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AUSTRALIAN
COMPOSER SERIES

PETER SCULTHORPE

quamby



AUSTRALIAN
COMPOSER SERIES



TASMANIAN
SYMPHONY
ORCHESTRA

Peter Sculthorpe b. 1929

1	Cello Dreaming	18'07
	Sue-Ellen Paulsen <i>cello</i>	
	Quamby	[21'20]
2	Prelude	3'15
3	In the Valley	5'23
4	From High Hills	4'59
5	At Quamby Bluff	7'43
6	Nourlangie	21'19
	Karin Schaupp <i>guitar</i>	
7	Music for Bali	3'56
Total Playing Time		64'46

Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra
Richard Mills *conductor*

Perhaps no other composer has consciously attempted to make Australian orchestral music so truly Australian as Peter Sculthorpe, who first came to public attention with the String Quartet No. 6, commissioned by Musica Viva Australia in 1964. Sculthorpe cemented his reputation with the *Sun Music* series for orchestra, which could be said to have been inspired by a pictorial view of Australia as a sun-baked landscape. In all there were four *Sun Musics*, and in 1968 even a ballet based on the same music. *Irkanda IV*, an earlier work (1961), signalled an interest in Aboriginal culture, though at this stage it was reflected purely in titles. *Irkanda* suggested a sense of loneliness and desolation, even of an insignificant figure dwarfed by the overwhelming landscape.

Sculthorpe, like his distinguished Australian predecessor Percy Grainger, looked beyond European models for his music. The whole of the Pacific Rim was his musical hinterland at a time when the post-serialism of the Darmstadt School held sway in Europe. In 1968, the abbot of a monastery in Japan introduced Sculthorpe to *saibara* music, the influence of which surfaced in the 1979 orchestral work *Mangrove*, a work which Roger Covell describes in the *New Groves Dictionary of Music and Musicians* as celebrating 'the rich fecundity of mangrove tidal flats at a time when these trees were looked on as untidy impediments to clean-limbed tourist development'. Balinese gamelan had been quoted in parts of *Sun Music III* and *Sun Music*

II. The Mexican sun is a thematic concept in the *Sun Music* series.

Sculthorpe has lived in Sydney since being offered a lectureship at the University of Sydney in 1963 (at the time of his retirement a few years ago, he held a personal chair as Professor in Musical Composition). He was born in Launceston, Tasmania, and has resided in the UK and US, with visiting professorships at the University of Sussex and Yale. However, he has said that Northern Australia is the landscape that he has come to love most on earth, a love expressed in pieces he has written since the 1980s, such as *Kakadu* (1988) and *Jabiru Dreaming* (1990-94).

Melodies from Arnhem Land and Groote Eylandt have been used in Sculthorpe's works, notably *Djilile* (Whistling Duck on a Billabong) which was used to complement a theme and set of variations expressive of alienated European culture in *Port Essington* (1977). Indeed, Sculthorpe is apt to use similar material (having representational significance) across a number of works, contributing to his highly recognisable style. Other fingerprints include Penderecki-like string clusters, string harmonic glissandi imitating bird cries, and melodies (be they derived from *saibara* tunes, Aboriginal strains or Gregorian plainchant) in high relief, all contained within highly audible contrasting forms. Sculthorpe has credited his characteristic interval of a falling semitone, evident also in

Aboriginal chant, to the 'Abschied' (Farewell) from Mahler's *Song of the Earth*. There is certainly an elegiac tone to much of his music, even a tone of Mahlerian regret in *Memento mori* (1993), a warning of death for the planet inspired by environmental despoliation of Easter Island in the southern Pacific. Sculthorpe's discovery that the astronomer Kepler regarded the oscillation of the semitone A flat-G as the sound of planet Earth has provided him with a musical signifier of ecological concerns which have been an increasing theme in his work.

Sculthorpe has written numerous orchestral works and 15 string quartets, but few stage works apart from the aforementioned ballet created from his work, and the TV opera *Quiros*. The 'ritual' *Rites of Passage* (1976) made use of the Kepler notes, and also of a combination of Latin and Central Australian Arrernte texts. It could be said that recent works signal a re-engagement with European traditions. The 2001 orchestral work *New Norcia* was inspired by the musical traditions established at that West Australian monastery by Dom Rosendo Salvado, and is based on the plainchant *Psalmus 150*. Plainchant is also used extensively in his most recent work, *Requiem* (2004).

