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Peter Sculthorpe: his music and ideas, 1929-1979

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PETER SCULTHORPE

His Music and Ideas,
1929-1979

MICHAEL HANNAN

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To Donald Peart
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Preface

The impulse for this book springs more from an involvement, both personal and professional, in contemporary Australian composition than might be suggested by its origin as a doctoral thesis: at no time during its gestation could I allow myself to think of it as an obscure document, inaccessible to all but those possessing scholarly expertise in music. Rather, my need to write in detail about the music of Peter Sculthorpe grew from a conviction that until substantial studies of Australian composers are available it will be impracticable to implement adequate courses in Australian music at the secondary and tertiary levels of education. The choice of subject reflects my opinion that no single Australian composer has made a greater impact on the musical life of this country than Peter Sculthorpe.

I have chosen to use a mixture of British and American musical terms. Partly this is for reasons aesthetically related to writing style: the term measure is preferred to bar, and terms like crotchet and quaver are preferred to their equivalents, quarter-note and eighth-note. At times the choice of terms was dictated by the need for precision. A prominent case is the distinction drawn between tone, referring to pitch, and note, indicating the symbol on the page. A number of terms, relating mostly to non-Western and twentieth-century musics are included in a glossary for the convenience of the reader.

I wish to thank Peter Sculthorpe for giving me complete access to manuscripts and personal documents, and for countless hours of conversation and editorial assistance. Special thanks are due to Pamela Clements, my editor, who has greatly aided the production of a consistent and lucid text. Thanks are also due to Michael Kassler for suggestions for Chapters 1, 2 and 3; to Graham Hardie and Vicki Trevanian for comments on Chapters 1 and 9 respectively; and to Phillip Dutton for drawing so expertly the musical examples. There were many people without whose encouragement and support the project would not have come to fruition: my parents, Mick and Pauline; my aunt and uncle, Sam
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Michael Hannan
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1

Biographical Introduction

Peter Joshua Sculthorpe was born on 29 April 1929, in Launceston, Tasmania. As his family lived some distance from the town, he was forced from an early age to find amusements which did not depend on the company of other children. The age difference between Sculthorpe and his brother, Roger (b. 1932), was too great for there to have been any effective communication between them as young children. His mother, Edna (née Moorhouse), who was born in Yorkshire, and who, before marrying, was an infant-school headmistress, directed his attention towards painting and writing. His father, Joshua, was a sportsman, and encouraged his sons to enjoy outdoor life. The family owned a general store and found during the depression years that better business could be made dealing in fishing tackle and firearms than in food. Consequently the outdoor life included knowledge of the techniques involved in fly-fishing and stalking game. Such involvements are usually responsible for the development of great independence and patience, and a concern for technique and craftsmanship. It is interesting in this connection that Ernest Hemingway, who later became one of Sculthorpe's heroes, was obsessed with the relationship between the craft of writing and the attainment of finesse in various sports.

The establishment of Sculthorpe's independence and solitude thus predates his schooldays and his first contact with music. It resulted, much to his father's disappointment, in a disdain for field sports. Joshua Sculthorpe could never really understand his son's attraction to music or, in fact, to anything intellectual or artistic that could not be put to some practical use; in order to appease his father, Sculthorpe devoted time to sports concerned with individual excellence such as sculling, diving and athletics, and later became a state champion swimmer.

Sculthorpe's musical education began at the age of eight when he received his first piano lesson from Clara Doodie. The mysteries of the notation of music having been partially unlocked, together with his background of precocious creativity, enabled him to
compose music, which he took to his second lesson. The teacher’s response was to punish him corporally without explanation. This display convinced him that writing music was morally wrong, but he continued to compose in secret. The situation resolved itself finally when his mother accidentally discovered some of his pieces. Sculthorpe studied with Doodie for two years and then became a pupil of Christine Myer, who had entirely different but, nonetheless, eccentric methods. She encouraged composition at the expense of piano technique and permitted her student to play any music he liked despite its technical difficulty. In this situation he was exposed to a great deal of the standard repertoire; he attempted, for example, to play all Chopin’s mazurkas and polonaises. The freedom from the discipline of learning to play accurately was beneficial to the composer’s musical education for it avoided the common practice in Australia of instruction solely in terms of achieving the best possible results in the examination system. The temptation is to teach nothing that is not crucially relevant to the annual examination. The haphazard procedures of Christine Myer were, however, obviously not ideal, and this was communicated to the composer’s parents by J.A. Steele, a prominent Melbourne musician who periodically visited Launceston as an examiner, and who had become aware of Sculthorpe’s compositional talent. The new teacher suggested by Steele for the fourteen-year-old composer was Marjorie Allen, who concentrated on teaching keyboard technique, and who was a more experienced musician, with urbane tastes in literature and the visual arts. She was able to offer more informed criticism of Sculthorpe’s music and was pleased to do so, and though it was her intention to give a thorough grounding in piano technique she did, from the beginning, always consider Sculthorpe as firstly a composer. Also, significantly, she stimulated a fiercely competitive rivalry between him and her two nieces, Roslyn and Helen Roxburgh, both of whom were gifted performers. Sculthorpe studied with Marjorie Allen for a little more than a year before enrolling for the Bachelor of Music degree at the University of Melbourne Conservatorium of Music in 1946. He continued his piano studies there with Raymond Lambert, a distinguished performer whose own teacher had been a pupil of Liszt; but a great enthusiasm for writing music resulted in a gradual loss of interest in the rigours of instrumental training.

Peter Sculthorpe received his general education at the Launceston Church Grammar School where, in 1942, he was awarded the Magistrate’s Scholarship. As a student he undoubtedly was most outstanding in language studies as he had, in his isolated childhood days, been reading—albeit in translation—works of the symbolist poets and of Nietzsche. In addition, while on holidays in Devonport with his family, he had befriended a German professor
who was understandably impressed by his precocious literary interests; thereafter Leo Halpersohn and he regularly corresponded. Later, a similar literary liaison was established with Wilfred Teniswood, one of his senior-school teachers. Teniswood was also quite surprised by Sculthorpe's pianistic abilities and, as he had connections in the Australian Broadcasting Commission (ABC), was able to arrange for his student to broadcast on “Young Australia” and specially organized local programmes. It is ironic that at this stage of his career the composer was, through the medium of radio, reaching a much larger audience for his own music than he was to do for many years to come.

The music of Sculthorpe’s pre-university days is arguably of little consequence, though it is often surprisingly accomplished in a post-Chopin idiom. His ignorance of more contemporary music was a result of the extreme conservatism of teachers and radio broadcasters. It was not, for example, until a cousin, Dorothea Gough, remarked that Sculthorpe was “the Tasmanian Debussy” that he was even remotely aware of that composer’s music; and, after his mother had purchased copies of Debussy’s Préludes for him in Hobart, he was disappointed to discover the use of the whole-tone scale, a musical phenomenon he thought he himself had devised. Dorothea’s familiarity with the music of Debussy was probably more a result of her overseas war service period than of any locally acquired musical experience. Another friend, Alec Headlam, had acquired recordings of Mahler’s symphonies. Sculthorpe occasionally heard the music of Mahler on Neville Cardus’s radio programmes, but the style had been too advanced for him to absorb in single hearings. Having recordings which could be played repeatedly meant that complexities of harmony and texture were able to be slowly absorbed and better appreciated.

The composer remembers a variety of musical experiences which, as a school student, he found difficult to relate to one another. Most of the music he heard he disliked or simply did not find stimulating. This included music performed in ABC subscription concerts and especially in ABC school concerts. It also applied to Beethoven’s late string quartets of which Christine Myer had 78 r.p.m. recordings, and most works presented on Neville Cardus’s “Enjoyment of Music” programme and on the “N.B.C. Symphony Hour”, a weekly recorded programme broadcast on ABC radio. He did, however, occasionally hear music which he considered revelatory. One of the first orchestral concerts that Sculthorpe attended included the C Minor Piano Concerto (K.491) of Mozart and the Adagietto from Mahler’s Symphony No. 5, both of which had a profound effect on him. Isolated pieces which had a similar impact were sometimes played by Cardus: works of Bloch and Delius, and, in particular,
Schoenberg's Transfigured Night and Berg's Violin Concerto. Sculthorpe concedes that, except for these rare experiences, he was at that time more interested in literature and philosophy than in music. The fundamental problem in his appreciation of music was that he was unable to conceptualize the historical and stylistic relationships between the works he heard. In contrast with his experience with literature, there was no one with whom he could discuss these matters. Thus, in one sense, Sculthorpe's listening experience seems to have been divorced from his compositional activity. There is, for example, no hint of Berg or Schoenberg in his music of this period, although Ernest Bloch's Schelomo (1916), of which Alec Headlam had a recording, became a crucial influence on Sculthorpe's music at a later time, as did the works of Mahler.

Against this background, Sculthorpe's decision to make music a career may have seemed unlikely. He was under pressure from his schoolteachers to pursue writing as a career, and his father, oddly enough, thought he should become an artist, by which, however, he meant commercial artist. On the other hand, the young school-leaver reasoned that his literary activities had been merely a response to poets like Verlaine, T.S. Eliot and Lorne, that his attempts at painting had been imitations of the works of the impressionists and of Picasso, but that music was something that had involved him constantly, more often than not without external stimulation. It thus seemed to him to be a logical decision that he should study music at university as a first step towards commitment to the vocation of composition.

Melbourne possessed an extremely vigorous musical life in the postwar period, and much of the activity was either directly or indirectly connected with the University of Melbourne Conservatorium of Music. 1 Bernard Heinze, who was Ormond Professor of Music, was also the most distinguished Australian conductor. His influence and popularity as a conductor were no doubt partly responsible for an impressive nine thousand concert subscribers in Melbourne in 1946, a number which was more than double that of Sydney. 2 Heinze's wife, Valerie, whose brother-in-law was Lord Mayor of Melbourne, became Lady Mayoress for a while, owing to the death of her sister. Her position enhanced Heinze's popularity, and attracted more public support for the concert hall and the Conservatorium.

The first-year music enrolment for 1946 included among students of school-leaving age a large proportion of repatriation students, who, being older and more experienced, were for the most part more committed and sure of their vocations than the average freshman. 3 Included in this group were Rex Hobcroft, who distinguished himself as a pianist, and James Pemberthy, who, in 1947, became musical director of the National Ballet; but
there were also many others whose enthusiasm created a unique atmosphere for younger students like Sculthorpe, George Dreyfus and Wilfred Lehmann. Apart from the activities of the Conservatorium itself and of the very vital Union Theatre, there were several organizations whose existence depended in part upon the support of student musicians. The British Music Society, which concentrated entirely on chamber music, employed, on a very small budget, the best student performers, and in so doing was able to maintain a fairly continuous series of concerts. The society was also able to give students some impression of European urbanity since it functioned like an aristocratic club, with, for instance, rooms which were finely furnished and panelled. The music presented, however, was not entirely from the old-world repertoire. Sculthorpe’s *String Quartet No. 3* was performed on 26 October 1949, and his *String Quartet No. 4* on 14 June 1950. As late as 1955 the society organized a farewell concert for Wilfred Lehmann, in which the first performance of Sculthorpe’s *Irkanda I* was given.

Another organization, the Guild of Australian Composers (Victorian Division) was the first to sponsor concerts of Sculthorpe’s music in Melbourne; Sculthorpe was its librarian for about two years. The Guild, unlike the present group of the same name, consisted mostly of composers of salon music, and was under the presidency of Louis Lavater, a successful Melbourne composer of the time. In addition, Bernard O’Dowd’s Australian Literary Society created opportunities for the performance of contemporary music, and also, perhaps more significantly for Sculthorpe, it provided the chance to converse with distinguished literary people. Perhaps the most vital organization of all was, however, the New Theatre, a company with extreme left-wing views. Professor Heinze, who recommended it to Sculthorpe, suggested that he need not be concerned with its politics, that the company would be happy to help a composer in return for help with its own productions. Nonetheless, Sculthorpe did write music for political songs used in the May Day rallies at Studley Park, but, although he was excited by the idea of thousands of people singing his music, he refrained from talking about it for fear of condemnation.

Although the performance of contemporary European music was rare in Melbourne, Heinze had promoted French orchestral music to a degree that Sydney had not experienced, and there was considerable interest in modern English music including Walton, Britten and minor composers like Constant Lambert. The New Music Society, of which Sculthorpe was a member, actually corresponded with John Cage, inviting him to visit Melbourne; but neither Cage nor the society could raise money for the fare.
Perhaps the most interesting group concerned with the performance of contemporary music was one organized by Felix Werder. Consisting mostly of Jewish performers, the group met in private and played music by Melbourne composers as well as works by Bartók and Schoenberg. Sculthorpe, who was introduced to this circle by George Dreyfus, has commented on its importance:

I do think that Felix's greatest contribution to the Australian scene was, and is, in creating a kind of Bohemian focal point in his apartment(s) through which all younger composers with Melbourne connections have passed. And this is no mean achievement. Of all musicians in Melbourne at this time Werder was unquestionably the most advanced music, but, for Sculthorpe, contact with him had its limitations in that the older man seemed to have set himself up as an aloof master who was impervious to anything outside his own world-view. He was, for example, unwilling to discuss the music of Edgard Varèse, a composer who had greatly impressed his young associate.

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, with his unconventional ensembles like that of Ionisation (1931), 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. One composer who might have helped solidify this position was Percy Grainger, but Sculthorpe at this time was unaware of any of his music apart from "Country Gardens" and the like, and quite oblivious of his extraordinary ideas except for an inscription on a wall in the Grainger museum exhorting young composers to look to the islands north of Australia for inspiration. Ironically, Sculthorpe treasured this as a purely Romantic notion, and not as a practical possibility, for it seemed to coincide with a spirit of exotic adventure such as that of Joseph Conrad's fiction.

If Sculthorpe had not felt the real significance of Grainger's message, he at least was becoming aware of some of the qualities of Australians which were to influence his philosophy. He found, for example, that his intellectual interests were not shared by other musicians, except for A.E.H. Nickson, who was his counterpart lecturer. His peers, though mostly committed to music, were quite uninterested in literature and philosophy. Sculthorpe began to realize that the intellectual life which had enveloped him from childhood was not particularly important to intelligent Aus-
tralians. The paradox of this situation precipitated his own estrangement from European styles of thinking as appropriate models for an Australian aesthetic.

Sculthorpe entered the competitive profession of composition in quite an impressive way. As a freshman he was awarded, through the University of Melbourne, the first J.A. Steele Composition Prize (1946), and this achievement most likely was responsible for his receiving an exhibition giving free tuition for his degree. In more public terms, his first prize in the 1948 Victorian School Music Association's Song Writing Competition helped establish him as a composer since the award had previously been won by well-known older composers such as Margaret Sutherland (b. 1899), Robert Hughes (b. 1912) and Clive Douglas (b. 1903). Late in 1950, Bernard Heinze also acknowledged his support for the twenty-one-year-old composer by organizing a concert in which only works by Sculthorpe and Le Gallienne (b. 1915) were performed.

Sculthorpe's best compositions of this period appear to be very terse songs rather than longer pieces like the string quartets. "Elegy for a Clown", one such song, which is short enough to quote in full, is an example of the composer's considerable skill with the lyric as well as with melody (Ex.1). The sadness of the situation is delicately poised against the metaphysical wit of the poetic treatment; the phrase "laughter sleeping" is, for instance, a clever conceit, while the underlying idea that even in death the clown has created, through a concentration of imagery associated with both his profession and with death, a theatrical display, is well portrayed. Apart from the charm of the melody and the austerity of the accompaniment, the song foreshadows the composer's gift for miniature forms, not fully crystallized until Night Pieces (1970–71), composed more than twenty years later.

Ex. 1

`---`
Ex. 1 System 2

- way; Pun-chi-nel-lo, Jo-ly fel-low, Died to-day. There he

Ex. 1 System 3

poco accel. — — — — — roll. — — — a tempo

pos-ses, Scar-let, ro-ses Toss'd a-round; All that

Ex. 1 System 4

ma-tter'd, Life has scat-ter'd On the ground.
Sculthorpe’s experimental music of his student years as it relates to his early attempts to formulate an individual musical style is briefly described in Chapter 2. It should be emphasized, however, that he received little sympathy for composition outside the realm of well-established styles.

From the energetic musical life of Melbourne Sculthorpe returned in 1951 to the provincial society of Launceston, a circumstance which he must have found disheartening for his compositional career. In fact, the only real opportunity for composition in a public sense was the writing of incidental music for locally-produced plays. Sculthorpe pursued this activity simultaneously with his experiments with serialism and other styles or manners of composition. He earned his living during this period initially as a music teacher at Hagley School and then as a lecturer for the Adult Education Board. In 1952 he went into business with his brother, Roger. Managing a sporting goods shop removed him even more from a public musical life. Perhaps by way of compensation for this he initiated some research into the music of the extinct Tasmanian Aboriginals, but unfortunately only a few wax-cylinder recordings of their music were in existence. Consequently the project became more of a diversion than constructive research. The composer collected anthropological data from various sources, and also artifacts, mostly weapons and implements. His new-found ethnological interest also extended to the Australian Aboriginals and resulted in, for instance, the acquisition of photographs of various sacred grounds.

Although these investigations did not result in any published reports, they were certainly responsible for making Sculthorpe aware of the intimate relationship between the Australian landscape and its ancient inhabitants, and for convincing him that the modern Australian artist should seek a similar affinity. This realization was strengthened by the fact that he could not justify his experiments with serialism. Initially his reason for experimenting with twelve-tone music was that he wished to be working as much as possible with what he imagined were the most modern musical idioms, but, owing to his ignorance of the socio-historical raison d’être of serialism, it soon became apparent to him that there was little to be gained from continuing. His reaction was to destroy many of his manuscripts and to spend time considering the country and how it might inspire a new kind of music. Compared with the kinds of styles he had hitherto worked with, this is precisely what happened with the composition of his Sonatina for piano (1954). The musical influences and the compositional decisions which helped form the Sonatina are dealt with in detail in Chapter 2.

Sculthorpe wrote the Sonatina for an ABC composition
competition, but it was not given recognition. He then submitted it to the Australian section of the International Society for Contemporary Music (ISCM), which sent it, along with works by Margaret Sutherland, Robert Hughes, Harold Badger and Dorian le Gallienne, as Australia’s submission for the Baden-Baden Festival of 1955. The work was chosen by the international jury and was subsequently performed at the Festival by Maria Bergmann, with considerable success, by her own account. It was the first piece to represent Australia at an ISCM festival, although an Australian-born composer, Peggy Glanville-Hicks, had previously represented the United States. As a measure of the backwardness of music in Australia, the piece was, despite this distinction, rejected by an ABC programme committee in 1956.

Immediately after composing the Sonatina, Sculthorpe wrote a string trio, The Loneliness of Bunjil, which employed a very different musical idiom, one involving quarter-tones; but he returned to the principles established in the Sonatina for two works for solo violin, Sonata (1954) and Irkanda I (1955), both written for Wilfred Lehmann. All of these works are inspired by ideas taken from Aboriginal myth or by the Australian landscape itself. Curiously, the composer’s first substantial contact with the Australian continental landscape was on a journey by road from Canberra to Melbourne in 1956; but by that time he had almost totally abandoned the composition of what he regarded as serious music in favour of music of a more popular nature. After working in theatre in Launceston, Hobart, Canberra and Melbourne, Sculthorpe finally joined the Phillip Street Theatre in Sydney in 1957. For a period of more than a year he was engaged in such activities as composing revue songs, coaching and rehearsing singers, and writing other music ranging from a musique concrète film score to an arrangement of revue material for Louis Armstrong’s touring jazz band. His motivation for involvement in these kinds of music was undoubtedly influenced by the problem of making a living as a musician, but, though it is certain that he enjoyed the experience of the theatre, the dissatisfaction of not being free to compose music he believed in soon caused him to seek an alternative means of support.

In 1958 Sculthorpe applied for and was awarded the first Lizette Bentwich Scholarship, which was open to graduates of the University of Melbourne. He decided that, rather than a programme of study at various musical centres of Europe, which he would have preferred, he would undertake post-graduate research at Oxford. His reasons for this choice were partly that Oxford possessed a reputation of great respectability of which his father, Joshua, might approve, despite his characteristic misgivings about the practicality of musical studies. Because of the
conservatism of the Faculty of Music at Oxford, Sculthorpe was reluctantly given a special concession to undertake research in twentieth-century music. His proposed study of rhythm in twentieth-century music was, however, rejected on the grounds that it was not a substantial enough subject for a doctoral thesis. Instead, his research was to be concerned with musical form. At first he was supervised by Edmund Rubbra, but was later persuaded to study with Egon Wellesz, a change which was unpropitious because it was insisted upon that the topic be considered with particular reference to the latter's music.

Sculthorpe was more interested in his discovery of the music and theoretical writings of Olivier Messiaen, the early published works of Stockhausen, the English translations of the first issues of *Die Reihe* and innumerable other works and writings which were little known, possibly unknown, in Australia. The immensity of the composer's research project meant that he had licence to explore the gamut of contemporary music and related musicological papers for a considerable time before actually proceeding with any writing of his own. This situation allowed him to begin composing serious music again, after three years of virtual silence. Significantly, he had been freed from the time-consuming burden of earning a living and he was also attracting considerable interest for his music.

When first in England, Sculthorpe stayed with Wilfred and Frances Lehmann in Birmingham and commuted to Oxford several days each week. In this period, late in 1958, he composed two works, the first of which was *Prophecy*, for unison voices and piano, based on a text from Isaiah 34. Not all the manuscript of this rather jaunty setting survives, but one section was later employed in the third movement of *String Quartet No. 6*. The second piece, *Sun*, for voice and piano, which was composed for Wilfrid and Peggy Mellers, was in terms of its subject matter immensely more important. The meeting of Sculthorpe and Wilfrid Mellers, who also lived in Birmingham, was suggested by Egon Wellesz, who at one time had been a teacher of Mellers. It was the beginning of a long friendship which, from the start, proved extremely helpful to the Australian. Mellers forced Sculthorpe to define his position as an artist in relation to his own country. He discovered, for example, as Sculthorpe was describing the Australian experience, the importance to him of the sun, and was able to parallel this with D.H. Lawrence's sun obsession. This led Sculthorpe to set three short poems by Lawrence which were concerned with the sun. More significantly, Mellers helped Sculthorpe gain confidence in his own individual vision so that he was able to continue the pattern of composition which had been disrupted several years before, after *Irkanda I*, rather than to attempt to imitate the fashionable European styles of the time.
Another important friendship was that of Robert Henderson, who was the only other candidate for the Doctor of Philosophy in Music degree in 1959. Both students felt slightly out of place since they were much older than the undergraduates, but neither could they easily relate socially to the dons. Because Henderson was actually living in Oxford, the music undergraduates consumed so much of his time from a social point of view that he welcomed Sculthorpe's suggestion that they share a house in the country. They found a place in Thame, approximately twenty kilometres east of Oxford, and this initiated a gradually increasing degree of alienation from university life for both of them. Thame became a meeting-place for composers and musicians: amongst others Peter Maxwell Davies, Gordon Crosse and Katerina Wolpe often stayed, and on one occasion so did John Cage and David Tudor. Henderson rejuvenated Sculthorpe's interest in the Manchester composers, who had been taught by Richard Hall, and this led the Australian to spend some time at Dartington School, South Devon, where he took some lessons from Hall and became acquainted with William Glock, founder of the school, and editor of *The Score and I.M.A. Magazine*.

Robert Henderson also carried on a role begun by Wilfrid Mellers in persuading Sculthorpe to articulate his aesthetic in more detail, particularly by comparing European cultural patterns with Australian ones. It is, for example, from this period that the composer's theories about Australia being a "visual" country derive. He believes that Australians function more in terms of what they see than what they hear. He notes that in England a person's class can be fairly accurately determined by his speech; in Australia usually a person's speech has no relation to his rank in society. This pattern is further strengthened by the tendency of Australians, observed by the composer, to remark that they "see" a concert and an equally noticeable one of English people that they "listen" to television. The significance of these observations is that Sculthorpe is justifying his own practice of allying his music with some visual aspect of nature, a pattern which is contrary to the European practice of giving music titles of an abstract or humanistic origin.

The visual differences between Australia and Europe are, at the most fundamental level, quite obvious. Australia, as a vast flat land, has inspired many people to speak of an horizontal magnificence which is as impressive as the vertical grandeur of the European Alps. The horizontality is, however, only one aspect: there is also a sameness and a lack of definition of detail, in the sense that there is little contrast. This phenomenon has been well-defined by John Douglas Pringle, a Scotsman who has had a very distinguished journalistic career in Australia:
... it is difficult for Englishmen to appreciate the bush. ... I think that at first the bush will not fit into their preconceived notions of what a landscape should be.

There is no broad middle-distance to give the scene solidarity—no fields, no little hill with a wood or a church spire. The middle distance often looks monotonous and featureless. The beauty of the bush lies more in the sense of space and distance, combined with the strange and vivid detail—the shapes of tree and shrub, strangely lit by sun and etched by shade, bizarre, weird but endlessly fascinating.14

Quite apart from its varied geological structures, the detail of the European landscape is, by contrast, the product of many centuries of human shaping of the environment. D.H. Lawrence was, for example, disturbed by the fact that the bush extended to the shores of Sydney Harbour;15 fifty-five years later, when the city has more than three million inhabitants, this is still so, in places. The Australian landscape is not compartmentalized like the European. To take an extreme example, Holland, which is, more than Australia, totally flat, possesses complex and dense grids of fences and canals.

Sculthorpe considers that the diversity of detail in the European landscape and culture is mirrored by the complexity of European art, or more appropriately by its inordinate activity, for it is possible to achieve a great complexity without much diversity or activity. A Hemingway who has consciously pared the English language to its fundamentals in order to express an honest view of the world is no less subtle than a Joyce who has encompassed the gamut of Indo-European languages to express his particular view. One of the reasons that Sculthorpe has in more recent years allied himself with Asian music is that he sees below its surface a complexity which belies the superficial simplicity or seeming monotony. For example, within the scope of five tones, the modal concept of patet in Javanese music possesses subtleties which are inaccessible to Europeans, including ethnomusicologists, according to Javanese commentators.16 Similarly, the highly developed concepts of timbral variation and heterophony in traditional Japanese music are likely to be unappreciated by the Western listener in much the same way that Pringle suggests that the Australian landscape is featureless to English people.

Whether or not these theories and explanations represent a coherent philosophy is immaterial, just as Sculthorpe's success or failure in realizing them in his music does not affect the quality of his work. The important consideration is that this way of thinking has helped the composer to find an individual voice and also has made him reasonably immune to criticism that there can be no such thing as an Australian music. Sculthorpe's friend, Robert Henderson, recognized the link between the composer's originality and his independence from Europe:
To a committed European, to one who is both unable and unwilling to free himself from all the cumulative associations of a tired and perhaps decaying civilisation, Sculthorpe’s imaginative independence may seem slightly alarming and just a little disappointing, for we like to console ourselves that it is still Europe which holds the key to creative truth.  

In 1959 Sculthorpe composed two works, which were later withdrawn after being incorporated into new pieces. *String Quartet No. 5*, written for the Wilfred Lehmann Quartet and awarded first prize in the Royal Australian Concert Trust Fund Composers’ Competition (1959), was eventually used in *Irkanda IV* and *String Quartet No. 6. Sonata for Cello* became, in July of the following year, *Sonata for Viola and Percussion*, first performed at the Attingham Park Summer School in Shropshire where Sculthorpe and Michael Tippett were composers in residence. At the same summer school Wilfrid and Peggy Mellers gave the first performance of the *Sun* song cycle (1958) and Sculthorpe also lectured on his theories concerning an Australian music. He stressed in his talk the fact that, unlike Europe, Australia has no heritage of art and that the Australian artist is therefore forced “to create his own culture, to find his own roots”.  

This was the beginning of Sculthorpe’s career as a self-styled polemicist, a role which has become for him inseparable from that of composer.

Earlier in 1960 Sculthorpe had moved to Oxford because Robert Henderson was discontinuing his studies in favour of a journalistic career in London, and the house at Thame was too expensive to maintain alone. In this period an important friendship was that of Jessie Munro, a distinguished Scottish pianist who was a benefactor of the Department of Music at Oxford. Apart from providing him with social entrée that enabled him to meet composers such as Kodály and Stravinsky, she also put a room and piano at his disposal for the purpose of composition.

Quite suddenly, in December of that year, Sculthorpe was called home because his father was dying of cancer. He did intend to continue with his thesis in Tasmania, but after Joshua Sculthorpe’s death his reasons for undertaking the degree in the first place were in some ways no longer relevant. He decided to stay in Tasmania in order to be with his mother for a time, and it is in this period that he wrote *Irkanda IV* for solo violin, strings and percussion in memory of his father. Although it is claimed above that this work employs musical material from *String Quartet No. 5*, the extent of the borrowing is very small indeed, appearing only as the first six measures and as the canon (m.29–38). The significance of this is that the composer was consciously writing in a slightly more conventional style than his previous works, for he
wanted to produce something that his father might have liked. Consequently, the piece has an harmonic richness and a melodic expansiveness that works since the Sonatina lacked, but, in spite of this, those qualities of his music which have been allied to the themes of loneliness and desolation seem, oddly enough, greatly intensified. The combination of two factors, accessibility and emotional range, was responsible for the considerable success of Irkanda IV. Sculthorpe acknowledges that the première represented the first occasion in Australia that his music had been acclaimed by critics and wholeheartedly accepted by an audience.¹⁹

This kind of success, however, was not likely to make the task of earning a living any easier, so Sculthorpe returned to writing light music, most notably a score for the internationally distributed children’s feature film, They Found a Cave.²⁰ He seems to have been pleased that he had become financially self-supporting,²¹ but he began, once more, to feel the musical isolation of Tasmania. At the end of 1962 he initiated a correspondence with Curt Prerauer, a Sydney music critic, in response to an article dealing with Australian composers in which he was not mentioned.²² Some time later the composer sent Prerauer scores and tapes of his works and the critic made reparation by printing an article entirely devoted to Sculthorpe. In it Prerauer made a distinction between Sculthorpe’s music and other Australian music inspired by Aboriginal themes:

The titles of his works evoke aboriginal lore, but his path differs from that of any other composer, even from Antill’s. In sections of Corroboree Antill succeeds in translating the Australian landscape into music; but being meant in the first place for ballet, this remains programme music. With Sculthorpe, the work is not programme, but absolute music, and this makes it something new to this country.²³

Prerauer was convinced that the key to a national identity in music lies in the physical nature of Australia itself:

...for the main principle now is the impact of the stone-age continent upon the European who began to arrive 175 years ago. If that European had digested the landscape, there might not have been any music. Every factor, every element worked against the development of music. Instead, fortunately, the European was digested by the landscape. That is why we have music, despite all the forces that are hell-bent on defeating it. Because the landscape proved stronger, that is how Antill wrote “Corroboree”.²⁴

Curt Prerauer’s letters to Sculthorpe during 1963 also contain extremely sensitive and astute commentaries on the latter’s music as well as giving a valuable impression of the vitality of musical life in Sydney.

While he was in Tasmania during this period Sculthorpe was composing a work for an ABC Italia Prize entry. In The Fifth
 Continent for speaker and orchestra Sculthorpe returned to D.H. Lawrence for his text. His interest in Lawrence’s Kangaroo had come about through John Douglas Pringle’s assessment of the novel’s profundity in what is itself a profound study, Australian Accent.25 Apart from this, the composer was expanding his alliances with Australian culture in other areas. He had, for example, established a friendship with Russell Drysdale, who had visited Tasmania in 1962. The themes of loneliness and desolation in the painter’s work were very akin to the themes Sculthorpe had already explored in his own medium, so naturally their dialogue resulted in a reinforcement and expansion of their individual visions. Sculthorpe was also greatly attracted by Sidney Nolan’s surrealist approach to the Australian experience, particularly in the Ned Kelly and Mrs Fraser series of paintings.

One of the most important events in Australian music in 1963 was a conference of composers held in Hobart. Donald Peart has commented on the significance of this to Sculthorpe:

A representative number of Sculthorpe’s works was made public for the first time at the Composers’ Seminar, held in Hobart during Easter 1963, an event which needs to be mentioned in any future history of Australian composition. It was a brilliant inspiration of Kenneth Brooks, Director of Adult Education, Tasmania, to invite as many composers as possible to come to display their wares, so to speak, to a forum of interested people by playing tape recordings and talking briefly about their work. It was this event which first revealed the extent of the total achievement of young Australian composers. Incidentally, from the discussion of this seminar there emerged a valuable definition of the aims of these young composers and there appeared a marked cleavage between their ideas and those of the older generation.26

Of great value to Sculthorpe’s career is the fact that later in that year he joined Professor Peart’s staff at the University of Sydney as Lecturer in Music.

Sculthorpe’s arrival in Sydney was just one event of many which made that city and that time especially important in the history of Australian music. Other arrivals included Dean Dixon as resident conductor of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra and John Hopkins as Federal Director of Music at the ABC. The latter championed the music of young composers and continues to do so. For a concert on 31 May 1963, Donald Peart, president of the ISCM, programmed Richard Meale’s Las Alboradas, a work whose idiom suddenly closed the stylistic gap between Australian composition and that of the European avant-garde. This, together with the fact that Meale’s Sonata for flute and piano (1960) was chosen for the 1963 ISCM Festival in Amsterdam, together with the timeliness of Sculthorpe’s arrival, inspired the music critics Curt and Maria Prerauer, writing for Nation, and Roger Covell, writing for the Sydney Morning Herald, to increase their support for Australian
music. The vitality of the activities in contemporary music was not, however, the only aspect of Sydney's newly-vigorous musical life: in 1963 the Musicological Society of Australia was formed, and one of its energetic founders, Dene Barnett, also mounted the first authentic performance in Australia of the *St Matthew Passion*.

One aspect of the musical life of this period which must be stressed is that almost all the contemporary music was performed on an amateur basis, often by distinguished players who were greatly interested in new music but whose professional livelihood depended on playing the traditional repertoire and on teaching. The enthusiasm for new music was, however, not limited to musicians or persons with specialized knowledge. The ISCM had a very active membership; various musical ideologies precipitated spirited partisanship, which often resulted in public arguments over the value of the works presented. Against this background it was probably inevitable that audiences became polarized in their commitment to either Sculthorpe's or Meale's music. Both composers did, however, develop a valuable friendship, for, although their philosophies were often at variance, each one's knowledge of music was sometimes indispensable to the other. Meale, for instance, had studied at the Institute of Ethnomusicology at the University of California at Los Angeles, and was able to explain various principles of Asian music to Sculthorpe.

In 1964 Sculthorpe received a commission in the form of the first Alfred Hill Memorial Award, administered by the Musica Viva Society. This resulted in the composition of *String Quartet No. 6* which was given its première on 1 April 1965 by the Austral String Quartet. Although this was Sculthorpe's third commission, it was of crucial importance to him;²⁷ it is sociologically significant that he was thirty-one years of age before receiving the professional recognition implied by a commission, when in recent times commissions and government grants have been given to very inexperienced composers in their early twenties, and sometimes younger. Despite the frustrations of not being accepted earlier, Sculthorpe considers that the situation allowed him to develop his craft gradually, and systematically to refine a small amount of characteristic material. In contrast, the generation of composers following Sculthorpe has the problem of continually creating new pieces with the result that finely-crafted and unmistakably original styles rarely appear. Even with *String Quartet No. 6* Sculthorpe did not wish to use untried musical material as he felt that his career depended largely on the acceptance of the work.

The confidence gained from the success of the string quartet enabled the composer to be more adventurous in the creation of *Sun Music I* (1965), written at the invitation of Sir Bernard Heinze
for performance by the Sydney Symphony Orchestra at the Commonwealth Arts Festival, London. This work and companion works written between 1965 and 1969 represent attempts by Sculthorpe to minimize references to the expressionistic gestures of European music by limiting the motivic, melodic and harmonic content of the music. The composer himself has justified this procedure:

Structurally and aesthetically these works are a reaffirmation of the principles underlying all my work since the early 1950s. The only difference is the actual sound material.28

The acclaim given Sun Music I by London music critics in some ways signified the coming-of-age of Australian music, for the musical idiom was immediately identified as a specifically Australian one,29 despite its obvious debt to Penderecki’s Threnody for the Victims of Hiroshima (1961). In addition to being a reference to Australia, Sculthorpe’s choice of the sun theme was effected by his attraction to two other countries, Japan and Mexico, in whose world-views the sun is of crucial ritual significance. Although the title of the song cycle, Sun, was originally partly inspired by poems of D.H. Lawrence, Sculthorpe’s interpretation of the symbolism of the sun is, in some ways, at odds with Lawrence’s:

... to a point, I have been very much influenced by Lawrence’s short story, Sun. I say “to a point” because of the descriptions, the visual images, the feelings; but I don’t altogether care for the psychological overtones. For me, the Freud symbol is dark and centrally European and anti-sun.30

For Sculthorpe the sun represents, in fairly universal terms, “the symbol of the giving of life, destroying of life, good and god” 31

In practical terms, however, the title Sun Music helped make the work more accessible to those concert-goers who would normally have been bewildered by modern idioms; for it became possible for them, through their own intuition and through the promptings of the composer and various publicists, to associate certain orchestral textures with particular conditions and effects of the sun. In actually composing the Sun Music series, Sculthorpe was not necessarily himself tied to this procedure of association.

By advocating a kind of impressionism, Sculthorpe alienated some of his staunch supporters, notably Curt Prerauer, who, it must be remembered, had previously claimed that the composer’s most exceptional achievement was that of creating “absolute” music within a purely Australian context.32 If, however, Sculthorpe lost some of his devotees at this time he was, nonetheless, particularly fortunate in 1965 with regard to professional advancement. He became contracted to Faber Music Limited, a new publishing company whose only other composer at that time
was Britten; he was awarded a Harkness Fellowship; he was made life fellow of the International Institute of Arts and Letters; he was promoted to the position of Senior Lecturer in Music at the University of Sydney; and he was given a substantial commission by the Australian Opera Company.³³

The Harkness Fellowship, which Sculthorpe originally welcomed as a means to free him from his teaching duties so that he might fulfil the opera commission, enabled him instead to continue with the Sun Music series. In 1966, while he was composer in residence at Yale University, and later, from September to February 1967, as a guest at Yaddo, an artist’s colony in Saratoga Springs, he composed, among other works, Sun Music for Voices and Percussion, String Quartet No. 7 and much of both Sun Music III and Sun Music IV. America seems to have puzzled him somewhat; especially baffling was the tendency of the Americans that he knew to venerate European culture and often to neglect their own. The Faculty of Music at Yale was, for example, exceedingly proud of its large harpsichord collection but, at that time, had done little towards properly housing a collection of Charles Ives manuscripts. The extent of this worship of the Old World was well demonstrated at Yaddo, which had imported ancient Grecian ruins to decorate its gardens. The impression left on Sculthorpe by these attitudes seems little modified by his considerable contact with American arts and letters: at Yaddo, for example, other guests at the time included John Cheever, Malcolm Cowley, Norman Mailer, Norman Podhoretz, Mario Puzo, Philip Roth and Eudora Welty.

After returning to Australia early in 1967, Sculthorpe completed Sun Music IV, a work commissioned by the Australasian Performing Rights Association for performance at Expo 67 in Montreal. In that year he also completed Sun Music III,³⁴ the first of his pieces to be overtly influenced by Asian music. Part of the inspiration for this was Colin McPhee’s Music in Bali, published in New Haven in 1966. Sun Music III, originally entitled Anniversary Music, was commissioned by the ABC to mark the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of ABC Youth Concerts in Australia; perhaps to reflect the mood of the event, it has, through its inclusion of South-East Asian elements, a less dissonant character than either Sun Music I or Sun Music IV. The same might be said for Tabuh Tabuhan for wind quintet and percussion (1968), commissioned as the first John Bishop Memorial Award for performance at the 1968 Adelaide Festival. This piece incorporates ideas from both Japanese and Balinese traditional music.

Between the composition of Tabuh Tabuhan early in 1968 and that of String Quartet No. 8 in the middle of 1969 Sculthorpe
composed only one concert piece, *Sun Music II* for orchestra, a rather extrovert work well-suited to the Sydney Promenade Concert series (February 1969) for which it was commissioned. There were, however, two other projects of some magnitude. The first, in the middle of 1968, was the creation, with Robert Helpmann as choreographer and Kenneth Rowell as designer, of a ballet based on the *Sun Music* series for the Australian Ballet Company. Although this only involved writing a little extra music, recording several vocal sections and organizing the orchestral material for a smaller number of stringed instruments, it considerably widened the composer’s audience, and enhanced his reputation and financial security. A second and more or less simultaneous project was a score for the feature film, *Age of Consent*, based on Norman Lindsay’s novel of the same title, in which the composer’s gentle Balinese-influenced textures complemented the story’s predominating theme of innocence.

In August 1968 Sculthorpe was given a Radcliffe Music Award consisting of an allowance with which to write a string quartet that was to compete for prizes against three other similarly commissioned string quartets. As indicated above, he did not write this for some time. In September he took part in the “International Round Table on the Relations between Japanese and Western Art” in Kyoto and Tokyo, and was deeply impressed, if not a little bewildered, by certain contradictions in Japanese behaviour. He was surprised, for instance, that, for all their graciousness and politeness, the Japanese produced films of extreme brutality to which family audiences reacted in an unaffected way. The Japanese propensity for violence is well reflected in a later orchestral work, *Music for Japan* (1970). The composer was also surprised by the tendency of the Japanese, whose traditional culture is based on the veneration of nature, to distort nature in order that it be more aesthetically pleasing. This observation has perhaps influenced Sculthorpe’s attitude to the relationship between art and nature; certainly it is useful to consider it in any appraisal of works like *Snow, Moon and Flowers* for piano (1970).

His interest in traditional Japanese music which had developed through his teaching of “World Music” courses at the University of Sydney now became extended to contemporary Japanese music, notably through the acquaintance of Toru Takemitsu. Sculthorpe felt that some of those Japanese composers who had developed a high level of craftsmanship in European idioms had been able effectively to apply to their own compositions certain principles of their traditional music, for example those concerned with rhythmic and melodic patterning and timbral and pitch gradation. He imagined that these principles might be particularly useful to Australian composers if treated with a sufficient degree of subtlety.
In fact, Richard Meale had already achieved a quality in his work which could be directly traceable to traditional Japanese music: the structure of *Images* (1966), for instance, is based on *nagauta*. *String Quartet No. 8*, which eventually shared first prize in the Radcliffe Music Award (1969), is the first work which seems stylistically to assimilate various Asian elements into the idiom developed in Sculthorpe's Ikanda period. It also marks the beginning of a quite prolific two years of composition. Encouraged, perhaps, by receiving the generous Encyclopaedia Britannica Award for the Arts (1969), Sculthorpe from 1970 to 1971 composed no fewer than five works involving orchestra, four pieces for piano, and several chamber pieces. These may be grouped into four stylistic categories. The first, a continuation of the *Sun Music* genre, includes *Music for Japan* (1970), *Rain* (1970), both for orchestra, and *How the Stars Were Made* for percussion ensemble (1971). The second group consists of three piano works, *Snow, Moon and Flowers* (1970), *Night* (1965–70), and *Stars* (1971). Although these pieces are brief, they perhaps represent the pinnacle of refinement and craftsmanship in Sculthorpe's output of compositions. The last two categories are somewhat experimental in character. One includes *Love 200* for rock band and orchestra (1970) and *Love 201* for rock band and chamber orchestra, both of which attempt to integrate rock music styles with contemporary and baroque orchestral styles. Essentially a kind of theatrical compositional diversion, *Love 200*, more so than *Love 201*, is nonetheless considerably more effective, if only for structural reasons, than any similar project by a rock music composer in recent times. From the music of *Love 200* Sculthorpe extracted a song with a folk-like melody and quasi-Mahlerian accompaniment entitled “The Stars Turn” (1970), and a short orchestral piece, *Overture for a Happy Occasion* (1970). The fourth group of compositions consists of two improvisatory works, *Dream* for any instruments and any number of performers (1970), and *Landscape* for piano with tape echo and prerecorded tape (1971). Both these pieces are concerned with solving certain structural problems posed by improvisatory music, while *Landscape*, in particular, helped the composer to formulate some of the principles of his opera, *Rites of Passage* (1972–73).

In 1969 Sculthorpe was appointed Reader in Music at the University of Sydney, and in 1970 he was awarded an MBE for services to Australian music. Towards the end of 1971 he was appointed Visiting Professor of Music at the University of Sussex. In the village of Glynde, near Glyndebourne, he began preliminary work on what was ultimately to become *Rites of Passage*. A detailed documentation of this period as well as a description of the composer's involvement in previous theatrical activities may
be found in Chapter 7 of this study. The composition of this opera involved Sculthorpe for almost two years, in which time he wrote nothing else except a vocal piece for the King’s Singers entitled Ketjak (1972). This may be considered as a trial piece for some of the techniques initially used in the score of the opera, but these techniques were eventually rejected owing to the problems involved in their memorization.

Rites of Passage was staged in the Sydney Opera House in September and October of 1974. Predictably, since its conception bears no relation to the grand opera tradition, it caused vastly divergent reactions from both critics and audience. The partisan critics endowed it with visionary status, believing that they were witnessing a theatrical phenomenon which would be crucial to the future of opera composition in Australia. Indeed, it is arguable that Rites of Passage offers a workable solution to many of the problems confronting the contemporary opera composer, but it will be some time before any influence the work might have on music theatre in Australia can be assessed accurately.

Peter Sculthorpe had returned to Australia in 1973. His discovery in that year of Willem Adriaansz’s study of kumiuta and danmono37 perhaps inspired the creation for Roger Woodward of Koto Music I for piano and prepared tape, a work performed by directly manipulating the strings of the instrument. The composer revised this work in 1976, determining the melodic material more precisely and simplifying the organization of the prerecorded tape. At the same time he composed a companion piece, Koto Music II. It is difficult to relate either piece to the mainstream of his compositional activity, or, for that matter, to traditional koto music since each piece is dominated by an ostinato of several tones which is heard throughout. Although they may be considered peripheral works, the Koto Musics seem, however, to have informed the piano scoring of Landscape II for piano quartet (1978).

In August 1973 Sculthorpe travelled to Bali with a film crew led by Stafford Garner, with the intention of making a documentary on the traditional music. He was surprised that many of the cultural conceptions he had previously gained from reading were exaggerated, and so the project developed as a kind of documentary of his own relationship to the music. Considering Sculthorpe’s involvement with Balinese music from 1967 to 1973 it is ironic that this confrontation with the country should signal the end of the conscious influence of the music and a renewed interest in Australian musical sources.

In the five years following the completion of Rites of Passage Sculthorpe’s most impressive composition was The Song of Tailitnama for soprano, six celli and percussion (1974). Although
the opera had involved texts from Australian Aboriginal songs, this piece was the first to combine an Aboriginal text with melodic material adapted from a transcription of Aboriginal music. It should be stated that Sculthorpe had very early in his career rejected the possibility that Aboriginal music could serve as a folk music source to generate a national or even personal manner of composition. *The Song of Tailitnama* suggests that his early conviction was unfounded, especially since he has hardly yet begun to investigate the wealth of available recorded and transcribed music in the search for material which could suitably be adapted to his own idiom.

A further adaptation of Aboriginal music is found in the score of *Essington* (1974), a feature film written by Thomas Keneally and directed by Julian Pringle for ABC Television. An account of an ill-fated military settlement in what is now the Northern Territory during the third and fourth decades of the nineteenth century, this film contrasts the harmony of the natives in their environment with the Britishers’ inability to cast aside their Old-World values and to find an appropriate mode of existence. An Arnhem Land melody used for realistic Aboriginal camp scenes in the film was transcribed and then adapted to various banal drawing room piano idioms, which were meant to symbolize the genteel lifestyle that the Europeans were attempting to maintain. Other more bizarre treatments of the basic melodic outline portray an increasing degree of anxiety and instability induced by the gradual realization of failure.

The period after *The Song of Tailitnama* was for Sculthorpe one of spasmodic creativity, a fact which may appear to be inconsistent with his receipt of an Australia Council grant which freed him from his teaching duties at the University of Sydney from 1975 to 1977. In 1975 he wrote only *String Quartet No. 9, Sun Song* (a two-page piece for four recorders), and an arrangement for orchestra and unison voices of an earlier piece called *Sea Chant*. Although the quartet has received high praise from critics, it may be argued that it relies too heavily upon important previous works like *String Quartet No. 8* and *The Song of Tailitnama*. Visits to New Zealand at the end of 1975 and in August 1976 may have served only to strengthen Sculthorpe’s compositional depression. He felt envious of the richness and dynamism of the Maori culture that was available as an inspirational source for New Zealand artists. *Koto Music II* and *Alone*, for solo violin, both minor compositions, were Sculthorpe’s only original pieces in 1976, but they were overshadowed by *Lament for Strings*. Although an arrangement of choral music from *Rites of Passage*, this work achieves a sustained expression of grief, reminiscent of the Mahlerian *Irkanda IV*. At about that time the composer also arranged for string orchestra “The Stars Turn”, a song from *Love 200*. 
Sculthorpe was awarded an OBE in 1977, the year he composed *Port Essington* for string trio and string orchestra, a clever arrangement and juxtaposition of a number of the individual musical segments of the film *Essington*. Although Roger Covell said of the first performance that he did not think it would stand up to repeated hearings, the piece is typical of the composer's good judgement of what is appropriate for particular players and audiences: the members of the Australian Chamber Orchestra for whom it was commissioned appreciate both the technical challenge it provides and its relatively undemanding musical idiom, which has been found to be accessible to audiences unfamiliar with contemporary music.

*Landscape II*, composed for the New England Ensemble at the beginning of 1978, develops ideas from *The Song of Tailitama* and *Koto Music I*, but it also involves substantially new material, notably the use of a melody taken from *saibara*, an early vocal form of *gagaku*. It is, however, not so much the inclusion of this melody that should be regarded as innovatory as the textural manner of its presentation: one player performs the melody in strict time while the others play fuori di passo, sometimes a little ahead of and sometimes a little behind the beat. The structure of this work has undergone a number of changes, and at the time of the writing of this book the work did not exist in scored form, though it was still being performed from the parts. It is likely when the composer produces a score that further changes of a minor nature will be considered necessary.

Immediately following *Landscape II* Sculthorpe composed *Eliza Fraser Sings* for soprano, flute and piano, which uses a text by Barbara Blackman. The historical episode upon which the text is based was one which he had considered for many years and had been the subject of a projected opera, which he had abandoned in 1967. Eliza Fraser was the only survivor of a shipwreck off the coast of Queensland in 1836. Her experiences at the hands of Aboriginals before she was unexpectedly rescued had a deranging effect upon her and led her, when she had returned to civilization, to exhibit herself as a freak. Blackman centres her text at the scene of Eliza Fraser's showground booth. The protagonist's bizarre monologue oscillates between the reality of soliciting customers and fantasies relating to her experiences. *Eliza Fraser Sings* was commissioned by the Lyric Arts Trio, a Canadian ensemble specializing in contemporary music that emphasizes theatrical presentation. The work, however, seems theatrically understated because the required instrumentation is too light to support the ebullience of the text, and Sculthorpe's handling of the piano and flute idioms, though perhaps characteristic, is unnecessarily restrained. None the less, it represents a significant extension of
Biographical Introduction

...some of the qualities established in earlier pieces: in *Port Essington* the pitting of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century English idioms against music which might be considered, for its brashness and imitation of natural phenomena, to be more appropriate to an Australian environment foreshadowed the employment in *Eliza Fraser Sings* of music actually composed in colonial times. Here again Sculthorpe fosters the dichotomy between material which is a product of a spent civilization and that which portends an antipodean individuality. This kind of conflict seems to exist in some form in all his work, and it may usefully be defined as a dualism of the personal and the impersonal. In *Eliza Fraser Sings*, for example, he takes advantage of Fraser's two states of mind: one where she speaks in the third person and another where the first person is used.

The distinction between first and third person is applied more rigidly in *Requiem* for cello alone (1979), a work which displays equally the power of Sculthorpe's artistic vision and his mastery of virtuosic instrumental idiom. In assessing the liturgy of *Missa pro Defunctis* the composer chose to quote plainchant melodies where the text is descriptive and to use his own impassioned style when the scriptural authors employ a personal mode of address to God. In this way he was able to contrast the early Christian view of death as eternal repose with post-Renaissance anxiety at the prospect of annihilation.

*Requiem* may be seen as a deliberate contrast to its predecessor, *Mangrove* for orchestra (1979). Covell has described the former as a “powerful elegy for the passing of people and things” and the latter as an “affirmation of the teeming variousness of life”; but even within the structure of *Mangrove* Sculthorpe's dualistic tendencies are manifest as a contrast of nature with humankind: “the busy life and busy movement of the foreground” against the brooding background of human emotion. Both *Requiem* and *Mangrove* display a renewed confidence by Sculthorpe in his own compositional powers. In the orchestral work, particularly, he was able to develop his conception of his own style as well as overcome the temptation to cling to certain mannerisms that had crept into his work. At the 1979 Paris Rostrum, *Mangrove* achieved the unprecedented placing, for an Australian work, of fifth position—perhaps indicating a second coming-of-age for Australian music. A subdued local response to this approbation seems, however, to indicate the virtual disappearance of a long-standing public attitude that had compelled Australian composers to work in what they imagined were international styles. Donald Horne has postulated that “it is only by being themselves that Australians can be universal”. Sculthorpe's achievements, especially those of 1979, his fiftieth year, appear to have vindicated his personal and nationalistic approach to his art.
The Making of a Personal Style

The maturation of Australian composition, unlike that of the other arts, has been a very slow one, most probably for a simple geographical reason. The writer and the painter were able to respond much earlier to an environment and a lifestyle which were distinctly different from that with which European artists were concerned, but Australia offered little to the composer except the music of the Aboriginal and a diversity of environmental sounds. For a number of reasons, which will be mentioned below, Aboriginal music appeared, to the ear trained in European traditions, to be either impoverished or merely unsuitable as a source of musical inspiration; and few composers would have considered the sounds of the environment as legitimate source materials. As late as 1962, the critic Curt Prerauer deplored the lack of originality in the music of modern Australian composers:

Most Australian composers still compose "from memory". Busoni invented this phrase to describe the process when a composer writes a piece of music which he may honestly believe to be original but it is merely an echo of some other composer's idioms. Unable to produce an idiom of his own he subconsciously reproduces someone else's ideas which have lingered in his mind.¹

Later, in *Australia's Music: Themes of a New Society*, Roger Covell described some of the social mechanisms which helped perpetuate this situation:

This lack of free circulation for regenerative ideas went hand in hand with the feeling of cultural inferiority inescapable in a neo-colonial or provincial society. It became one of the first tasks of able musicians to demonstrate that they could write fluent and grammatically acceptable music in established idioms. It was necessary that the idioms should be established in order that the demonstration should be convincing to their fellow-countrymen. A radical style would have been interpreted in Australia in the earlier years of this century merely as a confession of incompetence. Like artists challenged to prove that they can "draw"; it was their task to achieve a likeness in music; and, since the music familiar in Australia at that time was itself anything but up-to-date for the most part, the ideals towards which composers had to strive in self-defence were bound to be at best a kind of superior remiscence. If
Percy Grainger had been born in Paris instead of Melbourne, he would almost certainly have realised the radical tendencies of his nature much more satisfactorily, and at an earlier date. But Grainger sensed, correctly in my view, that, however strongly he felt himself to be an Australian writing Australian music, it would never be possible for him to pursue his unorthodox visions of what music might be like in a society where the customary reaction to the practice of musical composition was a kind of embarrassed scepticism. Other composers who stayed in Australia or returned there after brief periods of study abroad were not in the position of being able to flout a tradition: their first task was to persuade their doubting fellow-countrymen that they had the technical means to belong to one.

It is clear from these observations that the problem was centred on the conservatism of the musical establishments rather than the unavoidable isolation of Australia from Europe and America. In the light of Covell’s assessment of Grainger’s strategy it is interesting that the two composers who finally defied the conservative stronghold also became the leading Australian composers of the postwar period. Richard Meale’s radicalism was a very extreme one: a refusal to sit for examinations as a student, and an extraordinary independence by which he overcame the inadequate means of acquiring knowledge of new music of other parts of the world. Peter Sculthorpe’s was a quieter radicalism, nurtured by his isolation in Tasmania after the completion of his undergraduate studies, and by his producing a work, *Sonatina* for piano, that bypassed the quiescence of the Australian compositional hierarchy to become the first Australian work to be recognized by the ISCM.

Despite the impressiveness of Richard Meale’s early mastery of modern European musical craft within the context of his own very original style, it is arguable that Sculthorpe has created a more impressive compositional stance through his attempts to devise an Australian quality in his music and through a calculated resistance to “composing from memory”. The motivation for both these aims was Sculthorpe’s realization that the music with which he was confronted in his formal and private studies was inappropriate to Australia. This may not have been an uncommon feeling among Australian composers, but it is certain that the course of remedy was, and still remains, hard to find. The reason for this is that, unlike the nineteenth-century nationalistic movements of small European countries and countries like Russia, which borrowed from various art music traditions, Australia possessed no particularly distinctive folk culture on which to base an art music of her own. Andrew D. McCredie has suggested that “the establishment and settlement of the Australian colonies actually occurred too late to permit the upsurge of a vigorous national tradition capable of withstanding the impact of modern communications in the later nineteenth century”. As an alternative
source of influence, many composers, including Alfred Hill and John Antill, had attempted to incorporate ideas from Aboriginal rituals into their music, but this procedure functioned on a very superficial level. Sculthorpe quite early dismissed the possibility that tribal music could be of much use to the composer. The simple nature of the vocal styles, which rarely vary from a few kinds of tumbling strains, was evidence enough, but even more significant was the lack of instrumental variety. Although the didjeridu is unquestionably a remarkable instrument in that playing techniques are employed which are not used for European wind instruments, it does not have any melodic function, and the way it combines with the voice is of limited interest. The rhythmic patterns of didjeridu playing do, however, display considerable complexity, but their dynamic inflexions arising from the technique of circular breathing and production of secondary tones through vocalizing into the tube are difficult to reproduce on conventional instruments. Since it is these techniques which give the rhythm its subtleties, it was thought that the idea could not be effectively utilized by a modern composer.

If Sculthorpe has, in any general way, been influenced by Aboriginal music, it is firstly by the monotonous repetition of the fundamental measure, defined by the didjeridu rhythm, music stick rhythmic groupings, and the distinct vocal phrases, and secondly by the feeling of a constant tonal centre. For Sculthorpe these aspects of the music reflect the flatness and the sameness of the Australian landscape, the essence of which became very important to him in his formulation of abstract notions relating to musical style. The composer also finds an interesting parallel between the flatness of Aboriginal music and speech and the flat quality of the English language as spoken by Australians, believing each to be a product of the flatness of the country.

Sculthorpe's radical approach had not been entirely concerned with the rejection of European music. In 1948, at a time when twelve-tone music was practically unknown in Australia, he procured a copy of Ernst Krenek's *Studies in Counterpoint,* and he and George Dreyfus, as undergraduate students, began to write twelve-tone pieces. Serialism seemed at the time to be the answer to their problems with musical style. The reaction of their teachers, peers and those members of the listening public who happened to hear their pieces was, however, adverse, and, while they were happy with their reputations as *enfants terribles,* it was clear that there was little future by way of performances. Thus, while he was still a student Sculthorpe wrote music in traditional idioms concurrently with his experiments in serialism. Returning to Tasmania in 1950, he continued to take seriously the idea of twelve-tone music, but was hindered by the lack of study material.
Not only had he not seen any scores of the twelve-tone music of Schoenberg, Berg or Webern, but also Krenek’s book had given him a somewhat limited view of the technique. As Krenek’s purpose was a pedagogical one, he chose to set out only the “elementary principles” and to elaborate these by deducing stylistic rules from his own particular use of dodecaphony.7 There was no attempt to examine the styles or individual procedures of any of the major exponents of twelve-tone music, and this lack gives the reader an incomplete view and often a false one. For example, while Krenek advocates a free approach to rhythm, it is true that Schoenberg, Berg and Webern were all at one time or another obsessed with the notion of adapting the strict rhythms and textures of established forms to their new principle of tonal organization. Although Krenek’s method was probably better suited to the abstract idea of twelve-tone music, both approaches, without the supervision of a teacher, were too rudimentary to be of much help to a young composer. While the free approach had probably led Sculthorpe to a structural complexity that had little meaning for him in relation to any musical training he had received, he was also aware from the recordings of Schoenberg that he had heard that the music based on the rhythmic structures of dance forms “sounded like eighteenth century music gone wrong”.8

Working without any knowledge of Boulez or even Webern, Sculthorpe began to compose pieces in which the principle of pitch-serialism was carried out in conjunction with the serialization of other parameters of music:

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 an Australian most aggressively.9

Until this time the composer had never faced the prospect of coming to a stylistic impasse. His conventional music had developed naturally enough as he absorbed the different facets of possible idioms, and the serial music, once begun, followed a logical and easy path. He was faced, therefore, with an identity crisis as well as a compositional one.

Apart from creating for himself a working environment which consisted of artifacts and images that were intrinsically Australian, Sculthorpe was also forced to look elsewhere for musical inspiration, and to begin to formulate concepts about the music he wished to create. As this situation had arisen as a reaction to serialism, it was natural that the principles of his new music would,
if nothing else, negate the fundamental precepts of serial practice. Thus he reasoned that the music's essential qualities should be simplicity, a lack of any arbitrarily imposed order such as the order of the row, and an absence of any cerebral processes such as intervallic inversion and retrogression. Because of the Krenek's emphasis on counterpoint, Sculthorpe further decided to reinstate chordal textures and to reject techniques of contrapuntal imitation. His knowledge of modern harmonic styles was, however, severely limited. He had had no contact with Messiaen's harmonic language, for example. In fact, the only composer who had impressed him in this area was Aaron Copland.

Copland's *Piano Sonata* (1941) demonstrated for Sculthorpe a rethinking of the fundamentals of harmonic idioms. The harmony was not triadic, diatonic or chromatic in the conventional senses of these terms; there were no immediately discernible functional relationships between chords; and, through their unique construction, the chords sounded fresh and essentially different. Copland created many of his characteristic sonorities by experimenting with voicing. For example, a triad with an added major seventh could sound transformed by employing it in an inversion, and then placing two of the tones close together in the treble register, and the other two close together in the bass register, with at least an octave between the high and low pairs. The relationships between Copland's chords are also quite different from those of conventional harmony. Although the principle of common tones is used, one quality of the progressions which has influenced Sculthorpe derives from the false relation of tones in successive chords and the tendency for these chords to move in similar motion (Ex.2):

![Ex.2](image)

Sculthorpe was impressed, then, by Copland's harmonic principles, and the *Sonatina* for piano clearly shows the use of some of Copland's techniques; but 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 fulsome ness 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 land masses with immense largely-unpopulated areas. It was therefore easy to conclude that the stylistic characteristics 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.

**Sonatina**

Sculthorpe seems to have applied the principles of developing Copland’s qualities in his *Sonatina* (1954). The opening chord of the piece was to become especially important in later works. Although similar in construction to some of the chords of Copland’s *Piano Sonata* (Ex.2), it was not borrowed from Copland, or, in fact from any work known to Sculthorpe at the time (Ex.3):

![Ex.3](image)

It is not unlike a major seventh chord with an added minor tenth (actually an augmented ninth), but it has no fifth. The effect of the major third against the minor tenth can be related to the effect of those chords which Copland may have derived from the blues, but this chord has a harsher quality. Apart, then, from this chord and a few other chords and relationships, all of which will be discussed later, the harmony of the *Sonatina* is not particularly typical of what Sculthorpe subsequently established in his personal style. The pattern is set much more clearly by the characteristics of form and related rhythmic implications.

Sculthorpe’s first important work is called a “sonatina” not because of a desire on his part to write music in any specific tradition or form but because it was written for a competition which called for “a sonatina”. Thus it has qualities which only on the surface tie it to any historical or formal notion of a sonatina. The most obvious of these is the contrast of tempi in its three movements. The first movement has a slow introduction and conclusion, but is predominantly quick; the second movement is slow; the third is quick and rondo-like. This pattern was probably observed in order to appease the judges of the competition, but the
internal structures of the movements, including the last, have little relation to the traditional requirements of the form. It is remarkable, however, that out of the necessity to conform slightly came the creation of Sculthorpe's two characteristic kinds of music, each with its special conceptual basis.

The fundamental difference is tempo: the first kind of music is very slow, the second, quite fast. In the slow music Sculthorpe places an emphasis on sustained melody and harmony, and in the quick, on percussively articulated melody (and often, it may be argued, no melody at all) and little functional harmony. The slow music is sometimes associated in the composer's mind with a feeling of tension, the quick with a feeling of release; on another plane, the slow music is thought of as introspective and emotionally intense, whereas the quick has the character of ritualistic celebration.

Sculthorpe strengthened the musical meaning of these distinctions by relating them to extra-musical ideas he had while writing the piece. He did this in basing the piece on an Aboriginal legend\textsuperscript{11} similar to the Ulysses myth, in which Yoonecara, the head man of a tribe, journeys to a land far beyond the setting sun in order to visit his ancestor Byama. The myth describes his adventure, together with the dangers he faces and his ways of dealing with them. Perhaps thinking that the telling was somewhat mundane, Sculthorpe transposed the story to a different level. In his version, Yoonecara stands on a cliff, looking out over a vast plain, contemplating the extent of his journey. This corresponds to the slow introduction. The quick section which follows corresponds to his movement across the plain, and the return to the opening slow music represents his realization that Byama cannot be reached through physical means. Thus, in the introspective second movement Yoonecara this time makes the journey into his mind, into his race consciousness, and is joined spiritually with Byama. The ritualistic last movement represents the rejoicing and celebration of the tribe when Yoonecara returns. As this study progresses it will be shown that by thinking in these non-musical terms the composer has, to a large extent, determined the character of his musical style and created a direct association between musical style and the nature of the Australian experience.

\textit{The quick style}

Of the two kinds of music outlined above, it is the quick that is closest to Sculthorpe's development of both in subsequent works. The reason for this is the establishment of a pattern to govern rhythmic style. The composer maintains a consistent rhythmic "feel"\textsuperscript{12} in both his quick music and slow music, but it is particularly evident in the former. Within the \$4$ metre of the \textit{Sonatina} there is an
almost exclusive use of patterns constructed from quavers and quaver rests. When this pattern is broken by an occasional use of semiquavers it is done in such a way as not to interfere with the basic feel of the texture. Within the framework of a passage in two-part counterpoint between the two bands, one part invariably keeps a strong feeling of two beats to a measure while the other provides a slightly contrasting rhythm (Ex. 4):

Although a kind of perpetual motion is established, the music is highly sectionalized and tightly structured within its sections. In fact, it is in these sections of two to sixteen measures length that the key to Sculthorpe’s notion of style and form is to be found. The greater part of the music is made up of units whose structure shows a pattern of exact rhythmic repetition. In Example 5 the rhythm of the first three measures is the same as that of the last three:

Although there are several similar but slightly more complex patterns in the Sonatina, it is this simple unit, {x, x}, which has persisted as the prime structural determinant in the composer’s small-scale rhythmic style.

This basic unit of construction possesses an open-ended rhythmic character. The end of the first half of the unit invariably acts as an anacrusis to the second half, and, since the rhythm of the second half is identical to that of the first, the whole unit is bound to the following unit, assuring the continuity of the music. It is in this context that Sculthorpe’s unique use of measures of contrasting value is significant. Even before the Sonatina he had occasionally used patterns like \(\frac{4}{4} \mid \frac{4}{4} \mid \frac{4}{4} \) and less highly structured ones like \(\frac{4}{4} \mid \frac{4}{4} \), in which the rhythm of the first half of the pattern is repeated or approximated in the second. The function of the short measure is simple: it acts as an added up-beat.
in order either to enliven the metrical continuity or, if it includes no attacks, as a means to allow the music momentarily to pause. When a composer has the habit of using rhythmic repetition of musical phrases it seems logical when a short measure is used in the first phrase to use it again in the second. Sculthorpe made it a rule to do this, and so strengthened the open-ended feeling of his structural units. Once he established the use of patterns such as 4 2 4 2, 4 2 4 2, 4 2 4 2 and so on, he cultivated them so that they became cornerstones of his personal style.

Because these small formal units are made open-ended by the use of anacrusis measures or by the rhythmic arrangement within the last measure of a unit, any one unit is linked to the next; and the process is usually continuous until a different kind of unit is introduced. This often disturbs the motion of the music and either brings it to a close or articulates the beginning of a new unit. The connecting and closing passages are invariably as short as two measures and are different from the main structural units in that they do not usually involve rhythmic repetition. In fact, it is because their rhythmic design is irregular that they highlight the significance of the latter. Quite often, however, the connecting passages are also open-ended and thus do not appreciably interfere with the regular motion of the music.

Melody

Although Sculthorpe’s quick music would not normally be associated with melody, it is in the fast sections of the *Sonatina* that he establishes the characteristics of melodic structure and intervallic construction that are important aspects of his style. The melodic structure follows the special rhythmic structure of the units, but, unlike the rhythmic pattern, which is the same for both halves of the unit, the melodic pattern of the first half is varied slightly in the second in a manner which preserves the shape of the first half in some way. Half the melodic pattern of the first half is repeated to give the structure X₁ Y₁ X₁ Y₂, and it is usual that Y₁ and Y₂ have very similar shapes, as in the Examples 6, 7 and 8.
In Example 6, \( Y_2 \) is transposed a third below \( Y_1 \); in Example 7, part of \( Y_2 \) is transposed a fourth above \( Y_1 \); and in Example 8, \( Y_2 \) begins in much the same way as \( Y_1 \) but ends with a downward motion instead of an upward one. The variants of \( Y \) in Example 7 and Example 8 are nonetheless marked by a strengthening of the underlying tonality\(^{17} \) of the whole melody. In Example 7, \( Y_2 \) begins on the tonal centre of the melody and in Example 8, \( Y_2 \) ends on the tonal centre.

All the melodies based on the special unit have a very strong tonal centre, although it is true that their accompanying material is usually tonally contrary to this. The bitonality stems from a French influence although it may have been transmitted through Copland; it is certainly not a practice with which Sculthorpe persisted after this piece. Tonality in the *Sonatina* changes for almost every unit, but quite unsystematically; this is surprising, especially considering the careful ordering of the rhythmic style, as outlined above, and the conscious effort to evolve a limited intervallic language.\(^{18} \) The pattern of tonal centres is, in fact, quite uncharacteristic of Sculthorpe’s mature work, which, as will be shown, achieves a simple but strong set of relationships.

*The slow style*

Although Sculthorpe established some important aspects of his compositional style with the slow music of the *Sonatina*, these are not at all representative of the slow music of later works. The slow central movement, for example, employs quite uncharacteristic modal material. The movement is, nonetheless, broken up into two- and four-measure sections which show some resemblance to the units based on rhythmic repetition of the qucik style; but no consistent patterns emerge.

The slow music of the *Sonatina* contains few of the important elements of Sculthorpe’s mature slow style. For instance, the stylized format of chordal ostinato as accompaniment to decorative melody of comparative rhythmic complexity was not established until a later date. In spite of this, the opening slow section of the first movement has several characteristics of tonal organization that are crucial to Sculthorpe’s compositional processes, even if they are used there in a rather unsophisticated manner. The first of these is the opening chord, already described, which is fundamental to any discussion concerning the composer’s harmonic idiom. The second is Sculthorpe’s technique of in-
introducing a new bass note when repeating a section of music. Here
the E₂ which follows the opening chord is replaced by a C₃¹⁹ when
the section returns in measure 7. The third characteristic, and
perhaps the most striking, is the predominance of the melodic
intervals of a minor second and minor third in the highest voice of
the chordal opening. These are the fundamental melodic intervals
in all of Sculthorpe’s music, although several other intervals are
important. Even though the Sonatina contains in its melodies
many kinds of intervallic sequences that are not representative of
the mature style, several patterns are, nevertheless, established.
The first consists of the use of the minor second and the minor
third in conjunction with the major third, forming a gradually
ascending or descending melodic line (Ex.9):

Ex. 9  \( \text{\( \frac{1}{2} \text{ c. 80} \)} \)  \( \text{\( \frac{1}{2} \text{ m. 15-16} \)} \)

The second, a more common pattern, is the use of the minor
second in conjunction with the augmented fourth or perfect fifth
so that the outline of a consonant fifth is emphasized, as in
Examples 10–12:

Ex. 10  \( \text{\( \frac{1}{2} \text{ c. 152} \)} \)  \( \text{\( \frac{1}{2} \text{ m. 67-68} \)} \)  Ex. 10a  \( \text{\( \frac{1}{2} \text{ c. 80} \)} \)  \( \text{\( \frac{1}{2} \text{ m. 10} \)} \)

Ex. 11  \( \text{\( \frac{1}{2} \text{ c. 69} \)} \)  \( \text{\( \frac{1}{2} \text{ m. 3-4} \)} \)  Ex. 11a  \( \text{\( \frac{1}{2} \text{ c. 80} \)} \)  \( \text{\( \frac{1}{2} \text{ m. 33-34} \)} \)

Ex. 12  \( \text{\( \frac{1}{2} \text{ c. 182} \)} \)  \( \text{\( \frac{1}{2} \text{ m. 51 - 64} \)} \)

In Sculthorpe’s music, even as early as the Sonatina, there is by the
composer’s admission a conscious avoidance in melody of major
and minor sixths and the minor seventh. This compositional
limitation contributes to the distinctive character of the musical
style. Although prominent in harmony, the major seventh does
not appear melodically in the *Sonatina*, but in later works it is used in a very distinctive way in melody.

*Harmony*

The rudiments of Sculthorpe's harmonic style are found in the *Sonatina*, especially in the first and second movements. The opening chord, for example, is crucial to the development of the musical language, not only in the form in which it is first heard but also as an harmonic idea from which a whole family of chords may be derived. Notwithstanding that this chord may be heard as relating to a decorated triad, the key to its construction is its two superimposed major seventh intervals, since Sculthorpe later employs other chords involving a number of major sevenths. In general, the major seventh is the crux of the harmony of this work: in almost every place where three or four tones are sounded together there is either a major seventh or, alternately, a minor second or minor ninth, intervals related by inversion and by degree of dissonance. Despite the persistence of chords involving these intervals in Sculthorpe's *oeuvre*, little order in their progression had been established at the time of the *Sonatina*. Later, a simple but highly logical pattern was to emerge.

In many respects the *Sonatina* is a naïve, unsophisticated piece. Donald Peart once called it "a charming and unpretentious piece much in the manner of the lighter productions of Les Six", but, although this judgement may contain some truth, it points to what is unoriginal and derivative rather than what is fresh and even unique.\(^2\) Probably the work may have caused some amusement among the urbane audiences of the ISCM Festival at Baden Baden in 1955, the same year that Boulez's *Le marteau sans maître* received its first performance, but it cannot in fairness be evaluated in that context. Sculthorpe composed it in the isolation of Tasmania; it represented a rejection of both his uninformed serial experiments and his outdated Romantic and impressionistic styles. Many of its qualities and techniques were solely the product of his own imagination and intuition. As such it is an achievement worth recognizing.

*The Loneliness of Bunjil*

In a lecture given at the Attingham Park Summer School in 1960, Sculthorpe described the *Sonatina* as "probably the work in which I first found my own personal style".\(^2\) Although this would appear to be true, it is curious that when the composer completed the piece, in 1954, he immediately began work on a string trio, *The
Loneliness of Bunjil, which in many ways represented a contradiction to the compositional procedures he had newly developed. On the other hand, being in a situation where he was unsure of the effectiveness of his new approach, it is not surprising that he was willing to experiment in other ways, to use, for instance, the quarter-tone scale. Unlike the works of Alois Hába, The Loneliness of Bunjil seems to be an attempt to find a means to use the quarter-tone scale while avoiding certain pitfalls. The first of these relates to harmony. Since the scale of twelve equal semitones evolved as a means to increase the potential of the key system, there are some bases for harmonically significant vertical configurations in twelve-tone music or atonalism. Even if vertical relationships were not a prime concern for the contemporary composer, there exists a history and a theory of harmony with or against which to work. The field of quarter-tones has no such basis: vertical combinations are heard in relation to the semitonal system, and therefore chords constructed from the quarter-tonal system sound out of tune; more significantly, there is no theory that could be adapted as a basis for vertical relationships. There is not, for example, the delicate balance of dissonant and consonant intervals or a system of resolutions.

To solve this problem, Sculthorpe first of all seems to have made the texture thoroughly contrapuntal, and seems to have tried, in as conspicuous a way as possible, to reduce the counterpoint to two parts. There is a tendency for the music in each part, particularly those parts which are not carrying the main theme, to be constructed of phrases of approximately one or two measures length, separated by a number of rests. Sculthorpe has organized the texture so that often there are only two parts sounding at any given point. Example 13 clearly illustrates this:23

Ex. 13 (\(j = c. 60\))

This procedure serves to direct the listener’s attention as much as possible to an interval rather than to a chord, to melody rather than to harmony.
In addition to this technique, Sculthorpe avoided any similarity with the modern scale by creating melodies and motives almost entirely from intervals unique to the quarter-tonal system: the intervals, that is, of $1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 11, 13, 15, 17, 19, 21, 23, 25, 27...$ quarter tones. The effect this has is so distinctive that when intervals based on multiples of the semitone are employed, as they are in an increasingly liberal way as the work progresses, they are not easily identifiable. The vertical relationship between the parts also avoids intervals based on multiples of semitones, especially in the crucial relationship between tones of parts which are already sounding and the corresponding tones of imminent contrapuntal entries. In contrast to horizontal intervals, when vertical intervals are based on multiples of semitones they are quite exposed.

The other-worldly quality brought about by the tonal language is reinforced by Sculthorpe's particular approach to rhythm. Throughout *The Loneliness of Bunjil*, with the exception of twenty measures (m.53–72) occupied by a canon and a connecting passage, the metre is a very slow $\frac{3}{4}$. As in the *Sonatina*, an attempt is made to simplify the rhythm as much as possible. Thus the basic motion is in crotchets; there is little use of quavers, and, apart from a discreet use of duplets, no other rhythmic entity which could interfere with the succession of crotchet units. It is arguable that the one weak section of the work is the canon, where, in order to articulate the entries, a dotted rhythm is introduced. The trance-like quality of the music is destroyed and replaced by rhythmic gestures that are reminiscent of both Schoenberg and Hába. This is ironic because, without realizing it, the composer was following the programme of the work even more closely than intended. *The Loneliness of Bunjil* is inscribed: "In the beginning, the Great Spirit Bunjil created the earth and all things in it except man. He became lonely...". Sculthorpe intended that the canon correspond with the creation by Bunjil of man and woman after his own image. Bunjil is represented by the cello voice, man by the viola, and woman by the violin. The canon, therefore, in its extramusical as well as its musical meaning, is concerned with the act of creation, whereas the rest of the work is concerned only with the state of being.24

Despite the uniqueness of *The Loneliness of Bunjil*, there are some surprising similarities with serialism in its manipulative techniques. Firstly, there is little recurrence of tones in melody, although there is no attempt to serialize pitches. Rather, this is simply a means to avoid a sense of tonal centring. As with twelve-tone music, however, quite often a tone is repeated once or several times immediately after its initial use. Secondly, the techniques involved in organizing the contrapuntal texture and manipulating the thematic and motivic materials are those traditionally
associated with serialism; intervallic inversion, transposition, augmentation, diminution and inversion of voices are used exhaustively to create a tightly-meshed structure which is not sectionalized to the same extent as in the Sonatina.

As a piece of music The Loneliness of Bunjil is certainly more finely wrought than any of Sculthorpe’s works until Irkanda IV (1961). It could be said, moreover, that it is less European in spirit than works like Irkanda IV, which are noticeably influenced by Bloch and Mahler.

Sonata for Violin Alone and Irkanda I

Sculthorpe did not continue to write music like The Loneliness of Bunjil for a number of interrelated reasons. Firstly, it was not written for any particular group of players, and it is clear that if it, or indeed anything like it, were to be performed it would be necessary for the musicians to acquire new techniques. Only the most experienced and amenable players would be willing to co-operate. The main reason, however, was that the Sonatina, in the meantime, had been accepted by the jury of the ISCM Festival. Thus, a piece that Sculthorpe had written had received recognition at an international level; in addition, it had been chosen from among works by experienced and well-known Australian composers, notably Dorian le Gallienne and Margaret Sutherland.

It was not surprising, therefore, that Sculthorpe returned to the procedures of the Sonatina for his next two works, Sonata (1954) and Irkanda I (1955), both for violin alone. These pieces, which were composed especially for Wilfred Lehmann, exploit the gamut of string technique, including complicated double, triple and quadruple stopping, natural and artificial harmonics, the rapid alternation of arco and pizzicato, arco phrases with pizzicato accompaniment, and tapping on the body of the instrument. One could almost regard the pieces as mere exercises in instrumental complexity were it not for the fact that they show a consolidation of some of the distinctive characteristics of the Sonatina, together with developments in tonal and structural organization.

Once again, the music is divided into open-ended units constructed of rhythmic patterns and their repetitions, the repetitions involving slight melodic variation. Even some of the connecting passages assume this pattern. Instead of a series of rhythmically compatible units, as in the quick sections of the Sonatina, there is a tendency for units containing the principal musical material to be immediately followed by a variation of this material, and for such units to return during the course of the piece in other varied forms. This kind of variation usually involves only
the addition of accompanying tones but it can be, more rarely, quite radical. The main theme of *Irkanda I*, for example, occurs in several guises, illustrated in Examples 14–19.

Similarly, one of the main themes of the Prelude of the *Sonata* reappears in the Postlude in a varied form (Ex.20–21):

Ex. 14 \( \text{m. 7-10} \)

Ex. 15 \( \text{m. 53-56} \)

Ex. 16 \( \text{m. 65-66} \)

Ex. 17 \( \text{m. 119-120} \)

Ex. 18 \( \text{m. 129-131} \)

Ex. 19 \( \text{m. 237-240} \)

Ex. 20 **With great vivacity and emotion** (Prelude, m. 77-78)

Ex. 21 **Broadly and with great emotion** (Postlude, m. 83-84)
Tonality

In the act of composition it sometimes happens that, while searching for the solution to one particular problem, other phenomena of style accidentally appear. In looking for ways to add variational detail to his writing for solo violin Sculthorpe was placing limitations on some aspects of his tonal organization. He introduced, for example, the technique of bowing a legato melody while simultaneously plucking unstepped low strings. Thus many sections of music occur where the tonal centres are those of open strings, particularly G and D. Sculthorpe was aware that the pattern had arisen because of the properties of the instrument, and he strengthened the pattern by placing other sections where only the bow is used in open-string tonalities. The tonalities of open strings are of great significance in Sculthorpe’s work, particularly E, the lowest tone of the double bass, A, the lowest tone of the next string, and C, the lowest tone of the cello. It can be observed from the scores that in making a piece Sculthorpe tends to compose each section in one of these open-string tonalities, and then to join them together. Because of the strong harmonic relationships between the tonalities defined by open strings, the overall tonal structure of a hypothetical work is usually satisfactory. Once the work is initially assembled, however, the composer may transpose a section if it will enhance the scheme of tonal relationships.

Complete transposition never occurs within a single work. If a melody is transposed, as for example in *Irkanda IV*, the accompaniment remains constant; and quite often Sculthorpe changes the tonal centre of his accompaniment without changing the pitch of the melody. In later pieces other subtle relationships between tonal centre occur, based upon the intervallic structure of particular kinds of chords; but open-string tonality is indeed a basis of Sculthorpe’s tonally oriented music. It has been discussed here in some detail so that it can be referred to in the examination of later works without the necessity of expounding its origin or theory.

Melody and harmony

Although the technique of melody accompanied by a texture of open-string pizzicato is found in *Irkanda I*, in some cases the juxtaposition of open-string tones is as crude as the bitonal techniques explored in the *Sonatina*. In the *Sonata*, however, there is an example of the way in which Sculthorpe began to consider the tonal interrelationship of melody and accompaniment (Ex.22):
Above the tonal centre, G, certain tones, notably G, D, B♭ and B♮, act as consonant points about which is woven an elaborate web of appoggiatura. It will be shown more clearly as this study progresses that Sculthorpe has evolved a musical style in which little importance is placed on harmonic progression. If progression occurs, usually only one tone of a vertical arrangement of tones changes at a time, as, for example, through the addition of a tone a third below the lowest tone in a chord. The essence of Sculthorpe’s harmonic style can be seen in Example 21, where the accompanying tones remain constant while the melodic tones define the harmonic quality. The style is most influenced by Gustav Mahler’s extensive use of appoggiatura, but, unlike Mahler, who uses the gamut of chromatic triadic harmony as the framework for his melodic appoggiatura, Sculthorpe limits his framework to one chord. An excerpt from Mahler’s music illustrates the difference between the two approaches (Ex.23):
Here the melody is dissonant with the accompanying chords on the strong beats, and resolves on the weak beats; this use of appoggiatura is unique because the same procedure is used in each successive measure. Consequently, harmonic tension is always present, and satisfactory resolution continually frustrated.

In the example from the Sonata, semitonal appoggiatura are employed, but, as well, temporary resolution often occurs by large leaps. Sometimes a consonant tone occurs on a strong beat, but its note-value is always short, and the melody progresses immediately to a dissonant tone. Thus, as in Mahler’s style, there is a constantly recurring harmonic tension; but unlike Mahler, there is a flatness and a feeling of non-progression resulting from the static accompanying tones.

Sculthorpe’s mature personal idiom is represented by this passage of eight measures more than by any other passage of music from this early period. Not only does the passage demonstrate the strict formal proportions of Sculthorpe’s rhythmic-melodic structural unit, but it is also the first example of the delicate relationship of slow melody to static harmonic accompaniment. Sparse harmonic accompaniments such as this do not come into prominence in the composer’s music until the latter half of the following decade. The chords of the accompaniments of earlier mature works such as Irkanda IV (1961) and String Quartet No. 6 (1965) are more richly constructed and are often chords of the same genus as the opening chord of the Sonatina.²⁸

If there is any influence of the music of another composer in these violin pieces it is that of Ernest Bloch, though Roger Covell has suggested Bartók’s Sonata for solo violin.²⁹ Sculthorpe was deeply affected by Bloch’s Concerto for violin and orchestra (1937–38), but, in spite of his familiarity with this work and others, the influence does not manifest itself in many direct ways. The most obvious aspects are Bloch’s concern for the complexities of string technique and his fondness of hemitonic scale constructions. Perhaps more significant is the way in which Bloch sometimes avoids a sense of harmonic progression in favour of a texture based on the prolongation of one chord. Certainly there is little of the rhapsodic quality of Bloch in this early music, though the cadenza-like sections of the later Irkanda IV are reminiscent of this.

Sonata for Viola and Percussion

The procedure for the adaptation of the first and third movements of the Sonata for violin alone into a piece for viola and percussion was a curious one. The first stage was the composition of Sonata
for cello (1959). This was effected simply by organizing the various sections into a shape like that of *Irkanda I*, and transposing them down either an octave, two octaves, or sometimes a twelfth, where the stopping and combinations of arco and pizzicato involved all four strings. There was also a standardization of tempi into the characteristic slow and quick distinctions. It transpired that when the composer gave the *Sonata* to the cellist for whom it was written it was not well received. Later, at the Attingham Park Summer School (1960), Sculthorpe rewrote it for viola and percussion because of the putative availability of both an excellent violist and percussionist. This was done with little formal reorganization. In a few places the percussion is given several measures functioning as connecting passages, and there is also a percussion solo of sixteen measures based on the rhythm of one of the main themes. It is this theme, though, that is the principal object of percussive intrusion; here the percussion has equal status with the viola in the construction of the music (Ex.24–25):

![Ex.24](image)

(Bright, with vigour. (m. 161–162)
(tap on finger-board)

![Ex.25](image)

(\( \text{m. 89-92} \))

The fingerboard knocking of the cello version (Ex.24) has been replaced by a rhythmic figure which gives the passage a martial feeling. The music thereby lapses into a gesture which is quite out of keeping with the composer’s need to purge his art of clichés of association. Sculthorpe compounds his indiscretion by introducing this drum pattern into other parts of the work, probably to increase the rhythm’s structural viability, but, in doing so, he unfortunately destroys the character of the original melody (Ex.26):
For the most part, however, the percussion plays a supportive role. It is discreetly used to emphasize the rhythmic design of the structural units, and it is particularly useful in relation to the composer's procedure of repeating sections throughout a piece, with textural variation. The choice of the percussion instruments makes quite a versatile kit of untuned idiophones and membranophones of wide-ranging pitch. Several patterns exist for their use: for emphasis of the rhythmic qualities of the viola part usually a single membranophone is used, but, for a more subtle interplay, combinations of instruments are used in an alternating pattern (Ex. 27):

There is also a considerable use of drum and cymbal rolls for cohesive and textural purposes, and often they are marked "crescendo poco a poco". Drum rolls of this kind are important in much of Sculthorpe's music, especially the orchestral works. In these contexts they are more subtly effective since they are not so exposed.

Sculthorpe had been interested in the potential of percussion since his undergraduate student days when he discovered a recording of Edgard Varèse's Ionisation. At that time this work impressed him as being a different approach to composition, and he responded to the influence by writing several pieces entirely for percussion instruments. Thus, it is odd that he could conceive of writing music where percussion is enslaved to an already composed and self-sufficient work. In many ways, however, the disciplines and limitations of such a task enabled him to develop
an efficient technique for orchestral percussion, and they also laid
the foundations for later music where percussion has special
structural significance. It is unfortunate, though, that an
impressive work for cello had been discarded in favour of a less
effective work for the unusual combination of viola and per-
cussion.

It has been suggested in this chapter that Peter Sculthorpe's need
to create an Australian style for his music resulted in a conflict with
his European-influenced attitudes, which, though unresolved,
produced a personal style of considerable uniqueness and
consistency. Chapter 3 is concerned with the consolidation of the
composer's musical style, but it deals with a period following his
exposure to Europe. It is to be expected, therefore, that his first
real contact with contemporary musical resources would cause
noticeable changes in his approach to composition; but, rather
than respond enthusiastically to European music, Sculthorpe
became even more committed to the notion of an Australian style,
and, although he was quick to absorb and to learn about
European contemporary music, he began to work obsessively in
terms of those aspects of style and structure he had developed. The
results of his renewed vigour demonstrate a greater finesse than his
earlier works.
Sculthorpe's Mature Style

The procedure of reworking the material of existing pieces has been a common one in Peter Sculthorpe's career, especially during the ten years following the Sonatina (1954). The composer has remarked that there was, in this period, no kind of problem associated with this since there was never any expectancy that a particular work would receive more than a few performances, and none whatever that it would be recorded or published. It has already been shown that Sonata for Viola and Percussion was adapted from earlier works, but this is, in a sense, an unrepresentative example of the process since the piece, with the exception of the percussion additions, remained more or less intact in its compositional detail. The years between Sculthorpe's arrival in England in 1958 and the completion of his String Quartet No. 6 in 1965 represented a period of reworking, perfecting and rearranging a small amount of musical material rather than one of burgeoning creativity, as the number of titles might suggest. Most of the material appears in the first two important works composed by Sculthorpe in England: the song cycle, Sun (1958) and Irkanda II for string quartet (1959). Some of the material of Irkanda II was reworked and developed in Irkanda III for piano trio (1960). A part of Irkanda III was then further revised and used with a passage from Irkanda II in two of the principal sections of Irkanda IV for solo violin, strings and percussion (1961). This last work was not changed in any way after its completion.¹ The music of Sun and some of those sections of Irkanda II which were not included in Irkanda IV have a similar history, appearing in the first and second versions of Irkanda III for piano trio (1960 and 1961), parts of The Fifth Continent, for speaker and orchestra (1962), and the Piano Sonata (1963), until finally being consolidated in String Quartet No. 6. Thus, apart from the Sonata for Viola and Percussion which was derived from the Sonata for violin, composed as early as 1955, the six years from the end of 1958 to the beginning of 1965 were spent in perfecting the musical material for only two works.
Peter Sculthorpe with his father, Joshua, on the beach at Swan Point in Tasmania. Reproduced by permission of Peter Sculthorpe.
The composer with his mother, Edna, during a visit to Melbourne. Reproduced by permission of Peter Seulthorpe.
Laurence White's painting of St Leonards, a village outside Launceston, Tasmania, where Sculthorpe lived from 1929 until the early 1950s. The family moved to the house in the foreground in the mid-1940s. Reproduced by permission of Peter Sculthorpe.
In Sydney in the mid-1960s. Photograph by James Murdoch reproduced with his permission.
With Meredith Oakes (now Sutcliffe) and Barry Conyngham in Sydney in 1968. Photograph by Lance Nelson reproduced with his permission.
With Ross Edwards and Anne Boyd in Sculthorpe's house in Queen Street, Woollahra in 1968. Photograph by Lance Nelson reproduced with his permission.
The composer in his study in the Queen Street house. Photograph by Lance Nelson reproduced with his permission.
In retrospect Sculthorpe sees a great advantage in this situation, as it allowed him to refine many aspects of his craft in a gradual way and to establish a distinctive harmonic language by working on the same passages over a period of years. Although it is beyond the scope of this study to examine the development of the material in question, an example of the process can effectively illustrate this principle (Ex.28–29):2
Essentially the difference between the two examples is one of rhythmic and textural articulation: In Example 29 the detail of the interplay between melody and accompaniment gives the passage a subtlety which one would not expect from a basically static harmonic framework.

Irkanda IV

On the whole, *Irkanda IV* is not a good example of Sculthorpe’s tendency to rework previously composed material since a large proportion of it was freshly written in 1961. Apart from the section discussed above, only the canon (m.28–38) is systematically derived from an earlier composition. Another main section beginning at measure 79 could be interpreted as a derivative of the martial section of *Sonata for Viola and Percussion*, while the violin solo near the end of the work was originally an attempt by the composer, when he returned to Australia in 1960, to reset D.H. Lawrence’s poem “Sun in Me”, originally used in *Sun*. Sculthorpe did not use more of his already-composed material because *Irkanda IV* was, as discussed in Chapter 1, written in memory of his father and was a definite attempt to produce music which his father might have liked. Although Joshua Sculthorpe understood little of his son’s music and disliked most of the early twentieth century music he had heard, the music of Gustav Mahler had impressed him to some extent. Consequently the composer has imbued *Irkanda IV* with recognizably Mahlerian qualities. The work is probably one of Sculthorpe’s most expansive, romantic and free-flowing pieces since it lacks the sense of deliberately rigid sectionalization displayed in *String Quartet No. 6* and other later pieces. It also loosely follows the pattern which Sculthorpe associates with Mahler’s *Symphony No. 9*: after the exuberance of Mahler’s first three movements there is a final resignation to fate in the dirge-like Adagio. Thus, in *Irkanda IV*, after the dramatic and the martial music has died away, Sculthorpe introduces the expression mark “preso da rassegnazione” at the moment when the falling semitone motive, which is crucial to the work, is deprived of its agitated bass-line accompaniment and given instead a single repeated note (m.167). Following this section there is a calm melody for solo violin, which Sculthorpe believes expresses an optimism and a detachment from the emotional level upon which the piece has functioned to that point; this section is marked “con desiderio di solitudine”.

Apart from these broad musical parallels and extramusical associations, there is surprisingly little detail which could be attributed to the influence of Mahler. There is a characteristic use
of appoggiatura, but otherwise the references are isolated. They include the effect of the diminuendo in the last four measures, the particular character of the martial rhythm which first appears in measure 89, and some of the detail of orchestration, for example, the violin trill first appearing in measure 114 and the sul tasto string tremolo in measure 181.

In spite of these references, it is not Mahler’s influence which is dominant in Irkanda IV. The rhapsodic quality of much of the solo violin writing can be more easily attributed to the influence of Ernst Bloch. The work, in fact, seems to be permeated with musical ideas which correspond to passages found in Bloch’s Concerto for Violin and Orchestra (1937–38). The main theme of Irkanda IV (Ex.29) is, for example, quite obviously related to one of the principal melodic ideas of Bloch’s work (Ex.30):

```
Ex. 30

\( \text{Solo Vn.} \)

\( \begin{array}{c}
\text{Ex. 30} \\
\text{(j = c.108)} \\
\text{(m. 57-58)} \\
\end{array} \)
```

Links such as this are, however, not necessarily the most significant between the two works. A typical influence is the technique of inverted dotting which Bloch employs characteristically in an ascending pentatonic context whereas Sculthorpe mostly employs it with minor second and minor third intervallic cells, and often on the same tone (Ex.31–33):

```
Ex. 31

\( \text{Solo Vn.} \)

\( \begin{array}{c}
\text{Ex. 31} \\
\text{(j = 72)} \\
\text{(Concerto, m. 7-8)} \\
\end{array} \)
```

```
Ex. 32

\( \text{Vn. 1} \)

\( \begin{array}{c}
\text{Ex. 32} \\
\text{(j = c. 60)} \\
\text{(Irkanda IV, m. 102-104)} \\
\end{array} \)
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Ex. 33

\( \text{D.B.} \)

\( \begin{array}{c}
\text{Ex. 33} \\
\text{(j = c.60)} \\
\text{(Irkanda IV, m. 5)} \\
\end{array} \)
```
Although it is possible to draw attention to many parallels in the detail of these two works, Sculthorpe’s response to Bloch is ultimately more an emotional one than a stylistic one. Just as he had identified with what he interpreted as un-European qualities in Aaron Copland’s Piano Sonata, he found in Bloch’s theme of the biblical wilderness a reminder of the terrifying, unpopulated landscape of Australia. Irkanda IV cannot, in any fair sense, be considered a derivative work: distinguished critics including Curt Prerauer7 and Roger Covell8 have praised its originality and recognized in it Sculthorpe’s success in convincingly articulating his personal vision for the first time. Irkanda IV demonstrates many of the stylistic qualities of earlier pieces, but its emotional range is far more expansive than any of these pieces. It is not, however, only the extended musical vocabulary which separates it from its predecessors: the significant technical advancement is the systematic integration of a number of structural devices already in practice as isolated techniques in Sculthorpe’s music.

The structure of Irkanda IV

The principal musical material of Irkanda IV appears, predictably, in the characteristic structural units, but, instead of connecting passages being used to bridge the gap between sections, these now seem to represent logical extensions of the units they follow, so that, in effect, a new kind of unit is created. Consisting of two parts, the first part is structured by internal rhythmic repetition while the second part is freer. The second part, though growing naturally from the first, still has the important function of either bringing the unit to a satisfactory close before a new section begins, or leading to the next section in such a way as to ensure the fluidity of the piece as a whole and to lessen the feeling of segmentation that is characteristic of the early pieces. This is especially important when the music changes from being quick to slow or slow to quick, so that the idea of a single-movement piece is preserved.

By far the most obvious structural device in the work is the use of the falling minor second as a principal interval of melodic construction. This is found in almost every section of the work, including the connecting passages. The same could be said to a lesser extent of the minor and major thirds which are more often than not used in conjunction with the minor second (Ex.34-36):
In spite of the prominence of these intervals in the work, there is, as one can see from the examples, rarely any real sense of motivic development, since the intervals are used in rhythmically varied ways. The structure of Irkanda IV is undoubtedly strengthened by the predominance of these melodic intervals, but, although they are largely responsible for establishing the threnodic mood, they are never tantamount to a major force holding the piece together.

Irkanda IV appears to be based on an elaborate form of variation technique. There are six significant divisions in the material used, and four of these are used in varied forms throughout the work in the pattern shown in Figure 1. Variation is sometimes as slight as a dynamic change (A₁, m.9–14) or as pronounced as a manipulation of melody as well as accompani-

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Key
A is the first main section, B is the second main section, and so on.
A₁, A₂ are variations of the first main section, and so on.
p¹, p², p³ are connecting passages, or passages which contain a diversification of material so as not to warrant classification as principal sections.
p⁴, p⁵, p⁶, p⁷ are variations of the second and fourth connecting passages respectively.
p⁸, p⁹ are connecting passages based on material from section F.

Figure 1 The structure of Irkanda IV

□ indicates that the section is broken into two parts and separated by another passage.
ment (B₂, m.103–08); but generally the main concept is of textural variation of accompaniment while the melodic substance remains constant. Each of the four varying sections, A, B, C and E, has, however, its own variational procedure and, thus, its own role in the structure of the piece. For A there is little variation: on its third appearance (m.53–58) the melody is transposed a perfect fourth higher, while the accompaniment remains the same; on its last, the melody is transposed an octave higher. Oddly enough, the first transposition does not transform the harmonic or tonal feeling; the casual listener may not even notice the change. As a result of this, and since section A occurs four times, fairly evenly spaced throughout, the passage acts as a kind of refrain.

Section B appears in six different guises, also evenly spaced, but, unlike section A, it undergoes a kind of transformation on each successive appearance. This occurs firstly through the extension of the melodic idea by the addition of several tones to each of the basic two-tone motives, secondly by a significant change in the accompanying texture, thirdly in an enriched version of the first variation, fourthly through the reduction of the accompaniment to a single tone, and lastly by a return to the simple motive of the original. As the variation and change in the constitution of B is gradual, there is never any problem in recognizing it. Thus, it too acts in the piece as another kind of refrain.

The other two sections which recur, C and E, are either by position or number of appearances not heard as refrains. Both these sections are quick, thus contrasting with A and B. Section E occupies only the central part of the work, and uses a freer mode of variation than either A or B. This feeling is accentuated by the rhapsodic sound of the parallel minor sixth double-stopping and by the fact that the units tend to merge into the connecting passages, which contain material derived from the units but which are structurally much freer. The effect of the E sections is, therefore, to contrast with the stylized A and B refrains. The two statements of the canon (section C) are placed in roughly symmetrical positions about the centre of the piece. The only variational change is from staccato to sul ponticello tremolo, the strict rules of canon not allowing for changes of the kind found in the other sections. Perhaps because the canon is taken from the earlier *Irkanda II*, where it can be seen to grow from the section preceding it, its intervallic structure cannot easily be related to the strong minor second and minor third pattern which is a characteristic of every other section of the work. Nonetheless, it is not out of place, since its forward-moving feeling of growth, which derives as much from its gradual accelerando as from its canonically shaped, contrasts with the predictable symmetry of the special structural units. Sculthorpe often employs contrapuntal passages
in an attempt to interrupt the fairly consistent harmonic textures of his music. Since he prefers his small structures to be tightly organized, these passages are invariably canons, usually in three parts either at the fifth and the ninth, or the unison and octave.\textsuperscript{10}

Of the two remaining main sections, D is more in keeping with the structural patterns discussed above than F, which is effectively a non-virtuosic cadenza. Although section D is not repeated, its motivic material is closely related to that of section E. It is used as a means to bridge the stylistic gap between the tranquility of section A\textsubscript{3} and the agitated rhapsodic quality of section E. Section D has the same tempo as section A\textsubscript{2}, but it gradually becomes more animated by the use of tremolo textures, which accompany a motive possessing a strong rhythmic impulse. Lacking the static harmonic quality of section A\textsubscript{2}, its emphasis on a different chord for each successive statement of the motive is related to the idea of the development section of the classical sonata form, though the system of chord progression is the composer's own. Nonetheless, it does have a strong affinity with the modulatory development of a short motive, and, as such, it is quite atypical of Sculthorpe's music.

This completes the description of the basic scheme of structural integration in \textit{Irkanda IV}, except for the violin cadenza. Apart from the low tone, E\textsubscript{2}, of the double bass and some sparse orchestration there is no harmonic or distinctively rhythmic accompaniment in this section. To the ear the melody seems rhythmically free, though it does have a progressive tonal and rhythmic logic and a strong overall shape. It is in two definite sections separated by the short second half of section B\textsubscript{4}. Both parts rise to a high point by a gradual process, the guiding principle of which is that the upward leaps are slightly larger than the corresponding falls. Characteristically, most of the intervals are either minor seconds, minor thirds or major thirds, and invariably the ends of phrases are based on the falling minor second.

\textit{Harmony}

The essence of Sculthorpe's harmonic language can be seen again in the passage for solo violin. With relation to the tonal centre defined by the low E\textsubscript{2} pedal point, the melody consists of a series of dissonant tones on the strong parts of the measures which resolve to consonant tones on weaker beats. Once the resolution is effected, the melody moves to another dissonant tone. This process can be perpetuated until the composer chooses to effect a final resolution.

Although, by contrast, melodies in the other main sections of
Irkanda IV follow the structure of the special unit, their harmonic accompaniments, with the exception of section D, are also static, and the relationship of the melodic lines to the tonal centres of their accompaniments follows the above procedure. This is not an innovation; a typical example of it from the Sonata for violin has already been discussed (Ex.22). The earlier work did not, however, pursue the principle as a prime structural determinant. Furthermore, the later work employs new kinds of chords as static harmonic accompaniments for melody. The opening chord, for example (Ex.29), is based on a minor triad and has several major seventh intervals added to the tones of this triad so that its construction, in one sense, follows the principle of that of the opening chord of the Sonatina. The chord possesses the property of being able to be enriched by the addition of major sevenths above or below its already-existing tones without significantly changing its particular quality.\(^{11}\) It is from this process that the technique of changing the tonality by adding a lower tone is derived. Thus, changes in tonality can occur without overt chordal change.

The chords of superimposed sevenths, though they may be strongly related to the triad, or actually contain triads, are nonetheless, somewhat dissonant, since each of their constituent major seventh intervals is dissonant. In seeking a resolution for these kinds of chords, Sculthorpe maintains the higher tones of one or more of the seventh intervals, and makes the lower ones fall a semitone. Thus, even this aspect of the harmonic idiom is closely related to the technique of falling semitonal appoggiatura. In a chord like that discussed above from the opening of Irkanda IV, the major sevenths are not obviously resolved in this way but the framework of the resolution is clear (Ex.37):

![Ex.37](image)

By rearranging the tones in an hypothetical outline, it can be seen that the E♭ and B♭ of the first chord remain constant in the second, while the E♭ falls to E♭ and the C♭ falls to B♭. Theoretically, the chord could be resolved in a different way by the choice of an alternative major seventh or set of sevenths as the operative
framework. The delayed resolution of this chord to a tonal centre of G (m.14–18) is a representative example of this phenomenon, since the A♭/G becomes the new operative seventh interval.

Although these aspects of harmony are fundamental to a study of Sculthorpe’s style, Irkanda IV, by the composer’s own volition, does not, on the whole, have particularly dissonant chords, so that the procedure of resolution is often unnecessary; the chords, strongly based on triads, although they may involve dissonant intervals, are, nonetheless, able to be heard as stable harmonic entities. There are also, in places where the accompaniment to melody has rhythmic rather than prolonged harmonic significance, some quite dissonant chords which are purposely left unresolved (Ex.38–39):

Ex. 38

Solo Vn.

Vn. 1

Vn. 2

Vla.

Vc.

D.B.

(m. 118–116)

Ex. 39

Solo Vn.

Vn. 1

Vn. 2

Vla.

Vc.

(m. 39–40)

In both examples, it is easy to calculate, using the principles described above, which tonal centres resolutions of these chords would imply; the chords are simply substitutions for the implied tonal centres. In this way Sculthorpe is able to avoid the bareness of a single bass tone and the mannerism of triad-based harmony, while simultaneously preserving a strong feeling of tonal centring.

As in the Sonatina and, to a limited extent, the violin pieces, there is a tendency for the harmonic style to be unsystematic; the composer is sometimes unaware of the principles behind some of the patterns which gradually emerge in his music. In Irkanda IV, Sculthorpe’s attempt to make a music which is somewhat
conventional in sound, without embracing anything which is stylistically foreign to his ear, or contrary to his compositional rules, greatly expands the scope of his harmonic idiom.

String Quartet No. 6

Sculthorpe's next significant work, *String Quartet No. 6*, is harmonically much more complex than *Irkanda IV*, but is not structurally as finely wrought. The composer wished to write an impressive piece for this important commission, but was unable to spend as much time in its composition as he would have liked because of teaching commitments. Thus the work is like a compendium of all the best musical material which had appeared in the works written since 1959, apart from that employed in *Irkanda IV*. Because most of the material had been refined and developed, and had slowly been integrated into a consistent stylistic mould, it is not surprising that the work, in one sense, represents a greater compositional maturity than the newer material of *Irkanda IV*. It could not, however, be easily adaptable to the single-movement variational form of the earlier piece since there was a considerable degree of contrasting material involved. Sculthorpe found an obvious solution to the problem by making it a piece in three movements, each of which has quite a simple structure. The first is a slow movement with a ternary structure, the second a fast movement with a slow middle section, and the third, a movement which has a slow section, a *moderato* section and a brief return to the character of its beginning. The variation technique is used in each movement, but does not assume so complex a structural role as in *Irkanda IV*. Although the form of the earlier piece serves as a prototype for the structural basis of the *Sun Music* series and many other later pieces, *String Quartet No. 6* is quite important in this regard since it reintroduces, in a very positive way, the idea of the two fundamental kinds of music in Sculthorpe's style. These are slow harmonically-static melodies and quick ritualistic non-melodic and non-harmonic textures. The distinction between the two is not as well drawn in *Irkanda IV*, where the few quick passages do not possess the same kind of rhythmic impulse as the quick sections of the second movement of the string quartet; this particular movement is itself a model for later forms which use a symmetrical structure based on the alternation of slow and quick music. *String Quartet No. 8*, for example, has an $A_1 B_1 C_1 B_2 A_2$ structure, where $B_1$ and $B_2$ are quick, and $A_1$, $C_1$ and $A_2$ are slow. Between them, *Irkanda IV* and *String Quartet No. 6* establish the fundamental principles for the structural organization of Sculthorpe's music.
In spite of the relative formal simplicity of *String Quartet No. 6*, it is a far more stylistically complex work than its predecessor, perhaps because of the motivation behind it. Like *Irkanda IV*, it was written in memory of a person close to the composer, but the circumstances of the death were vastly different. Sculthorpe began work on *String Quartet No. 6* some months after Bonnie Drysdale had taken her own life,12 at a time when, quite coincidently, he was composing a film score for a Commonwealth Film Unit documentary entitled *The Troubled Mind*, which was concerned with mental illness. Having selected his material for the film from the most anguished passages of his earlier music, it seemed appropriate that the same passages be used for the quartet. In the score Sculthorpe has employed terms like “angoscioso”, “piangendo”, “con desiderio pieno di malinconia”, “molto sconsolato” and “con dolore”, but one does not need these to sense the intentions of the music. The concentration of chordal dissonance and the jaggedness of the harmonic progressions in much of the piece are quite unlike anything else Sculthorpe had written. Even the quick sections, which were usually employed as a kind of release from the introspection of the slow passages, often verge on the point of losing their rhythmic impulse.

Like *Irkanda IV*, the work culminates in an instrumental setting of a D.H. Lawrence poem.13 Whereas the poem used as the basis of the cadenza of the earlier work is concerned with life-affirming ideas,14 that of the quartet expresses despair and a denial of life:

I have no desire any more
     towards woman or man, bird or creature or thing.
All day long I feel the tide rocking, rocking
     though it strikes no shore
     in me.
Only mid-ocean.—15

The setting of the first two lines of this poem represents the most important single stylistic entity in the quartet in view of Sculthorpe’s later works. Although these works move increasingly away from melodic-harmonic formulae in the exploration of new kinds of musical material, passages texturally like this occur frequently, sometimes as the only reminder in a piece of the intensely personal style of the early works (Ex.40):
Like the cadenza at the end of *Irkanda IV*, the melody here is free of the structural shackles of the ABAB\(^1\) mould, but not to such a great extent. The structure of the six measures may be divided into two main parts: the first consists of two measures of \(\frac{4}{4}\), and the second of the familiar \(\frac{4}{4} \frac{4}{4} \frac{4}{4}\) pattern. Each of these two divisions has rhythmic repetition in its accompaniment, so that some formal restrictions are acting on the melody. As well, in the \(\frac{4}{4} \frac{4}{4} \frac{4}{4}\) section, the melody shows an approximation of rhythmic repetition. The six-measure melody is further strengthened by its reliance on only a few intervals and by its strong adherence to a tonal centre, that of D. The structure of the melody is freed, however, by the fact that its second part grows out of the first part intervallically, but is rhythmically quite different from it. Thus, the melody is allowed to develop, but is still contained within a fairly rigid rhythmic accompaniment.

The chord shared between viola and cello is of special importance in accompanying textures. It can be regarded as a perfect fifth interval with an added second, but Sculthorpe invariably uses it in its second inversion, that is, with the fifth as the lowest tone.\(^1\)\(^6\) Although the chord is consonant and quite austere, it has a degree of harmonic resonance which makes it less bare than a single tone, as in the case of the violin cadenza of *Irkanda IV*, or a fifth interval, as in the case of the *Sonata* (Ex.22). Chords of this kind are extremely functional in Sculthorpe’s harmonic idiom as they provide a consonant alternative to triad-based chords. Consequently, they may be used as static accompaniments, or act as resolutions to dissonant chords.

Having completed *String Quartet No. 6*, Sculthorpe experienced difficulty in continuing to write music with the same expressive
character. He found in trying to “recapture the formula” of the *Irkanda* period that he was repeating himself, ironically falling back on gestures produced by the stylistic limitations he himself had placed on his own work. This problem is not an uncommon one for twentieth-century composers. Stravinsky, for example, went through several radical stylistic changes in his career, but it is perhaps Messiaen who provides us with a comparable situation to Sculthorpe’s. His melodic and harmonic style until 1950 relied, to a large extent, on a highly systematic use of the modes of limited transposition. In order to break away from the restriction of this tonal language, Messiaen first experimented briefly with serial principles, but afterwards found that there were better possibilities of developing a very flexible language from both birdsong transcriptions and a freer approach to his largely formularized system. Messiaen’s characteristic use of his modes is comparable to Sculthorpe’s personal style in that ultimately both can only be employed in a limited number of distinctive ways; and Sculthorpe’s solution is not unlike Messiaen’s in that both began to place less emphasis on those detail-determining aspects of composition such as the intervallic qualities in melody and harmony, but both clung to their rhythmic and structural procedures.

For *Sun Music I* (1965), the first piece to be a radical departure from his personal style, Sculthorpe chose musical material that in no obvious way can be related to anything he had written before; but his rhythmic organization of it on a small scale, and its properties on an overall structural level are very much in keeping with the principles underlying the construction of *Irkanda IV*. The composer’s decision to move away from a style which had taken so long to bring to maturity was not at all as surprising as it seems. The *Sun Music* series and related works which follow in the period from 1965 to 1970 all contain stylistic elements which are unmistakably derived from the pre-1965 period. These elements, although never given great prominence in any work, do, nonetheless, demonstrate a continuity of stylistic development.

The following two chapters, which discuss the *Sun Music* series and related works are, as a result of great similarities among the pieces involved, of a broader analytical survey than the previous two chapters. The first is concerned with a description of Sculthorpe’s new musical material and how this may be related to his already established personal style, while the second shows how this material is organized in the various works of the period.
New Material and Influences

The source of the inspiration behind the title *Sun Music* was discussed in some detail in the introductory chapter of this work. Fundamentally, the idea of the power of the Australian sun became, for Sculthorpe, symbolic of the distinction between the respective intrinsic qualities of Australia and Europe. The new musical language of *Sun Music* was devised, therefore, not only as an attempt by the composer to extricate himself from what he imagined to be a stylistic cul-de-sac but also as an attempt to remove his music still further from such European notions as "motive", "development of the motive", and, to a large extent, from harmonic progression. As Sculthorpe's musical language had been influenced by the sound and emotional associations of composers like Mahler and Bloch, he now attempted to sever any such connections by the use of musical material which had no relation to these composers. The choice of this material was designed to purge the music of melody and tonal relationships as much as possible, to eliminate the fulsomeness of its harmonic textures and to create a more impersonal language, but at the same time a language which was capable of evoking emotional associations that were different from those recognizable as being especially European.

*Sun Music I* seems to represent a search for a more objective response to Australia, an impressionistic response to the un-peopled, timeless landscape. Although Sculthorpe borrowed some ideas literally but quite superficially from Krzysztof Penderecki, a comparison of *Sun Music I* with the latter's *Threnody for the Victims of Hiroshima* (1961) serves to delineate the special Australian quality of Sculthorpe's music. Penderecki's work, for all its emphasis on new orchestral sonorities and the fact that the expressive language of harmony is forsaken, is an anguished cry for the victims of one of mankind's most frightening atrocities. By contrast, *Sun Music I* has a spaciousness and calmness perhaps brought about by the composer's efforts to evoke the loneliness and the desolation of the Australian landscape. Unlike the
Threnody, it does not seem in any way to be associated with people and the wretchedness of people. If it is a personal statement, and not merely an attempt to translate the visual into sound, then it is probably concerned with the composer’s establishing a personal cosmology based on the life-giving power of the sun.

Sculthorpe’s employment of new musical materials seems, from a compositional point of view, to be less significant than his actual organization of these materials. On a basic level the organization follows the pattern of the pre-Sun-Music works in its preoccupation with simplicity and its reliance upon repetition. The musical material Sculthorpe now came to use was mostly of the simplest nature: perhaps a tone-cluster or an unconventional instrumental sound, each of which, in essence, has no developmental tendency. By contrast, an harmonic progression or a motive derive their significance from their linear relationships. The composer’s organization of his unadorned materials consists merely of repeating them in simple but varied rhythmic textures. Thus each section of a work is basically constructed from one musical idea. This is not to suggest that Sculthorpe’s music of this period is simple-minded. The composer manages to achieve an undercurrent of structural subtlety while maintaining on the surface a direct and straightforward musical statement. The structural procedures of Sun Music I and other works of the period will be discussed accordingly in Chapter 5.

The Sun Music period is dominated by works for full orchestra.1 Sun Music I (1965), Sun Music II (1969), Sun Music III (1967), Sun Music IV (1967), Music for Japan (1970) and Rain (1970), all for orchestra, form the bulk of the music, not only in terms of their combined duration but also in compositional merit. Tabuh Tabuhan, for wind quintet and percussion (1968) perhaps relies too heavily upon melodies and textures borrowed from Balinese music, while String Quartet No. 7 (1966) is, because of its apparent lack of meticulousness, a decidedly inferior earlier version of Sun Music IV. Dream (1970) and Landscape (1971) though potentially quite effective, are improvisatory pieces based only on the broad structural principles of the other works of the period. The Sun Music Ballet is an amalgam of Sun Music I, Sun Music II, Sun Music III, Sun Music IV and a vocal work, Sun Music for Voices and Percussion (1966), which itself was composed in a hurried fashion. The only outstanding non-orchestral works of the period are String Quartet No. 8 (1969) and Night Pieces for piano (1970–71).

Like the pre-Sun-Music works, in which there is a tendency towards a contrast of slow, introspective, harmonic passages and quick, ritualistic, rhythmic passages, there is shared between all the works listed above a number of contrasting kinds of music.2
Although no two works contain exactly the same kinds of musical material, each work may have a number of kinds in common. There are, for example, clusters of tones in most of the works, although each work has its own distinctive rhythmic realizations of the cluster. In order to make a study of the individual pieces less problematic, it is useful to discuss firstly the various kinds of musical material so that, in the structural analyses, the fundamental terms will need little explanation.

Rhythm

Without doubt Sculthorpe's main preoccupation in the works of the Sun Music period is not with the orchestral textures themselves but with rhythm and rhythmic organization. The effect of each new texture is largely dependent on the way in which it is rhythmically presented. The composer's most distinctive use of rhythm may be seen as a renewed interest in the quick ritualistic music of works like the Sonatina and String Quartet No. 6. Despite certain passages of a slower kind in Sun Music I (m.87–92), Sun Music for Voices and Percussion (m.47–70) and Sun Music IV (m. 47–66), the composer was not fully awakened to the potential of this ritual approach to music until 1968, when he developed an interest in the Balinese ketjak, a trance-like ritual in which a large group of men imitate the dances and sounds of monkeys in acting out a story from the Ramayana. Sculthorpe grafted a vocal version of the most rhythmically exciting aspects of the ketjak on to a succession of his repeated rhythmic structural units and included it in the Sun Music Ballet, but this version was transformed and developed into quite original music for amplified percussion in Sun Music II (Ex.41):
Those parts of *Sun Music II* which were not derived from the *ketjak* continue in the spirit of the ritual, and are, in fact, much more aggressive than anything suggested by the *ketjak*. In *Sun Music II* Sculthorpe thus initiated a kind of music which he then developed in perhaps his best chamber piece, *String Quartet No. 8*, and one of his most assured orchestral works, *Music for Japan*; but undoubtedly it finds its fullest musical, and indeed theatrical, expression in *Rites of Passage* (1972–73).

The significance of this ritual music in Sculthorpe’s work is that it is one of his few stylistic entities which can be extended over large periods of time without a necessity for a strong generating force. The essence of the style is that a particular rhythmic counterpoint is established and repeated at length. The basic feel remains unchanged, although it may be added to or subtracted from, these procedures being the only developmental techniques that can be employed without destroying the feel and thus the trance-like quality of the music. Sculthorpe’s techniques for varying the texture, while maintaining the basic feel, fall into two categories. The first is simply a matter of adding new contrapuntal voices to a fundamental rhythmic idea. Thus, in *Music for Japan*, a simple rhythmic idea undergoes the variations illustrated in Examples 42–44.

Ex. 42  
\[
\text{Perc. 1} \quad \text{Claves} \quad d = c.60
\]
\[
\text{Perc. 2} \quad \text{Bongos}
\]
\[
\text{Ex. 43}  
\text{Perc. 1} \quad \text{Claves} \quad \text{B.D. (pedal)}
\]
\[
\text{Perc. 2} \quad \text{Bongos}
\]
\[
\text{Perc. 3} \quad \text{Timbales}
\]
Further variation occurs with the addition to the texture of rhythmic patterns scored for other instruments of the orchestra. This same technique is employed in Movement II of String Quartet No. 8 and to a lesser extent in Sun Music II.

The second method has its first appearance in the fourth movement of the same quartet, but becomes extremely important in Death, the ninth movement of Rites of Passage. This is the technique of creating a feel through the counterpoint of several rhythmic patterns, each of a different number of measures, the longest of which is the most stabilizing factor of the feel, while the rhythmic character of the shorter patterns varies slightly as the music progresses. The numbers of measures of each pattern have a low common multiple, so that if each pattern is given the prescribed number of repetitions, the first measures of all the patterns coincide again. Thus, although the resulting texture is fairly consistent from measure to measure, it is in a state of continual flux. The process is an extremely engaging one, as the listener is constantly focusing on sections of each voice in relation to different sections of the other voices. The excerpts in Examples 45–47, from String Quartet No. 8, illustrate this principle:
The five-measure section of the violin 1 part, which is twelve measures in total length before it is repeated, is accompanied in the three examples by different sections of the violin 2 and of the combined viola and cello parts, which are respectively twenty and thirty measures in length. The passage, beginning at measure 5, consists of sixty measures, sixty being the lowest common multiple of twelve, twenty and thirty.

The Asian influence

An attraction to the rhythmic ideas from the Ketjak and rice-pounding was natural for Sculthorpe, since both Balinese genres have the ritual quality which the composer was cultivating, and neither clashed with the intervallic and harmonic qualities of his earlier music. This is not the case with the Balinese melodies and accompanying figurations which Sculthorpe introduced into his music beginning with Sun Music III. These, with their simple anhemitonic pentatonic scales, stand in direct contrast to the strongly hemitonic nature of his use of intervals in melody.

Sculthorpe had been interested in Asian music from the time of his formulation of a non-European aesthetic for his music. It seemed to him that, if the Australian composer were to draw inspiration from any source outside Australia, it should be from Asia and the Pacific rather than from Europe. Since much of the music of Asia is concerned with nature, Sculthorpe thought it more appropriate to what an Australian music should be. As a listener Sculthorpe had, from about 1960, been excited by Japanese gagaku and the music of the Tibetan Buddhist monks, but he could not incorporate these into his music in any way because of their tonal and structural properties.

The discovery of Colin McPhee’s lengthy study of Balinese music soon after its publication was a revelation to Sculthorpe, for here was a music which fitted exactly into his four- and eight-measure structural units, and which was based upon exact repetition in both its micro-structure and macro-structure. There are, it can be seen, numerous other similarities. Sculthorpe’s distinctive use of percussion for accompanying punctuation is similar in concept to the so-called colotomic structure of genres like gamelan gong, in which the group of instruments with melodic and decorating function are accompanied by a punctuating pattern of a few large and small gongs. In Sculthorpe’s music, as in Balinese music, the lowest pitched punctuating instruments sound less frequently than the higher ones. Many genres of Balinese music have the same interest in the division of 4-time measures into eight notes which are grouped in different combinations of twos and threes. There is also a common preoccupation with ostinato techniques.
It was obvious to Sculthorpe that if he were to use Asian elements in his music then they had to be drawn from Bali. It is arguable that the problem of the disparity between the intervallic design of the two kinds of melody is not really a serious one, since, in a style like Sculthorpe’s where contrast is an important factor, there seems to be no reason why a music which has many similarities could not be incorporated. Whereas Sculthorpe’s melodic style is founded on the minor second and minor third, it can be shown that he limits his use of Balinese melody to a basic motion of major seconds and minor thirds.

The composer’s initial inclination on reading *Music in Bali* was to write a series of educational pieces for small groups of woodwind instruments, based on the music of the gender wayang ensemble, a quartet of ten-keyed gender. The choice of this particular Balinese genre may have been influenced by the fact that its forces are limited and homogeneous, but another probable reason was that McPhee had provided comprehensive musical excerpts from the long opening music, *Pemungkinah*, as well as several other musical interludes. Also, the style of phrasing in the piece was considered by Sculthorpe to be ideally suited to wind instrument technique. The educational project was not realized, but Sculthorpe thought that since he had not included wind in the orchestra for *Sun Music I*, he would take the opportunity to include gamelan-like passages in *Sun Music III*, which he scored for full orchestra.

At first glance it appears as if the composer has merely selected musical examples from McPhee’s gender wayang chapter, orchestrated them, and pieced them together to create a satisfactory shape for a section of the composition; but he reworks them in unnoticeable ways to suit his own compositional ends. He also quite often composes new but comparable material and sometimes uses what he calls a “ransacking approach”, taking a phrase from here, a phrase from there, to build up one of his structural units (Ex.48–50):

![Musical notation images]

(Ex.48) (McPhee, Ex.22) (Ex.49) (McPhee, Ex.18)

(Ex.50) (m. 2–16)
Example 50, from *Sun Music III*, is constructed from three elements: a phrase from McPhee (Ex.48), an adaptation of an idea from McPhee (Ex.49) and a composed phrase. All these are woven into an A B A, C melodic pattern.

The *gamelan*-influenced passages are not, however, merely constructed of borrowings from and composition in the style of Balinese music. As well, the orchestration always involves percussive punctuation and other punctuating or variational additions such as upward glissandi from high string clusters, low-string pizzicati and percussion rolls (*Sun Music III*, m.23–60); free glissandi on the upper keys of the vibraphone (*Tabuh Tabuhan*, m.53–60); and long-held string chords (*Rain*, section 3, m.3–8). In this way the *gamelan* sections are more thoroughly integrated into Sculthorpe's style.

As far as the musics of other Asian cultures are concerned, Sculthorpe believed, in this period of his music, that he may not ever be able to use them in as direct a way. Rather, to borrow Schoenberg's valuable distinction, the ideas of these musics may perhaps be used, if not the styles. At the beginning of *Music for Japan*, for example, the orchestral texture which the composer wanted as a sound-equivalent of the mysterious currents of the ocean depths, is based on the idea of Tibetan Buddhist chant. Tibetan chant is sung simultaneously by the priests, but each takes it in his own time and at his own favoured pitch. Thus there is no vertical synchronization, and the effect is of a wavering low vocal tone-cluster. In *Music for Japan* each performer has a series of tones to play in his or her own time, repeating the series until the conductor gives a signal for the section to end. Even though this music is based upon the same idea as the chant, one would hardly connect the two from an aural point of view.

In many ways this indirect method produces more reliable and significant results, for, although the direct use of Asian materials in *Sun Music III* and *Tabuh Tabuhan* can be defended, the history of such borrowings reveals a trend towards superficiality which is reinforced by its association with some aspects of the *chinoiserie* of the West. Sculthorpe has said that Asian music has been important for his morale in his resistance of Western traditional influences; certainly it seems to have supplied an effective antidote to the encroaching influence of twentieth-century European music. More significantly, perhaps, it has helped create an equilibrium in his approach, which does not prevent the music from being a legitimate Western statement. Sculthorpe's approach can be seen, for instance, as following part of Karl Jaspers' view of world history:

What we lack and what vitally concerns us is to be found in Asia! Questions come to us from over there that lie deep in our own minds.
For what we have produced, accomplished and become we have paid a price. We are by no means on the road to the self-perfection of man. Asia is an indispensable need for our completion. Even though we understand things from our own vantage point, by recognising what we ourselves are, we may still be able to recognise that which is so deeply buried and concealed within us that it would never have risen into consciousness if we did not see it reflected in this world which is at first so strange to us. We should understand by expanding ourselves within it, while that which lies dormant within us blossoms out.  

It may be that the conflict of the West and the East in Peter Sculthorpe’s music springs just as much from these subconscious forces as from his rationalized feelings about Australia, the Pacific and Asia.

*Orchestral coloration, new instrumental and vocal techniques*

Paralleling the Polish impressionist school, and to some extent drawing from its vocabulary and notation, Sculthorpe’s use of orchestral coloration of a simple but evocative kind represents a more striking departure from his earlier musical language. Material of this kind, whether it be a texture created by a number of instruments or voices, or an effect created by a single instrument or voice, takes its shape and function from one of three organizational notions. The first is the act of sustaining: the sound of the music is continuous and unchanging. The second is the technique of allowing each performer to repeat rhythmically a given pattern independently from the other performers: the sound is continuous but subject to much activity and flux. The third is a short independent sound, whether it is used to punctuate or is incorporated into a passage where it is part of a rhythmic counterpoint of instruments or voices.

Most of the sounds employed in this music fit, by their nature, into only one or two of the three methods of organization. Wide continuous glissandi for example can only be used in the second category, while short quick glissandi in one direction fit the third as well as the second categories. One musical idea which fits all three categories is the cluster, hence one of the reasons it has an important place in the music of this period. A cluster is simply a number of adjacent tones sounding simultaneously. Sculthorpe employs semitonal clusters of three, four, five or more tones in various parts of instrumental registers and with different instrumental combinations. The theoretical implication of clusters is that, although they are chords in the sense that they consist of three or more tones sounding together, they do not exhibit the traditional properties of chords, nor do they sound like chords. The consistent proximity of their constituent tones precludes the relevance of harmonic relationships. To the listener a cluster appears to be a singular sound event, not a complex in-
terrelationship of tones. The significance, then, of the cluster in Sculthorpe’s musical aesthetic is that, although it can provide him with an acoustically rich continuous sound, it exists without a need for resolution. Whereas widely-spaced complex chords tend to sound dissonant, the effect of a cluster is mostly quite neutral. Thus, like the ritualistic rhythmic music and the harmonically-static gamelan passages, the cluster has an existence which is self-sufficient and non-developmentally. This is not to say that Sculthorpe does not ever resolve his clusters. It will be shown that in Music for Japan, in an obvious way, and in Sun Music III, in a very subtle way, clusters are resolved. The essential point is that there is no need to resolve them.

More than any other phenomenon in Sculthorpe’s music, the cluster is imbued with a wide range of evocative potential. It, above all, appears to be responsible for the many and different critical responses to the works of the period, of associations with charred desert, desolation and the power and the light of the sun. Despite the arbitrariness of these responses, it was the composer’s intention, in writing impressionistic music, that visual associations, no matter how personal and varied, should occur to the listener.

As with all the different materials of this music, the various kinds of clusters will be discussed in relation to their organization in particular works, but one form may be mentioned here. This is obtained by using symbols \( \frac{1}{2} \) or \( \frac{1}{5} \) meaning, respectively, any very high tone or any very low tone. When a group of instrumentalists performs either of these, the resulting sound is either a very high or a very low cluster.

Most of the new orchestral sonorities result from instrumental techniques which are additions to the traditional catalogue of playing styles. Some techniques of long-standing like tremolo, sul tasto, sul ponticello and flutter-tonguing are certainly given a renewed prominence, but most are a product of the contemporary awareness of the wide range of sounds of which instruments are capable. Appendix I is included to provide a list of such techniques as well as their notational representation, where appropriate.

Melody and harmony

Melody and harmony of the kind Sculthorpe developed in his earlier work have an importance in the music of this period, but their use is limited to very few forms and ideas. By far the most interesting appearance is also the most stylistically predictable. Clearly derived from the main musical material of the third movement of String Quartet No. 6, this kind of passage first reappears in Sun Music III, and is heavily relied upon in Tabuh Tabuhan and String Quartet No. 8 (Ex.51–52):
Although these examples are clearly derived from *String Quartet No. 6* (Ex.40), Sculthorpe also parallels them with *arja*, a Balinese popular song form, because of the consistent rhythmic basis of the accompaniments and the rhythmic freedom of the melody. The melodies of these sections may be free, in that they do not demonstrate the strict A B A B₁ form found in much of the earlier music, but they certainly adhere strongly to the stylistic principles of melody and accompaniment which were described in Chapter 2 in relation to the *Sonata* for violin.

The static aspect of the harmony in this music is not uncommon in certain other passages in the *Sun Music* series and related works. Scattered throughout these pieces are passages which contain one characteristic chord that is repeated or varied in some way, as a means of prolongation. Sometimes a particular chord is added to, or changed slightly, but there is never any real sense of harmonic progression within a section. Two techniques for the variation of a single chord deserve special mention. The first, which involves a variational procedure based on glissando, is best represented in *Sun Music IV* (Fig. 2). ¹⁰
Although the idea of this is simply a set of four tones which individually move to other tones of the same chord (g\textsuperscript{b}_3 to f\textsubscript{1}, a\textsuperscript{b}_1 to g, f\textsubscript{1} to g\textsuperscript{b}_2 and g to a\textsuperscript{b}_1), the effect is a strikingly original orchestral sonority. The composer conceptualized this musical idea from a period of involvement in Mexican pre-Columbian culture. Much Toltec architecture is based upon the platform-slope-platform shape that is used in this passage, so that a visual phenomenon is translated into sound. As early as Sun Music I, glissandi were used between fixed tones and the idea also appears as part of an harmonic accompaniment in Sun Music III.\textsuperscript{11}

The second notable example of the creation of a texture from the treatment of a single harmonic idea also appears in its simplest and most impressive form in Sun Music IV (Ex.53):

Here the constituent tones of a chordal idea are dissected and distributed horizontally, making a texture, the rhythmic counterpoint of which is particularly engaging. The clarinet parts, for example, are in canon with the bassoon parts.

Most of the unpredictable uses of melody and harmony in this period occur in Sun Music I, but this is not surprising since the composer was trying to make a strong break with his previous musical style. Thus, the very opening of Sun Music I involves a
melody principally based upon the minor seventh, an interval which hitherto Sculthorpe had studiously avoided. An unexpected element of Sun Music I is the section at measure 63, which is an adaptation of a serial piece entitled Haiku for piano, which Sculthorpe had written for pedagogical reasons.12 His intentions in including this passage were probably related to his need for contrast. Since the piece is concerned with the harsh but life-giving power of the sun, the composer thought it natural that a section be included which represents night, the absence of the sun.

Other serial uses

Although this is the only example of conventional twelve-tone usage, the composer quite often employs a row to organize the whole or a part of an orchestral sonority for which he does not want any feeling of tonality emerging. Sometimes, for example in Rain, a series is split between two groups of instruments which repeat their six-tone pattern in a rhythmically free manner (Ex.54):

In Music for Japan, the opening section (which was discussed earlier in this chapter), is organized entirely from a twelve-tone row. In a broader way, the idea of this row {G, A♯, F♯, A♯, F♯, B♯, E, B♯, E♯, C, D, C♯} seems to be employed as a determinant for the expanding cluster section in the same work (Ex.55):13
Thus the row may be considered as a structurally binding force in the work, even though it is used to shape radically different musical styles.

*Birdsong*

Imitations of birdsong in Sculthorpe's music are only used occasionally, and could be accounted for quite easily under the sub-headings of "Melody" or "New Instrumental Techniques". Birdsong is mentioned here more for its aesthetic implications than for its prominence in the music. Apart from the Australian accent, the languages and musics of the Aboriginals and the cries of birds and insects, Australia has few sounds which she can claim as her very own. Certainly Sculthorpe has not made so grand a gesture to the ornithological world as Messiaen, but birdsong is a significant element in his music. He introduced birdsong in *Irkanda I* (1955) before he had heard any of Messiaen's music. At the time it was probably a justification for including free elements in a style, the smaller structural units of which were strictly organized. The idea was abandoned until the works of the *Sun Music* period, in which the different patterns of high clusters represent bird-calls: attempts, by Sculthorpe's account, to populate the lonely landscape. Birdsong finds a fuller expression in the unmetred movements of *Tabuh Tabuhan* and *String Quartet No. 8*, where it is an amalgam of the *Irkanda I* and *Sun Music* examples (Ex.56–58):

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**Ex. 56**

\[ J = 96 \\
\]

*Irkanda I, m. 25-26*

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**Ex. 57**

*Tabuh Tabuhan, III; p.3, div.3-6*
Sculthorpe's new musical language, outlined above in five categories, is indeed in strong contrast to the highly personal style of the works which culminated in *Irkanda IV* and *String Quartet No. 6*. Each ingredient of the new style is organized according to rhythmic principles, which, if they were not established in the *Irkanda* period, are certainly derived from it. Like the progression of earlier works, the music of the *Sun Music* period gradually begins to show a refinement of structural design and a consolidation of those aspects of the composer's style which he chose to retain. The following chapter discusses each work in relation to these two processes.
5

Structural Procedures of the Sun Music Period

Many of the materials discussed in the previous chapter are hardly the stylistic property of a composer who uses them. In order to make their use personal, Sculthorpe adapted them to his special rhythmic units involving repetition. Of greater compositional significance is his use of an overall structural scheme, developed from the variational techniques of Irkanda IV, as described in Chapter 3. The nature of the materials in the post-1965 works, however, necessitate a different approach to structural organization since no longer is there a prominence of passages consisting of a melody with harmonic accompaniment. Thus, where it was possible to vary the accompaniment while keeping the melody constant, or to make the melody more complex using the same accompaniment, it came to be no longer so. Similarly, it became no longer possible to change the timbral qualities of a section by using techniques such as tremolando and sul ponticello, since much of the new material for these works is distinctive only because of its particular textural or timbral character.

Despite these differing circumstances, Sculthorpe still reintroduces sections with some variation from their initial appearances; but it is variation by the addition of other material rather than rewriting or rearranging the existing material. He quite often does this with two major sections of a work. After the separate statements of two distinctively different sections there will be a further section in which both are heard simultaneously, perhaps with some kind of variation in one of them. In Sun Music I, for example, the string cluster (m.19) returns (m.109) and is accompanied by free continuous glissandi of brass harmonics. Although it is the only instance of this kind of brass glissandi in the work, there is a single earlier passage involving glissandi of high string harmonics (m.79–86).

Sun Music I

In the Sun Music series there is a much subtler structural process than variation or the combination of two previously-used passages
into one single section. In *Sun Music I*, for example, the melody and the chord found in the first six measures can be shown to infiltrate the remainder of the work, often in rather unnoticeable ways. The motive of two falling minor sevenths, which was by Sculthorpe's admission a conscious attempt to change the intervallic patterns of his style, also outlines two tritone intervals separated by a major third (Ex.59):

The chord of measure 5 introduces the minor ninth interval as well as reinforcing the importance of the tritone. Except for the reappearance of the melody in a serialized section (m.63–78), the passage most closely derived from the opening is nonetheless not easily associated with the sound of the opening because of the evocative web of glissandi (Ex.60):
Here the melodic and harmonic intervals outlined by the opening six measures are formed between the stationary points of the texture. In almost all other parts of the work where intervals or chords are used there is a similar relationship. Even the serial section has a marked use of tritones and minor ninths in chords or for melodic intervals; and as well, there is a four-measure restatement of the falling minor sevenths of the opening melody. The section of the work which most resembles the ritualistic rhythmic style (m.87–92) represents another instance. Taking the form of a quadruple rhythmic canon, it consists mainly of unconventional string techniques such as knocking on the resonant part of the instrument, tapping the strings between the bridge and the tailpiece, quick upward glissandi, and high tone-clusters. Those conventional techniques which are employed involve only the intervals of the tritone, semitone and minor ninth.
Thus one structural element in the work is almost exclusively based upon the kernel of the opening six measures, although there is hardly any suggestion for the listener of a germinating process. Another structural element, that of the cluster, may be traced through the piece as a progression of textural variations, the differences among them being fundamentally one of size, position in the tonal range and rhythmic treatment. There are nine sections in *Sun Music I* based on the cluster. Two sections involve a cluster of five semitones performed by brass (m.7–16 and m.103–08), while the remainder, with the exception of the passage where the high tone-cluster is one of the components, have clusters of more than an octave span. Both of the two principal clusters (m.45–48 and m.103–08) are introduced by being divided into groups of smaller clusters which are then combined through a series of successive independent entries (Ex.61–62):
The second of these textures is derived from the rhythmic idea of the first, although the effect of each is unique. When the first cluster returns twice near the end of the work, the progressive entries are completely dispensed with; the rhythmic definition is now unnecessary for instant recognition of the coloration.

Sun Music for Voices and Percussion

*Sun Music for Voices and Percussion* (1966) is an attempt principally to explore new musical resources of the voice, and, to a very limited extent, of the piano. Although it is strongly based on the composer’s rhythmic structural unit, the very nature of the musical material, and the concept of the relationship between the choir, the percussion and the piano limits its capacity to be a direct successor to *Sun Music I*.

The essence of the difference is that *Sun Music for Voices and Percussion* is concerned with sound of no specified pitch, although a distinction between higher and lower pitch areas is made in each of the three constituent groups. A sound performed by voices of different tessitura at their comfortable mean pitch will be correspondingly differentiated. With percussion, the distinction between high and low pitch areas is brought about by the nature of the instruments employed; with the piano strings, Sculthorpe makes the distinction clear by dividing the compass into four broad areas of pitch: high, medium-high, medium-low and low. In spite of the occurrence of broad distinctions of pitch-difference, *Sun Music for Voices and Percussion* is Sculthorpe’s only through-written work that does not involve specific pitches; thus melody, harmony and tonal centring are totally precluded. In so composing a piece, Sculthorpe deprived himself of an important aspect of stylistic identification, and, indeed, of a strong device for contrast between sections. The composer further complicates this last problem by limiting the musical vocabulary in each group. The material for the piano, for instance, consists only of continuous glissandi on strings, wire-brush clusters and short glissandi from various parts of the compass.

*Sun Music for Voices and Percussion* is also a unique piece for this period because the three forces, the choir, the percussion and the piano, have, almost at all times, an equal importance in defining the musical substance of any section. Whereas, with the orchestral pieces, there is a tendency for some sections of the orchestra to be subservient to what is happening in a particular section, there is, here, a reliance on a combination of the three sections for the creation of distinctive textures.

Considering these characteristics, the structural concept under-
lying the work is different from that of *Sun Music I*. The limited range of the musical material means that the music can be organized in disparate rhythmic and textural ways without losing the sense of unification that repetition and variation give in the context of music where pitch relationships function. Even though it does not have the subtle logic of *Sun Music I*, it, nonetheless, has no feeling of structural uncertainty. It sounds like Sculthorpe’s music principally because its structural units, in their rhythmic organization, represent the lowest common denominator of his personal style, and there are no elements of the piece which could be attributed to any other composer’s style.

Finally it must be mentioned that *Sun Music for Voices and Percussion* was composed in little more than a day, a period which for Sculthorpe, whose compositional routine usually manifests itself as a painstaking struggle, is remarkably short for a piece of its duration. This is not to say that he conceived the musical material in this space of time. A few days earlier he had in fact written *Night Piece*, a much shorter and simpler work, which employs similar vocal and piano techniques, as accompaniment to a setting for soprano voices of a poem by Chris Wallace-Crabbe.² The circumstances, then, of its being composed in a short period of time, is another reason why the structure of *Sun Music for Voices and Percussion* is not as effective as that of *Sun Music I*, which involved months of planning and composing.

**Sun Music III**

Sculthorpe’s first work to include gamelan-like textures, *Sun Music III*, was, like *Sun Music I*, conceived and realized over quite a long period of time. Begun in 1966 at Yaddo, an artist’s colony in Saratoga Springs, it was not completed until a few months after the composer’s return to Australia in 1967. Despite its gamelan-like sections, which do not relate intervalically to most other sections of the work, *Sun Music III* is structured according to the same principle as *Sun Music I*. Five basic structural elements may be found in the work. The first is a cluster initially appearing at measure 1; the second, a tritone motive, played by timpani (m.5); the third, a semitone interval, which appears as an extension of the second, but has its own structural significance; the fourth, the technique of glissandi, applied to parts of almost all of the musical material; and the fifth, the gamelan-like figurations with their strong reliance upon the minor third and the major second intervals. Unlike *Sun Music I*, each of the threads may be followed through a kind of development, and there is a greater degree of intermingling and correlation amongst them. The cluster, for
example, initially covers a range of a minor tenth (m.1) and then reappears spread out over an additional octave (m.63) by extensive division and double-stopping of the strings. Next it is compressed into a microtonal high cluster (m.79–88 and m.119–30). Following this, a chord appears which may be interpreted as a very thinned-out cluster since it consists of semitonal intervals separated by larger intervals (m.139). Thus, here it is related to the thread of the semitonal interval. Finally the idea of this chord is transformed into a chord involving the tones used in the *gamelan*-like sections by means of large octave displacements of one tone in each semitonal interval (Ex.63):

![Ex. 63](image)

Thus, for the B and F♯ there is a B♭ and an F, and for the F♯ and C♯, a G and D; but the displacement is so great that the effect is that of a richly-decorated major chord. The progression of clusters, therefore, moves through the piece towards a kind of resolution at the end.

Similarly, the other elements form distinctive patterns. The tritone motive is transposed several times so that a progression of tonal areas is created for it. At the end it is combined with a double-bass figure from the last section of the work in order to achieve a resolution (Ex.64–65):

![Ex. 64](image)

![Ex. 65](image)
The tritone motive is also combined with the semitonal interval to form the basis of a quite long passage based on a *gamelan*-like figuration (Ex. 66):

![Ex. 66](image)

The analysis of *Sun Music III* according to these principles could develop into a study in its own right, since there are many important correlations between the various structural elements employed. Extensive analysis of this kind is not within the scope of the present study. The above treatment of *Sun Music III*, then, merely serves as a guideline to Sculthorpe’s methods of structural co-ordination.

**Sun Music IV**

Composed in a relatively short time during the long gestation period of *Sun Music III*, *Sun Music IV* is one of those works which is based principally on the material of previously composed works. Because of this it does not display the stylistic and structural simplicity of *Sun Music for Voices and Percussion*, but neither is its structural detail as well ordered as that of *Sun Music I* or *Sun Music III*. Nonetheless, it has been admired by Roger Covell, who sees it as a union of the *Sun Music* and *Irkanda* styles, and by John Hopkins, the conductor of the first performance, who believes it to be Sculthorpe’s most effectively shaped orchestral work. The composer himself considers it to be the most striking of the series.

Although this work follows the structural procedures of *Sun Music I* and *Sun Music III*, there are a number of elements which are difficult to justify. The opening chord for horns and winds (m. 2–3), for example, only appears once. Part of this chord, the three-note horn cluster (m. 1–3), does, however, reappear, transposed, for trumpets with flutter-tonguing (m. 123–25), but it is arguable that this brief transformed restatement is not obvious enough to be structurally effective. The importance of the clusters in *Sun Music IV* is, in itself, contentious: unlike *Sun Music I* and *Sun Music III*, where clusters and related chordal phenomena have considerable importance, there appear to be tenuous connections among the few clusters that appear in this piece. Indeed, the composer draws attention to this lack by the unexpected use of chimes with his two principal cluster sections (m. 67–78 and
m.99–112): the use of these four semitonal chime strokes, representing the only use of tuned percussion (excluding timpani) in the work, may be considered structurally eccentric and somewhat contrived.

The appearance of structurally unintegrated material contrasts strongly with the more obvious structural elements in the piece. In *Sun Music IV* there is a series of six related chords which occur intermittently, and which have their two lowest tones in common (Ex.67):

Ex. 67

Like the corresponding progression of clusters in *Sun Music III*, but in a more obvious way, these chords form a progression that moves towards a final resolution. Since these chords as well as the rhythmic textures of m.47–66 and m.125–33 are so firmly tied to a C tonality, the existence of isolated chords outside this field (for example m.1–3 and m.113–14) seems structurally difficult to justify.

On a broader level, the shape of the work is determined by the occurrence of two relatively long passages, both of which have been discussed in some detail in the previous chapter. These are the chordal glissandi section (m.9–18) and the primarily rhythmic texture (m.47–66). Although their harmonic content is quite similar, they are intended as contrasting sections. Both occur at the beginning, and in reverse order near the end, so that structurally they are the most important sections of the work.

**Tabuh Tabuhan**

*Tabuh Tabuhan* for wind quintet and percussion (1968) represents significant departures from the single movement structure and the idea of metred music. It is in five movements, the first, third and fifth of which are constructed of *gamelan*-like passages, harmonically accompanied melodies similar to *Sun Music III* (m.77–90), and short chordal sections similar to those of *Sun Music IV*. The second and fourth movements, by contrast, are unmetred, and involve new instrumental techniques such as those presented in Bruno Bartolozzi’s *New Sounds for Woodwinds* as
well as fragmented sequences of tones, and birdsong imitations. Structurally, therefore, the work is reminiscent of String Quartet No. 6, whose slow outer movements contrast with a quick central movement; and it is also a precedent for works such as String Quartet No. 8 (1969), Rain (1970), Love 200 (1970), Landscape (1971), How the Stars Were Made (1971) and Rites of Passage (1972–73), which all have broadly symmetrical arrangements of contrasting movements, or large sections. The unmetred, or spatio-temporal, organization also plays an important role in later compositions, particularly String Quartet No. 8, Music for Japan and Rites of Passage.

Apart from Rain, Tabuh Tabuhan is Sculthorpe's only work with a great emphasis on the use of borrowed gamelan passages. Its success lies in the extent of the stylistic integration of these sections with elements which are an intrinsic part of the composer's personal style. The integration is founded on the limited textural possibilities of the wind quintet, vibraphone, timpani and untuned percussion combination, but mainly on the extensive use of ostinato techniques. That is, both the borrowed gender wayang material and the composed melodic material are accompanied by static harmonic figurations which are organized as ostinati. The chordal sections, which rarely display a sense of harmonic progression, naturally tend to relate more closely to the tonicality of the composed melodic passages than to the borrowed material, but their principal function is either to articulate the beginnings or ends of longer sections or to act as connecting devices for sections which may be too stylistically dissimilar.

The second and fourth movements of Tabuh Tabuhan, though an attempt by Sculthorpe to free himself from the tyranny of the barline, are so uncharacteristic of his later spatio-temporal movements and sections, especially in their rhythmic asymmetry, that one could easily argue that they were written by a different composer. Later, in his use of this mode of presentation, Sculthorpe always preserves a strong feeling of balance through his characteristic techniques of repetition, but in Tabuh Tabuhan this procedure seems to have been neglected. In the spatio-temporal scheme, which is fundamentally a division of the total duration of a movement into three-second units, the attacks tend to be arbitrarily positioned within the units, and no systematic attempt is made to balance the statements of musical phrases even though there is considerable repetition through the use of ostinati. This shortcoming is probably caused by the rhythmic acceleration towards a climax of irregular horn glissandi, but, as with other climactic passages in Sculthorpe's music, a feeling for phrasal balance is always maintained.

Although Tabuh Tabuhan does not display the structural
subtlety possessed by many of Sculthorpe's works of this period, it undoubtedly finds a very successful formula in its symmetrical arrangement of movements. This formula, though it governs the structure of peripheral works such as the improvisatory Landscape and the stylistic collage of Love 200 and less effective pieces like Rain and How the Stars Were Made, is nonetheless responsible for supporting the stylistic integration of String Quartet No. 8 and for providing Sculthorpe with a satisfactory vehicle for a work of the length of Rites of Passage.

Sun Music II

If the manipulation of previously written material was a habit of Sculthorpe's in his Irkanda period as a means of finally discarding inferior passages and of moulding the remaining material into effective pieces, then the composition of Sun Music II (1969) represents another return to this procedure in order to be able to produce an orchestral piece in a short period of time. The origins of Sun Music II lie in two passages of music that were composed especially to give the Sun Music Ballet (1968) a rhythmically active contrast to the slow-moving textures of Sun Music I, Sun Music III and Sun Music IV. The first is a vocal piece called Monkey Dance, which is based on the Balinese ritual dance drama, the ketjak. Apart from its function of rhythmic contrast, it was included in the ballet as a vocal companion-piece to Sun Music for Voices and Percussion. For Sun Music II, where it appears from measure 11 to measure 150, the sounds which were originally intended to imitate the monkey calls of the ketjak are scored, according to the pattern of the vocal inflexions, for drums of various pitches, namely high bongos, low bongos, timbales and timpani. Later, when the orchestra enters, the composer introduces indefinitely pitched very low and very high clusters. Thus, no structural level of pitch relationships occurs in this part of the work.

The second passage was originally used as an alternative ending for Sun Music IV, Robert Helpmann, the choreographer, feeling that the ballet should end in an explosive way and not just fade into silence. Its first major section (m. 151–62, excluding strings) was, in fact, composed to punctuate the fourteen-measure chordal string glissandi section of Sun Music IV (m. 137–50). The other appearance of this section in the new ending (m. 177–90) also included the Sun Music IV string passage. For Sun Music II Sculthorpe simply took this ballet ending and wrote new string parts to replace the Sun Music IV material.

Sun Music II consists, then, of an orchestration of Monkey Dance followed by an adaptation of the alternative ending of Sun
Music IV. The union succeeds because, like the first part, the second is in the ritualistic rhythmic style outlined in Chapter 4. The second part also involves material of no definite pitch. Moreover, the second part seems to continue in the spirit of the first part as the piece moves towards its climactic conclusion. There are, however, other structural levels functioning in Sun Music II. The most obvious is the inclusion of a new section as an introduction (m.1–10) so that the work has some sense of return. Furthermore, the introduction contains the timpani tritone motive of the second part; and this is also, however momentarily, included in the first part (m.79–86 and m.97–102).\(^9\) In doing this Sculthorpe was consciously creating a structural element in the piece so that the stylistic gap between the first and second parts might be narrowed.

String Quartet No. 8

If Sculthorpe’s work is considered in relation to his objective of creating a style which, as much as possible, is purged of European musical and aesthetic influences, then String Quartet No. 8 (1969) emerges as one of his most successful pieces. Despite his numerous compositional techniques designed to achieve a non-European music, until String Quartet No. 8 a pattern of unresolved conflict between European and non-European aspects of style is evident in all his works. Although the tension of one against the other is ultimately responsible for the individualistic style, this quartet has a delicately poised balance which hitherto had not been achieved. Oddly enough, more than any other work of this period, it reinstates the tonal language of the Irkanda period, but it treats melody and harmony with stylistic restraint, while rhythm loses its rigid proportionality in the unmetred movements and its sense of urgency in the metred movements. String Quartet No. 8 is also remarkable for its fusion of many of the elements of Sculthorpe’s style: the early solo string writing, birdsong imitations, the ritualistic rhythmic style, melody with static harmonic accompaniment, material derived from Balinese music, and new instrumental sounds are all integrated into the work in such a way that contrasts are limited almost to tempo and rhythmic style.

On a broad scale, the structure is similar to the symmetrical arrangement of contrasting movements of Tabuh Tabuhan. The first movement consists of a relaxed, rhythmically-free cello solo, with a short birdsong interlude employing the other instruments. This is balanced by the fifth movement, which differs from the first through the employment of a change of tonal centre (A instead of G) and the addition of a final chord. The second movement is based on rhythms heard during the Balinese practice of pounding
Like the second movement of *String Quartet No. 6*, this movement has a slow central section, a stylized melody with static harmonic accompaniment similar to the related sections of *Sun Music III* and *Tabuh Tabuhan*. The second movement is balanced stylistically by the fourth movement, although this is unrelated to the Balinese idea. The central movement, like the outer movements, is given the rhythmic freedom of spatio-temporal organization, and consists of a fusion of the style of the slow section of the second movement with the melodic characteristics of the solo cello movements.

Some aspects of the individual movements need to be discussed in detail, particularly the first, third and fifth movements, since in Chapter 4 the two styles of the second movement have been amply treated and the fourth movement was specifically discussed. Unlike *Tabuh Tabuhan*, where the spatio-temporal organization is utilized to effect a rhythmic acceleration of freely moving parts, resulting in an impression of sexual climax, in *String Quartet No. 8* it is employed as a means to free the music of the proportional characteristics of barred music so that a totally relaxed rhythmic style may be achieved. The quality of the style is analogous to that of the music of the Japanese *shakuhachi*, though it is doubtful that the composer was thinking of this when composing the piece. *Shakuhachi* music is constructed of melodic phrases of two to perhaps as many as ten tones which are performed with one breath according to rhythms which, though they may exhibit a broad concept of proportion, are not based on an exact proportion of whole number relationships. Between each phrase there is a short break in which a breath is taken, but what is significant is that there is rarely a sense of urgency to move to the next phrase. The overall rhythmic style is, then, as natural and as relaxed as breathing.

Much of the austere quality of the outer movements of *String Quartet No. 8* derives from the long-held tones, the slow-moving phrases and the reliance on a limited number of chordal and melodic intervals. Chordal intervals are restricted to the harsh minor ninth and the ambivalent tritone, while melody moves mainly by the minor second, diminished fifth, major third and occasional minor third.

As mentioned above, the third movement combines the stylistic characteristics of the outer movements with an adaptation of the stylized melodic-harmonic music of the slow section of the second movement. The principal melodic fragment of the third movement is borrowed from a section of Five Aspects of a Slow Theme, the central movement of the early *Sonata* for solo violin (1955). This melody has especially close affinities with Sculthorpe's post-*Irkanda* style of melody and accompaniment. The spatio-temporal scheme is used in this movement not only to free melody from the
restrictions of metre and note proportions, but also to free the relationship of harmonic rhythm and melody. Nonetheless, the principle of frustrated resolution still applies, but Sculthorpe introduces a third element into what had been until this time a two-part relationship (Ex.68):

The dissonance or consonance of the tones of the melody need to be considered with respect to the tonal centre, B, but as well to the dissonant chord of F♯, B, c, e. That is, although certain tones of the melody may be consonant with the tonal centre they will be almost always unresolved because of the chord.

The third movement of *String Quartet No. 8* is one of Sculthorpe’s few single movements involving a song-like continuity of melody. Although the texture is full-bodied, it also has the restraint of the austere first and last movements and something of the detachment of the ritualistic rhythmic movements. Sculthorpe’s achievement in this work lies, therefore, in the effective containment of his leaning towards an idiom involving musical gestures identifiable as being specifically European in character.

**Music for Japan**

Coming at the end of a period of much experimentation and stylistic consolidation, *Music for Japan* (1970) represents Sculthorpe’s most successful orchestral work until *Mangrove* (1979). It may be considered as an additional *Sun Music* as it exploits the possibilities of orchestral sonorities rather than pitch
relationships, but, unlike the *Sun Music* series and other works of this period with the exception of *Sun Music II* and *Sun Music for Voices and Percussion*, it contains nothing which might easily be recognizable as melody. It does, however, involve a strong harmonic structural element.

The title of the work was chosen not because of any Japanese musical influence but because it was especially composed for the Australian Youth Orchestra who performed it in Japan at Expo 70. In spite of this, a few superficial elements of style and mood appear to be Japanese in flavour. The very opening chord is punctuated by an accelerating drum figure that is similar to the *kakko* rhythms of *gagaku*, while the quality of the sul ponticello string clusters evokes the thin timbre of many Japanese instruments. The work has a simplicity of design and a clarity of articulation which make its title seem quite appropriate.

*Music for Japan* embodies a fusion of most of the structural and stylistic characteristics either developed or isolated in the *Sun Music* period. The same principles of structure apply, and there is an adaptation of the symmetrical arrangement of sections. Like *Sun Music IV* and *Tabuh Tabuhan* there are, spaced throughout the work, related chords and tones. There is, moreover, a balance between sections with free rhythm and sections with strict metrical organization, and, although there is no melody, there are sections where the motion is quite static and sections of considerable rhythmic activity.

The work is in five principal sections, the musical material of which has mostly been commented upon in Chapter 4. The first section consists of two main elements: a long-held chord, and a sonority created by the free and independent motion of many instrumental lines. The second section, for strings and orchestral punctuation, is concerned with the growth of a cluster by addition of tones above and below. The third is a ritualistic rhythmic section for drums with orchestral punctuation, while the fourth is also primarily of rhythmic interest but is more decisive. The fourth moves towards the climax of a dense low cluster which resolves to a simple major triad. This is followed by the fifth section, a variation of the first section.

The structure may, in a way, be considered symmetrical, since the idea of the changing clusters in section 2 is utilized as a large part of the musical material of section 4. Because the progression from section 3 to section 4 has the same feeling of continuity as the progression from the first to the second parts of *Sun Music II*, *Music for Japan* has a stronger sense of forward motion than it would with a more obvious symmetrical shape.

The structural principle underlying the work is manifest in two ways. The first of these is the serial organization of some of the
musical material. Although the use of the twelve-tone row has been treated in Chapter 4, it is useful to summarize its significance in *Music for Japan*. The tones of Nono’s all-interval row are used to organize the texture of section 1 (sections 1 to 3). The characteristics of expansion and contraction implied by this row are then applied to the clusters in section 2 (4 to 9) and to a lesser extent to the clusters in section 4.\(^\text{13}\) In the connecting passage at 9, and in section 3 between 9 and 10, the free pizzicato patterns are based directly on the row; and the composer thinks of the whole of section 3 as being rhythmically related to the expansion-contraction idea since the fundamental rhythmic pattern is firstly 3 + 3 + 2, then 3 + 2 + 3 and finally 2 + 3 + 3. The double bass part undergoes a similar process of contraction and expansion. At the opening of the piece the basses play a low octave E. As the work progresses there is a liberal use of the technique of playing two adjacent strings between the bridge and tailpiece, which narrows the interval. There is a further narrowing to the single attack of footstamping in sections 2 and 3. In the cluster at the climax, the interval expands to a minor second, and, finally, the octave returns.

The harmonic structural element is more obvious, for, like that of *Sun Music IV*, it is based on chords with a common lowest tone, in this case, E. These are illustrated in Example 69:

The chords at 1 and 5, which correspond structurally to those at 10 and 12, are not resolved in the first instance, but finally resolve to the chord at 9, which is similar to those at the conclusions of *Irkanda IV*, *Sun Music III*, *Sun Music IV* and *String Quartet No. 8*. Similarly, the cluster between E\(^1\) and B resolves to the major triad of E. Throughout the work, whenever there is a feeling of tonicality it is that of E, except for section 2, which gravitates around G; but even there, the lowest tone, at the point where the cluster is largest, is E, since E is the lowest tone of the expansion. Similarly, the lowest tone of most of the free pizzicato sections is also E.
Despite these compositional details, *Music for Japan* seems to be at the same time a much simpler and much more direct statement than any work of the *Sun Music* series. Although it does not involve textures with the harshness of some of those of *Sun Music I* or *Sun Music IV*, it displays qualities of austerity and restraint, particularly in section 2, and, later, qualities of unrestrained forcefulness. Both these characteristics may be interpreted as essentially Japanese in spirit. It thus seems that the composer was attempting to translate his view of the Australian experience into terms which the Japanese might comprehend more readily, and also to indicate clearly his cultural alliances with the East.
Stylistic Refinement in Night Pieces

Since the 1950s composers have experienced difficulties in writing for solo instruments. Stringed, woodwind and brass instruments each have their own intrinsic limitations: one does not expect solo pieces to be much more than explorations of new techniques, which, no matter how impressive, generally defy the mechanical principles by which these instruments have gradually evolved. For example, the experiments of Bruno Bartolozzi and others showing that conventional wind instruments can produce microtonal scales and chords, if of imperfect tone quality, probably will not have far-reaching application if only because it would seem to be impossible to relate microtonal passages and these kinds of tonally-arbitrary chords to any structured tonal system.

The reason for the development of these techniques is, however, symptomatic in twentieth-century music of the growing importance of instrumental sonority as a structural determinant. A fugue or a sonata may be scored in any number of ways without affecting the significance of its structure; but to rescore the Sun Music series or indeed most post-serial music would be totally to destroy its original structural meaning.

The piano is one of the only solo instruments which possesses the capability of a full expression of the tonal language of modern music, but its range of sonorities has, with the exception of sonorities obtained by manipulating the interior of the instrument, developed little since the time of Debussy. Consequently, in writing for the piano a composer like Sculthorpe has had to think in completely different ways from those he used in composing chamber and orchestral music. In creating Night Pieces, Sculthorpe was forced to return to a pre-Sun Music concept, to a language in which pitch and rhythmic relationships are the prime structural determinants. To a certain extent this was also true for String Quartet No. 8, which falls between the Sun Music series and the later orchestral works, Music for Japan and Rain, but this also contains elements that are the result of the exploration of string sonorities and ritualistic passages which involve a complex
In Japan with (l to r) Yoritsune Matsudaira, Mrs Podpalova, Earle Ernst, Mahdi Emandjra, Helen Bryant (now Lo) and Ton de Leeuw. This photograph was taken by one of the Japanese gagaku musicians.
With Tass and Maisie Drysdale at their home near Gosford, NSW. Photograph by Lance Nelson reproduced with his permission.
Cover of the first issue of Music Now showing Sir Russell Drysdale's drawing The Ancient Maestro—Benefit Performance, Sydney Opera House AD 2025, from "The Seven Ages of Sculthorpe". Reproduced by permission of Donald Peart.
With (l to r) Jeannie Lewis, members of the rock band Tully, John Hopkins and Ellis D. Fogg after the first performance of *Love 200* in 1970. Photograph reproduced by permission of the Australian Broadcasting Commission.
Outside *The Thatched Cottage* at Glynde, Sussex, in 1971. Reproduced by permission of Peter Sculthorpe.
Staging of Rebirth from *Rites of Passage* in the Australian Opera's 1974 production, designed by Kenneth Rowell and directed by Jaap Flier. Reproduced by permission of the Australian Opera.
The composer after a visit to Bali in 1974.
Programme design by Charles Blackman for Eliza Fraser Sings. Reproduced by permission of the Seymour Group.
The composer's brother Roger, and mother Edna, in 1979. Photograph by Joe Faust reproduced with his permission.
The composer's house in Holdsworth Street, Woollahra. Photograph by Joe Faust reproduced with his permission.
The studio at Holdsworth Street. Photograph by Joe Faust reproduced with his permission.
rhythmic interrelationship of the four parts. Nonetheless, Sculthorpe approaches composition for string quartet in much the same way as for solo piano because he considers that both are what he terms “exposed idioms”. He admits that in composing for the orchestra one tends to rely on its great expressive range, and that the refinement process is not difficult. With the string quartet and more especially the piano, the composer is forced to reassess the whole basis of his craft. Instead of the search for new ideas and interesting modes of expression, the emphasis shifts to deciding what is inadmissible or admissible in one’s personal style. Perhaps that is why the Sonatina (1954) could establish so early as much of Sculthorpe’s musical language as it did, and why Night Pieces, though modest in concept, crystallizes many aspects of his musical style and aesthetic and is even prophetic of later developments.

The use of serial procedures

In undertaking to compose several short piano works for inclusion in the piano syllabus of the Australian Music Examinations Board, Sculthorpe decided firstly to return to an earlier attempt to write short serial pieces. Haiku had originally been composed in the university classroom as an example of the technique of using serialized pitches and, to a limited extent, serialized rhythms (Ex.70–71). Of greater significance, however, was the aesthetic behind Sculthorpe’s teaching method. Given that the tone-row is an impersonal musical entity capable of being manipulated in countless stylistic ways, Sculthorpe’s approach was to achieve a kind of uniformity by having his students attempt to represent a specific mood in their pieces. This was conveniently supplied by the Japanese poetic form, haiku, which is based on the power of suggestion, and is brief and terse. Thus, in many ways, it parallels Webern’s approach to serialism in making the most pregnant and aphoristic use of limited resources. The use of the haiku was, however, not intended to promote Webern-esque pieces, but rather to be contrary to the European practice of which Webern is representative—of writing abstract music. Sculthorpe considers what he describes as “writing music about music” to be a perverse idea, since almost all pre-Renaissance and all non-Western music either has a definite social or religious function or is directly related in subject matter to humankind or nature.

Although the serial process had been useful to Sculthorpe in the teaching of composition, he had rejected it from his own vocabulary as early as the Sonatina. He did, however, make some concession in the early 1960s. Ian Cugley has noted that “after he wrote Irkanda IV he said that he felt that he would return before too long to serial technique—where before he had been trapped in the system he now had the ability to use serialism for his own
musical ends". Even though *Haiku* was composed as a teaching exercise in 1964, Sculthorpe did try to make it part of a more substantial piece, *Three Haiku*, but abandoned the project probably more because of pressure of work in fulfilling the commissions of *String Quartet No. 6* and *Sun Music I* than because of any temperamental or aesthetic reaction to the serial process. *Haiku* did find its way into *Sun Music I*, with changes and additions that were related to the musical material of the orchestral piece.²

The creation of *Night*

With the piano music commission in 1970, Sculthorpe began with the idea of returning to the original concept of *Three Haiku*, but found that he could not easily become involved with serial techniques. He decided, therefore, to adapt the section of *Sun Music I*, making it into a self-sufficient piece. A piano reduction of the sixteen-measure section was used as the basis of *Night*, with octave displacements and alterations to rhythm and dynamics. The most significant changes were determined by the inadequacy of the sixteen measures as a self-sufficient musical structure. In the context of *Sun Music I* the last tone of measure 78 fades into a pianississimo string texture; the section, therefore, appears to be inconclusive if viewed outside this context. In order to make the structure of *Night* complete in itself, a more emphatic ending was added; also, as the climax came too early, a four-measure introduction was composed so that the climax was positioned in measure 11 of a twenty-measure structure.

Despite this reworking procedure, the piece is still somewhat flawed by the hybrid nature of its materials. The section derived from *Haiku* is stylistically comprehensible only in terms of its serialization of pitches based on the row of Webern's *Variations for Piano Op. 27* (1936);³ the uncharacteristic intervals of measures 13–14 may be considered stylistically inadmissible if one is not aware that the descending minor seventh is the principal motive of *Sun Music I*;⁴ and, as both the introduction and measures 15–16 use techniques of the earlier *Irkanda* style, they are unrelated to the remainder of the piece in some ways.

A thorough analysis of *Night* would do little to advance one's understanding of Sculthorpe's musical style, for it is more closely related to the *Irkanda* period than to the post-*Sun Music* period.⁵ Admittedly, the way the composer has achieved some kind of compatibility with the *Irkanda* style in his manipulation of Webern's tone-row is interesting, but its significance is limited, and its substance hard to define except by pointing out vertical combinations of successive members of the row which form chords characteristic of Sculthorpe's harmonic idiom. Although Scul-
Stylistic Refinement in Night Pieces

Thorpe has seen fit to include Night in Night Pieces, its ultimate significance from the point of view of this study is that, for several reasons, it acted as a kind of catalyst for the more original Snow, Moon and Flowers and Stars.

In order to mould Night from the existing sixteen measures in Sun Music I, even though the compositional aspect of it involved writing only five new measures, Sculthorpe was forced to reassess the principles of his craft. In this case it meant going back to a different period and to material which posed unusual stylistic problems. The four measures of the introduction are based on combinations of successive members of the last six tones of the row: the chord of measure 1 is derived from \{9, 10, 11, 12\}; the melodic fragment following, from \{9, 8, 7\}; the chord defined by the A\# and the first left-hand chord in measure 3, from \{8, 9, 10, 11\}; the chord defined by the last two notes of the third measure and the first two of the fourth measure, also from \{9, 10, 11, 12\}; and the last melodic fragment, from \{9, 10, 11\}. This observation has little significance in a strict serial context: the composer, whether consciously or not, has simply extracted from the row certain harmonic and melodic entities, but certainly with no respect for serial procedure. As well as following parts of the sequence of the row, these four or five fragments are, considered separately, very familiar entities in Sculthorpe’s own tonal language; considered together they inhabit a tonal field which could not conceivably have been created by anyone else.

The most impressive aspect of the four-measure introduction is that it completely transforms the structural concept of the piece. The serial section now seems to grow out of the first four measures almost like a variation. The opening chord is repeated and the melodic fragment following is heard as a kind of inversion of the characteristic three-note fragment of measures 2 and 3: that is, a step in one direction followed by a leap in the other. The concept of the serial section proceeding as a variation of the first four measures is further strengthened by the appearance of the repeated characteristic chords of measure 7 and by yet another variant of the three-note fragment between measures 10 and 11. Now, too, the harmonic calm of measures 13 and 14 is more acceptable in relation to the tonal character of the introduction than it was before, following from the serial section alone.

In the process of transforming a passage from an orchestral work into a piece for piano, the composer has thus consciously recreated an earlier stage of his style in a refined as well as an obvious way. This project occupied considerably more time than was expected, but merely presaged the long period of composition devoted to Snow, Moon and Flowers and Stars, which, unlike Night, represented serious attempts by the composer to create perfect paradigms of his own musical language.
Japanese influences in *Night Pieces*

Although the compositional thought-processes followed directly from the work on *Night*, the inspiration for *Snow, Moon and Flowers* is taken from Japanese sources. In Japanese literature *setsugekka* is one of several combinations of poetic topics, and refers specifically to snow, moon and flowers, a traditional trinity of beauty. There is, for example a *haiku* which illustrates the link between the three words:

Setsugekka ichi-do-ni miyura utsugi kana
(Teitoku, d. 1653)

This may be translated:

It lets one see
Snow, moon, and flowers—all at once
Oh, Utsugi. 6

The significance of this poem is that the small white flowers on the *utsugi* shrub (*Deutzia scabra*) have the appearance of snow when viewed in the moonlight.

Immediately one recognizes two connections with Sculthorpe’s aesthetic: firstly that music should be related in some way to nature, and, secondly, that the power of suggestion, of the association of ideas, is an important factor in an impressionistic music. *Night Pieces* is in fact inscribed with another impressionistic *haiku*:

The moon one circle
Stars numberless
Sky dark green. 7

The correlation between *Night Pieces* and Japanese culture is also found on technical and aesthetic levels. In all traditional Japanese arts, the pursuit of technical perfection is of prime concern. There is a concept, *miyabi*, which indicates elegance, taste and the avoidance of the ugly and inappropriate. Similarly, in painting, the law of form (*keisho*) forbids all exaggerations, peculiarities and grimaces. With *haiku*, perfection is sought on a heightened plane because the form is aphoristic; there is even less room for any kind of exaggeration.

The miniature forms of *Stars* and of the individual sections of *Snow, Moon and Flowers* are, then, a direct response to the principles of traditional Japanese art. As with Japanese painting which has dozens of specific laws governing such attitudes to the way, for example, that bamboo is painted in different seasons, Sculthorpe has attempted to codify the laws of his own style within a very brief, terse framework. The four pieces constitute a set of variations, four different ways of using a number of common
musical ideas. This, in itself, may be considered a Japanese concept rather than a European one, for the pieces are not strictly thematic variations, nor are they textural variations on a given harmonic structure. The concept of the variations is more akin to Hokusai's *Hundred Views of Fuji*, a series of woodblock prints which depict Mt. Fuji from many different angles in different seasons and different moods. There is the shape of the mountain and the personal equation of the artist's sense of proportion and line to unify the series, but each print has its own meaning, its own mysterious depth and beauty (*yugen*). Each is complete in itself, but has added weight when viewed alongside its counterparts.

This parallel with Japanese painting may appear to be somewhat fanciful, despite the fact that the composer has granted credence to it. It does, however, seem necessary to the author that the special quality possessed by these pieces needs to be given some verbal expression. This can only be done on an extremely abstract level. Indeed, on the surface the four pieces have very tenuous programmatic bases. There may be a suggestion of lightly falling snowflakes in the slow *misterioso ostinato* of Snow, and the way that it ends, without cadence, perhaps parallels the cessation of falling snow. With Moon there is only the high distant calm of some of the sonorities, and with Flowers there is the suggestion of blossoming or unfolding. The texture of *Stars* has a closer relation to the Aboriginal legend that the stars were made when one of the ancestors threw a burning log into the sea, and the sparks flew up into the sky. These observations, although significant, are nonetheless banal in relation to the oriental spirit that pervades the four pieces.

Considering the importance the composer places on this aesthetic, and his practice of working Asian styles into his music, it is surprising that neither *Snow, Moon and Flowers* nor *Stars* has any obvious relationship to Japanese traditional music, or, for that matter, to Indonesian music. This is principally because the pieces are strongly based on a harmonic concept which, though simple, is an uncharacteristically dominating force. That is, there are no other works except for juvenilia and theatre music which are conceived wholly as harmonic structures; but it is also true that these pieces are shorter than anything else, and that some larger pieces do contain longer harmonic sections. Thus it is possible to examine the architectonic structures of the piano pieces solely on an harmonic basis, as well as to consider harmony as one of the fundamental variational factors.

*Harmony*

Like the harmonic sections of earlier works, *Night Pieces* employ
prolongation devices, so that one harmonic unit may extend from
one to eight measures. Nonetheless, the pieces are unique in that
the harmonic changes that occur form progressions which have
the strength of simple progressions in diatonic harmony but are,
naturally enough, fashioned according to Sculthorpe's own
principles. In Example 72 there is an outline of the harmonic
structure of each piece. It shows that each piece, with the exception
of Snow has a five-part structure. These are, with commentary:

Section A: Initial chordal prolongation
In Flowers there are two substantially different chords, the
second being a resolution of the first.
In Stars the section is repeated with some tones added below
at the octave, and there is also an introduction (m.1–2) and a
bridge passage between the two statements.

Section B: Second chordal prolongation
In Flowers there are three chords, the progression from the
first two resolving to the third, but this section may be
considered as a variation of section A. There is also a bridge
passage between section B and section C.

Section C: Cadence or resolution
In Snow and Stars the chord of section B resolves to that of
section C.
In Moon a chord is introduced which provides a plagal-like
cadence to a reappearance of the tonal centre of section B.
In Flowers there is a strong cadence but of the four pieces it is
the only one which is not fully closed.

Section D: Return to section A with slight variation
In Stars there are two varied sections.

Section E: Final cadence
Snow has no final cadence.

It is clear from the outline that the harmonic structures of Snow
and Stars are quite closely related, but there is also a complex
system of tonal interrelationships among all of the pieces. This is
not so much between specific chordal formations as between
chords of different constitution which are based on common root-
tones. Figure 3 is intended to show these relationships and their
degree of occurrence. In some ways the results are misleading, and
so the figure should be studied in close conjunction with the score.
Undoubtedly the tonal centre of A♯ is the dominating force, but
this is represented by the greatest number of chordal formations.
The tonal centre of E, though it is the concluding tonicality of
Stars, occurs most often as an unresolved chord, invariably with
the tone, C, added below, in the course of the relevant sections,
while that of B, occurring much less, is the concluding tonal centre
of both Moon and Flowers. The tonal centre of E♯ does not
really occur in chordal form, but is almost always found as a
Figure 3  The structure of tonal areas
bridge figuration which functions as a kind of dominant to the A♭
sections.

The triadic relationship of E, A♭, B is the strongest tonal force in
operation, and this is in keeping with Sculthorpe's tendency to
create harmonic change either by adding a major third below an
existing chord, or by adding a minor third above. Indeed, this
procedure can be seen in Snow and especially Stars, both of which
rely on the A♭ to E to C to A♭ progression, but even in Flowers in
the return to section A from the E(C) tonal centre, there is this
effect, because the A♭ of the relatively untriadic principal chord
(m.19) has great melodic prominence. It is also noteworthy that
there are upward resolutions of A♭ to B in Moon and A to D♭ in
Flowers. Although these relationships are of a different character,
they are, nonetheless, based on the interval of the third.

The significance of all these observations is, however, limited,
without an examination of the actual chordal relationships.
Again, as with the self-imposed restrictions of tonality, the
composer has standardized both the kinds of chords used and the
rules of progression. It is not that these principles do not exist in
earlier periods; but in works like Irkanda IV and String Quartet
No. 6 the harmony is much less systematic and perhaps more
complex, and in pieces of the Sun Music period harmony has a
comparatively minor status. Another essential difference is the
absence in the piano pieces of a harmony which is tied to melody;
the melodic fragments are intrinsically part of the chordal
language and do not relate to chords in successions of appoggiatura
as they had done until this time.

In Chapter 2 it was established that there are two categories of
chords in Sculthorpe's music. There are those that involve at least
one major seventh interval and which can usually be described as
decorated triads, or be related to the triadic concept in some way;
and there are those that do not contain major sevenths and are
based upon a combination of tones from the anhemitonic
pentatonic scale. The former may be quite harmonically stable,
not necessarily seeking a resolution, but they are always resolvable
to a chord of the latter category. The simple principle underlying
this operation is the fact that the major seventh seeks a resolution
to the octave. In these resolutions, as has been discussed in
Chapter 2, the higher tone is common to both chords. However, it
may not always be necessary for the lower tone to fall a semitone:
the very fact that the dissonant lower tone disappears in the second
chord is enough to secure the resolution. This procedure is totally
systematized in the piano pieces. There is only ever one common
tone between the chord and the chord of resolution: the fifth of the
tonic of the resolution. This parallels the perfect cadence in
diatonic harmony, except that the fifth in Sculthorpe's system can
never be the bass tone as a major seventh interval has to occur
below it. With a progression of two chords of the first category
there is, again paralleling tonal harmony, usually more than one
common tone, and this is precisely why the addition of thirds
above and below chords is a prominent characteristic of
progression.

There is mention above of the theory that in these pieces
Sculthorpe has crystallized his rules of composition. This is
certainly true for rhythmic organization and some aspects of
melodic design, but the harmonic principles discussed above
cannot be called rules since they were not consciously applied. The
composer has indeed refined his harmonic language, but he has
achieved this state by months of experimentation with all the
possible variables of his musical materials. In this respect it is
illuminating to examine the order of composition, because it
reflects the degree of crystallization. Moon was composed first in
quite a short time, and it contains harmonic procedures not found
in its companion pieces (for example, the left-hand fragment of
measure 8 and the plagal-like cadence of measure 9). Moon was
followed by Flowers, which achieves a greater perfection within a
more ambitious harmonic structure but also contains some ideas
that are seemingly inappropriate (for example measures 15–16) to
the composer’s system. Snow, which was composed in a
surprisingly long period of six weeks, is the most simple and the
most perfect, while Stars, inheriting this harmonic perfection, is
thus able to be more complex and more flamboyant.

Melodic and rhythmic variation

To this point only the harmonic variable has been discussed, and it
has been shown that the composer chooses to view a number of
tonal and chordal concepts from four contrasting angles. The
rhythmic and melodic constants and variables are much more
accessible and are, in fact, formalized in a conscious way by the
composer. The rhythmic treatment given to each of the harmonic
structures is the most variable factor, as it supplies the individual
character of each piece. Again, if one follows the compositional
order, a definite pattern emerges. Firstly it is clear that from the
outset the composer has decided to derive all motivic material
from the tones of the chords, rather than introduce a separate
melodic level, but, although Moon begins in this way, its central
section is reminiscent of the harmonic units of earlier pieces. In
Flowers the tones of the motive are confined to those of the chords,
and there is also the introduction of a broken figuration in a
constant semiquaver motion. In Snow this becomes a five-tone
ostinato, and the opening section may even be considered
unchordal; certainly the introduction of the tone, c, makes the
sequence depart slightly from the usual triadic-based formation (the c adds a major third to the already existent minor third of B above A\(^b\)). There is an argument, moreover, that the five tones of the opening of Snow link together the formations of the opening chords of Moon and Flowers. Finally, Stars becomes a combination of the ostinato idea of Snow and the semiquaver figuration of Flowers. The only information which need be added to this brief description is that the cadence-points are necessarily of greater rhythmic freedom in order both to be effectively articulated or to produce momentary calm.

If there is one absolute self-imposed rule in Sculthorpe’s music it is that everything repeated must be varied in at least some slight way. Thus one finds that even the immediate repetitions of the two- and three-measure motives and figurations are varied. In Moon and Flowers there is a falling minor third of some melodic significance, which is transposed a minor third higher on its second statement. In Stars, where the motive is replaced by a figuration, one of the tones is changed to a tone a minor third higher, and the short fifth and eighth measures of the unit differ slightly. With Snow the minor third transposition does not occur, since the sequence of the ostinato has to be maintained. The sequence is actually broken on the last note of the section, but more for reasons of facilitating the change to a new section than of being faithful to an abstract compositional principle.\(^{12}\) Because of the metrical organization of the first section, the five-note ostinato is, however, being constantly varied, and one finds that a different tone falls on the strong beats of measures 1, 2, 3, 5 and 6 (one tone is tied over the fourth measure, and then repeated, in order to make this rhythmic organization possible). It is significant that the order of accentuation is also the order of tones in the sequence.

The absoluteness of this rule governing repetition comes into question in Snow, where the section B figuration is repeated exactly (m.7–8 and m.9–10), but it could be argued that the dynamic change constitutes a variation and that the slight melodic accentuation of \{b\(^b\), F\(^b\), E\(^b\}\} (m.8–9) varies rhythmically from measures 10–11.\(^{13}\) In any case, the rule has greater import in relation to the repetition of larger sections in different parts of a piece. This is to be expected in a music which is based upon variation rather than organic development, but one finds that in the piano pieces there is, again, a systematization of this process. With Snow the return of the first section is contracted by the omission of the \(\downarrow\) measures and the reduction of the ostinato to two separated sections of eight notes, the first tone of each section being lengthened by a quaver. In Moon the return is truncated to a metrical pattern of \(\downarrow\) from four measures of \(\uparrow\) and is changed by the omission of the last four notes of the motive and, like Snow,
the lengthening of the first note by a quaver. In Flowers the basic three-measure motivic complex is elongated by a ⁴/₄ measure so that two extra high tones may be added, giving a suggestion, perhaps, of a late blossoming.

With Stars, instead of one new variation of the opening, there are three sections, each of which may be regarded as a variation, although the last also functions as a rhythmic device, equivalent to the final cadences of Moon and Flowers; it may even be considered as the final chord of a cadence following from the section with the low A³. The first of these variations (m.29–34), though it has the original metrical structure, has the unexpected additions to the measure 11–16 section of E tonicality bass tones, and demi-semiquaver treble tones. In pianistic terms it is analogous to the sudden “flaring up” of the Balinese kebyar style, a form of gamelan music that attracts Sculthorpe greatly. The second variation of the return is quite different. It begins as a variant of the section discussed above, but then, curiously, three tones which hitherto had not appeared (A, D and F) are introduced, and the section is also contracted to a characteristic ⁴/₄ ⁴/₄ ⁴/₄ metrical pattern. Finally the closing section is reduced to three of the tones of the preceding section (E, B⁰, and D), reminiscent of the thinning-out process at the end of Snow, and thus completing the variational connections of the four pieces.

To conclude, it is useful to look forward to the possible effect the writing of Night Pieces has had on Sculthorpe’s direction as a composer. Since these pieces were, for Sculthorpe, primarily concerned with the solving of compositional problems related to miniature forms, he had a plan, on their completion to compose a large and quite grandiose work for the piano. This project now seems unlikely to materialize for quite some time, but the monumentality which the composer was seeking duly manifested itself in Rites of Passage (1972–73). Although this long work was, like Sun Music I, largely concerned with breaking new stylistic ground, it is, like Night Pieces, also concerned with a summing-up of both musical procedures and personal philosophy. Above all it demonstrates the meticulousness which Sculthorpe exercised in writing for the piano, and, in some respects, as with harmonic language, the crystallization found in Night Pieces seems indispensable to its new developments. Indeed, Rites of Passage and Night Pieces appear to fall at opposite ends of a spectrum that marks the end of the period begun with Sun Music I in 1965. Just as Irkanda IV and String Quartet No. 6 may be regarded as the culmination of the previous period, so are Night Pieces and Rites of Passage representative of a new maturation.
Towards a New Concept of Opera

Rites of Passage (1972–74) is perhaps the only composition in Sculthorpe's œuvre which allows a detailed examination of certain extra-musical aspects of the philosophy of his work. This is simply because it is a composition for the theatre, and is thus, in contrast to music for the concert hall, fundamentally concerned with the communication of very tangible ideas and emotions. The evolution of the work, beginning as early as 1965, provides a legitimate academic context in which to examine the composer's interdisciplinary interests and his approaches to the solving of various kinds of intellectual and aesthetic problems.

The theatre has, from early in Sculthorpe's career, attracted him greatly, for not only is it a collaborative art by virtue of the different media it involves but also it demonstrates, in the synthesis of its components, a more highly developed manifestation of the notion of "performance" than the playing of music. Sculthorpe often speaks of "great moments of theatre", by which he primarily means a seemingly magical transformation of visual forms. There is no real equivalent of this phenomenon in abstract music, either structurally or by the association of ideas, feelings or images. When one considers that the visual orientation of Australians is a central idea in Sculthorpe's aesthetic, it does not seem surprising that the composer has been preoccupied for a considerable time with involving his music in the theatre.

Sculthorpe's first regular involvement with the theatre began when he returned to Launceston in 1951. Amateur theatre in provincial areas of Australia provided one of the only public opportunities for musical creativity at this time. Until 1956, the composer wrote incidental music for plays produced by the Launceston Players. A production in 1951 of Much Ado About Nothing seems to have been one of the most ambitious of these undertakings since the music was scored for piano, violin, cello and recorders, and the settings of the songs were approached as serious compositions. The other plays, including Molière's The Miser, Leo Marks' The Girl Who Couldn't Quite, Life with Father
by Lindsay and Gouse, and Juntas on Horseback, a comedy by a local playwright, Walter Sutherland, included only incidental music for piano.

Through his association with Anne Godfrey-Smith, who had directed Much Ado About Nothing, Sculthorpe wrote songs and incidental music for a production at the Repertory Theatre, Canberra, of Twelfth Night, which ran for the month of July in 1956. After this Godfrey-Smith and Sculthorpe travelled from Canberra to Melbourne at the time of the Olympic Games. Here they produced a play by Ric Throssel which was a social protest against the atomic bomb. A further collaboration between writer, director and composer resulted in a musical farce which lampooned the political life of Canberra. Ulterior Motifs ran in Canberra for a month, and attracted the attention of William Orr, then director of the Phillip Street Theatre in Sydney. Orr was at first considering staging this work himself, but decided that the obscurity of much of the political satire would not be appreciated by a Sydney audience. He did, however, persuade Sculthorpe to write some material for Cross Section, an extremely successful revue, which eventually ran for more than a year from September 1957.

With Sculthorpe's continued involvement in theatre he wrote increasingly less concert music; in fact, as his commitment to theatre became more professional, he stopped writing concert music altogether. This is indeed puzzling since in the period 1954 to 1955, which had produced the Sonatina, The Loneliness of Bunjil and the solo violin pieces, he had effectively ceased imitating other musical styles and had become personally convinced that his work had a substantial originality. Sculthorpe has said that the problem was one of not receiving public acceptance for his concert music. Admittedly, both the Sonatina and Irkanda I had had performances at international festivals, but most artists need to receive encouragement from their immediate professional environments in order to flourish. It is clear that Sculthorpe was acquiring a reputation for his theatre music, so undoubtedly this was the reason for his persisting with it. His only alternative for employment would have been teaching or work in no way associated with music. As it was, in Sydney he coached singers involved in the revue in his capacity as an understudy pianist, but supplemented his income by composing music for films, radio plays and television.

Eventually, Sculthorpe arranged some of his revue material into instrumental pieces for concert performance. These he modelled on the concept of Gershwin's An American in Paris. There was a piece called Kings Cross Suite and, later, another called Three Movements for Jazz Band. When Louis Armstrong's band
performed the latter at the now legendary Sydney Stadium late in 1958, it was the first music of Sculthorpe’s to be played outside the theatre in Sydney; but having become disillusioned with the routine of the theatre, the composer had already left for England to undertake post-graduate research at Oxford.

Although Sculthorpe resumed the composition of concert music in England, he also involved himself, to a limited extent, in theatre. He constructed a *musique concrète* tape as incidental music for a production of *King Lear* by the Lincoln College Players at the Oxford Playhouse, and later at Stratford-upon-Avon; but it seems clear that he had eschewed the theatre as an outlet for his compositional identity. Again, this was largely a function of being in an environment where there was considerable interest shown in his music. With his reasonable success as a concert music composer in England, and especially after the great encouragement of the acclaimed first performance in Melbourne of *Irkanda IV* after his return to Australia, he simply lost interest in the theatre.

*Eliza Fraser*

Unknown to Sculthorpe, however, events were taking place in the early 1960s that would initiate for him a frustrating eight-year period in which he vainly searched for a workable collaboration with a librettist in an attempt to devise a concept for an opera. The Australian painter, Sidney Nolan, exhibited his *Mrs Fraser and the convict Bracefell* series in London, and it was suggested that the historical episode on which the paintings were based could serve as a framework for a theatre piece. Patrick White, who was in London at the time, worked on the idea and produced a draft for an opera. This he presented to Benjamin Britten, whose attitude to the project was not favourable. White, understandably angered by Britten’s rejection of the script, committed himself to finding a suitable Australian composer. On returning to Australia he listened to as much recorded music as he could, and decided that Sculthorpe’s music would be the most effective. Thus, in 1964, a collaboration was set in motion and a commission arranged by the Elizabethan Theatre Trust. Sculthorpe’s initial impulse to collaborate with White was motivated to a large degree by the honour of being asked by such a distinguished writer, but it soon became clear that each man had his own conception of what the work should be. In the story, *Mrs Fraser*, one of the survivors of nineteenth-century shipwreck off the coast of Queensland, is captured by Aborigines, stripped of her clothes and treated as an Aboriginal woman. Bracefell is a convict who has escaped from civilization and learnt the ways of the Aborigines to the extent that he can move freely among them. He discovers Fraser and tries to
coerce her into a romanticized sexual attachment, but she resists. She eventually persuades him, in return for promising to intercede for him for a pardon, to lead her back to civilization. At the first sight of a settlement, however, she betrays him and he is forced to flee back into the bush.

Sculthorpe considered that the story was dramatically strong, but he was less interested in the conflict between the two people than in the romantic, idyllic and often bizarre images that Nolan projects in his paintings. White, on the other hand, developed the drama in almost novelistic proportions. This posed a problem of length, for White was seemingly unaware of the pace of sung dialogue. White also admitted to being confused by the restrictions placed on the use of syllables in word setting, and proceeded to produce his libretto with little regard for the composer’s requirements; but, despite his failure to recognize the essentials of a libretto, neither writer nor composer had developed a theatrical concept for the opera.

Sculthorpe’s confrontation with the problem of the theatrical credibility of singers in contemporary opera led him to begin to compile sets of techniques that either are or are not effective in a theatre which relies heavily upon music. A summary of Sculthorpe’s ideas concerning some of the basic problems involved in contemporary opera is given below.

Although traditional opera is non-realistic, since people do not usually sing dialogue or songs to each other, singing is accepted as a convention. In opera, the ostensible absurdity of the singing does not necessarily interfere with the underlying seriousness of the dramatic situation. In twentieth-century opera, where the musical language is usually very different from that of the nineteenth and earlier centuries, this theatrical absurdity is exposed. It is difficult, for example, to imagine Mrs Fraser and Bracefell singing to each other in rhythmically-jagged atonal phrases, and this is not only because they are nineteenth-century characters. Music in the theatre has always manifested itself in heightened forms of poetic utterance, fundamentally ritualized derivatives of natural speech. In general, the music of the twentieth century is characterized by un-song-like, and therefore more-than-usually artificial qualities. If characters in an opera are to sing with credibility, they must sing a kind of melody that does not obliterate the rhythms and inflections of poetic language.

In addition, Sculthorpe believes that in twentieth-century drama a clear distinction has come to exist between realism and fantasy, because film and television have made it possible for drama to appear totally real. This has brought drama in the theatre to a degree of realism that was not expected in earlier times. By extension, it also suggests that a serious dramatic opera is no
longer possible. In *Dialogues and a Diary* Stravinsky rejects the medium of the proscenium-arch theatre:

> If I were to write another opera, I suspect that it will be for the electronic glass tube . . . rather than for the early Baroque stages of the world’s present-day opera houses. ④

Further, Sculthorpe has observed that in the twentieth century, people have become accustomed to dramatic involvement either by being enveloped by the large cinema screen or by focusing inward to the intimate medium of television. Successful identification with characters in dramatic productions now demands a close-up medium like television. The theatre, a long-view medium, is more suited to pageant and ritual; and the secret of effective theatre lies in presenting these in spectacular ways.

*Collaborations with Moorehead, Covell and Wallace-Crabbe*

After the collaboration with Patrick White was terminated, it was some time before Sculthorpe admitted to himself that the subject of Mrs Fraser was not suitable, at least if treated in a conventional way. The composer continued to be fascinated by the Nolan paintings, and when the opportunity for a collaboration with Alan Moorehead and Roger Covell arose he greeted it with enthusiasm. The inclusion of Covell as a second writer was obviously meant to solve those kinds of problems that had arisen because of White’s unfamiliarity with musical techniques. Moorehead would write the libretto; Covell would rewrite it so that there would be no problems in setting it. Since Moorehead had a practice of visiting any place about which he was writing, he, Sculthorpe and Covell travelled to Fraser Island. The visit probably strengthened Sculthorpe’s appreciation of the paintings which the island and the adjacent coastal area had inspired eighteen years earlier, but it became clear to him and Covell from the moment that Moorehead began to approach the writing in much the same conventional way as White that further collaboration would prove to be unsatisfactory. ⑤

By 1965 Sculthorpe felt that, in order to make progress on the opera, he needed to be relieved of his teaching duties so as to have time to think deeply about a suitable subject and about a workable formula for theatrical credibility. He was given a Harkness Fellowship and became Composer in Residence at Yale University. His first inclination was to re-establish a collaboration with Roger Covell because of Covell’s knowledge of music and theatre and also because of his considerable talent for the lyric, which had shown itself in a children’s choral work, *South by Five* (1965), which Sculthorpe had set before leaving Australia. The new subject suggested was the story of the notorious British actor,
Gustavus Vaughan Brooke, who had considerable success on an Australian tour arranged by George Coppin in 1855. Sculthorpe felt that the subject would be appropriate for an opera if not treated as serious realistic drama. He believed that it would be easier to accept as singers people associated with the theatre, and that there would be more occasions in such a work for singing to be a part of the realistic action.

On the basis of a conventional scenario, discussion between Sculthorpe and Covell began, but, because the composer was in the United States, the collaboration by correspondence proved to be most unsatisfactory to both, and the project was eventually abandoned. In the meantime, however, Sculthorpe had become absorbed in Aztec culture. This suggested to him the idea of a ritual theatre as an alternative to the unworkable dramatic opera (“Mrs Fraser”) and the kind of musical which “Brooke” would have had to have been. At about this time the composer began a collaboration with the Australian poet, Chris Wallace-Crabbe, also a Harkness Fellow staying at Yale. Besides a Mexican ritual piece, Wallace-Crabbe and Sculthorpe worked on a comic operetta entitled “The Firing Squad”, but it was in the former that they advanced notions as to how a serious music theatre piece might successfully be staged. Although influences from Antonin Artaud’s The Theatre of Cruelty manifestos may be detected, their piece is not derivative of Artaud’s mise en scène for The Conquest of Mexico, for, rather than being a statement of the horror of two civilizations clashing, it is simply a presentation of the events of a sacrificial ritual. That is, it is not concerned with human chaos, but rather with harmony and world order, even though the Western sensibility finds the notion of this kind of human sacrifice intolerable.

With a ritual piece such as this, the problems of incorporating music without losing theatrical credibility are minimal. Music, both vocal and instrumental, is integral to ritual. The progression of events does not depend upon an interplay of speech, but rather is solely represented by visual and aural symbols. “Speech in the Occidental theatre”, says Artaud, “is used only to express psychological conflicts particular to man and the daily reality of his life”, but “words . . . have metaphysical powers”. The words of this theatre piece became, therefore, the sacred, magical words of Mexican ritual. These could be sung, shouted, spoken or whispered, according to the particular ritual or to the compositional plan. The music, apart from that which was part of the ritual, could also be used from the pit to enhance or comment upon the visual spectacle. One difficulty that Sculthorpe and Wallace-Crabbe faced was the absence of collaboration with a stage director, for the diverse symbolic elements of the spectacle
had to be drawn together as a coherent theatrical structure. Nonetheless, between them, they seem to have been able to conceptualize the theatricality of the piece to a certain point.\footnote{9} Unfortunately, Wallace-Crabbe left Yale, and, with increasing commitments to orchestral commissions, Sculthorpe was forced to abandon the writing of music for the project. At the back of his mind there was also the thought that the work was too short and too unconventional for the Australian Opera Company’s purposes.\footnote{10} Although the composer had been impressed by Artaud’s writing before this, the Aztec piece was his first attempt to realize an opera within Artaud’s concept of theatre. Artaud was to remain a significant influence from that time, but Sculthorpe returned to a theatre with dialogue for his next attempt to devise an opera.

\textit{Collaboration with Tony Morphett}

Of all Sculthorpe’s librettists, Tony Morphett gave the longest and, in some ways, the most effective service. He was gifted at moulding a given set of ideas into a viable dramatic structure, and also willing to repress his own ideas in an attempt to create a piece which in no way was foreign to Sculthorpe’s particular vision. The disposition to make this concession was probably connected with his employment as a journalist and as a television series writer. Morphett’s work with the composer was, nonetheless, very much an equal partnership.

Following the concept of “Brooke” that people in any way connected with entertainment have some credibility as singers, Morphett and Sculthorpe assembled a list of characters who sing naturally in everyday life. These included sailors, the clergy, natives, mad people, and people who undergo a role change such as dressing up for a celebration. It was decided that any character who did not fit one of these categories would have a speaking part. Apart from the list of types who are credible as singers, Sculthorpe gave Morphett a list of themes, events and objects which have a profound effect on him in the theatre. These are grouped below in the kinds of word-association sequences in which the composer originally wrote them:\footnote{11}

- blood, death, burial, ship, shipwreck,
- oars, spears, crucifix.

This sequence is cyclic since both “spears” and “crucifix” lead back to “blood”. For Sculthorpe, a hero dying at the end of a piece is always disturbing; and he associates “burial” with the Requiem Mass. A second sequence begins with the word “ship”:

- ship, maps, old engravings of Pacific,
- island, noble savage.
From “island” springs his concept of “the loner” and the “solitary figure in the vast landscape”. Allied to the loner is the Lord Jim theme, the adventurer who, in a boyish, romantic way, sets out to atone for previous guilt, whose every action, however good or noble, brings him closer to his terrible destiny. Related to the Lord Jim character, and also important to Sculthorpe, is the dual appearance of extreme qualities of courage and cowardice in one person. A third list contains related theatrical phenomena:

- masks, disguises, dressing up, transformations,
- processions.

By “transformation” the composer refers to the kind of experience that Cinderella, for example, underwent, but it can also mean any simple change from one state to another. Lastly, primitive drums and all kinds of bells are important symbolic objects in Sculthorpe’s hypothetical theatre. Bells are of universal significance since they can symbolize almost any life event: birth, marriage, death, feast days, warnings and calls to action.

The piece which began to evolve from these ideas could be described as an ecological allegory. Although it was never moulded into a libretto, the story-line, the characterization and the details of the theatricality were elaborately planned. Briefly, a missionary-based settlement on a Pacific island undertakes, on the death of the last surviving native, a celebration which is a re-enactment of the discovery of the island by James Cook. The abbot, Father James, who plans the ritual, is suffering from severe guilt, the sources of which are the inevitable extinction of the native race and his secret plan to allow the island to be destroyed for its mineral wealth. As the re-enactment progresses, it becomes clear that he is seeking his own death: he is under the delusion that he is Captain Cook, and wishes to be killed in the same way as Cook. Father James meets opposition to his eventually exposed mining plans from Brother John, a self-styled ecologist and humanitarian. The celebrations, which are quite elaborate in scale, lead to unplanned personal conflicts and alliances. John, for example, falls in love with Madge, one of the secular inhabitants of the island, and the ensuing conflicts with James, some of the townspeople and a visiting geologist result unexpectedly in his death. The ritual is, however, treated throughout on a rather comic level, since most of the island’s inhabitants approach the celebrations in this frame of mind.

For Sculthorpe, James and John represent two sides of the Lord Jim character. Like Lord Jim, James’s need for atonement forces him into a fantasy world, but his dream is finally shattered when John, for whom he cares like a son, is killed instead. John’s fatal flaw is the idealism and naïveté which prompts him to be outraged by the ecological disaster of white man’s intrusion on the island,
and draws him blindly to his love affair and its associated complications. Every action he takes brings him closer to his death.

Of the other characters, all could be called stereotypes, with the exception of the storekeeper, Hobbe, who is an eccentric master of ceremonies both of everyday life on the island and of these particular celebrations. The source of Hobbe's humour is his ability to conjure up lines from well-known songs, lines which are appropriate to any particular conversational situation. He often sings with McDonald, who is a former musical comedy star. Unlike Hobbe, who always sings to make fun of the other characters or simply to be clever, McDonald is credible as a singer because his reasons are vain ones: he likes the sound of his own voice and imagines everyone who hears him will be impressed. The other individuals who sing are Lisa, a mad woman, who because of her mental condition is perhaps credible as a singer of very atonal music, and Darren, a cynical and rather ruthless young man who leads a rock band. Another side of youth is represented by Madge, an adherent of free love until her relationship with John. She is thus thought by Sculthorpe and Morphett to be credible as a folk singer. The missionaries sing their own liturgical music and, with the townspeople, any music appropriate to the re-enactment pageants.

Although there is an underlying seriousness in the ecological theme and in the conflicts between some of the characters, the theatrical and musical treatment of the piece, and the variety of the action, suggest a quality more entertaining or satiric than profoundly serious. The essential fact is that the outline seems to represent a workable concept for a contemporary opera, no matter how unconventional; but without its comic levels it could not succeed. Sculthorpe's reasons for not proceeding with it, but continuing instead with a search for a more serious concept were twofold. Firstly he believed that, for his first full-length piece, he should express himself through his own musical language, whereas, with the existing plan of the "Island" piece, most of the music would need to be adapted from traditional styles. Secondly, although the concept and story-line of the work were agreed to be satisfactory, Morphett lost interest in completing the libretto because there were no definite plans for production and therefore no deadlines towards which to work. Despite abandoning the project, the composer planned to return to it in the future, and has especially felt this since composing Rites of Passage because having fulfilled the need to create a serious work he would not experience the personal identity problems associated with working with a kind of musical collage.
Sculthorpe’s collaboration with Morphett was not, however, entirely fruitless. The composer chose three sets of lyrics from the first draft of the work and used them as a basis for Love 200 (1970), a concert piece for rock band, female singer and orchestra. This work is a collage of very different musical styles: Sun Music textures, romantic harmonic textures, rock music styles and quasi-Venetian multi-spatial antiphony.

In spite of the diversity of idiom, Sculthorpe managed to invest the work with his own compositional characteristics. Throughout his career, whenever he has employed established idioms, they have always been subjected to rhythmic procedures and orchestration techniques that are uniquely his own. In this case the disparate idioms were necessary because of the stylistic incompatibility of rock music and modern concert music. In searching for a traditional musical style that would blend well with rock music, Sculthorpe settled upon the baroque period; while in trying to find an orchestral style to accompany a folk-like pentatonic vocal line, the choice was somewhat Mahlerian.

The first song, “It’ll Rise Again”, which is based on a chord progression similar in concept to that of Bach’s Prelude in C minor (Bk 1), employs a quasi-baroque accompanying figuration, but it is rhythmically manipulated in a way that is very characteristic of Sculthorpe’s procedures and certainly not in contradiction to rock performance practice. In the third song, “Love”, the Gabrieli-like brass arrangement in the verse and the Vivaldi-like organization of a diatonic circle of fifths in the chorus achieve an adequate fusion with one kind of rock keyboard playing style. The Prelude and the interludes between the songs are unmistakably derived from the Sun Music style, and function to supply a richness and variety of orchestral texture. The band takes only a minimal part in these instrumental sections and no part at all in the central song, “The Stars Turn”, which is a self-contained composition for female singer and orchestra. The great disparity between the contemporary orchestral idiom and the various harmony-based styles no longer represents a problem to the listener since one stream of rock music since the late 1960s has successfully incorporated very advanced contemporary styles, aided by the complex technology of the modern recording studio. The kind of audience that is most likely to be interested in Love 200—that which has a sympathy for and knowledge of rock music—is thus able to accept the non-tonal elements of Sculthorpe’s style.

Although it is a concert piece, Love 200 has a theatricality which testifies to the potential of the opera project from which it sprang. This is partly because of the natural stage awareness of rock performers and the additional spectacle of special lighting effects,
but it is fundamentally determined by the unique relationship of the orchestra to the band. In most attempts to combine these two kinds of forces, the orchestra is usually greatly subservient to the band. In *Love 200* the orchestra not only has its own special passages, it also most often combines with the band in ways that emphasize unique textural or spatial qualities, taking much of the spectator’s attention away from the band, but without upsetting the dominant role of the band in determining the style.¹⁷ For example, in “It’ll Rise Again” Sculthorpe scores an almost parodic fusion of baroque and rock figuration for hammond organ, but later in the song the figuration reappears in an ecstatic wind orchestration; the figuration, though in some senses banal in its first appearance, is rejuvenated by the limpidity of this subsequent arrangement. A second and more obvious example is the employment of three antiphonal brass quartets. Here, in many of the relevant sections, the listener’s attention is drawn away from the dominating rock ensemble by the peripatetic interplay of the brass groups positioned at the two sides as well as at the back of the concert hall.

In drawing attention to the scoring, Sculthorpe was perhaps intentionally compensating for his somewhat limited appreciation of rock music idioms; the result accordingly represents a surprising balance between the basic rhythmic impetus of the rock music ensemble and the ingenuity and finesse of the orchestration. This balance, which hitherto had not been achieved in works that have attempted to combine rock music and orchestral music, made *Love 200* an impressive addition in 1970 to what has since shown itself to be a rather limited genre.

*Collaboration with Gabriel Josipovici*

The period in which *Rites of Passage* evolved began in Sussex, England, in October 1971, with a collaboration between Sculthorpe and Gabriel Josipovici, a lecturer at the University of Sussex and a friend of the composer since they met in Oxford around 1960. Josipovici seemed ideal as a prospective librettist since he was a practised playwright with a substantial knowledge of avant-garde theatrical techniques and a great enthusiasm and awareness of contemporary European music. From the outset of the collaboration Sculthorpe encountered a highly critical mind: Josipovici’s reaction to his description of the concept of the Captain Cook piece was, for example, one of uncompromising skepticism. The writer branded it as “a typical national monument—the kind of thing an audience expects and the kind of thing always a disaster, falling between every stool”.¹⁸ He seems acutely aware of the problem of creating a national identity that is not superficial or false:
Capt. Cook wrong because it is anthropocentric, i.e. ultimately a sell-out to Western values, especially nineteenth century ones of which this type of opera is apotheosis. So it would remain colonial, backwaterish, peripheral. To find true soul of Australia we must stand back and outside Western man—outside man himself. But how to do this in Opera, since opera drives one forward into doing precisely this kind of Capt. Cook thing.19

One of Josipovici’s approaches was like a species of theatre of the absurd, a plan which was designed to fit his conception of contemporary theatre while incorporating some of Sculthorpe’s themes:

But what if one starts in this conventional way—this is the opera—and then slowly break it down as the sun breaks down Western man—revealing impossibility of doing this. Start again. Try another theme, the joke opera, with three beginnings etc.—after some fooling, getting wilder and wilder, whole scheme breaking up under weight of its own impossibility, other themes, truer ones, begin to emerge—fragments of the past—Mrs. Fraser—Kelly—Gallipoli—the heat of the sun . . . destroying everything including man and his art, including the Sydney Opera House. . . . A work to be played at the start of every season, to remind us of the thinness of the veneer of civilization and human life. . . . Inexorable sun/landscape (loneliness, weather, death, there you are Peter).20

It is obvious from the writer’s tone that he was struggling to satisfy Sculthorpe’s conditions, but it is also evident that he had forced the composer to initiate a reassessment of his aesthetic and of the cultural context in which the piece was to appear. This is reinforced in Sculthorpe’s correspondence of the time:

... Since I’ve been here, I’ve done more reading and thinking than I’ve done since I was invented as a composer, i.e. since Irkanda IV. I can’t tell you, but in any case you would know, how exciting this has been. And further, in five weeks I’ve discovered more about myself and theatre and opera and music than in five years at home. When work begins, I’ll be well prepared.

Gabriel and I have produced drafts for two different music theatre pieces, both of them establishing new forms, and both exciting, very exciting. One takes the Orestean Trilogy as its jumping-off point, and the other, Mrs. Fraser. But it’s been my feeling that neither are quite fitting for the opening of a new opera house, and for Australia at this particular time. . . . Anyway, both are there for the future.

At present, we’re working on Sun. The Jacquetta Hawkes’ book Man and the Sun contains the source material, and this theme is, I suspect, what I’m really about. The work will be for want of a better name, a scenic oratorio; perhaps one could call it a celebration, with all senses of the word’s meaning.21

Josipovici’s notes for “The Sun” are really a rewriting or reworking of the “Captain Cook” notes partially quoted above, only they contain more detail of visual images and theatrical techniques; but in a second section, headed “Sun Opera”, he
characteristically demonstrates that he is committed to the Western expectation of drama and conflict, finally admitting that the composer’s concept is not only alien to what he imagines is necessary in theatre, but also that the kind of theatre Sculthorpe envisages has no need of a dramatist:

Sun Opera
(I’d like to play Eastern detached quality against expressionist).
Ape—Devil—very clear and sharp orders—Fragments of his past—bits and pieces come back as he struggles forward—they drop into place, grown contorted, distorted, etc.
He starts them off—No—can’t adapt Comedy in this direct way. He wants to hear the sun—but it burns into him. He calls out “the Sun”.
He can’t move (Nothing dramatic here. It could get so boring once audience get the idea—In Comedy there was double source of tension—him, and what the others were actually doing—tension because he was making them do things. But here? No reason for them to mime all this etc. I can select texts for Peter—but otherwise no need for me.)

Thus the end of the collaboration was prophesied. Sculthorpe wrote on 5 January 1972:

I’ve just disposed of my seventh librettist! No. 8 will be a little hard to dispose of. I’m No. 8. Everything was amicable with Gabriel; but as he forced me to examine myself, to really probe, in order to make our collaboration work, it became very clear to both of us that I must be my own writer or ideas person. What is exciting is that I’m now working on a fantastic idea that combines the Requiem that I want to write with all kinds of electronic manipulation of sound and, above all, uses a kind of Pacific Mythology that I’m inventing. This sounds crazy and complicated, but it is, in fact, very simple (perhaps crazy), and I’ll tell you more as it takes a little more shape. . . . I’m ecstatic about the whole venture, for the first time, and although the burden of work ahead is greater than I’d hoped for, I do feel as though a burden has been taken from me, the burden of seven librettists in eight years.

The use of Requiem texts
Sculthorpe’s attraction to the Requiem is a many-faceted phenomenon. It stems principally from a belief that the Mass is the only religious ritual common to all Western cultures and that, by extension, Latin is the only common ritual language. Sculthorpe argues that the Mass is the only ritual and symbolic structure possessed by Western man and that the Mass setting is therefore the only symbolic musical structure. The Requiem Mass is of special significance since the parts of the liturgy which can be set to music are additional to those of the Common Mass. European
composers have favoured the Requiem more than any other special Mass or day of the liturgical calendar because it has been consistently commissioned on the deaths of prominent clergy and citizens and because, unlike most complete settings, it may be celebrated on almost all days of the liturgical calendar. Thus there is a rich tradition of Requiem settings which culminates in the nineteenth century with Verdi, Brahms and Fauré and in the twentieth century with Britten, Stravinsky and Ligeti. In the West, moreover, the rituals associated with death are probably preserved more than rituals connected with any other event. The reason they have remained relatively intact is in Sculthorpe’s view connected with Western man’s fear of death, which has resulted from his virtual rejection of God (world order) and espousal of humanism (knowledge, progress). Sculthorpe explores this idea in a letter dated February 1972:

Some people have been disturbed about the idea of underpinning the work with Requiem; if the idea disturbs then it’s working. Sitting at my desk here in Glynde, looking across to the Downs, it has become very clear that modern man’s (Western man’s) sickness and anxiety is caused by his flight from death, and his subsequent invention of Time, and of History. Death is a part of life, or as Freud has written “The goal of all life is death” and I believe that until Western man comes to grips with this fact, then he is doomed. But can one imagine any Post-Renaissance state affirming a stability of economics and population and an end to progress?

Les Rites de Passage

The turning point in the evolution of the opera was Sculthorpe’s discovery of Arnold van Gennep’s Les Rites de Passage and his subsequent immersion in the study of anthropology and comparative religion. Sculthorpe’s initial attraction to van Gennep’s work was to the title, but the connection between the Requiem and the notion of rites of passage is very obvious. He has written of the relationship between his opera and anthropology:

... the work is a return to the idea of drama as ritual. It is important to any understanding of it to realise that it grew not from myth or folk tale, legend or romance, but from an anthropological work. The life of an individual in any society, past or present, is made up of a series of transitions from, for instance, one age to another, one occupation to another, one social situation to another. Van Gennep discusses the fact that when an individual moves from one stable form of social structure to another, he passes through a period in which he is a member of neither of the two stable groups. It is with this period that certain ceremonies are associated, ceremonies whose function it is to ease the transition of the individual and also to safeguard the stable groups from disturbance. These ceremonies van Gennep calls “rites of passage”, a term now commonly used by anthropologists. Van Gennep argues that all ceremonies dealing with movement into a new status, such as pregnancy and childbirth, during adolescence, at
betrothals and marriages, and at funerals, as well as at ordinations and installations, and also at changes of season, display a common order. First there is a separation from the previous condition, then a marginal period and then an aggregation to the new condition. These are known as rites of separation, rites of transition and rites of incorporation. . . .

A great part of my opera, then, is concerned with the essence of these rites. It is a ceremony in which performers and audience share in the formal unfurling of what I believe to be a deeply significant pattern. 27

The decision to make a ritual theatre piece out of this material meant that the Requiem movements would alternate with what would be called “rites” movements; but Sculthorpe gradually dismissed the idea of the Requiem in favour of something more life-affirming, and perhaps more theatrically exciting. In any case the Requiem is a specific example of a rite of passage, and its inclusion would have unbalanced the structure of meaning in the work. 28

The shift of attention was, from a theological point of view, quite dramatic: from the liturgy of the Requiem to texts taken from “Oration IV” of Julian the Apostate, the last pagan emperor of Rome (from A.D. 361–363), a man who interrupted the short line of Christian emperors from Constantine and who immediately preceded the period of the beginning of Christian political supremacy. Julian is a refreshing figure against the background of politics of the time. His predecessors had embraced Christianity for reasons of expediency, but this had created considerable tension within the clerical hierarchy of the Church, who now had access to State wealth. His apostacy momentarily neutralized this situation, since he favoured none of the factions.

Undoubtedly Sculthorpe was attracted to Julian’s “Oration IV” because it is a hymn to the “sovereign sun” (Julian’s paganism was tantamount to sun worship), but the poetic quality of the text is remarkably similar to that of D.H. Lawrence’s Sun in Me, a poem set by the composer in Sun (1958) and used as a basis for the violin solo at the end of Irkanda IV. His enthusiasm for the text is evident from a letter dated 6 February 1972:

... the words in the pit are from the Emperor Julian’s ... ‘Upon the Sovereign Sun’, the sun being a kind of combination of Mithras and Helios. You must agree that this for instance, is quite splendid:

Within himself he comprehends the ungenerated cause of things generated, and the unchanging, unfading source of things eternal....

I’ve paraphrased and elided many of the ideas, and the writings are now being translated into Latin, a more resonant language for singing, I find, than the original Greek. 29

Boethius’s The Consolation of Philosophy

The reference to the orchestral pit indicates that the composer had
already decided upon his concept of “two separate planes, or areas, of activity”: the stage, for the rites, which represent change (rites of passage), and the pit for the sun canticles, representing “the permanence of love, of goodness and God-ness”. These phrases have been extracted from writing by Sculthorpe on the final form of *Rites of Passage*, but they are equally pertinent here. In a letter written at the end of May, Sculthorpe announced that he had “changed loyalties”, from the Emperor Julian to Boethius. The change of loyalty does not seem to change significantly the tenor of the philosophy. The text chosen by Sculthorpe from Boethius’ *De Consolatione Philosophiae* (A.D. 524) is, as cited above, concerned with “the permanence of love, of goodness and God-ness”. Despite the similarities, however, the density of Boethius’ philosophy and the quality of his writing far overshadows the bombast of Julian’s ritual hymn. Boethius encompassed more of the totality of Western thought than any of his predecessors, for, although he was a Christian, his viewpoint was largely Platonic; but his Platonism differed from, say, that of St Augustine in that the latter used it primarily as a model for arguments against heresy. Boethius’ world-view is a purely philosophical one, free from prejudice or political connivance. Bertrand Russell sums up his qualities in a eulogistic manner:

It may be that his freedom from superstition was not so exceptional in Roman aristocratic families as elsewhere; but its combination with great learning and zeal for the public good was unique in that age. During the two centuries before his time and the ten centuries after it, I cannot think of any European man of learning so free from superstition and fanaticism. Nor are his merits merely negative; his survey is lofty, disinterested and sublime. He would have been remarkable in any age; in the age in which he lived, he is utterly amazing.

Boethius, a Roman senator, wrote his *Consolation of Philosophy* in prison under sentence of death for suspected treason against his friend, Theodoric, King of Italy and the Goths. Considering the circumstances it is remarkable, as Russell notes, that there is “no trace of the superstition or morbidity of the age, no obsession with sin, no excessive straining after the unattainable”. He adds that there is “perfect philosophic calm—so much so that, if the book had been written in prosperity, it might almost have been called smug”. Boethius divides the work into prose sections in which he himself speaks, and alternates these with verse sections in which Philosophy answers. It is one of the latter which Sculthorpe has chosen as his text. Below, a word-for-word translation of the Latin is given in addition to a more poetic translation, which is usually attributed to the architect John Thorpe (1570–1610):
Quod mundus stabilis fide | That the world with stable faith
---|---
Concordes variat vices | Harmonious changes its turns,
Quod pugnania semina | That the warring principles
Feebly perpetuum tenet | A treaty perpetual hold,
Quod Phoebus roseum dieum | That the sun the rosy day
Curru provehit aureo | In chariot carry on golden,
Ut quas duxerit Hesperos | So that which leads the evening star
Phoebe noctibus imperet, | The moon the nights should rule,
Ut fluctus avidum mare | So that its waves the greedy sea
Certo fine cuereant | With a fixed boundary may compel
Ne terris locat vagas | So that not to the lands it may be allowed wandering.
Latas tendere terminos, | Broad to extend its boundaries,
Hanc cerum seriem ligat | This of things succession binds
Teras ac pelagus regnas | Lands and oceans ruling
Et caelo imperitans amor. | And heaven ruling love.
Hic si frena remiserit, | It if the reins should relax,
Quidquid nunc amat invicem | Whateoever now love mutually
Bellum continuo geret | War continually would wage,
Et quam nunc socia fide | And which now with friendly faith
Pulchris motibus incitant, | With lovely motions they move,
Cerent solvere machinam | They would contend to destroy the structure.
Hic sancto populos quoque | It in sacred the peoples also
Iunctos foedere continet, | Joined in treaty keeps together,
Hic et coniugi sacrum | Hand of marriage the rite
Castis nexit amoribus, | With chaste weaves loves
Hic fidis etiam sua | It its faithful to its
O felix hominum genus, | O happy of men race
Si vestros animos amor | If your hearts love
Quo caelum regitur regat. | By which the heaven is ruled shall rule.

That this fair world in settled course
her several forms should vary,
That a perpetual law should tame the
fighting seeds of things,
That Phoebus should the rosy day in
his bright chariot carry,
That Phoebe should govern the nights
which Hesperus forth brings,
That to the floods of greedy seas are
certain bounds assigned,
Which to them, lest they usurp too
much upon the earth, debar,
Love ruling heaven, and earth, and
seas, them in this course doth bind.
And if at once let loose their reins
their friendship turn to war,
Tearing the world whose ordered form
their quiet motions bear.
By it all holy laws are made and
marriage rites are tied,
By it is faithful friendship joined
How happy mortals were
If that pure love did guide their minds,
which heavenly spheres doth guide.  

Love, then, is equated with God and with universal order, and
conjugal love and friendship are seen as earthly reflections of this
divine structure. Human happiness is also equated with love, not
with pleasure or with its reverse, abstention from sin.
Rites of Passage is a religious statement of a very personal nature: the juxtaposition of Boethius with primitive ritual was a way, arrived at with considerable difficulty, in which Sculthorpe's own philosophy could achieve a legitimate expression. To compose a Requiem Mass or even to use its text in some way in a wider context would perhaps misrepresent him because, although he recognizes the Latin liturgy as the foundation-stone of Christian ritual, and, although he admits being spiritually attached to it as a European man, he is not sympathetic with the moral, psychological and political character of Catholicism. To compose a Requiem would be to divorce Christianity from its grave historical implications, to ignore the effect the Church has had upon the Western consciousness. Furthermore, despite the symbolic importance of the sun in Sculthorpe's world-view, it would be equally misleading for him to set texts from the Emperor Julian, for they are, in a sense, only peripheral to Western philosophy. Undoubtedly Julian is an interesting figure of his time, but he could legitimately be dismissed as a fourth-century eccentric. Put simply, Boethius embodies an extraordinary degree of Western thought, from antiquity to the times in which he lived, but is unpolluted by guilt. In this sense his outlook is also Eastern, and thus in accord with Sculthorpe's conception of his own artistic position. Perhaps more important is Boethius's complete view of nature, his Pantheism, which correlates with Sculthorpe's belief in the landscape of Australia, in the elements, and in the sun. Boethius's very personality, his calm in the face of torture and imminent execution, is akin to the Australian theme of the solitary figure in the landscape, a man who is in complete harmony with his environment.

The significance of primitive ritual

It is at this point that the anthropological aspect of Rites of Passage meets the philosophical substance suggested by the Boethius text. Primitive societies have the most complete religious union with nature because it alone sustains their existence. This phenomenon is explained by Maurice Bowra:

Primitve man lives for the most part in the open air and knows the untamed, uncultivated realm of primaeval nature with an intimacy beyond the reach of even the most ardent naturalist, who stands securely apart as a dispassionate observer of plants and animals. Primitive man knows nature because he lives with it and in it and by it. This means that he has a detailed, precise, and practical knowledge of it in all its forms at every season, that at no time can he put the thought of it out of his mind. As a hunter or fisher or gatherer of fruits or roots or insects or grubs, he has a factual realistic experience, which is more intimate and more expertly first-hand than that of any zoologist or botanist. Yet though he knows when animals breed and when fruits
ripen, he does not breed or grow them; though he knows what fungi, tubers, and berries are edible, and what plants will provide poison for his arrows, he knows nothing of the reasons for it. His indispensable asset is precise information on all natural matters which concern him in the search for food, and this is based on the accumulated experiments, the trials and errors, of his forbears, and on his own skilled observation and inference. He is himself an actor on the natural scene, and he knows it from inside as one born and bred to it. But just because nature is so important to him, he is not content to confine himself merely to the possession of useful information. He is also a thinking being, who forms theories on why things happen and creatures behave as they do. So, while nature is both his home and his hunting-ground, it is also the seat of supernatural powers whom he attempts to understand, to assuage, and to control. He knows enough of animals and plants to conclude that they are governed by spirits, and though he may have no clear notion of their character, he is sure of their existence.  

The above has been quoted at length for reasons that will become clearer below. Sculthorpe originally intended, as has been shown, to portray the rites of passage by picking out crucial events like birth, puberty, marriage and rebirth, but omitting death presumably because the Requiem is concerned with this. Later, when Julian’s *Upon the Sovereign Sun* was to be employed, the rites became birth, initiation, marriage and death (incorporating rebirth). An even later version included a rite of circumcision (usually one part of the initiation rites). Sculthorpe claims that his decision in the end to employ only the initiation rite was based on the enormity of the concept of rites of passage: it was, he decided, impossible to include all of man’s life in one work. The initiation rite is more central to Sculthorpe’s philosophy than any other single rite, for in it is contained the total substance of primitive man’s world order, and, by extension, it represents, in microcosm, the gamut of all rites of passage. Sculthorpe’s understanding of the initiation rite comes not so much from van Gennep, who tends to be factual rather than conceptual, but from Mircea Eliade’s *Birth and Rebirth*:

Every primitive society possesses a consistent body of mythical traditions, a “conception of the world,” and it is this conception that is gradually revealed to the novice in the course of his initiation. What is involved is not simply instruction in the modern sense of the word. In order to become worthy of the sacred teaching the novice must first be prepared spiritually. For what he learns concerning the world and human life does not constitute knowledge in the modern sense of the term, objective and compartmentalised information, subject to infinite correction and addition. The world is the work of Supernatural Beings—a divine work and hence sacred in its very structure. Man lives in a universe that is not only supernatural in origin, but no less sacred in its form, sometimes even in its substance. The world has a “history”: first, its creation by Supernatural Beings; then, everything that took place after that—the coming of the
civilizing Hero or the mythical Ancestor, their cultural activities, their demiurgic adventures, and at last their disappearance.

This, then, is the purpose of initiation, and Maurice Bowra's account, given previously, of the functional but essentially spiritual understanding of nature is a fine example of the kind of knowledge that is acquired in the initiation rite. The structure of the initiation rite is rich in symbolic meaning. Sculthorpe has taken the four principal concepts of this rite for his four rites movements. These are Preparing the Ground, Ordeal, Death and Rebirth. Superimposed on this form is also the pattern of all rites of passage: separation, transition and incorporation. The preparation of the sacred ground is a creation of an image of the world in the time of the supernatural beings and, in fact, reactualizes this time. For the Australian Aboriginal the sacred ground is sited in specially chosen natural environments and is surrounded by objects and images of great symbolic significance in the tribal mythology. Separation in the male initiation rite is a dramatic one of child from mother, and, by inference, a separation from his previous irresponsibility, ignorance and asexuacity. This is performed in such a way as to create a fearful impression on both the child and the mother, for the novice is told that he will be captured and killed by divine beings. This is in itself an ordeal, but the actual ceremony of the separation often involves a separate ordeal, an ordeal by fire, for example. The rites of circumcision, subincision and other mutilatory acts are not only ordeals, they also represent ritual death since the novice emerges from the experience physically different; he is born a new person. Even more symbolically explicit is the practice of complete enclosure with deprivation of any form of light. This is at once symbolic of death (the grave) and of imminent birth (the womb). In all these ceremonies the novice is unaware of what is going to happen, and is in fact convinced he is going to die. The essential point of this is that the initiation prepares the novice not only for life but also for death.

This concept has an important ramification in Sculthorpe's philosophy in that the Western neurosis or "flight from death" that he speaks of can be attributed to the absence of any legitimate initiation ritual in contemporary Western society. When initiation does occur, as in the cases of the novice entering the ranks of groups like the Hell's Angels, or even a university college, society's characteristic reaction is one of horror, presumably motivated by its own fear of death. In any case such rituals are invariably only outward appearances of initiations as they do not have a structured religious significance to the participants.

Because the "conception of the world" understandably involves a complex and detailed body of knowledge, the initiation rite often
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lasts for many months, and includes instruction, although this is hardly as dramatic as those events described above. Nonetheless, most knowledge is imparted through ritualistic means such as mime, dance or song.

It may be significant, considering Sculthorpe's obsession with Australia, that the structure of a rite of passage parallels the making of his country. There is firstly a separation from the mother, England, followed by a period of transition, in which the national character is moulded, and finally an incorporation into the world community. This process is observable at all levels of the Australian experience. With painting, for example, the break with Europe forced the artist to respond to vastly different visual stimuli. Although members of the Heidelberg School were deeply inspired by impressionism, and Heysen by Turner and Constable, their work established a definite Australian character. With modern painters like Nolan and Drysdale the break with Europe appears to be complete.

*Texts of rites movements*

The texts for the rites movements of *Rites of Passage* are taken from certain songs of the Australian Aranda tribes. The composer has isolated these from T.G.H. Strehlow's *Songs of Central Australia*. Sculthorpe has written that he "chose Aranda because it sounds very like English as spoken by Australians; certainly it is as much a part of our country as the rocks of the desert". Although this consideration undoubtedly influenced his choice, the discovery of Strehlow's book was equally as influential, for the book constitutes a treasury of songs related to all kinds of ritual, and the author's translations are most accomplished. Even though it is the Aranda language which is set, to a large extent Strehlow's poetic translations determined Sculthorpe's choice of texts; the association of the chosen songs to the initiation ritual is more often implied than actual. This is largely because Strehlow devotes little space to the category of initiation songs (26 pages) compared with other categories like "songs of human beauty and love charms" (80 pages); his criterion for much of his selection is aesthetic rather than anthropological: he delights in the comparison of the techniques and topics of Aboriginal songs with those of European literature. Despite the dearth of initiation songs, the composer has found songs which are no less relevant to his subject matter. In any case, Sculthorpe has written that "although the words were very important . . . in arriving at the music, *Rites of Passage* is not especially concerned with its text". This statement relates closely to Artaud's distinction between European theatre and his own theatre which is based on Eastern concepts:
For the Occidental theatre, the word is everything, and there is no possibility of expression without it; the theatre is a branch of literature, a kind of sonorous species of language.  

Artaud advocates a theatre that has a language which is independent of the word, a language which uses only "shapes, or noise, or gesture". Since the essence of the initiation rite is defined by the science of anthropology and since we can understand its significance through its physical gestures and its visual symbolism, it seems reasonable that the text of Rites of Passage need not be crucial to its theatricality.

"But words", says Artaud "have metaphysical powers", meaning that a symbol which is potent to man can have no validity unless it can be linguistically identified. Theatrically, Artaud distinguishes between the use of words as symbols and the conventional use of words:

... this metaphysical way of considering speech is not that of the Occidental theatre which employs speech not as an active force springing out of the destruction of appearances in order to reach the mind itself, but, on the contrary, as a completed stage of thought which is lost at the moment of its own exteriorization.

The texts for the rites movements have been assembled with two main considerations. The first is the metaphysical implication of the words with respect to the Australian experience and the framework of the initiation rituals, while the second signifies the manner in which these ideas may be theatricalized.

For Preparing the Ground and part of Ordeal the text is taken from part B of "The Bandicoot Song of Ilbalinta" which is titled 'The Sacred Soak of Ilbalinta'. Although this contains no specific reference to initiation, the idea of a sacred site is crucial to the preparation of this ritual. For Preparing the Ground the text and translation are as follows:

\texttt{wana 'tantjila 'na}
\texttt{wirbm 'tirbmi 'tei}

\texttt{waka 'wawila 'na}
\texttt{wirbmi 'tirbmitet}

\texttt{tnimawu 'rupiŋ 'a waliini 'bet}
\texttt{tnimaka 'wa waliini 'bei}

\texttt{tnimar 'bulk 'ba waliini 'bei}
\texttt{tnimaka 'wa waliini 'bei}
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Lo the tnatanja pole,  
Covered with rings and stripes!

Lo, the Kauaua pole,  
Covered with rings and stripes!

Like a pillar of sand it is towering upwards;  
The tall ceremonial pole is towering upwards.

Like a whirlwind it is towering upwards;  
The tall ceremonial pole is towering upwards.\(^{45}\)

The ceremonial pole is an example of a symbolic artifact such as might be found on a site prepared for initiation. "The rings and stripes" of the pole almost certainly have further religious significance, but the potency of the symbol for Sculthorpe is its inherent theatricality. In Artaud's concept of theatre, "effigies yards high" are an important ingredient of spectacle,\(^{46}\) not only because enormous objects are always theatrically effective but also because large totem poles produce a feeling of primaeval awe in the Western mind:

A totem, a cry from the womb: these can crack through walls of prejudice in any man: a howl can certainly reach through to the guts.\(^{47}\)

Thus the text is a source of inspiration for the design of the work; and certain other aspects of this ceremonial pole which are not mentioned in the text of the poem but are nonetheless known by Strehlow, are also helpful in this regard:

... a great tnatanja pole was once swaying above the sacred soak. It had originally sprung from the soak itself. It soared up towards the sky, its trunk covered with charcoal bands separated by rings of white eagle's down. A crest of feathers adorned its tip.\(^{48}\)

Strehlow also mentions that Ilbalintja is a sun totemic site,\(^{49}\) so that, apart from the object itself, the design might be motivated by symbols of birds, flying, sky and sun.

Ordeal begins with a description of the sacred soak itself:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{walile} & \quad \text{‘ritj} \\
\text{man} & \quad \text{‘tomanto} \quad \text{man} \quad \text{‘toman} \quad \text{‘to} \\
\text{wa} & \quad \text{‘latri} \quad \text{‘ka} \\
\text{man} & \quad \text{‘toman} \quad \text{‘to} \quad \text{man} \quad \text{‘toman} \quad \text{‘to}
\end{align*}
\]

White creek sand, impenetrable hollow,  
Yellow earth, impenetrable hollow.\(^{50}\)
Here again, Strehlow gives a fuller description:

The first layer is said to consist of white creek sand, the next of lime, and the third of a soft yellow rock. The fourth is a mixture of soft orange and red rocks. Once the water has receded to this level in a long dry season the water turns a reddish colour. After these soft layers comes an impenetrable stratum of hard rock.31

The colours mentioned could be useful to a designer as could the symbolism of rocks, sand and earth. The idea of stratification also follows on from the banding of the totem pole. The next part of the text for Ordeal is from a poem which is a description, using similes, of the ceremonial regalia of the Ankota ancestor:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{`nomabau `ei} \\
\text{`nomaja `tin `tjelano `pat} \\
\text{`nomabau `ei `retlan `pat} \\
\text{`nomal `bet `tinjap `pat} \\
\text{`nomabau `ei `retlan `pat} \\
\text{`nomatnjen `ja `la `belan `pat} \\
\text{`nomaa `kwe `rkalan `pat} \\
\text{nomatnjen `ja `labelau `pat}
\end{align*}
\]

I am red like a burning fire:
I am covered with glowing red down.

I am red like a burning fire:
I am covered with shining red ochre.

I am red like a burning fire:
Red is the hollow in which I am lying.

I am red like the heart of a fire:
Red is the hollow in which I am lying.32

This is more specifically related to the action of ritual. The ancestor’s face and the upper part of his body are in fact completely covered with red-ochred eagle feathers. Thus there is a link with the first two texts, and the added symbolism of fire, which is important in some initiations. The final text used in ordeal is, however, explicitly connected to the initiation ritual:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{`loabja `pau `huja `rintwa `na} \\
\text{`latnwa `pau `huja `rintwa `na}
\end{align*}
\]
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junalkara 'ka ma 'bolta 'rai
junret 'jalta 'juta 'rai

Ringneck parrot’s tail! Sever it!
The skin covered penis! Sever it!

Up in the sky! Sever it completely!
At the very neck! Cut it through!53

The hawk-men of the “Lakabara Song” were the instigators of circumcision by a knife made from the bone of a parrot’s tail. The mood of the poem is one of extreme violence and frenzy, as the tradition ascribes bloodthirsty intentions to the performers of the ritual, while an anaesthetic to the pain felt by the novices is supplied by a vigorous trance-inducing chant.

For Death the text is of an even more violent character, and quite unrelated to the initiation ritual. It is taken from the Northern Aranda “Arintja Song of Ulamba”, a tale of brutal and murderous revenge:54

janb 'net janaŋ 'ei karil 'ja rakwa 'net lan 'net met
janb 'net janaŋ 'ei karil 'ja rakwa 'net lan 'net met

metjjet ret kŋawa 'ret lelen 'ket belen 'ket
mangwa 'net nawa 'ret lelen 'ket belen 'ket

Into putrid soil he thrusts his victim,
he thrusts him deep;
Into soil foully decayed he thrusts him,
he thrusts him deep.

The Bird of Death rises to the sky,
and will not be held.
From dead bones he rises to the sky,
and will not be held.55

The choice of this passage was obviously meant to exacerbate the ferocity of the last Ordeal selection, emphasizing the terror of ritual death through a scatological description of a real death; but the two verses also contain the familiar earth, bird and flight symbols. The “Bird of Death”, it might be added, is reminiscent of the fabled Arabian phoenix which is reborn and flies up from its own ashes. Here one interpretation is that the victim’s spirit is reborn into the bird which “will not be held”, because of its renewed vigour.
Sculthorpe chose to repeat the text used for Preparing the Ground in Rebirth presumably because the idea of return, of completing a cycle, is implied by the concept of rebirth. Certainly when the novice is reincorporated into the society, it is he that is significantly changed, not the society; but he also has, for the first time, a complete comprehension of the meaning of the sacred space, and hence of the universe. To strengthen this idea, the composer, in the Sixth Chorale, uses just one more fragment from the Aranda language, this time a single word, altjira. Strehlow explains the word in the following way:

It is a rare word, whose root meaning appears to be “eternal, uncreated, sprung out of itself”; and it occurs in certain traditional phrases and collocations. . . . Thus according to the Aranda, the earth and the sky have existed altjirana—or, as we might say, they have existed “in the beginning”, meaning thereby that nothing preceded them.56

Number symbolism and Music of the Spheres

In composing Rites of Passage, Sculthorpe was also dependent upon several other ideas which are fundamental to his creative procedures. The first of these is number symbolism, which has always helped him, as it did Alban Berg, in the conceptual stages of composition.57 For Sculthorpe the use of numbers mostly has little relation to the titles or extra-musical ideas associated with pieces, but in Rites of Passage there is a close correspondence. This work is, therefore, an ideal one in which to explore Sculthorpe’s interest in particular numbers. To begin, he has always been obsessed with the number, three, which he considers “the most magical of numbers”,58 and so it is not surprising that, at its fundamental level, his music is concerned with returning structures. The structure of all rites of passage is also a three-part one of separation, transition and incorporation. In addition, according to J.E. Cirlot, whose A Dictionary of Symbols59 is perhaps the most frequently consulted book in Sculthorpe’s library,

Three symbolizes spiritual synthesis and is the formula for the creation of each of the worlds. It represents the solution of the conflict posed by dualism. It forms a half circle comprising: birth, zenith and descent. . . . Finally, it is associated with the concepts of heaven and the Trinity.60

In Sculthorpe’s numerical hierarchy the number, two, standing for dualism in its aspects of “echo, reflection, conflict and counterpoise”,61 is of secondary but still crucial significance; and the multiples of both three and two follow next.

Rites of Passage falls into two parts, and it includes three kinds of movements: rites, chorales, and another kind for the Prelude, Interlude and Postlude. There are, then, three of these movements,
as well as four rites \((2 \times 2)\) and six chorales \((3 \times 2)\). Every movement with the exception of Rebirth, which is in five sections, can be broadly subdivided into either two, three or four \((2 \times 2)\) large sections, and these, in turn, may be further subdivided into two, three or four parts. The composer admits that he was not aware of all of these relationships except, of course, the ones on high architectonic levels, but concedes that they probably exist as a natural consequence of his compositional rules. Despite the disruption of the pattern in Rebirth, it is fitting that this movement is of broader scope since it represents the emotional climax of the work, and the number, five, has symbolism that is particularly relevant to it. Five is symbolic of “man, health and love”, 62 while the rebirth stage of the rite corresponds with the attainment of completeness in man, emergence from the physical dangers of ordeal and ritual death, and readiness for sexual love. As well, the re-establishment of the world order implied by rebirth corresponds to hieros gamos (the union of heaven and earth), and this is connected to the number five, since three symbolizes heaven and two is associated with the Magna Mater (symbolizing earth). 63 One other number worth commenting upon is thirteen, corresponding to the total number of movements. This is symbolic of “death and birth, of beginning afresh”, 64 and is therefore closely related to the meaning of the rite.

A second theme which is relevant to the conceptualization of Rites of Passage is music of the spheres. Although Boethius is not especially concerned with this in “Quod mundus”, his world order is expressed in terms of the motion of the spheres:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{How happy mortals were} \\
\text{If that pure love did guide their minds} \\
\text{Which heavenly spheres doth guide.}
\end{align*}
\]

Boethius was, however, very much preoccupied with the motion of music of the spheres. In De institutione musica he treats music under the categories of vocal, instrumental and celestial. He doubts that the “swift mechanism of the sky could move silently in its course”, that the “rapid motion of great bodies”, all revolving with “just impulse”, could be without sound. 66 Later, the astronomer, Kepler, even tried to compute a music of the spheres, basing his calculations for each planet on its mass and velocity. Kepler’s music for Earth is the palindrome, G, A \(^b\), G, 67 this exact sequence being quite common in Sculthorpe’s music. It is also curious that Plato, who was the earliest known exponent of the theory, based his calculations on the number sequence \([1, 2, 3, 4, 8, 9, 27]\), which breaks down into two geometric progressions of \([2, 4, 8]\) and \([3, 9, 27]\), all numbers of great significance to the composer. The implication of Sculthorpe’s interest in music of the spheres
seems to be that he considers *Rites of Passage* to be a contemporary celebration of the concept. Indeed there is a case that the essence of ritual is also involved:

The slow-moving ritual, characteristic of all ceremonies, is closely bound up with the rhythm of the astral movements.68

The concept of the hero

Sculthorpe has said that he is not interested in psychological drama because it has appeared only in a small part of the world (Europe) for a short period of history, say five hundred years. He agrees with Artaud that this kind of drama is tied to the written word to the detriment of other ingredients of the theatre. His lack of interest is further justified by his reading of the Australian sensibility itself:

The Australian has no tragic hero. Ned Kelly, for instance, is anti-hero and, sadly, an embarrassment to the national consciousness. But the Australian has solitude, a solitude that exists today just as it did for D.H. Lawrence in 1921.

My music is about the weather, loneliness and death. Is it coincidence that the paintings of Drysdale and the novels of Patrick White are about the weather, loneliness and death? The Australian has no heroes, no tragic heroes.69

Sculthorpe wrote this in response to an idea of Kierkegaard’s that “the tragic hero does not know the terrible responsibility of solitude” because “he has comfort that he can weep and lament with Clytemnestra and Iphigenia”.70 *Rites of Passage* in fact celebrates a different kind of hero, outside the context of the anxiety of European man:

Until recent times, no man could, with impunity, step outside a tradition. In order to understand and be attuned to the world, he needed only to know the myths, take part in ritual and decipher its symbols; through them he was linked to both the inner and outer worlds. The heroic man was not the one who tried to reform the existing order, but he who had the courage to affirm it, and who did so repeatedly on every occasion of his encounter with the sacred.71

The theatrical conception of the work

The hero of *Rites of Passage* is the initiand, for initiation involves the greatest test of courage that a human being faces. The fact that this is a very different concept from that of the hero72 in grand opera has led to a degree of criticism and comment concerning Sculthorpe’s insistence on the term “opera” for the work. He considers, however, that *Rites of Passage* has a grandeur and a monumentality which is not implied by terms like “music theatre” or “experimental theatre”, and that, in fact, these terms misrepresent the concept. In any case, rather than having its origins in
the notion of grand opera, the roots of this work seem closer to the French conception of opera at the time of Lully, which relied heavily on the chorus, the ballet and "les merveilleux", or grand scenic effects. One of the beginnings of this kind of opera took place in Antoine de Baif's Academie de Poésie et Musique (founded 1570), which had as an objective the "creation of a unified spectacle in which music, poetry, dancing and scenic display all played an equal part". This description seems to match Scullthorpé's own conception of his opera. The essential difference between *Rites of Passage* and any other kind of opera is that there is no communication between members of the cast by means of words. The dancers present the action by means of movement and mime of a symbolic and often realistic kind and the singers deliver the text directly to the audience, as if on a different plane from the dancers.

Another major difference is that the orchestra is positioned on the stage, although the composer does not insist upon this. He would prefer that the work be not produced in a prosenium-arch theatre, preferring ideally a kind of theatre-in-the-round. This is not because he has any aesthetic objection to the prosenium-arch, only that the tradition of Western theatre has evolved certain conventions, like the creation of an illusion of reality, which are outside the objectives of this work. Seeing this work produced in a conventional theatre, one cannot avoid the psychological need for illusion, but a more open staging would restore to it the quality of a procession or religious ceremony, and allow its unique kind of theatricality to function without reference to conventional stage mechanics. Since it will rarely be possible to produce *Rites of Passage* in anything other than a prosenium-arch theatre, having the orchestra on stage reinforces the fact that illusion is not being attempted.

*The influence of Artaud*

Not only in terms of staging is Sculthorpe's concept of theatre closely related to Artaud's; there have been several indications in this chapter of his espousal of many of the principles of Artaud's *Theatre of Cruelty Manifestos*:

Imbued with the idea that the public thinks first of all with its senses and that to address oneself first to its understanding, as the ordinary psychological theatre does, is absurd, the Theatre of Cruelty proposes to resort to a mass spectacle.

The attack on the senses, at least as the composer sees it, is intended to cut through the barriers of consciousness to reveal the essential nature of humankind. By presenting the vivid processes of the initiation rite in combination with a text in Latin, Western
man’s ritual language, he is attempting to reawaken the unconscious symbolic meaning of human existence. We need, writes Artaud, a theatre that “inspires us with the fiery magnetism of its images”; we have lost, according to Carl Jung, the ability to fantasize:

... in our daily experiences we need to state things as accurately as possible, and we have learned to discard the trimmings of fantasy both in our language and in our thoughts—thus losing a quality that is still characteristic of the primitive mind. Most of us have consigned to the unconscious all the fantastic psychic associations that every object or idea possesses. The primitive on the other hand is still aware of these psychic properties; he endows animals, plants or stones with powers that we find strange and unacceptable. 96

Artaud’s prescription for the shock treatment necessary to allow man to “re-assume his place between dream and event” is one which is largely embraced by Sculthorpe. Although Artaud’s themes are, unlike the initiation rite, concerned with man’s base instincts such as crime, erotic obsession, savagery and cannibalism, the violence and danger inherent in initiation makes it suited to the same theatrical alchemy.

The notion of the set is replaced by the all-embracing concept of the spectacle. Since there is no longer a proscenium stage, mechanisms such as flying apparatus are inapplicable, and most objects become portable. Artaud prescribes “objects of strange proportions”, “new and surprising objects”, “enormous masks”, “effigies yards high”, “costumes taken from certain ritual models”, “hieroglyphic characters”, “ancient and forgotten musical instruments” and “new musical instruments as tall as men”. The essential criterion for properties is “that all objects requiring a stereotyped physical representation will be discarded or disguised”. 99 This accords with Jung’s observation that strange symbolic non-representational objects are often instrumental in unlocking the subconscious, but, as well, it circumvents the possibility of theatrical cliché.

Artaud calls for the reform of conventional lighting procedures, claiming that the equipment in use in theatres of his time was no longer adequate. Although he advocates effects which are couched in fanciful terms, his formulae are clairvoyant of modern developments like the laser. Among his requirements are “light in waves, in sheets, in fusillades of fiery arrows”, “the action of light which arouses sensations of heat, cold, anger, fear, etc.”, “sudden changes of light”, “the full gamut of coloured light” and “apparitions”. Again there is a definite attempt to avoid clichés of lighting. Artaud demands, also, the gamut of vocal possibilities ranging from primal “cries” and “groans” to “incantational beauty”. As far as music is concerned, the unexpected and unusual
are described as “rare notes of music” and “charms of harmony” and the ritual element is accounted for as “excited pounding out of rhythms and sounds”. The most essential ingredient of action is that of cruelty or danger, but the guiding principle is the “physical rhythm of movement whose crescendo and de-crescendo accords exactly with the pulsation of movements familiar to everyone”. Artaud’s conception of action ranges from “paroxysms” and “tremors” to “evocative gestures” and “emotive or arbitrary attitudes”.81

Peter Brooke has written that “Artaud applied is Artaud betrayed: betrayed because it is always just a portion of his thought that is exploited”.82 It is also conceivable, if not inevitable, that the European mind cannot, for cultural reasons, detach itself from the theatre of dialogue. Rites of Passage, because it is a pure ritual theatre, seems more suited to Artaud’s approach than the productions of plays by his disciples like Brooke and Garcia, and even his own projected mise en scènes. Brooke admits that another danger of Artaud’s approach is that it leads to discontinuity:

There is a joy in violent shocks. The only trouble with violent shocks is that they wear off. What follows a shock? . . . I fire a pistol at the spectator—I did so once—and for a second I have a possibility to reach him in a different way. I must relate this possibility to a purpose, otherwise a moment later he is back where he was: inertia is the greatest force we know. . . . The trouble is that one can easily find oneself firing the first shots without any sense of where the battle could lead.83

Rites of Passage has no propensity to degenerate to this state, since each of its events that may be given a violent theatricalization has a specific symbolic meaning and each is related to the total structure of the initiation rite.

Staging the work

The first season of Rites of Passage opened at the Sydney Opera House on 27 September, 1974. The conductor was John Hopkins, the producer and choreographer, Jaap Flier, and the designer, Kenneth Rowell. The scenario in its present form postulates this production, but most of the ideas and action contained in it were suggested to the producer by the composer. Flier, however, was not very much in sympathy with Sculthorpe’s production concept, preferring a quite abstract approach to dance. Most of the time his choreography had no obvious connection to the initiation rite, and sometimes seemed to go directly contrary to the ritual structure, and with little sensitivity to the musical structure. After this experience, Sculthorpe felt that a scenario with specific stages of the action following specific sections of the score was necessary. Although the composer has his own preferences as to how the
work may be realized, the scenario tries to avoid dogmatism as much as possible. The director is asked to follow the structure, but he can quite easily impose his own personality upon it as far as properties, other aspects of design, and all details of movement are concerned.

The reason for the degree of non-specificity is not only respect for a director’s or designer’s creative freedom but also in consideration of the differing financial resources of opera and other theatre companies, and the possibility of production in theatres of various sizes and designs. It is always tempting to demand the most sophisticated theatrical resources, but this, in a way, demonstrates a lack of social responsibility. Jerome Savary, the director of Le Grand Magic Circus, a company famous for its fantastic theatrical spectacles has written:

The Magic Circus was tired of big shows—only rich people could buy us and only rich people could see us—so I have only ten in the company which makes it easier to travel and to play in any kind of theatre.  

Despite a huge reduction in resources, Savary’s company has not sacrificed any of its original breath-taking immediacy, proving that it is possible effectively to apply the principles of Artaud on a small scale.

Because Sculthorpe’s scenario is basically a skeletal version of a summation of the literary, anthropological, philosophical and histrionic substance of this chapter, it seems unnecessary to analyse it. Primarily it is a functional document, a starting point for a director who could quite easily be bewildered by the plethora of available detail. As it may be useful in clarifying certain concepts it has been included as Appendix II of this study. The fact that the various steps in the action are allied to specific cues in the score may be somewhat misleading. The structure of the scenario illuminates the musical structure in no particularly useful way, since the scenario was not a contributing factor in the composition of the piece. To a large extent Sculthorpe’s alignment of the action to the score is pragmatic rather than conceptual: quite often the rubrics have been located so as to reduce commotion on stage; at other times the distribution is calculated by dividing the number of measures of a section by the number of rubrics. Lastly, it should be recorded that, although Sculthorpe devoted considerable time to the devising and perfecting of the scenario, he would consider it foolish always to insist on a verbatim interpretation: the scope for the possible theatricalization of Rites of Passage should be evident from the foregoing analyses of its subject matter, and of Sculthorpe’s conception of the theatre. His scenario was conceived firstly as an obligatory aid to any theatre director who was not in sympathy with his aims; but, apart from the advantage of supplying the score with scant details of the staging, the
interpretation of *Rites of Passage* still seems best left to a collaboration between composer and director.

Although primarily concerned with a structural analysis of *Rites of Passage* the following chapter deals, where appropriate, with the symbolic significance of certain musical idioms and special musical relationships. The analysis may appear to be disproportionately long considering the analyses of other works in Chapters 2, 3, 5 and 6, but it should be remembered that the opera is more than four times the length of any other single piece Sculthorpe has composed and that the degree of structural complexity based on the principles discussed in Chapter 5 increases exponentially the necessary length of minimal structural analysis.
The Music of Rites of Passage

*Rites of Passage* is made up of two basically different kinds of music: rites and chorales. Each has its own orchestra and group of singers, and its own special position on the stage. The chorales singers, who also play small percussion instruments, are stationed on a tiered platform at the back of the stage area, and the chorales orchestra, consisting of two tubas, six celli, four double basses, percussion (three players) and conductor, is arranged in front of these singers. The rites singers and the three drummers of the rites orchestra are positioned at stage-left. The piano and the pianoplayer are located at stage-right, isolated from the two main groups because the piano is an integral part of both orchestras. The piano is used, for the most part, as a linking factor between the rites and the chorales. In four of the movements, specifically the Third Chorale, Rebirth, the Sixth Chorale and the Postlude, there is an interaction of all forces, and, at the end of the Second Chorale, the female rites singers are involved. The area of the stage bordered by these performers and the front of the stage is employed by the dancers; and one part at the centre of this area represents the sacred space. Throughout the performance the instrumentalists remain in fixed positions; the singers, however, occasionally move from their positions. The chorales singers process to their positions during the Prelude, the rites singers to theirs near the end of the First Chorale. The rites singers leave the stage towards the end of the Third Chorale and return immediately before the beginning of the vocal section at the end of Death. All the singers move in “harmonious motion” with the dancers during the final improvisatory section of Rebirth, but regain their positions by the end of this section.

Vocal styles

Because *Rites of Passage* is only the second substantial work by Sculthorpe involving singers, it is not surprising that many of the new techniques he introduces into his music are vocal ones; and, since the chorales orchestra is used, for the most part, to support
and enrich the singing, vocal styles tend to dominate the work. Just as the composer’s range of instrumental techniques was treated in the discussion of the Sun Music period, it seems appropriate to give vocal styles similar treatment in this chapter.

The First Chorale contains three musical ideas of considerable importance. The first is a setting in which the tenors and basses declaim the syllables of two lines in a strict rhythmic arrangement (Ex. 73):

This idea occurs three times in the First Chorale, varied slightly each time to accommodate the number of syllables and the poetic rhythm of the respective lines. It is also found in the Second Chorale and the Fifth Chorale as well as in Rebirth, where it appears in six-measure settings of the two three-line groupings organized in rhythmic canon. The most important musical material of the First Chorale is an homophonic setting of the first of these three-line groupings. This, like the declaimed style, appears three times, but with one line per section. The third section is extended so that the word, amor, may be set thrice (Ex. 74):
It is from this style that Sculthorpe derives the term “chorale”, because it is based on the hymnic principles of one note per syllable and of rhythmic simplicity. It may be likened to Bach’s harmonizations of Lutheran hymns, some of which are of exceptional harmonic complexity. The harmony of Sculthorpe’s chorale style is indeed considerably complex if studied in relation to his musical language before this time. Like the chorales of Bach’s Passions, Sculthorpe’s chorales have a monumental quality; they function like pillars which support and balance the remainder of the music of Rites of Passage. The strict verticality and periodicity of the constituent chords also produce an effect of serenity that could not have existed if the texture were contrapuntal, or the rhythms irregular. With the exception of an addition of a dominating soprano melodic line, the Fifth Chorale is almost identical to the First Chorale; but the Third Chorale and the Sixth Chorale completely dispense with the spoken text in favour of the chorale style accompanied by rhythmic textures supplied by the rites singers and drummers.  

Settings of the word amor

The third significant vocal idea in the First Chorale is the first occurrence of the varied settings in the work of the word amor. In the section quoted above, the tenors and basses sing two protracted four-note melodies. These carry only the syllable “a”. Finally the men sing the syllable “mor” to coincide with the setting of the word in the women’s parts. This is best represented in the Fifth Chorale where all the singers intone the syllable “a” through all three statements of the chord progression, while the syllable “mor” is reserved for the coda of the third statement. The chord used for the setting of “mor” is one of the genre of chords made up from superimposed major seventh intervals. Elsewhere in the work there are other kinds of settings for the word amor. At the end of the first large section of the three-section Second Chorale, amor is set with two different chords. The first is dissonant and similar to the setting described immediately above, while the second is based on a chord constructed from the anhemitonic pentatonic scale (Ex.75):
At the end of the third large section of the Second Chorale the dissonant chord is replaced by an augmented second interval \([a^b, b]\). The corresponding section of Rebirth\(^6\) also follows the pattern in Example 75, but at the end of the second part of this movement (p. 103) the harmony of the setting is similar to that of the First Chorale. The end of the Fifth Chorale has a unison setting on \(c\), while the end of the Fourth Chorale has the only other consonant setting of the word (tones A, D, and E in the chord). The climaxes of the third and sixth chorales have, for example, an added dissonant bass tone, while the rhythmically independent singing of the unison E of the Postlude represents a different concept of setting.

Despite the appearance of the word \(amor\) in only the fifteenth and twenty-ninth lines of the text, it is set in each of the chorales and in Rebirth. Indeed Sculthorpe has written that the chorales and Rebirth, if performed without a break, would, "in a sense, form an oratorio in praise of \(Imperitans\ amo\) the love that orders and unites the universe".\(^3\) The multiple settings do, in fact, represent a force which is significant in ordering and uniting the music of \(Rites\ of\ Passage\).\(^6\) almost all the settings of \(amor\) function as cadence points, articulating the endings of important sections and of whole movements.\(^9\)

**The Fourth Chorale**

Without the cadential settings of the word \(amor\) acting as a link between movements, the Fourth Chorale would seem to lack a strong structural relationship with the other movements, since most of its unique musical ideas do not appear in any obvious way elsewhere in the work. The section of the text assigned to the Fourth Chorale is concerned with the destruction which results if
the “ruling power of love” is relaxed. All that “move with lovely motion” are thrown into chaos. Sculthorpe’s text for Death, the following movement, reflects this idea, just as his stage direction for the singers and the dancers to move in “harmonious motion”, in the last section of Rebirth, reflects the reaffirmation of order.

The celestial order is paralleled in the principal musical material of the Fourth Chorale, a vocal texture in six parts for female singers. Each part, sung to the syllable, “a”, has a three-tone or four-tone ostinato, perhaps corresponding to the motion of a celestial body. In combination, the resulting sound is a shimmering texture which has subtle rhythmic and contrapuntal interest, but which flows in quite an undisturbed manner (Ex. 76):

The serenity of this texture is disturbed by the intrusion of the male singers, who begin to murmur the text and then to increase their dynamic to a farrago of shouting. This overpowers the women’s quite dissonant setting of the word amor; and, as if defeated by the chaos, the women whisper extremely softly, and rhythmically independently, “et caelo imperitans amor”. The whole of the first section of the Fourth Chorale is then repeated exactly, except that the men complete their section of the text. This time the whispering is omitted and a new section begins which is entirely instrumental, reminiscent of the Sun Music idiom, but intended to symbolize the
pandemonium of war. The male singers create a battery of harsh guiro and gourd textures in combination with orchestral percussion, strings and tubas, but, predictably, the women do not participate in this as percussionists. The tubas’ harmonic glissandi refer back to the strings’ harmonic glissandi of the First Chorale, which anticipates the statement of that part of the text concerned with Phoebus, god of the sun. The reference in the Fourth Chorale relates to the idea of nuclear war, of man’s tapping the powers of the sun’s energy. Finally the women return with a freer version of their initial figuration, but the consonant setting of amor, which concludes the movement, represents a total return to order.

The Fourth Chorale is, then, a self-contained dialectic brought about by the superimposition of two textual fragments from the poem, and realized musically by the use of contrasted material. Apart from the relevance of the settings of amor to one side of this dramatic conflict, these settings are essentially the most powerful structural link between this chorale and the other movements.

*Indonesian borrowings and pentatonic modality*

Although the principal vocal texture of the Fourth Chorale is not repeated in any other movement of *Rites of Passage*, it is, in feeling and conception, very similar both to the gamelan-like figuration which appears in Preparing the Ground and Rebirth, and to the melody which this figuration accompanies (Ex.77):
Of all Sculthorpe's *gamelan*-like textures this is the one that is the most unmistakably derivative of Indonesian music: the melody and its fragmentary counter melody (the counter melody is not included in the excerpt) are almost literally transcribed from a Javanese song entitled “Puspawarna”, or “Kinds of Flowers”. The accompanying pentatonic vibraphone figuration is of Sculthorpe's own invention, although it is not out of character with the instrumental textures of *ketawang*, the genre from which the song is taken. The style of the figuration is, in fact, a development from the composer's earlier use of Colin McPhee's transcriptions of *gender wayang* music; but, in contrast to the counterpoint of different *gender* parts, Sculthorpe's texture, in this example, is rigidly stylized. The highest and lowest of the three parts are doubled at the octave, and consist of three-tone (and sometimes two-tone) ostinati arranged in rhythmic groupings of four notes. After every eight quavers (two measures) the tones of each ostinato change; but the tonal centre remains constant. After twelve measures the tonal centre changes to a fourth above the initial tonal centre. The middle line of the three parts is, through both sections, centred a fourth above the fundamental tonal centre. It, too, consists of two-tone and three-tone ostinati, and, in any of the two-measure sections, involves at least one tone not in the other part. Thus the vibraphone texture fluctuates between having four notes and five notes of the pentatonic scale {E, G, A, C, D}. Although it is possible to prescribe a tonal centre for the texture, it has, as a result of its carefully wrought rules of construction, a certain tonal ambiguity. This is compounded by the complex modal character of the Javanese melody and the fact that the countermelody has a conspicuous addition of the tone, B.

The melody itself is based on *patet manyura*, which evokes the mood of ripeness and fulfilment. It is, in Sculthorpe's opinion, of a most sublime nature, defying analysis. It seems to be a good example of the subtle complexity of the concept of *patet*, where the mood is not only determined by the tonal centre of the scale but also by the particular melodic shapes and rhythmic definition. A large part of the melody is given in Example 78.
The modal quality of this melody seems to change constantly; it is not until the final cadence that one is sure that the tonal centre is A, although, in retrospect, what seemed to be E or C tonal centres could also have been interpreted as A tonal centres. As mentioned above, the modal complexity is further increased by the addition of the vibraphone figuration, which in the first section is centred on E and, in the second, on A.

In constructing textures like this Sculthorpe is thinking of his music in a characteristically Asian way, delicately manipulating only five basic tones, and balancing related modal qualities against each other. These passages of his music are often claimed to be monotonous, but the composer believes that his critics are “listening with ears jaded by chromatic harmony” so that the modal subtleties are often undetected.14

After Preparing the Ground, the Javanese melody is employed next in the last section of the Second Chorale, where it is accompanied by a pentatonic texture employing a different series of tones. The texture is used firstly, without the melody, in the opening section of the Second Chorale. It initially consists of a pentatonic chord {F, G, A, C, D} for strings, which is prolonged for twenty measures, and a vocal prolongation which changes slightly every two-and-a-half measures with the introduction of a new syllable of the text (Ex.79):
This represents another attempt to create delicate modal changes: the string chord has a root of F but a definite predominance of the tone, c; and the changing two-tone and three-tone chords of the voices cause the emphasis to shift constantly. When the section is repeated (from m.19), a B♭ replaces the A, affirming the importance of the F in the original chord. After the central section of the Second Chorale, the Javanese melody appears, accompanied by the initial texture, so that F becomes its tonal centre. Consequently, the tonal character of the melody is transformed. In the second half of this section, however, the tonal centre becomes B♭; this conflicts strongly with the melody, whose modality is centred on A. In both cases, the clash of melody and accompaniment conforms reasonably well with Sculthorpe's harmonic principles: there tend to be dissonant intervallic clashes with one or other tonal centre, and these are momentarily resolved before further clashes occur. The prominence of E in the melody means, however, that dissonance prevails; and the particular case of the B♭ tonal centre recalls the occurrence of the major seventh chord with a melodic flattened fifth in the composer's more conventionally harmonic music (Ex.80):

With the exception of a few examples based on D♭ and C, almost all instances of this harmonic phenomenon in Sculthorpe's music have a root of B♭.¹³

The Javanese melody is employed with both accompaniments in Rebirth, a movement which represents a synthesis of the special musical elements of the chorales and the rites. There are further additions to this passage in Rebirth which deserve comment. Whereas, in the Second Chorale the changing texture was scored for tenors, with an F tonal centre, and later for basses, with a B♭ tonal centre, in Rebirth the two versions appear together in canon, the entries of which are separated by four measures. The double basses, which originally held a tone in the prolonged twenty-measure string chord of the Second Chorale, have, in Rebirth, a three-note, cross-rhythmic ostinato which reflects the gamelan-like figuration of the vibraphone. Thus, in Rebirth the result of these combinations is a wash of sound, perhaps the most complex
non-chromatic texture in Sculthorpe’s oeuvre, and certainly one of his most serene Asian-influenced passages.

*Some melodic relationships between movements*

Rebirth also includes one of Sculthorpe’s most intense expressionistic sections of music, thus bringing his East-West conflict into full perspective for the first time in one movement. The texture involves a chromatic, falling vocal melody set against harmonically oscillating chords for voices and instruments (Ex.81):

This passage, together with the chorale style and the “Lament” from the end of Death will be examined in detail in a section concerning harmony later in this chapter. “Lament” was, in fact, the first music written for *Rites of Passage*, and originally carried the text used for the First Chorale. Its distinctively funereal mood probably derived from the former plan to incorporate the liturgy of the Requiem. Although it exists almost as an independent piece in the work, since it is never repeated, the predominance of the falling semitone in the melody means that it is intimately related to the many sections of the work that rely on this motive. The most prominent of these forms the introduction to Ordeal, and, in a variation, the introduction to Rebirth (Ex.82–83):
The slow static melody from Ordeal has a quality similar to the music of Zen Buddhist chant (particularly shomyo) and early shakuhachi music. Although it is certainly a subconscious influence, there are many similarities between the idea of this section and *Koku*, a twelfth century piece for two shakuhachis (in unison) and temple bell. The elongated two-note fragments of adjacent tones is common to both, but even the intermittent bell-stroke is replaced in Ordeal by delicate conga-head glissandi and sounds produced on the piano strings. In Rebirth the melody is shared between two tubas in low registers.

Elsewhere, there are other significant uses of the falling semitone in melody. The cadence between the seventh and eighth measures of the chorale progression has a falling semitone in the upper part; the expressionistic section of Rebirth, most of the vibraphone pitch cues and a large part of the vibraphone figuration of the Fourth Chorale are all characterized by falling semitones. One of the most important examples is found in the vocal textures of the body of Ordeal. Apart from the introduction briefly mentioned above, the music of Ordeal consists of a constantly varying texture constructed around two basic patterns for three skin drums. At various points in the movement vocal textures and piano improvisations are added to the drum patterns. The organization of this music will be dealt with later, since here the only concern is with intervocalic relationships. There are two kinds of vocal music in Ordeal: the first, for male voices, follows the rhythmic style of the drumming, while the second, for female voices, consists of long-held notes in the manner of those of the introductions to Ordeal and Rebirth. The relevant fragments of these vocal lines and textures are illustrated in Examples 84–87:
It should be added that the piano improvisation also includes references to the semitonal motive.

*Vocal textures involving improvisation*

Several less frequently used vocal textures also deserve mention. The first is based on the idea that each performer sings the syllables of a text with durations and pitches chosen at will, the object being to create as much variety as possible. With a large number of singers, the resulting sound is a constantly varying polyphonic texture that would be difficult to perform or even to achieve if it had been notated in a conventional manner. These aleatoric sections occur, appropriately, at the beginning of Preparing the Ground, symbolizing the chaos at the beginning of time, and after the “Lament” at the end of Death, symbolizing the temporary destruction of order. Allied to this technique is another idea which Sculthorpe has used instrumentally in works related to the *Sun Music* series. Again involving a freedom of rhythm, the singers employ the pitches of a tone-row, each beginning on a different member of the row. This yields a more restless sound than the previous technique. It is used in the middle section of the Second Chorale to accompany the men’s rhythmic declamatory style where the text is concerned appropriately with “the floods of greedy seas”, as well as later, after the soaring melody of Rebirth, where this is further reference to the sea (letter ⑤). Apart from the settings of *amor* in the Postlude, there are two occasions where this free and independent rhythmic technique is employed on one single tone: at the beginning of Ordeal, where it is a drone on A, accompanying a long static melody, and after the tuba duet at the beginning of Rebirth, where it is a drone on e.

All the techniques listed in the above paragraph contain an improvisatory element as an effective means of achieving certain textures without complicated scoring. Extensive improvisational licence is given only to the pianist, except for an improvisation between Rebirth and the beginning of the Sixth Chorale involving almost every performer. In this section the dancers as well as the chorales singers and the rites singers “move in harmonious patterns both within and outside the sacred space”. If this obviously represents the triumph of order, it also signifies the dissolving of the boundaries of the sacred ground, a return to a pre-ritual state, or, in simple terms, everyday life. The completion
of the initiation ritual is, in fact, a cue for triumphant gestures of human approval. Thus, the improvisation, in contrast to the staging, is a chaotic crescendo from whispering to a tumult of the shouting. The complete Boethius text is used, so that, for the first time in the work, many different parts of the text sound simultaneously. The vocal improvisation is underlined by a sustained chord for double basses and tubas as well as an improvisation for skin drums, which begins as a heart-beat rhythm for a single drum and gradually gains momentum until its violent syncopations compete with the clamour of the shouting. In addition, each of the orchestral percussionists improvises on the range of timbres available from the three tom toms, while the cellists improvise, in an impassioned style, upon the series of tones, \([E^b, E^b, F, G, A^s, C]\). The section ends at a climax where all sound ceases except for a wash of piano-string and vibraphone chromatic glissandi, bridging a gap before the beginning of the Sixth Chorale.

*The chorales orchestra*

The vocal textures which remain undiscussed are those which are additions to the skin drum patterns of Ordeal, the Third Chorale and the Sixth Chorale. These will be dealt with after the following examination of the function of the chorales orchestra. Apart from the tuba duet, the *gamelan*-like figurations for vibraphone in Preparing the Ground, Rebirth and the Fourth Chorale, the cello and tam tam improvisations at the end of Rebirth and the piano improvisations, the role of the chorales orchestra falls into three well-defined categories. There are textures in the *Sun Music* style,\(^\text{17}\) but the central section of the Fourth Chorale (already briefly discussed) is the only substantial one written entirely for instruments. Nonetheless, the middle section of the Second Chorale, which involves voices and instruments, is one of the most stylistically innovative of the whole work, for it demonstrates the immense compositional possibilities, in Sculthorpe's idiom, of giving voices and instruments equal status. One of the reasons for there being a small orchestral force of six celli, four double basses, two tubas, piano and percussion is that the composer wished to avoid the problems of the orchestra overshadowing the singers.\(^\text{18}\) It may be a valid criticism that Sculthorpe has been too cautious in this regard, but it is also evident that these self-imposed limitations have forced him to use the instruments, especially the percussion, in an inventive manner.

The second role is one of structural punctuation. Throughout *Rites of Passage*, percussive sounds are used to articulate the shape of the work. This is not unpredictable in Sculthorpe's music, but the fact that percussion forms the largest instrumental force in the work means that it can legitimately dominate the orchestral
textures. On the simplest level, a percussive stroke falls on the first
beat of almost every distinct section of the work, even those parts
which are unmetrical or noticeably static in character. In metred
sections there is often internal articulation to strengthen the
symmetry of Sculthorpe’s highly ordered structural units, or to
signify, by way of extended anacrusis, the impending completion
of a section and the beginning of another. A curious example of
this function occurs throughout the Javanese melodic section of
Preparing the Ground (Ex.88):

The composer has employed this pattern\(^9\) to mark the first beat of
each eight-measure vibraphone section, but, because the vocal
melody is slightly asymmetrical, he has organized it so that the
strong beat falls on the final tone of each melodic phrase as in
Javanese gamelan music, and not, as one might expect, on the first
tone.

The technique of punctuation within sections as short as eight
measures finds its most complete expression in conjunction with
the chorale style (Ex.89):
Because the harmonic progression has no rhythmic or melodic characteristics that necessarily divide it in the way that most of Sculthorpe’s metred phrases are organized, the glockenspiel has here been employed to underline the customary division. The chimes, however, delicately offset the serene periodicity of the chord progression. As each of the four chorales involving this progression has three statements of these eight measures, the composer has been able to vary the percussion punctuation as a growth function within each movement, and as a variation function between movements. For example, on the third statement in the First Chorale, the vibraphone adds colour and weight to the basic progression, the glockenspiel creates a further division and the Chinese cymbal assumes the original role of the chimes (Ex.90):

The compositional principle illustrated here is clearly related to the punctuating structures of Balinese music, but it is, in fact, a new approach for Sculthorpe, since it represents his first punctuating framework without florid melody or instrumental figuration.
One level of variational procedure in the work may be illustrated by the different scorings of percussion in these eight measures as they appear in various places (Ex. 91–96):
Thus the first statement of the First Chorale and the first statement of the Third Chorale combine rhythmically to form the first statement of the Sixth Chorale. The third statement of the First Chorale is rhythmically identical to the third statement of the Sixth Chorale, but the latter has the same instrumentation as the third statement of the Third Chorale. If one were to examine the pitch relationships one would find that, similarly, there are variational subtleties on that level.

The third important role of the chorales orchestra involves the strings and tubas. Although these instruments appear principally to be merely doubling the vocal parts, the basses and tubas are, in fact, supplying the crucial root tones of Sculthorpe’s harmonic system. Their importance cannot be overstressed: they endow the harmonic writing with a strength and depth which the low voices are not capable of providing; and it is indeed inconceivable that Sculthorpe could compose such a work without them. For the most part, however, the strings, particularly the cellos, are employed to help the singers perform accurately; the harmonic language is difficult, and, for an average opera chorus, even unfamiliar. This is not to say that in these cases the strings have no structural or textural function: the long-held chords of the Second Chorale and Fourth Chorale are, for example, crucial to the conception of these movements. Similarly, the vibraphone and chimes chords, which provide pitch cues throughout the work, assume a vital structural significance.

*The role of the piano*

Although the piano is listed as an instrument of the chorales
orchestra, it takes part in all of the rites except Rebirth, and, curiously, is excluded from the Second Chorale and the Fourth Chorale. In the other chorales, and in the central section of Preparing the Ground, its function is identical to that of the punctuating percussion; but it is also given two short solos in both the First Chorale and the Fifth Chorale, while, in the outside sections of Preparing the Ground, it is stylistically linked to the ritual drum textures. The most impressive sections for the piano are the improvisations in Ordeal and Death.

The musical material for the piano is almost entirely produced by direct contact with the strings and other interior parts of the instrument. The keys are used only to raise various combinations of dampers in order that glissandi with particular scale qualities may be achieved; and they are also used occasionally for traditional prepared-piano techniques. Piano improvisation dates in Sculthorpe's music from Landscape (1971), for piano with tape echo and prerecorded tape. In this work the composer was not so much interested in the playing style as in providing, through the prerecorded tape, a structure which freed the performer from the considerable responsibility of the durational proportions, and, to a large extent, the actual musical ideas of the various sections of the piece. The specifications for the creation of the prerecorded tape consist of seven durations which are attached to a typical structure of A B C D C B A where A, B, C, and D are contrasted textures of the performer's choosing. In performance, the prerecorded tape thus provides the basic shape of the work, and the player is left free to add material that will either reinforce this shape or offset it in some way. Although it is possible to argue that Landscape is not so much a composition as a structural idea, various recordings and performances of it have enjoyed considerable success, and it seems certain that this is attributable simply to a structural solidarity unusual in this kind of improvisation.

The piano improvisations in Rites of Passage are related to the concept of Landscape since they are additions to the highly structured texture of skin drums and voices in Ordeal, and skin drums alone in Death. In Ordeal the piano and voices alternate according to the scheme shown in Figure 4.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Pattern number</th>
<th>Forces additional to drums</th>
<th>Number of measures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a  b  c  d  e  f  g  h</td>
<td>piano  voices  piano  voices  piano  voices  piano  female voices</td>
<td>24  24  24  48  24  24  24  48</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4
In sections c and g the pianist is advised to use material which is based on the melody of the female singers of section h. The structure is also strengthened by the use of similar textures in sections a and c and in sections a, e and h. The improvisation of Death, however, involves a different approach. Rather than an attempt to create a structure by various repetitions of material, the technique is one of continuous growth from soft and delicate textures to loud, harsh textures. The choice of material, however, is largely determined by the performer’s own style of improvisation.

Sculthorpe includes the piano improvisations because of certain special advantages of an improvisatory approach. In the compositional concept of these sections, for example, the piano is completely independent of the strong metrical foundations of the drum textures. If the composer were to score the piano part, the notational and performance difficulties would be almost insurmountable. A second consideration is that of spontaneity, a quality which has virtually disappeared from the European orchestral and choral traditions. Sculthorpe has occasionally remarked upon the impulsive energy of some kinds of rock music, deploiring the fact that this quality seems impossible to achieve because of the particular evolution in the twentieth century of the performer of his kind of music. Although he is firmly entrenched in the tradition of notational precision, often, for example by using various gradations of accents and tenuti for many successive notes, Sculthorpe places, as a matter of principle or of aesthetic, great value upon spontaneous modes of performance.

*The Skin Drums*

Apart from three improvisations and a punctuating function in various sections of the rites, the skin drums are primarily used in rhythmic textures, which are organized according to only a few different principles. One principle that applies universally is the repetition of basic patterns. All of Sculthorpe's music relies upon repetition, but with these textures the patterns are repeated many times. The texture, for example, which accompanies the static vocal clusters of Preparing the Ground consists of three four-measure patterns, each repeated ten times (Ex.97–99):
There are three levels of repetition, the first being the factor of ten. Secondly, there is a close correspondence between pattern A and pattern B, the principal difference being the internal accentuation of the measure. Pattern A has an additive framework of $3 + 3 + 2 (\uparrow \downarrow \downarrow)$, while pattern B is divisive ($4 + 4$); but three of the note patterns are the same, since the rhythms of drums 2 and 3 are exchanged and that of drum 4 remains the same. In the third kind of repetition there is a tendency for each drum part to consist
of a one-measure rhythm which is repeated in the following three measures of the unit. This is so for drums 1, 2 and 3 in patterns A and B, and for drum 1 in pattern C. In all three patterns, drum 4 is conceived as a four-measure rhythm with no internal repetition, and, in all three patterns, drums 5 and 6 have a punctuating function in order to articulate the length of the four-measure units. The procedure can be likened to a tendency in African tribal music for each instrument of a rhythmic texture to have a pattern of an independent length which is repeated until a new section of a piece is begun. Undoubtedly, then, the drum music can be interpreted as a symbolic entity in Sculthorpe’s concept of a rites movement.

The drum music in Preparing the Ground was initially conceived as a rhythmic accompaniment to the vocal music in the Sixth Chorale, and then included in the earlier movement, thus adding another element to the complex structural network of the piece. For the Sixth Chorale, a slight variation of pattern A is used instead of pattern C, and patterns A and B are played five times, not ten. Pattern C of Preparing the Ground was especially composed to create a rhythmic acceleration to climaxes at the ends of the first and third sections of the movement.

The Third Chorale employs a simpler rhythmic texture based on a similar organizational principle; the six-layered pattern is illustrated in Example 100:
The corresponding pattern B is the same as in Example 100, while the corresponding pattern C differs only in drums 5 and 6, which form a pattern less like a punctuating rhythm (Ex.101).^{23}

![Example 101](image)

In the Third Chorale, which is in $\frac{3}{2}$ metre, there is a conflict between the harmonic rhythm and the drum patterns because each measure of the chorale style is equivalent to three measures of the rites four-measure unit ($1 \times \frac{3}{2} = 3 \times \frac{2}{3}$). Sculthorpe deals with this anomaly by adding three measures rest ($\frac{3}{4}, \frac{1}{4}, \frac{3}{4}$) in the vocal parts between the first and second, and second and third statements of the eight-measure unit. The resulting eleven-measure unit (32 minims) is equivalent to eight statements of the rites unit. The Third Chorale statement, which is extended so that there can be five settings of the word amor, is tailored in a similar way, so that the four-measure rites unit is used twenty times. The progression from these asymmetrical qualities of the Third Chorale to the strictly divisive relationship of the rites drumming and chorale style in the Sixth Chorale is undoubtedly an important structural factor, and arguably of symbolic significance since the slight uneasiness in the earlier movement presages the warlike sections of the Fourth Chorale.

**Ordeal**

The drum patterns of Ordeal and Death are partly based upon different organizational principles, but the men's vocal textures of Ordeal, though more detailed than those of the Third Chorale, are also four-measure patterns that are repeated many times. There are three of these, together with two elongated melodic lines for the female singers. They vary in complexity, and differ from the patterns in the Third Chorale in that pitch is more often than not specified. This supplies a textural contrast to the flatness of the drum music and the piano improvisation, which is little concerned with pitch relationships (Ex.102):
In this example the texture is influenced by non-European musical concepts. The second line employs part of a pentatonic scale found in Japanese traditional music, but its rhythmic and melodic shapes are reminiscent of the slow nuclear themes of Indonesian music, except, of course, for tempo and actual intervals. As a further comparison with gamelan music, the first line and the third line are based on rhythmic units which are respectively half and double that of the second line. The third line is made up of a rhythmic idea which Sculthorpe originally derived from the Balinese ketjak for use in Sun Music II. The syncopated rhythm in the last two measures of the fourth line is a common device of gender wayang music, while the fifth and sixth lines have a characteristic punctuating function.

In the search for musical inspiration for Rites of Passage, the anthropological basis of the work naturally directed the composer’s attention to Australian Aboriginal music, but he found little to interest him.24 One of Trevor Jones’ transcriptions of Groote Eylandt Songs25 later, however, became the basis for a long section of The Song of Tailtinama (1974), a work displaying Sculthorpe’s most effective handling of borrowed materials. The transformation of the original melody into his own musical idiom is indeed revealing (Ex.103–04):
Although there are only slight changes of rhythm, the tonal characteristics of the tumbling strain are significantly altered, but without interfering with the fundamental simplicity. The B in the transcription is eradicated, and the A, flattened. The tones, c, d, f and g of the transformed melody correspond intervallically with the second line of the *Rites of Passage* texture (Ex.102). It thus seems likely that this vocal texture also resulted from the reworking of the Aboriginal melody.

The drum texture of the body of Ordeal consists of pattern 1 (Ex.105–06) as well as a version of pattern 3 (pattern A × 6 + pattern B × 6 + pattern C × 6). Pattern 1, which is also employed to open the work, is a texture for three drums, all of which carry a periodic series of semiquaver strokes. Variation is obtained solely by a system of changing accentuation and dynamic gradation. The texture is divided into four-measure sections, in each of which one drum is given a particular accentuation and dynamic pattern while the other two are given unaccented patterns at a flat dynamic level. The first two four-measure units are as shown in Examples 105–06.
In the third four-measure unit, drum 3 is given accents on the third and seventh semiquavers of each measure, and so on, according to the following plan:

1st 4-measure unit:
   accents on the 1st and 5th semiquavers of drum 1
2nd 4-measure unit:
   accents on the 2nd and 6th semiquavers of drum 2
3rd 4-measure unit:
   accents on the 3rd and 7th semiquavers of drum 3
4th 4-measure unit:
   accents on the 4th and 8th semiquavers of drum 1
5th 4-measure unit:
   accents on the 1st and 5th semiquavers of drum 2
6th 4-measure unit:
   accents on the 2nd and 6th semiquavers of drum 3
7th 4-measure unit:
   accents on the 3rd and 7th semiquavers of drum 1
8th 4-measure unit:
   accents on the 4th and 8th semiquavers of drum 2
9th 4-measure unit:
   accents on the 1st and 5th semiquavers of drum 3
10th 4-measure unit:
   accents on the 2nd and 6th semiquavers of drum 1
11th 4-measure unit:
   accents on the 3rd and 7th semiquavers of drum 2
12th 4-measure unit:
   accents on the 4th and 8th semiquavers of drum 3

If this pattern were continued any further it would return to where it began; in this respect it is similar in its principle of organization to the ostinato technique of Movement IV of String Quartet No. 8. After a repetition of pattern 1 and pattern 3, Ordeal ends with a syncopated homorhythmic pattern (pattern 2, Ex.107), which is also employed to close the Prelude (where the factor of repetition is 4 instead of 8):
Death

Like Ordeal, the main body of Death (from $\text{\#11}$ to $\text{\#11}$) is constructed from two different rhythmic ideas. The first of these, pattern 7 (Ex.108), is based on the same principle as the fourth movement of String Quartet No. 8. Consisting of twelve-measure, eight-measure and six-measure two-drum patterns in $\frac{9}{8}$, the texture continues for 144 measures, thus completing two cycles (the lowest common multiple of 12, 8 and 6 is 72):
The second rhythmic idea (pattern 8) is an adaptation of pattern 1 to $\frac{5}{4}$ metre. As only three drums are employed, and since the accents move across three instead of four semiquavers, the cycle is completed in three four-measure units. To these twelve measures Sculthorpe has added a four-measure homorhythmic ending, serving a similar terminating function to pattern 2.

The structure of skin drum patterns in *Rites of Passage* thus assumes the form shown in Figure 5:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Sequence</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prelude</td>
<td>$\text{A}$ to end</td>
<td>$p_1 + p_2$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparing the Ground</td>
<td>$\text{A}$ to end</td>
<td>$p_3$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ordeal</td>
<td>$p_1$</td>
<td>Improvisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third Chorale</td>
<td>$\text{A}$ to end</td>
<td>$p_5$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Death</td>
<td>$p_6$</td>
<td>Improvisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rebirth</td>
<td>$\text{A}$ to end</td>
<td>$p_8$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sixth Chorale</td>
<td>$\text{A}$ to end</td>
<td>$p_3$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key:
- $p$ pattern (1, 2, A, B, etc. as described in text)
The structure of Rites of Passage

Having discussed, in some detail, the various stylistic components of *Rites of Passage*, the next step is to show how the work is synthesized. The duration of the work as well as Sculthorpe's predilection for short structural units means that the larger structural qualities may be demonstrated by recourse to diagrammatic methods rather than through verbal terms. A modified structural score, with a key of thirty-four stylistic components, is presented in Figure 6. On the diagram the relevant numbers from the key for any section of the work are placed beside the cue letter of that section. In addition, there is a grid above the structural score to allow easy cross-reference between movements for each member of the key. Figure 7 shows the number of members of the key which any two movements have in common.

The members of the key correspond roughly to the stylistic components dealt with thus far in this chapter. It would be possible to break down *Rites of Passage* into many more distinguishable components, but, the more complex a structural score becomes, the less effective it is in demonstrating the shape of a work. Each of the members of the key is not necessarily unique. For example "chorale style with declaimed text" (1) refers to the First Chorale and the Fifth Chorale, but since the spoken text also appears in the Second Chorale, the Fourth Chorale and Rebirth, it has its own number (24) in the key. Similar duplication appears, for example, between (2) and (11).

Since the structural score makes no distinction between repetition and variation of a stylistic component, it is analytically more crude than the treatment of the structures of other pieces in this study. Nonetheless, it demonstrates the same kind of structural density, on a grander scale, as the *Sun Music* series. The additional diagram showing the extent of structural relationships between individual movements is a further indication of the elaborate structural network.

Harmony

Three sections of *Rites of Passage* represent significant changes in Sculthorpe's usual harmonic practices, and one of them, forming the basis of the chorale style, is quite a substantial development. The "Lament" from the end of Death and the four-measure section at letter © of Rebirth are more noteworthy for the structural ideas of their harmony than for their harmonic idiom, which is characteristic for Sculthorpe. The principle involves a sequence of two or three chords with a simple rhythmic motion; the sequence is repeated a number of times, and acts as the
Figure 6  Structural score and cross-reference grid
The Music of Rites of Passage

Key to Figure 6

1. Chorale style with declaimed text
2. Chorale style with rite's performers
3. Rites drums with piano improvisation
4. Chorale style
5. Javanese melody
6. Quasi-canonic vocal texture
7. Sun Music textures
8. Settings of the word amor
9. Chorales singers’ percussion
10. Slow bass-register melody
11. Rites drumming
12. Ikanda style
13. Gamelan-like figurations
14. Long-held notes or chords
15. Drumming pattern 1
16. Tam tam solo
17. Glissandi on harmonics
18. Drumming pattern 3
19. Melodies based on semitones
20. Piano punctuation
21. Non-improvisatory piano solo
22. Piano improvisation
23. Restricted improvisations
24. Declaimed text
25. Vocal clusters
26. Vocal rhythmic patterns
27. Singing on single tone
28. (a) whispering (b) shouting
29. Murmuring
30. Rhythmically free vocal tone rows
31. Settings of “Ha”
32. Drumming pattern 2
33. Drum improvisations
34. Aleatoric section

Prel.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1st Ch.</th>
<th>0</th>
<th>1st Ch.</th>
<th>0</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P.T.G.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>P.T.G.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd Ch.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2nd Ch.</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ord.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Ord.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd Ch.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3rd Ch.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th Ch.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4th Ch.</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Death</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Death</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5th Ch.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5th Ch.</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reb.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Reb.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6th Ch.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6th Ch.</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Post.</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In Example 109 the one differing accompanying chord is used to emphasize the ends of the two-measure divisions of the four-measure phrase. Example 110, in unmetred style, is perhaps designed to create the effect of a similar sense of division. The alternation of chords certainly supplies a rhythmic definition that the single chord lacks when it appears elsewhere in that movement. The second chord also acts as a pivot for the tonic, b, in the melody. It creates a considerable harmonic polarity without disturbing the strong sense of tonality; the resolution back to the prime chord is inevitable.

It is pertinent to this argument, if, however, somewhat predictable in this composer’s music, that the new chord is repeated immediately after its resolution back to the first chord.
What the composer has created here is a phenomenon similar to the technique in earlier European music of alternating contrasting but related chords. The harmonic principle in the examples from Death and Rebirth is the same: there is an alternation of two chords in Rebirth and a rotation of three in Death (Ex.111–12):

In Rebirth the tonal centre is E despite the initial A♯ bass tone. The first chord, typically constructed from superimposed major seventh intervals, is further enriched by the addition of two lower tones (C♯, E) before significantly changing. The change may be interpreted as principally a semitonal step downwards (A♯, B, G) \(\rightarrow\) (G, B♯, F♯) although there are various other changes, and the continuously chanted E remains the same.

Although composed earlier, the passage from Death represents a further development of the principle. There is a clear division of
the accompaniment into three distinct chords, each exactly one measure in length. The melody germinates from the semitonal appoggiatura, but some trace of this motive is found in almost all of the parts. In spite of the chordal nature of the accompaniment, it does involve contrapuntal techniques. If one considers, for example, the F in the first chord, its resolution to E is frustrated, but finally occurs on the change of chord. In measure 3 the b♭ rising to b⁷ functions similarly, and also anticipates the last two tones of the first four measures of the melody. The idea is continued in the sixth voice (beginning in m.4).

The chord in measure 3 is slightly uncharacteristic if considered in relation to Sculthorpe’s post-Sun-Music harmony. It can, however, be traced back to a fragment from the Prologue of The Fifth Continent (1962) (Ex.113):

One procedure which may fall into disuse because it would seem to lack a quality of adaptability is Sculthorpe’s chorale style. This may be distinguished from almost all his other uses of harmony in that it does not involve melody as separate from accompaniment; the melody is simply the highest voice in a strictly homorhythmic texture (Ex.114):

It should be remarked that each chord has the same note value. This is in keeping with most of the examples discussed, but it is of special interest here because of the number of chords involved and
the lack of any significantly contrasting rhythm such as a melody might supply. The simplicity of the texture and the strict periodicity of the chordal motion give impressions of both serenity and strength. On the one hand, the total absence of Sculthorpe’s characteristic suspended tension between melody and tonal centre deprives the music of the possibility of any expressionistic tendencies, while, on the other, the regular, vertical organization is reminiscent of the masculinity of a Bach chorale, or even, in more modern terms of, say, Messiaen’s statue theme (Ex.115):27

Unlike the harmonic progression of some pieces of the Irkanda period or of Snow, Moon and Flowers and Stars there seems to be no definite pattern of tension-resolution. The first chord of the First Chorale, for example, could be interpreted as one which needs resolving, but it is followed by a series of chords of comparable instability until the appearance of the last chord, which is almost identical to the first. It is illuminating to examine the harmony in relation to the melodic outline of the highest voice. The melody is constructed from only three tones, (E♭, C³, E♭), representing a paraphrase of the principal melodic material of Irkanda IV. Each chord, with the exception of the penultimate, involves either E♭ or C³, and as many as three chords have both. It may be argued that a kind of tonal stability is established by these common occurrences.

The eight chords are related to each other in three main ways. Firstly, every chord has at least one major seventh or minor ninth between one of the two upper parts and one of the two lower parts, and thus the chordal quality sounds homogeneous even though it is not as systematic as those passages involving chords with superimposed dissonant intervals. Secondly, with the exception of the fourth chord, which has no tones in common with the chords preceding and following it, and of the seventh chord, which has none in common with the last, each chord has at least one tone in common with the chords adjacent to it. The predominance of E♭ and C³ in the melody further strengthens the progression. The fourth chord, for instance, might be unconvincing if the melodic
line were not \{B^b, F^b, C^7, E^b, C^7\}, as the chords of the second E
to C^7 seem like an alternate harmonization of the first E^b to C^7,
where the harmony is firmly based on common tones. It should
also be observed that the third and fifth chords are almost
identical, additional compensation for the anomalous fourth
chord. By establishing reiterative melodic patterns, however
fragmentary, the expectation of different harmonic treatments is
aroused. When Bach, for example, harmonized a chorale melody
which had repeated phrases, he sometimes changed the pro-
gression for the repetitions. He also took advantage of the fact
that, having established the melodic fragment with a fairly
standard harmonization, the chordal language of the repetition
could afford to be much more complex (Ex.116–18): 28

Ex. 116

Ex. 117

Ex. 118

Ex. 119

It has already been shown that Sculthorpe tends to favour
considerable intervallic restrictions in part-writing. His rationale
for this is that, even in the most simple of harmonic textures, each
performer should be given material which can be thought of in
melodic terms, and that the performer should not feel that an
arbitrary succession of tones is being supplied which, in com-
bination with other tones, makes up a succession of chords. In
Example 112 (from Death), for example, the diminished seventh
interval (E^1 to D^b) between the two principal tones is avoided by
the addition of E on the last crotchet beat of measure 1 (Ex. 119): 29

Ex. 119
The inner parts of this same accompanying texture all consist of melodic fragments involving small intervals. This situation may be regarded as characteristic of part-motion in Sculthorpe's music. It is, for example, not only the melody of the chorale style which is concentrated in this way, but also the other parts; each voice involves at least three semitonal intervals, while the largest interval, the perfect fourth, occurs only once. In addition there is a high rate of repetition of tones: within each part there is at least one tone which occurs thrice, and another occurring twice.

The eight-measure chorale progression is varied in two ways in each of the four movements in which it appears. Firstly there is a slight melodic variation that is intended to give the effect of a more complete resolution; certainly it is heard as a continuation of the first melody. If both melodies are considered as agglomerations of two-measure fragments, although this way of dividing is somewhat artificial, then the resultant pattern is a version of the familiar A B A B₁ melodic structure (Ex.120):

Ex. 120 (J = 60)

The second variation involves the addition of tenor and bass lines as well as a number of different extensions to the eight measures, including a chord interpolated between the original measure 4 and measure 5 (Ex.121):

Ex. 121 (J = 60)
The continuation of the progression allows the repeated settings of the word, *amor*. Amor is set either with two chords or with three, again emphasizing the importance of these numbers in Sculthorpe’s aesthetic. In the Third Chorale the setting of three chords is used three times, and is thus a further example of the principle of chordal ostinato, discussed above. This progression is also similar in effect to the basic progression of *Stars*. The melodic outline of the first two chords and the identical bass tones of the third may be the only immediately obvious similarities, but their harmonic functions are fundamentally the same (Ex. 122):

Ex. 122

The chordal ostinati discussed above have been devised so that the last chord resolves back to the first, but in this setting of *amor* the final chord represents a completed resolution. Because of this, the progression is closely related to the harmonic procedures of *Stars*, and indeed of *Snow, Moon and Flowers*. It should be pointed out that this kind of systematic progression dates only from the time of the piano pieces (1970–71).

The addition of tenor and bass lines to the existing four parts seems to be reasonably predictable. With few exceptions the new tones are a third, a fifth or a seventh below the original lowest tones, and, as such, they tend to reinforce the already-existing triadic framework of the passage. They do not seem to change significantly the harmonic character of the progression, but rather, in the parlance of Messiahén, function as “tones of resonance”. This is undoubtedly possible since the women’s voices carry an already self-sufficient four-part texture, and because the differentiation, which is normally effected by extremes of register, is here aided by the timbral distinction between women’s and men’s voices.

*Rites of Passage* is Peter Sculthorpe’s largest and most impressive composition. It represents the culmination of many years of research and conceptualization, and it is also the first comprehensive synthesis of the many musical procedures that are hallmarks of the composer’s style. It is, moreover, one of the most
controversial works in the history of Australian music and theatre; rarely do critical appraisals polarize to such a great extent and rarely does the average theatre-goer experience either such excitement or such boredom from a new work. Although Sculthorpe couches it in characteristically flippant terms, his reaction to the boredom felt by some of his friends has quite illuminating implications:

Yes . . . but I can understand this in a way. They'd also find driving to Broken Hill boring.34

The principal inference of this comment is that there is a certain kind of mental attitude which is closed to the infinitely subtle variations in an Australian desert landscape. The complexity of structural detail underlying what the composer terms "a sense of spaciousness and distance"35 in Rites of Passage seems to parallel this situation. It appears, then, that the ultimate importance of this work to Australian and other composers could be in offering an alternative solution to the perennial problem of successfully organizing large musical structures. Donald Peart, however, sees it especially providing the Australian public with "a much needed extension of the dramatic possibilities of opera and of stage music in general—after all, our ideas of what opera is and could be are very circumscribed owing to the narrow policy of The Australian Opera."36 For Peart "Rites shows the way towards an appreciation of 'a cosmic style' in music drama, including under that heading Monteverdi's L'Orfeo, the 'Ring' operas, Busoni's Doktor Faustus and a few others, probably those of Tippett."37
Further Developments

Peter Sculthorpe celebrated his fiftieth birthday in April 1979 with performances of Mangrove for orchestra and Requiem for cello alone, specially-commissioned works which confirmed his assured vision as an Australian artist; but for almost five years before this he had been struggling with a variety of techniques and influences in an attempt to find a different direction for his music. Perhaps because Rites of Passage represents a summation of his compositional career he felt compelled, after its production, to look for alternative approaches. The period from 1973 to 1979 includes, in addition, quite a number of works that may be construed as in some way avoiding the act of creation. These include arrangements and reworkings of existing material, and pieces involving some reliance upon improvisation. The emphasis in this final chapter will be upon Sculthorpe's compositional development during this period.

The Song of Tailitnama

With the exceptions of Mangrove and Requiem, The Song of Tailitnama for soprano, six cellos and percussion (1974) is the most impressive work of the post-Rites of Passage period. Its origin as music for the television documentary, Sun Music for Film has not hampered its suitability for the concert hall since the film was intended in part as an account of what is involved in preparing a self-contained chamber work for a professional recording. The composer may have designed its opening, which evokes the sounds of the bush, to provide visual inspiration for the director, Stafford Garner, but this does not seem to have impaired the shape or substance of the work as a whole.

Like the rites movements of Rites of Passage, the text for The Song of Tailitnama is taken from T.G.H. Strehlow's Songs of Central Australia and is set in the Aranda language:
jutalbme jaŋkartj=enama
lutnare jaŋkartj=enama
nokake jaraŋkwalo
rtjilmawe jalanatanoĩne
ladebawaralei kankaĩleĩtenai
ladeburbjeburbjejai
liŋueinteĩuŋuŋaŋkaŋkaĩleĩtenai
ladebaltuŋuŋaŋburbjejai

Strehlow's translation is as follows:

The spinifex tips on the mountain are glowing;
The bold forehead of the mountain is glowing.

"Fathers and sons, upon us before all others
The sun is hurling its spears of light."

Hark, the birds! Singing they soar to the sky,—
The birds, the ilbibría bluebirds.

When the morning is young, singing they soar to the sky,—
They, the massed messengers of the birds!²

Oddly enough, the text is set only in the third of the four main sections of the work although the voice is also used in the first and last, set to "a" or "m". A further curiosity is the use of melodic material adapted from Aboriginal sources with no connection to the Aranda text.³ The work seems to rely on the text more for its nasal sound-quality than for its capability of informing the musical treatment in the section where it is used. The text is noticeably subservient to the melodic requirements: even though the first and second and the third and fourth verses scan, Sculthorpe has set them in the pattern [1,3,1,3,2,4,2,4] in order to achieve a characteristic phrasal balance.

The structural concept of the work may be traced back to a number of previous works, but is nonetheless unique. The Song of Tauiitnmaŋa begins with a slow section in which a twenty-measure melody in the Japanese hirajóshi scale is supported by scant harmonic accompaniment and birdlike sounds (Ex.123):
This melody is followed by a freely improvised segment headed “Music of Early Morning,” for which the instruments water-gong, guiro, sandblock and woodchimes are specified. The whole first section of the work is counterpoised against a longer slow last section, which Sculthorpe begins with the outline of the opening six measures of the original melody. From that point the section is developed into a broader, more impassioned statement of forty measures. The new melody is richly accompanied by an harmonic texture similar to that of the central movement of *Tabuh Tabuhan* and represents one of the few examples of non-variational development in the composer’s music (Ex.124):

Ex. 124  Calmo (\( \mathcal{d} = c. 86 \))

The composer has claimed that the accompaniments of each of these slow melodic sections were inspired by textural concepts from Japanese court music, but there is little in the detail of the music to suggest a pervasive influence. The most obvious borrowing is the rising first cello motive (\( \mathcal{d}, m. 3 \)) which has a role similar to that of the *koto*. In this gesture, the masterly pitting of \( F^\# \) against the \( F^\# \) of the melody is reminiscent of the seemingly dissonant nature of the heterophony of *gagaku*.

*The Song of Tallitama* has two quick central sections, the second of which builds upon the exact texture of the first, with the additions of voice and percussion. The voice, carrying the Aranda text, assumes the melody played by the first cello in the first section, while the first cello takes up a countermelody, which is mostly above the pitch of the voice. Both sections extend the phasing and ostinati techniques of *String Quartet No. 8, Rites of Passage* and *Koto Music I*. There is also, as in *Music for Japan*, a feeling of forward movement from one quick section to the next: the second has the effect of a development of the first because of its
additional high countermelody, suggestive of birds singing as 
"they soar to the sky", and because of its percussion, which begins 
as sparse punctuation but becomes progressively active (Ex.125):

The duplet values and the cross-rhythmic grouping of the 
percussion figuration indicate a complexity not encountered in the 
first quick section, although even there the combination of small-

scale and large-scale ostinati is far more elaborate than in the 
fourth movement of String Quartet No. 8 (Ex.46). For example,
within the scope of ninety-six measures, cellos 5 and 6 have a composite part consisting of three separate ostinati: the first (eight measures) is repeated, the second (four measures) is played five times, and the third (ten measures) is played six times.

At the end of each of the two ninety-six measure segments (6) and (10), Sculthorpe has added extended cadences, which are intended to provide a sense of finality or climax to the reiterated textures. This common characteristic of the composer’s style seems to be pushed to its limit in this work. Whereas before such devices rarely exceeded eight measures, in this work the first ending is divided into four segments, with a total of twenty-four measures, and the second into five, totalling thirty measures. It is curious that for Mongrove (1979) Sculthorpe decided that these devices, which clearly delineate the sectionalization of his music, should be dispensed with in favour of a principle of overlapping major sections. He had come to regard the extended cadential device as a kind of personal cliché. Nonetheless, the technique is an unmistakable trademark of his music and is used to particular advantage at the climax of The Song of Tailitnama (13).

Structural relationships between the outer slow sections and the inner quick sections are intervallically strong, though the melodic character of each is discrete. The dynamic of the work springs primarily from the respective developmental links between the first and fourth and second and third sections. Like many of Sculthorpe’s pieces, the outline of this one is symmetrical, but its particular configuration of sections (A1, B1, B2, A2) seems more conducive to development than the odd-numbered patterns of works such as String Quartet No. 8 and Tabuh Tabuhan.

String Quartet No. 9

Although Peter Sculthorpe’s ninth string quartet, written in 1975, takes the five-part sectional format of its predecessor and the notion of forward development from The Song of Tailitnama, it appears, for a number of reasons, less artistically successful. A reliance upon the compositional ideas of these two previous works is exacerbated by a relative poverty of invention. The quick second and fourth sections, for example, employ the same structural idea as the quick sections of The Song of Tailitnama, but the reiterated material is less interesting, and the instrumental forces too restricting to achieve a comparable result.5 The equivalent of the earlier work’s counter-melody is added at the expense of one of the original voices, and this compromise is particularly evident at the climax (p. 14, m.9–16), where the corresponding first violin trill (p. 6, m.11–18) is omitted.6 The unavailability of additional instru-
ments simply means that the compositional idea cannot ade-
quately be realized by a string quartet.

The starting-point for the composition of the first, third and fifth movements of String Quartet No. 9 was an eight-measure exercise written by Sculthorpe, while he was visiting Professor of Music at the University of Sussex (1971-72), to demonstrate to his students how a tone-row might harmonically be manipulated (Ex.126):

As it appears in the quartet, the idea consists of a three-chord ostinato (viola and cello) accompanying a melody (violin 1), both employing the row \{B^b, G^b, A^b, E^b, B^1, F^4, F^b, D^1, A^b, D^b, E^b, C^b\}. The effect is not unlike the chordal ostinati in Death and Rebirth, discussed near the end of Chapter 8. The passage is stated four times in the third section, with other materials serving as
introduction, interludes and coda. On each appearance it is varied only slightly, in accordance with dodecaphonic practice and in satisfaction of the composer's own rules of composition. The introduction of the third section uses the chord progression of the above example to accompany melodic material with restricted intervallic and rhythmic motion: static lines initially emphasizing a rising and falling fourth and then a falling and rising major second. Sculthorpe’s well-realized intention was to give the impression that the twelve-tone melody grows naturally from this simple material like a sudden melodic flowering. To make this illusion even more convincing, he uses the same major-second motive to open the work (m.1-12), but the harmonic treatment is relatively sparse. This opening of the work is followed by three separate textures (m.13-14, m.15-16 and m.17-18), of which the first and second support the development of the melody, while the last acts as a bridge to new material. All three fragments are used in interludes in the third section of the work, where they appear as brief extensions of the serial passage.

A second half of the opening section consists of three new musical ideas linked by a B⁷ held throughout by the first violin. The first of these, an uncharacteristic gesture in the composer's idiom, is one of the most distinctive events in the work (Ex.127):

In spite of its unusualness, this remains undeveloped except for restatements in the longest interlude of the third section, where it is intermingled with ideas from the first and other sections of the work.
Further Developments

The two slow sections discussed above are fragmentary in effect, possessing neither the economy of their counterparts in String Quartet No. 8 nor the sustained expansiveness of the last movement of The Song of Tailtinama. The last section of the ninth quartet represents, however, a strong conclusion to the work: its fulsome harmonic treatment of the first-section melody, and its forceful coda, possess a statuesque quality reminiscent of the chorales of Rites of Passage.

Port Essington

Sculthorpe's involvement in writing music for the ABC feature film, Essington (1974), brought him face to face with one of the cornerstones of his philosophy of Australian identity: the notion of appropriate behaviour and thinking for this physical environment. Even as a child he had noticed that some historic mansions in Tasmania faced south, with few windows on their northern aspects. It was as if the architects were ignorant of the sun's behaviour in the antipodes. The source of many inappropriate modes of thinking in earlier times was a nostalgia for the grander aspects of civilization. Thus, in Essington, a nineteenth-century military community on the coast of what is now the Northern Territory is more concerned with the construction of a noble government house than with coming to terms with the hostile environment, more obsessed with pomp and ceremony than with an intelligent mode of existence and survival. Soldiers were made to parade in monsoonal conditions; Aboriginal corpses, traditionally placed in the branches of trees, were taken down by the whites and buried. Almost every action by the white population is portrayed as a mistake based upon the need to uphold standards appropriate only to a distant part of the world. Essington explores these issues and the way in which a number of characters relate psychologically to the situation. The central character, the commandant, becomes progressively insane as the story unfolds. His anxiety is reflected partly by insomnia, a condition ironically relieved only by his listening to the hypnotic chanting of the natives in the nearby camp. The idea for the music of the film springs directly from these circumstances.

Sculthorpe took an Aboriginal song used in the film, transcribed it and adapted it in various ways as a commentary upon the action and upon character development. The transformations are intended to symbolize the banality and emptiness of nineteenth-century musical idioms when compared with the vitality and rhythmic subtlety of the Aboriginal music (Ex.128–29):
The composed music is approached in two principal ways, although both are derived from the song. The first, a series of variations for piano in a nineteenth-century drawing-room manner, highlights the pathetic comedy of the inhabitants’ attempts to maintain trappings of civilization. The second, multitracked textures built up from sounds produced from the interior of the piano, articulates the progressive degrees of the commandant’s derangement. A third idiom, also derived from the song, and used towards the end of the film to represent one main character’s unique harmonious response to the environment, consists of the melody, as transcribed, accompanied by quasi-Asian punctuation and ostinati. This texture, produced entirely by plucking the strings of the piano, is meant to symbolize the music of the future—in timbre, manner of production, and philosophy of construction.

In transforming the music composed for Essington into Port Essington, a continuous work for string trio and string orchestra, Sculthorpe denied himself the vivid contrast that had existed among the various segments of the film music. Rather, he allowed himself the possibility of homogeneity of sound between the two instrumental forces. Port Essington is, by necessity, a set of variations on a theme, with several interludes and juxtapositions involving other material. Sculthorpe has attempted to maintain an English character in the conventional variations by responding to English composers or composers with strong English connections, in particular, the music of Handel, Mendelssohn and Elgar has informed the musical detail respectively of the second, fourth and fifth sections. As most of the variations are in eighteenth- or nineteenth-century styles, the work is difficult to appreciate without some programmatic explanation of the composer’s intentions. Sculthorpe has placed in the score headings which parallel the story of the ill-fated settlement:

1. Prologue: The Bush
2. Theme and Variations: The Settlement
3. Phantasy: Unrest
4. Nocturnal: Estrangement
5. Arietta: Farewell
6. Epilogue: The Bush

Without the action of the film to justify the choice of musical materials, the composer seems to have opted for the more general approach of portraying the bush as an unrelenting force encroaching upon the Europeans’ attempts to tame their surroundings. The most effective compositional device in Port Essington is the skilful interweaving of the conventional variation with imitations of bush sounds and with discordant gestures, thus alleviating, to some extent, the uncharacteristic effect of the rigidly sectionalized variational format. The nineteenth- and twentieth-century musical idioms that pervade the work from its dissonant beginning contrast vividly with a minor climax that develops when the opening music is superimposed upon a variation in the style of Mendelssohn, in a manner that virtually obliterates the variation (Ex.130).
The conflict between the bush and the settlement is an outward manifestation of a conflict in the minds of the settlers, a conflict between the new and the old, and an inability to accept fully a new condition. This theme has been an unstated preoccupation in Sculthorpe's music from early in his career. It is presented in *Port Essington* in a literal way for the first time. It is then developed dramatically in *Eliza Fraser Sings* for voice, flute and piano (1978), and brought to philosophical maturity in *Requiem* for cello alone (1979).

**Eliza Fraser Sings**

Eliza Fraser's ordeal was far more extreme than that of the Port Essington settlers. Stripped of her connections with the past, both human and material, she was violently incorporated into tribal life. Sculthorpe's fascination with her Australian experience stems from the mystery surrounding her true response to her plight. There is a possibility in his mind that she made the wrong decision when the opportunity to return to civilization presented itself. If this is so, then her schizoid tendencies sprang more from the shock of her return than from the trauma of her incarceration.

Barbara Blackman's ebullient text for *Eliza Fraser Sings* is firmly committed to the traditional view of the story. It offers, however, two separate planes of activity. The first takes place in the present: Fraser, after her rescue, solicits customers at a showground booth, presumably to capitalize upon her suffering. The language is formal, mechanical and impersonal, presented in the third person. The other plane, representing lapses by the protagonist into a personal account of her past, is often characterized by carnal language and hallucinatory images. To strengthen the distinction between the two states of mind Sculthorpe rewrote some of Blackman's text, notably the ending, where Fraser's announcements are rephrased in the first person. This perhaps indicates that finally the two planes are merged, that Fraser is not irrevocably deranged.

In Sculthorpe's setting, the duality of the actor's character is sharply delineated: she speaks in the third person in a chant-like style, and sings in the first person. The instrumental accompaniments for the song sections tend to be dominated by keyboard figurations reminiscent of *Night Pieces* (1971), while those of the speech mostly involve fragmentary textures for flute and the interior of the piano. Both approaches seem, however, underplayed. The melodic style clearly follows the restrained manner of the composer's early settings of poems by D.H. Lawrence, whereas the great emotional range and vivid imagery of Blackman's text
demands a more exuberant and fulsome treatment. The energy possible in the spoken sections is also bridled because of Sculthorpe’s reluctance to exploit fully the range of sonorities available to the contemporary performer. He is willing to specify effects such as piano harmonics, but he is disinclined to challenge the performer’s technique. As a result, these passages lack density and animation when compared with Sculthorpe’s compositions for stringed instruments. A problem also exists where improvised sonorities, specified for ease of execution, are mingled with carefully composed materials. In the final section of the work, the composer’s direction for the pianist to pluck random widely-spaced chords seems incompatible with his meticulously crafted counterpoint between voice and flute.

In *Eliza Fraser Sings* Sculthorpe develops the contrast between nineteenth- and twentieth-century idioms explored in *Port Essington*. In *Eliza Fraser Sings*, however, the music representing earlier times is authentic. In adopting *Lady Forbes’ Quadrille*, perhaps Sculthorpe had in mind the bizarre contrast of the genteel Lady Forbes with the degraded, deranged Mrs Fraser humming the song outside her booth to a kind of circus-roundabout accompaniment (Ex.131):

![Ex. 131](image)

*Fifth partial harmonics, sounding two octaves and a major third higher than written.*
The burlesque quality achieved suits the tenor of the text and supports the contrast necessary to articulate the protagonist's schizophrenia. It is arguable that the effectiveness of the work would have been enhanced if Sculthorpe had concentrated more upon this kind of material.

Requiem

A far better formal balance between borrowed and composed materials is found in Requiem for cello alone, a work that also explores the duality of personal and impersonal modes of expression. Sculthorpe regards the Missa pro Defunctis as Western man's most important ritual, and one of the most significant musical structures for the European composer. As documented in Chapter 7, the Requiem Mass was incorporated into one of the early plans for Rites of Passage, but was later abandoned for a number of philosophical reasons. The dynamic of Sculthorpe's appreciation of the Requiem Mass stems from conflicting attitudes to death—as eternal repose or as an event to be feared, fear of death being, for Sculthorpe, the prime source of human anxiety. In the Freudian view, fear of death has caused a repression of pleasure, and has led man to invent religious structures in order to attain salvation. Sculthorpe believes that the post-Renaissance artist, aware of the failure of structuring, has attempted to individualize existing structures to express himself. Rites of Passage is an elaborate example of this process. In Requiem, however, the composer has applied far more subtle methods to formulate a personal statement.

In choosing texts from Missa pro Defunctis, Sculthorpe distinguishes between prayers directed towards God on behalf of the Faithful Departed, and prayers of supplication. As in Eliza Fraser Sings, the difference is determined by the use of personal pronouns. The Introit, for example, employs the third person:

Eternal rest give to them, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them.

The Kyrie, originally a hymn of praise to the Greek god of the sun, is expressed in the first person:

Lord have mercy upon us.

Christ have mercy upon us.

This distinction allows the composer to influence the structure of his instrumental Mass. Prayers of the first kind use plainsong melodies, and those of the more personal second category are realized in Sculthorpe's own idiom (Ex.132–33):
In an interview published at the end of 1979, Sculthorpe described his instrumental use of plainchant as possessing a “coolness and third person-ness”. The music of supplication had, in contrast, “warmth and passion”. It was “imploring with the wanting of forgiveness and of eternal life”.

The first movement, Introit, uses the “Requiem aeternam dona
cis domine” plainchant in conjunction with a six-note motive that sounds as if it might be a setting of words, thus giving the impression of being a personal commentary upon the text of the chant. The second movement, Kyrie, is a setting of the text in the composer’s style. It has a three-part structure, the second part of which is a variation of the commentary passage of the Introit (Ex.134–35):

The third movement, marked “come una preghiera”, takes its inspiration from a verse of the Dies Irae which begins “Qui Mariam...”:
Thou didst Mary's guilt forgive,  
Didst the dying thief receive.  
Hence doth hope within me live.

This movement, consisting of a bowed melody accompanied by left-hand pizzicato chords, shows clearly the composer's intention of basing the work upon the major and minor seconds, common intervals in chant. The fourth movement, Lacrimosa, also from the Dies Irae, employs plainchant with pizzicato punctuation and a B\(^9\) drone.\(^9\) The melody, in the dorian mode, clashes strongly with the drone when B\(^8\) occurs. The disturbance to the calm, a wilful intrusion by the composer, presages the turmoil of the ensuing movement.

Libera Me, the penultimate movement, has three distinct kinds of material: rapid fragmentary gestures that exploit the predominant intervals of the work, two-part and three-part homorhythmic settings of the text, and a restatement of the opening of the Kyrie. The last movement, Lux Aeterna, begins with plainchant but is dominated by material reminiscent of Sonata for cello (1960).

Thus the first and fourth movements are dominated by plainchant, the second and fifth movements by settings of the text in Sculthorpe's own idiom, and the third and sixth movements by free composition. The broad structure of Requiem may therefore be interpreted as A\(_1\), B\(_1\), C\(_1\), A\(_2\), B\(_2\), C\(_2\). The symmetrical arrangement normally preferred by Sculthorpe is achieved, to some extent, by the inclusion of plainchant at the beginning of the sixth movement and by the reappearance of the Kyrie at the end of the fifth movement. The particular ordering of the liturgical selections is, however, a crucial factor in determining the shape of the work. As Libera Me is a prayer celebrated in the funeral service following the Requiem Mass, it seems unjustified to position it before Lux Aeterna, the Communion prayer. It is clear that Sculthorpe felt that the Libera Me text, which is largely concerned with Judgement Day, would provide a dramatic climax in the fifth movement, and that the work would be suitably concluded with the more optimistic Lux Aeterna.

Although Requiem may be considered to have satisfied the composer's philosophical need, initiated in Rites of Passage, to explore man's conflicting attitudes towards death, and while it may be regarded as a particularly successful example of his procedure of juxtaposing borrowed and composed materials, it nonetheless derives stylistically and conceptually from the early Irkanda period. At the outset of his career Sculthorpe attempted, with works such as Sonata and Irkanda I, both for violin alone, to challenge his developing concepts of instrumental technique. Whereas the results of his labours at that time contributed largely
to the formulation of harmonic and textural aspects of his compositional idiom, *Requiem* has a stylistic assuredness which is better able to support the extension of instrumental technique. Sculthorpe's use, for instance, of left-hand pizzicati represents an exhaustive exploration of the possible combinations of fingers used to stop and fingers used to pluck the strings. His use of three-note chords, achieved by stopping one string high on the fingerboard so that it falls into the plane of two adjacent open strings, is typical of the quality of compositional thought which pervades the work (Ex.136):

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**Mangrove**

*Mangrove* for orchestra, composed immediately before *Requiem*, but revised in late 1979, relies to a greater extent upon borrowed material than any work since *Tabuh Tabuhan* (1968), and much of the credit for its success as a composition must be given to the composer of *Isé-no-Umi*, a piece from the *saibara* genre of Japanese court music. The vocal melody of *Isé-no-Umi*, which is 104 measures long, is used virtually in its entirety, spread initially between the first two of three relevant sections of *Mangrove*. The accompanying orchestral texture of the song is, however, ignored by Sculthorpe in favour of a restrained harmonic system. *Isé-no-Umi* uses the scale {E, F, A, B, C}, with some additional tones. At times D replaces C, and F substitutes occasionally for F. Although the supporting harmony used by Sculthorpe is related to his own principles, and is especially similar to that of the last section of *The Song of Tailtinama*, it is also entirely based on six tones of the melody. Some of the supporting harmonies are outlined in Example 137:
With these simple combinations, scored for low strings and brass, the composer achieves a remarkable harmonic richness, perhaps pointing ironically to the failure of the Japanese to realize the harmonic potential of their own scalar systems.

Although Sculthorpe’s arrangement displays no hint of the complex heterophony of *saibara*, his direction, *fuori di passo*, applied to the melody, results in a kind of aleatoric heterophony (Ex.138):

![Ex. 138](image)

The predominance of dotted groupings in the melody enhances the effectiveness of this technique, causing the passages to sound as if in imitation of a complex natural echo. The resultant brooding quality of this music contrasts, however, with the childlike text of *Isé-no-Umi*:

*The Sea of Isé*

On the clean Beach of Isé,
While the tide is low,
Let’s gather the seaweed,
Let’s gather the sea-shells,
Let’s pick up shining pearls!

In his notes at the beginning of the score the composer acknowledges his actual presence at the mangrove-free beach at Isé as one source of inspiration. The transformation of the melody may represent, then, a darker, more passionate state of mind—a response to the mysteriousness of the Japanese culture.

While demonstrating a willingness to incorporate accurately almost all of the Japanese tune into *Mangrove*, Sculthorpe shows, also, his characteristic need to dominate his borrowed material. He compresses the rhythms of some five-measure and three-measure phrases in order to fit them into four and two measures respectively, he is not adverse to omitting whole phrases, some seeming inconsistencies of interplicic motion are corrected, and a few rhythms are made less square by anticipatory tying across the barline. The way in which the melody is spread throughout *Mangrove* is a further manifestation of the composer’s manipulative methods. The first of three sections uses the opening three-
fifths of the song, the second uses the remainder, and the third involves a shortened version of the opening. Both the first and third sections are finished with newly-composed melodic material.

The inclusion of a recapitulation, together with the described manipulations, indicates, then, a defiant disregard for the subtle organization of the original piece. