmic cells of the entire fragment.

Sculthorpe has indicated that his first conscious use of *Chant* appears in the introduction to *Child of Australia* (1987).<sup>10</sup> The motivic and structural influence of the

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<sup>10</sup> Sculthorpe, "Songlines," unpublished musical sketches.

*Chant* songline, however, can be traced in a somewhat ambiguous thread through Sculthorpe's music for string quartet. The songline manifests itself in the music primarily as melodic material; however its distinctive sectionalization also exerts a degree of structural syntax on elements of phrase design, rhythm, harmony, and texture. The opening melodic gestures of both *Prelude to a Puppet Show* and the slow movement from Sonata no. 1—two works from which String Quartet no. 1 was transformed—bear a remarkable similarity to the contour of the *Chant* melody (example 9-2). The chordal scheme in this first manifestation of basic elements of the songline also reflects another aspect of the *Chant*. The roots of the chords of the opening four measures descend stepwise from E-flat to B.

Example 9-2: Sculthorpe, *Prelude to a Puppet Show*, mm. 1-9.

The musical score for Example 9-2, Sculthorpe's *Prelude to a Puppet Show*, measures 1-9, is presented in three systems. The first system (measures 1-4) is marked *p* and includes the annotation "rather sad". The second system (measures 5-8) is marked *mf* and includes the instruction "bring out the melody". The third system (measures 8-9) is also marked *mf*. The score is written for a string quartet in C major, 4/4 time, and features a descending stepwise chordal scheme in the first four measures and a melodic line in the subsequent measures.

The *Chant*'s distinctive phrase construction reflects the structure of the piano work. The final four measures of the piano work function as a type of summation of the composition's essential structural components. As in the *Chant*, the descent through a second tetrachord in the final measures of the slow movement from Sonata no. 1 completes the descent (example 9-3).

Example 9-3: Sculthorpe, Slow movement from Sonata no. 1, mm. 48-56.

The musical score consists of five systems of staves. The first system shows a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The second system features a piano accompaniment with a crescendo marking. The third system includes a vocal line with a decrescendo marking and a circled '3/4' indicating a measure. The fourth system shows a piano accompaniment with a decrescendo and ritardando marking. The fifth system continues the piano accompaniment.

In the *Pastorale* movement of String Quartet no. 4, the *Chant* songline manifests itself as a repeated bass descent in the opening section (example 9-4). A descending fourth bass motion also closes the middle section of the movement (example 9-5).

Example 9-4: Sculthorpe, String Quartet no. 4, *Pastorale*, mm. 5-11.

5 *sul tasto*  
*p*  
*sul tasto*  
*p*  
*sul tasto*  
*p*  
*sul tasto*  
*p*

9 *pp* *ord.* *cresc.* *mf* ② (♩ = ♩)  
*pp* *ord.* *cresc.* *mf*  
*pp* *ord.* *cresc.* *mf*  
*pp* *ord.* *cresc.* *mf*

Example 9-5: Sculthorpe, String Quartet no. 4, *Pastorale*, mm. 59-64.

The descending fourth motion of the *Chant*'s basic melody manifests itself in the cadential suggestion in example 9-5 (m. 64), and mirrors an observation made by the composer in 1996:

I do like the fourth, and tonalities a fourth apart, I think because of that interval's intrinsic association with the plagal cadence, which always to me suggests 'Amen'. Playing the double bass as a student, I used to get such a thrill from the changes of harmony; therefore, I tend to think of music from the bass up.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Milton, Sculthorpe interviews: complete transcript, 8.

The descending melodic contour of the *Chant* appears to appeal to the composer across a range of styles. The main thematic material of *Small Town*, for instance, reflects the repeated descents from a primary tone so pervasive in the *Chant* (example 9-6). Although the treatment in *Small Town* is periodic in structure, the melodic line mirrors the basic contour of the *Chant*.

Example 9-6: Sculthorpe, *Small Town*, string quartet version, mm. 13-24.

The image displays two systems of musical notation for a string quartet. Each system consists of four staves: Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Cello/Double Bass. The music is written in a key with one sharp (F#) and a 2/4 time signature. The first system shows a descending melodic line in the upper strings, with dynamics including *p* (piano) and *cresc* (crescendo). The second system continues this line, with dynamics including *mf* (mezzo-forte), *dim* (diminuendo), and *ramp p* (ramp piano). A circled number '2' is placed between the two systems, indicating a second ending or a continuation of the first system.

The second movement of String Quartet no. 11 uses *Chant* as a fundamental unit of construction. Further, its appearances in the movement often occur in combination with manifestations of the other melodies transcribed by the Baudin expedition. The opening measures of the second movement constitute an explicit cello realization of the *Chant* songline (example 9-7).

Example 9-7: Sculthorpe, String Quartet no. 11, 2<sup>nd</sup> mvt. opening measures.

The melody is subsequently transferred to the second violin in a version that is accompanied by *Kakadu* style Balinese figuration (example 9-8).

Example 9-8: Sculthorpe, String Quartet no. 11, 2<sup>nd</sup> mvt. mm. 12-23.

In another statement of increased complexity, the figuration is played by first violin and viola. The second violin restates the main material of *Chant*, and the interval and unmistakable dramatic gesture of the *Cri de Ralliement* appears in the cello voice (example 9-9).

Example 9-9: Sculthorpe, String Quartet no. 11, 2<sup>nd</sup> mvt. mm. 34-41

The image shows a musical score for a string quartet, specifically Example 9-9 from Sculthorpe's String Quartet no. 11, 2nd movement, measures 34-41. The score is written for four staves: Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Cello. The music is in G major and 3/4 time. The first two staves (Violin I and Violin II) feature complex rhythmic patterns with many sixteenth and thirty-second notes. The Viola and Cello parts have more rhythmic variety, including some longer notes and rests. Dynamic markings like 'dim.' and 'mf' are present throughout the score.

In the next main section of the work, the rhythmic aspects of the *Air de Danse* appear (example 9-10). A suggestion of the *Cri de Ralliement*, though not as explicit as in the previous example, appears again in the cello.

Example 9-10: Sculthorpe, String Quartet no. 11, 2<sup>nd</sup> mvt. mm. 56-68.

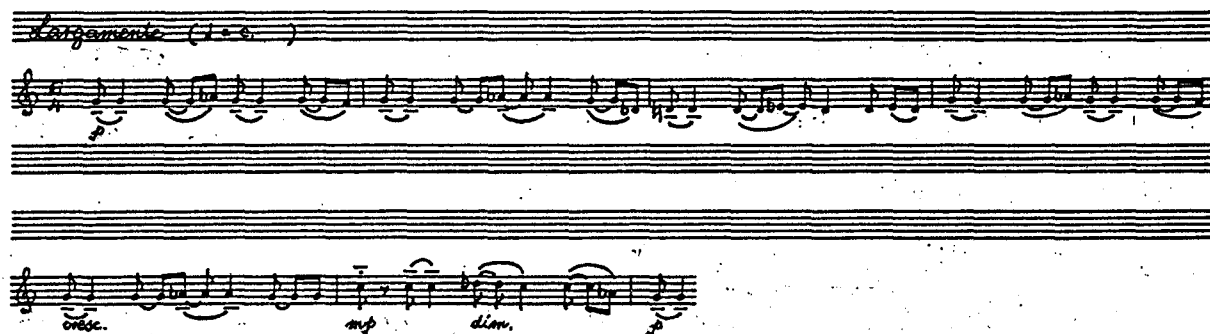
The image displays a musical score for a string quartet, consisting of three systems of staves. Each system contains four staves, representing the four instruments of the quartet. The notation is in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The first system shows the beginning of the passage, with various rhythmic patterns and melodic lines. The second system continues the music, featuring a section marked 'And.' (Andante) with a slower tempo. The third system concludes the passage, ending with a final cadence. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, slurs, and dynamic markings.

### Lament

Another songline that appears in Sculthorpe's music also has Aboriginal origins. Sculthorpe first came to know the *Lament* when it was sung to him by Mawuyul Yathalawuy, a tribal elder from Elcho Island, just off the coast of Arnhem Land. She played the title role in the 1980 film *Manganinnie*, the story of the last survivor of one of the tribes exterminated by soldiers and early settlers in Tasmania,<sup>12</sup> and the melody, transcribed by Sculthorpe, was used in the film (example 9-11). The composer's first exposure to the melody was memorable:

When the Aboriginal woman sang the melody, I loved it so much. It felt quite clearly like something that was inside me. Of all the Aboriginal melodies I have heard, this one struck the most deeply responsive and personal chord.<sup>13</sup>

Example 9-11: *Lament*, transcribed by Peter Sculthorpe.<sup>14</sup>



The songline in its originally transcribed manifestation (example 9-11) features an extremely limited sequence of pitches. The tonal centers of G and D provide the basis for

<sup>12</sup> Sculthorpe. *Sun Music: journeys and reflections*, 255.

<sup>13</sup> Peter Sculthorpe, interviews by the author, 1993-2003, Sydney, Australia.

<sup>14</sup> Sculthorpe, "Songlines: notes," (Personal library, Peter Sculthorpe, Sydney).

explorations of semitonal intervals; the chromatic upper neighbour tones of the passage provide the main intervallic cells of the melody. Within the passage, the G/A-flat semitone opposes its D/E-flat parallel. In addition to the semitone, therefore, the perfect fourth or its inversion (perfect fifth) becomes an important intervallic cell, both at foreground and background levels. Dramatic tension is achieved through this juxtaposition of tonal centers around the 'tonic' and 'dominant.' The logical extension of the melodic tension subsequently incorporates the 'subdominant' (m. 6); the result is an increased centralization of G as the fundamental 'tonic' of the passage.

Sculthorpe used a transposed, free adaptation of the *Lament* as the main theme of the 1988 orchestral work *Kakadu*. The central pitch of the *Lament*, however, has been transposed to C (example 9-12).

Example 9-12: Sculthorpe, *Kakadu*, mm. 1-6.

*Ardente* ( $\text{♩} = c.104$ )

Flutes  
Oboes  
Cor Anglais  
Clarinet in B $\flat$   
Bassoons  
Contra Bassoon

13  
Horns in F  
24

12  
Trumpets  
34

12  
Trombones  
3

Tuba

Timpani  
Bongo  
Tom toms

1  
Percussion 2  
3

*Ardente* ( $\text{♩} = c.104$ )

Violins I  
*f marcato*  
*rit.*

Violins II  
*f marcato*  
*rit.*

Violas  
*f marcato*  
*rit.*

Violoncellos  
*rit.*

Contra Basses  
*div.*

Ob.

1  
Bongo  
Tom toms

1  
Perc. 2  
3

Vin. I  
Vin. II  
Vla.  
Vc.  
C.B.

In 1991, Sculthorpe returned the *Lament* to its original ‘key’ in *Threnody* for solo cello (example 9-13). The rhythm, which had been altered in *Kakadu*, is also returned to the form of its original transcription.

Example 9-13: Sculthorpe, *Threnody*, mm. 1-9.

The musical score for Example 9-13 consists of three staves of music in treble clef, 4/4 time. The first staff is marked "Cantando (♩ = c. 84) sul D" and begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The second staff includes "cresc." and "mp dim." markings. The third staff is marked "sempre sul D" and begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic.

A discussion of the prevalence of the G/A-flat semitone has already incorporated musical examples from the quartets through String Quartet no. 9 (chapter 7). Some pertinent examples from the later quartets demonstrate how the basic intervallic constraints and tonal suggestions of the *Lament* have permeated the melodic textures of the composer’s style. The stylistic synthesis of the intervallic cells of the *Lament* appears in String Quartet no. 12, for example, as the main theme of the opening quick music (example 9-14). All of the basic elements of the *Lament* manifest themselves explicitly. The pitch centers are now A (‘tonic’) and E (‘dominant’); the chromatic neighbour tones around these centers represent a completely synthesized aspect of the

composer's style. Within such a limited aural landscape, an enormous range of pure musical drama manifests itself even more distinctly.

Example 9-14: Sculthorpe, String Quartet no. 12, mm. 28-39.

Another passage drawing upon the same intervallic cells and pitched identically manifests itself in the cello passage from the *Interlude* of the tenth string quartet (example 9-15). The basic intervals of a semitone with transpositions and skips at the fourth/fifth provide the main tension of the excerpt.

Example 9-15: Sculthorpe, String Quartet no. 10, III. *Interlude*, mm. 26-45.

The main melodic material of the outer movements of String Quartet no. 14 suggests a slightly more disguised manifestation of the *Lament*. The main notes of the second violin melody are now returned to the songline's original tonal centers (example 9-16). The semitones (G/A-flat and D/E-flat) in the quartet, however, stress the expanded intervals accompanying the semitones. Thus, the direct semitone cells are not heard as a melodic gesture. Rather, the overall melodic and harmonic framework formed by the structure of the *Lament* songline is only suggested and not explicitly stated.

Example 9-16a: Sculthorpe, String Quartet no. 14, 1<sup>st</sup> mvt. mm. 1-4.

Poco inquieto (♩ = c. 72)

Violin I  
*p/mf second time*  
*sim.*  
*sul G*

Violin II  
*p/mf second time*  
*sempre in rilievo*

Viola  
*p/mf second time*  
*sim.*

Violoncello  
*p/mf second time*

3  
*cresc.*  
*mf/f second time*

Example 9-16b: Sculthorpe, String Quartet no. 14, 1<sup>st</sup> mvt. mm. 6-10.

5  
*p/mf second time*

7  
*cresc.* *mf/f second time* *mp/poco f second time*  
*poco cresc.* *poco cresc.*

9  
 1  
 (sul G) *mp/poco f second time*  
*6 sim.* *mp/poco f second time* *sim.*  
*mp/poco f second time*

### Djilile

One of Sculthorpe's most widely used songlines is an Arnhem Land melody, *Djilile*, meaning "whistling-duck on a billabong,"<sup>15</sup> collected in the 1950's by A. P. Elkin and Trevor Jones.<sup>16</sup> The composer first heard *Djilile* on a recording<sup>17</sup> when he was looking for some music to be used in the 1974 film *Essington*; once he heard the melody, he immediately knew that he had found what he was looking for.<sup>18</sup> The most striking feature of the songline (example 9-17), based on the pitches (G) A B C D, constitutes a basic stepwise melodic contour that ascends the first tetrachord of the natural minor before descending to the seventh scale degree. The pitches from the mediant to the subtonic then explore various fragmentations before the return to the melody's tonic base.

Example 9-17: Sculthorpe, *Djilile*, solo piano version, mm. 1-12.

<sup>15</sup> Peter Sculthorpe, interviews by the author, 1993-2003, Sydney, Australia.

<sup>16</sup> Trevor Jones, "Australian Aboriginal Music: The Elkin collection's contribution toward an overall picture," in Ronald M. and Catherine H. Berndt, eds. *Aboriginal Man in Australia: Essays in Honour of Emeritus Professor A. P. Elkin* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1965).

<sup>17</sup> *Arnhem Land: Authentic Australian Aboriginal Songs and Dances* (HMV Vols. 1 & 2 OALP 7504-5, Vol. 3 OALP 7516).

<sup>18</sup> Milton, Sculthorpe interviews: complete transcript, 26.

In the film, a story of the disastrous settlement attempt at Port Essington, the melody is synonymous with the bush. In 1976, Sculthorpe revisited the material with the composition of a string orchestra work entitled *Port Essington*, previously discussed in chapter 7. The *Djilile* melody features in the sections of the work that portray the harsh environmental conditions of the Australian bush. In its first incarnation, the melody is agitated and ferocious in its rhythmic and dynamic intensity (example 9-18).

Example 9-18: Sculthorpe, *Port Essington*, 1<sup>st</sup> mvt. *The Bush* mm. 1-8.

Con ferocità (♩: c.112)

The musical score consists of two systems of staves. The first system includes Violins 1, Violins 2, Violas, Cellos, and Doublebasses. The second system includes Violin 1, Violin 2, Viola, Violoncello, and Double Bass. The tempo is marked 'Con ferocità' with a quarter note equal to approximately 112 beats per minute. The music is in 2/4 time and features a driving, rhythmic melody in the violins and a supporting accompaniment in the other strings. The dynamics are marked 'f' (forte) throughout.

As the work ends, a far more serene manifestation of the songline, with a *Kakadu* style accompaniment, represents the devastation of the settlement attempt and the return of the environment to its natural state (example 9-19).

Example 9-19: Sculthorpe, *Port Essington*, 6<sup>th</sup> mvt. *Epilogue: The Bush*, fig. 23 (mm. 1-7).

The image displays two systems of a musical score. The first system, labeled '23', is titled 'Con semplicità (♩. c.132)'. It features five staves: Violin I (Vn.1), Violin II (Vn.2), Viola (Via.), Violoncello (Vic.), and Double Bass (Db.). The Violin I part has a melodic line with a fermata. The Violin II part has a rhythmic accompaniment. The Viola and Violoncello parts have pizzicato accompaniment. The Double Bass part has a simple bass line. The second system, labeled '24', continues the music. It includes dynamics such as 'cresc.', 'ord.', 'mp', and 'p'. Performance instructions like 'pizz.' and 'ord.' are present. The Violin I part has a melodic line with a fermata and a '2' above it. The Violin II part has a rhythmic accompaniment. The Viola and Violoncello parts have pizzicato accompaniment. The Double Bass part has a simple bass line.

Although the *Lament* songline features as the main theme of the orchestral work *Kakadu*, the central section of the work (example 9-20) incorporates the *Djilile* songline with the same accompanimental figure that appeared in *Port Essington*. In both works, the songline appears in the tonality of A.

Example 9-20: Sculthorpe, *Kakadu*, fig. 13 (mm. 1-11).

The musical score for Example 9-20, Sculthorpe's *Kakadu*, fig. 13 (mm. 1-11), is presented in two systems. The top system shows the first three measures in 12/8 time, with a piano (*pp*) dynamic. The middle system is labeled '13' and 'Serenio (♩ = c. 48)'. It includes staves for Violin I, Violin II, Viola, Violoncello, and Contrabasso. The bottom system continues the score for the same instruments. Dynamics include *pp*, *p*, and *dim. a niente*.

The composer's intrinsic affinity for the basic melodic elements and structure of the *Djilile* songline is suggested by several examples taken from the early quartets. In *To Meadows* from String Quartet no. 3, the contour of the opening second violin statement is remarkably similar to *Djilile*, both in terms of melodic and rhythmic relationships (example 9-21).

Example 9-21: Sculthorpe, String Quartet no. 3, *To Meadows*, mm. 1-4.

The musical score for Example 9-21 consists of four staves. The top staff is Violin I, the second is Violin II, the third is Viola, and the fourth is Cello/Double Bass. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 3/4. The music is primarily in the Violin II part, with other parts providing harmonic support. Dynamics include piano (p) and pizzicato (pizz.).

In *Country Dance* from String Quartet no. 4, composed in 1950, the connection is even more startling (examples 9-22 and 9-23). The main melodic material of the movement corresponds extremely closely with the contour of *Djilile*. The similarity of the melodic shape indicate an aspect of the foreshadowing of *Djilile* some twenty years before the composer first heard a recording of the melody (example 9-23, mm. 23-29).

Example 9-22: Sculthorpe, *Country Dance*, transposed melody.

The musical score for Example 9-22 consists of two staves. The top staff is Violin I and the bottom staff is Violin II. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 3/4. The tempo marking "Briskly" is written above the first staff. The music consists of a single melodic line in the Violin I part, with the second staff providing harmonic support.

Example 9-23: Sculthorpe, String Quartet no. 4, Country Dance, piano score, mm. 1-29.

3. Country Dance

briskly: in a jolly manner.

The musical score is written for piano and consists of six systems of staves. The first system includes a treble and bass staff with a 3/8 time signature and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The tempo and mood are indicated as "briskly: in a jolly manner." The first system is marked *mp*. The second system is marked *mf* and contains a measure number box with the number "10". The third system is marked *pp* and contains a measure number box with the number "20". The score features various musical notations including eighth and sixteenth notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

Sculthorpe confessed in 1995 that he had “long wanted to arrange *Djilile* for string quartet.”<sup>19</sup> A subsequent string quartet version of one of his favourite melodies was inevitable. It appeared in 1999 in the string quartet work entitled simply *Djilile* (example 9-24). The sensitive treatment of the songline in the work exhibits Sculthorpe’s ongoing fascination with this beautiful Aboriginal melody.

Example 9-24: Sculthorpe, *Djilile* for string quartet, mm. 1-12.

Cantando (♩ = c. 54)

Violin 1

Vln. 1

Vln. 1

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Sculthorpe’s description of his first experience of the Kakadu National Park and his visit to Nourlangie Rock suggests how all of these songlines fit into his compositional approach and how they have become synthesized as an aspect of his musical style:

<sup>19</sup> Milton, Sculthorpe interviews: complete transcript, 26.

On that first visit, I stood on top of Nourlangie, the enormous rock monolith in the park. Looking out across the great floodplains, I could see abandoned sites of early white settlement, the Arafura Sea, Torres Strait and, in my imagination, the islands of Indonesia. The musics of these places, and the tribal music of Kakadu itself, seemed to fuse in my mind.<sup>20</sup>

Although it is obvious where Sculthorpe has used one of the songlines explicitly in his music, many of the examples provided have shown that the songlines constitute material that strikes a responsive chord in the composer's imagination. As we have seen, many of the basic elements of these songlines were present as an aspect of the composer's fundamental compositional approach. That these elements were then later fused—almost reconciled in the composer's mind as songlines—presents stimulating evidence in support of stylistic synthesis.

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<sup>20</sup> Sculthorpe. *Sun Music: journeys and reflections*, 257.

## Chapter 10: Conclusion

Peter Sculthorpe has sought and found a voice that communicates at once his identity as an Australian. He has achieved this through the incorporation of various specific and highly developed rhythmic, harmonic, and melodic motives into a language that is now universally recognized as distinctively Australian. The string quartets exhibit and encompass the composer's abundantly rich stylistic language. An examination of their riches leads to an understanding of the composer's basic stylistic fingerprints.

The synthesis of Sculthorpe's style into a musical language that combines various elements and aesthetics reflects the composer's basic compositional approach. A study of the quartets suggests that various stylistic elements manifest themselves from time to time, without reference to a particular "period." Rather, the styles undergo a process whereby their basic cells—rhythmic, melodic, harmonic, and intervallic—are synthesised into a stylistic language that is not only individual and consistent, but also exquisitely refined and abundantly varied.

Indeed, the process through which various stylistic elements are accreted into a personal musical language or aesthetic most excites and inspires Sculthorpe's optimism for the future of music in the country. In a recent interview he said, "What is most exciting about Australian music is the diversity—it's amazing!"<sup>1</sup> He enlarged upon the point with the author:

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<sup>1</sup> James Barratt, "Personal notes," *QANTAS: The Australian Way Magazine* (December 1999): 39.

I have a student writing on the music of Chile, and though the music is very powerful, in the United States it has been almost eradicated, mostly because there's nowhere for enough of the people to get together. In addition, the United States doesn't have the multi-cultural policy that our government has, and whether we like it or not, it's part of the pattern of our thinking. The music of Chile in Australia will eventually become incorporated into our culture. As an Australian, I can talk to Chilean people, and use their rhythms in my music. It's perfectly valid, as an Australian, to do that. The possibilities from which to draw are endless.<sup>2</sup>

The composer is perhaps over-enthusiastically attempting to suggest that, in particular, an Australian musical aesthetic can validly incorporate influences from a multi-cultural musical universe. Indeed, Sculthorpe's individual musical language draws heavily upon a variety of sources, and he would certainly acknowledge that many European and American composers have used similar inspirations. What is fascinating about Sculthorpe's quest is the dichotomy of views inherent in his philosophical approach. He has repeatedly said that he is trying to "purge" his music of European elements. Conversely, and quite deliberately, the entire fabric of his aesthetic, and especially significantly for the purposes of this study, the choice of the string quartet as the medium through which he can attempt such an endeavor, is resplendent with contradiction. It seems that the composer's ultimate philosophical dualism is therefore manifested in his fondness for perhaps the most European of musical achievements--the string quartet. The dualism extends to the inclusion of a tone row and a direct quote from a Beethoven quartet. It seems possible, and quite logical and inevitable, that Sculthorpe chose the string quartet as his preferred compositional medium, in part in recognition of the fact

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<sup>2</sup> Peter Sculthorpe, interviews by the author, 1993-2003, Sydney, Australia.

that in order truly to escape from the confines of a European aesthetic, he first had to embrace it philosophically. In some ways, therefore, his search for a non-European musical language has made his understanding of a European aesthetic the primary force of his compositional activity.

The persistent theme of Sculthorpe's music has been man and nature. It seems appropriate, therefore, to include some of the composer's philosophical reflections on the environment, and to touch upon the evolution of his passionate optimism.

Several months ago, I spent some time with the distinguished Polish composer, Henryk Górecki. Almost every day, Henryk would mutter, "after bad there is worse." I would say, "come on Henryk, after good there is better." He would reply, "well, perhaps for you, coming from that big shining island in the south, after good there is better. For us here, after bad there is only worse." Somehow, these exchanges made me feel that I should take an even more positive attitude to my work.

I know that we degrade the land and pollute the air. We destroy the past and deny the future. We are told that by the middle of next century the world's population will have doubled itself. Can Science solve the attendant food and energy problems? Can the Humanities prevent the compounding of despair and hatred? In spite of all that faces us, I have decided to put my trust in the belief that "after good, or even not so good, there is better." Indeed, I feel today that I am morally bound to attempt to write music that uplifts the human spirit, uplifting it in a way that I have never before achieved. I believe that the uplifting of the human spirit should be the concern of us all.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Peter Sculthorpe, interviews by the author, 1993-2003, Sydney, Australia.

The cycle of Sculthorpe's string quartets is increasingly recognized as a major contribution to the genre. One commentator has suggested that Sculthorpe's use of folk materials of the Pacific reflects "the flair Bartók brought to Hungarian and Romanian materials."<sup>4</sup> In his works for string quartet, Sculthorpe has tended to write with yearning for the intellectual and emotional climates of Europe; as suggested above, this is perhaps because of the nature of the genre.<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, it also represents a longing that encompasses his feelings about his music, his life, his planet, and his hopes for humanity.

I honestly think that the string quartet is one of the greatest achievements of western civilisation; as a composer, therefore, it is naturally my favoured medium. I would like ultimately my very best music to be for string quartet. Students and people often ask what's the point of being a composer today. We all have our different reasons. My reason is that I believe that the history of the human race is made up more by its great works of art, even its less great works of art, than by all the wars and all the truces. I think our history is plotted more by the art. Therefore, I am one of countless people who set out to write the perfect work of art and it's just a wonderful thing to keep one going for one's life. It's a wonderful way to live a life, thinking that maybe the last piece wasn't so bad, and maybe the next one could be a really great work of art. It's as simple as that.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Heuwell Tircuit, "Kronos and Sculthorpe: fine duo," *San Francisco Chronicle* (11 April 1983).

<sup>5</sup> Peter Sculthorpe, Composer's note: *String Quartet No. 9* (Personal library, Peter Sculthorpe, Sydney).

<sup>6</sup> Peter Sculthorpe, interviews by the author, 1993-2003, Sydney, Australia.

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The bibliography is generally organized alphabetically. In the case of multiple musical works by Sculthorpe, however, entries are organised chronologically by date of composition, with the date given in parentheses after each title (sections 1 and 2). In the case of multiple works by a single author, entries are organized alphabetically. Some of the citations for articles used in this study contain incomplete information. In many cases, obscure articles were contained in the composer's personal files;<sup>1</sup> page numbers, exact dates, and other source information are therefore occasionally unknown. Sculthorpe's publisher is Faber Music, London; the publisher also releases material in "Faberprint:" a facsimile of the composer's manuscript awaiting engraving.<sup>2</sup> The bibliography is organized according to the following categories:

1. Published musical scores
2. Unpublished musical scores
3. Books and articles
4. Unpublished papers, lecture notes, speeches, and interview transcripts

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<sup>1</sup> Due to an enormous demand for information about his music, Peter Sculthorpe now carefully keeps individual files on each piece of music he writes. Source and other material used in the composition of a particular piece are compiled within the piece's file. Performers or presenters often send press clippings on individual pieces to him. He retains these in the relevant file. Lecture, biographical or historical notes on each piece are also collected in the files.

<sup>2</sup> Sculthorpe's handwriting is so meticulous that these facsimile editions essentially function quite conveniently as performing editions. Because the engraving and proofing process is lengthy, the Faberprint system allows the compositions to be more immediately available to performers wishing to present the music. For the purposes of this paper, Faberprint editions are included in the section citing published musical scores.

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