Beethoven Variations, premiered by the West Australian Symphony Orchestra in December 2003, is based on the 'Ode to Joy' of Beethoven, a composer for whom Sculthorpe had previously shown little sympathy. Nevertheless, the resonances of history have

always been of great significance to Sculthorpe. Steven Isserlis, who gave the world premiere of *Cello Dreaming* in 1998, struck by the composer's use of the notation *piuttosto lontano* ('somewhat distant'), stopped mid-rehearsal and exclaimed, 'I've just realised that you and Beethoven are the only composers ever to use the word *piuttosto*!' Sculthorpe's delight in recounting this event is almost palpable. Similarly, he was profoundly moved to realise that the Stradivarius on which Isserlis performed the work had once been the property of the legendary cellist Emanuel Feuermann, who had bequeathed it to his good friend Aldo Parisot – who, more than thirty years earlier, had performed many of Sculthorpe's early pieces on that same instrument.

Cello Dreaming draws its inspiration from Australia's so-called Top End. There, along the coastline, Aboriginal cultures mingle with those of the Torres Strait, Papua New Guinea and, to a slightly lesser extent, Indonesia. Cello Dreaming reflects this.

The music is based upon two ideas, both first stated by the soloist. Heard at the outset, the first idea is an adaptation of an Indigenous lullaby. The second idea, dominating the central section, is a downward-falling motif, of the kind known as a 'tumbling strain'. In the course of the work, references are also made to birdsong, to the drone of the didjeridu and to the figurations of the Balinese gamelan. If there are feelings of regret in some of the music, this is

because of my concern about the possibility of an end to paradise. These feelings, however, are erased at the close of the work.

Quamby was originally Sculthorpe's String Quartet No. 14; the version for chamber orchestra was created in 2000. Interviewed by Robin Hughes for the Australian Biography Project in 1998, soon after the composition of the quartet version, Sculthorpe described the piece as 'the string quartet that I would have written in Tasmania as a Tasmanian before I was really exposed to Asian music and Aboriginal music ... In other words, a Tasmanian string quartet.'

When I was very young, my father told me a story about Quamby Bluff, a rather forbidding mountainous outcrop in the highlands of 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!' meaning 'Save me! Save me!' It was perhaps inevitable that my thoughts about this incident and this place would find their way into a piece of music.

The Prelude presents most of the material upon which the music is based. Throughout, the falling tritone is especially important. Heard at the very outset, it dominates the sombre second movement, In the Valley. By way of contrast, From High Hills is calmly lyrical, its melody actually conceived in my schooldays. The

last movement, At Quamby Bluff, is the longest, and the music here is questioning and restless. Following a short hymn-like section, however, there is some resolution at the close.

After I completed Quamby, I realised that the outer movements contain suggestions of Beethoven's motto theme, 'Muss es sein?', 'Must it be?' I was unaware of this while writing the work, but clearly such a question was on my mind at the time.

Tasmanian roots notwithstanding, Sculthorpe has found a spiritual home in northern Australia's Kakadu region. It comes as a surprise to many to learn that when Sculthorpe wrote the piece *Kakadu*, he had never actually been to the place: the work was commissioned by an American anaesthesiologist as a 60th birthday present for his wife. 'When I finally visited Kakadu,' Sculthorpe later wrote, 'it wasn't at all as I'd imagined it. I'd seen a number of photographs, but none conveyed the spirit of its landscape. Also, it was much more serene than I'd imagined. I felt that I really belonged there, a strange feeling, perhaps, for a Tasmanian.' The guitar concerto *Nourlangie* (1989) is one of several works inspired by the ancient beauty of the region. In this work, says guitarist John Williams, the work's dedicatee, Sculthorpe 'takes advantage of the guitar's more universal sound qualities – the time and space between its plucked notes, and the resonances within the instrument – in contrast to the more European, notably Spanish, tradition of developing

idiomatic note patterns with less focus on the inner beauty of the sound itself.'

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 and, in my imagination, Torres Strait and even the islands of Indonesia. The music of these places, and of Kakadu itself, fused in my mind. Since that time I have written a number of works in which this fusion has been incorporated into my musical language. Nourlangie is one of these works. It takes its name from an enormous monolith in the park.

Nourlangie consists of alternations and elaborations of two different motifs. Following an introduction, the first motif is heard in a chorale-like form. The second motif, heard immediately after the first, is based upon a Torres Strait dance-song, and is later transformed into a long, joyful melody. Although the work contains many bird sounds, it is not intended to be a description of Nourlangie; more properly it concerns my feelings about this powerful and serene place.

Music for Bali is another work with a somewhat surprising genesis: the winter cold of an artists' colony in upper New York. (Sculthorpe did not visit Bali until 1973, when he was working on an ABC documentary about Balinese music.) It is taken from a larger work, the 24-minute *Tabuh Tabuhan* for wind quintet and percussion: 'the

second of my pieces to be influenced by the sun-laden music of tropical Bali,' says Sculthorpe. From *Tabuh Tabuhan*, for strings and percussion, was commissioned by the then Australian Broadcasting Commission in honour of the 86th birthday of Igor Stravinsky, and was given its premiere performance in a recording by the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra in 1968. 'Tabuh' is the Balinese word for hammer, or stroke; it is also the word for music. 'I've always liked the idea that music in Bali isn't concerned with abstractions. It's concerned with the physical act of making sound, with making music ...'

Music for Bali was written in 1968. Originally, it was called *From Tabuh Tabuhan and it belongs to a period in my output that was very much influenced by Indonesian music. Following the terrorist act in Bali, in October 2002, I decided to change the title to Music for Bali. I wanted the music to sing for those who were maimed or killed in the bombing.*

A brief work, its outer sections were inspired by Balinese gamelan music. The central section was inspired by music used in arja, the popular theatre of Bali. My intention was to suggest the tenderness and spaciousness of an arja song of love.

Gordon Kalton Williams (Symphony Australia)
Natalie Shea
Peter Sculthorpe

Sue-Ellen Paulsen

Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra's Principal Cello Sue-Ellen Paulsen studied in Vienna with André Navarra after completing her studies at the Queensland Conservatorium with Richard Dedecius. She toured the United Kingdom, Germany and Italy as soloist with the Queensland Youth Orchestra in 1980 and in the same year was a Commonwealth Winner in the ABC Concerto Competition (now Symphony Australia Young Performers Awards). She was cellist with the New England String Quartet in Armidale for three years prior to her appointment with the TSO. Sue-Ellen Paulsen was one of two Australians invited to play in the World Philharmonic Orchestra in Montreal, Canada in 1988.

Sue-Ellen Paulsen has been Guest Principal with the Sydney Symphony, Adelaide Symphony Orchestra and Australian Chamber Orchestra. She was invited to join the Australian Chamber Orchestra for its 1995 American and 1996 European tours and in April and May of 1997 she travelled throughout the Czech Republic giving recitals in chateaux and castles in Bohemia and Moravia.

Sue-Ellen makes regular solo appearances with the TSO, performing concertos by Haydn, Milhaud, Lalo, Shostakovich, Ligeti and Sallinen, among others. In 1995 she gave the world premiere performance of Andrew Ford's cello

concerto *The Great Memory*, which was composed especially for her. She has also featured as soloist with the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra in CD recordings of compositions by Peter Sculthorpe and the Cello Concertos of Richard Mills and Gordon Kerry. With support from the Australia Council, she has commissioned works from Gordon Kerry and Antony Partos.

Sue-Ellen Paulsen has appeared in recital with pianist Caroline Almonte (broadcast live on ABC Classic FM) and performed Saint-Saëns' *La Muse et le poète* with Irish violinist Fionnuala Hunt and the TSO. Other recent performances with the TSO include Schumann's Cello Concerto, and Tchaikovsky's *Variations on a Rococo Theme*.

Karin Schaupp

Karin Schaupp is one of the most outstanding young guitarists on the international scene. She performs widely on the international stage, as a recitalist, concerto soloist and festival guest. Her playing receives the highest acclaim from critics and audiences alike and she is held in great esteem by her peers worldwide. She has given countless recitals in Australia, Europe, Asia, the US, Mexico and Canada. Karin Schaupp's unique stage presence and magical, passionate playing have inspired several composers to write works especially for her.

Karin Schaupp has appeared on live television in many parts of the world. In 1997 she performed live as a Special Guest Artist to 20 million viewers and listeners in China, on the occasion of China Radio International's 50th Anniversary celebrations. More recently, Karin Schaupp was invited to join a prestigious line-up of international artists in the opening Gala of the Goodwill Games, which was broadcast on live international television. She has also appeared on German, American and Canadian television and some of her Australian TV appearances have resulted in an overwhelming response from viewers, with record numbers of viewers calling in. Karin Schaupp also plays regularly on radio, including numerous broadcasts of live recitals, as well as many interviews and guest appearances.

Karin Schaupp's guitar training began at the age of five and she first performed in public the following year. While still in her teens she won prizes at international competitions in Lagonegro (Italy) and Madrid, where she was also awarded the special competition prize for the Best Interpretation of Spanish Music.

Taught almost exclusively by her guitarist mother Isolde Schaupp, Karin Schaupp completed her tertiary music studies at the University of Queensland with First Class Honours, a Master's degree and a University Gold Medal. Most recently she was awarded the prestigious

Music Council of Australia Freedman Fellowship in recognition of her achievements.

Karin Schaupp has previously released three highly acclaimed solo CDs: Soliloquy (1997), Leyenda (1998) and Evocation (2000). Recently, she has extended her performing activities to become a founding member of two new guitar ensembles, The World Guitar Trio based in the USA (with Chris McGuire and Carlos Barbosa-Lima) and Saffire: The Australian Guitar Quartet (with Slava Grigoryan, Gareth Koch and Antony Field). Saffire's recent debut CD for ABC Classics reached No. 1 on the classical charts and won the 2003 ARIA award for Best Classical Album.

Karin Schaupp has also been involved in a number of other collaborative CD projects including concertos by Philip Bracatin, Ross Edwards and Peter Sculthorpe for ABC Classics.

Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra

The Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra is acclaimed as one of the world's finest small orchestras. German-born Sebastian Lang-Lessing is the orchestra's Chief Conductor and Artistic Director.

The TSO presents an exciting and diverse annual concert series in Hobart and Launceston as well as concerts in regional centres. With a full-time playing strength of 47 musicians, its core repertoire is that of the Classical and early Romantic periods. It is, however, a versatile orchestra, performing repertoire from Baroque to jazz, popular music, opera and ballet, and is recognised for championing contemporary music.

The TSO records regularly for radio broadcasts, compact discs and soundtracks for television and film. It was the first Australian orchestra to record the complete Beethoven symphonies, and its recent recordings on international and Australian labels have been received with critical acclaim. In 2003, the orchestra launched its Australian Music Program and in 2004 released the first recordings of orchestral music as part of the TSO Australian Composer Series.

Encouragement of young talent is of paramount importance to the TSO. It provides an education program and collaborates extensively on a range of programs with Symphony Australia, the Australian Youth Orchestra and the Australian Music Centre.

The TSO has performed in most of the major Australian festivals and regularly travels to mainland Australia, touring both capital cities and regional centres. It has performed in Greece, Israel, Indonesia, South Korea, China, Argentina, Canada and the USA.



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Richard Mills

Richard Mills is one of Australia's most sought after conductors. In recent years he has pursued a diverse career as a conductor and composer which has seen him working with a large number of the nation's music organisations. He is Artistic Director of the West Australian Opera, a post held since 1997, Artistic Consultant with Orchestra Victoria, and Director of the Australian Music Program for the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra.

As a conductor Richard Mills has appeared with all the major orchestras in Australia and regularly performs in major Australian festivals as well as working overseas. He made his conducting debut in the USA with the Albany Symphony Orchestra in 1989. He made his debut as an opera conductor at Opera Queensland with *The Magic Flute*. Now, through his work with Opera Australia and West Australian Opera, he has a large repertoire of standard works, as well as a reputation for conducting contemporary opera and his own compositions.

The then Victoria State Opera commissioned him to write an opera of Ray Lawler's *Summer of the Seventeenth Doll*, which premiered in Melbourne in 1996, and received a Sydney season in 1999. His second opera, *Batavia*, was commissioned by Opera Australia and was premiered at the Melbourne Festival in 2001 to great critical acclaim. *Batavia* consequently

received a number of Green Room and Helpmann Awards including Best Opera at both ceremonies and Best New Australian Work. He has been commissioned to write a new opera for the 2007 UWA Perth International Arts Festival.

In 2004, Richard Mills conducted a revival of *Batavia* in Perth, when it was presented as a joint production between the Perth International Arts Festival, Opera Australia and West Australian Opera. Other conducting engagements that year included *La Cenerentola* and *Norma* for West Australian Opera, concerts and recordings with the Melbourne and Tasmanian Symphony Orchestras, the world premiere of Peter Sculthorpe's *Requiem* with the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra at the Adelaide Festival, and the world premiere of his double concerto for clarinet and violin with the Taipei Symphony Orchestra. In 2005 he conducted *Tristan und Isolde* for the Queensland Music Festival.

His recording *Richard Mills Orchestral Works* with the Queensland Symphony Orchestra has become a best seller on the ABC Classics label. His three-CD set of the film music of Franz Waxman with the same orchestra was awarded a German Record Critics Prize in 1992, and he has conducted recordings with the West Australian and Tasmanian Symphony Orchestras.

He was made a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) in 1999.

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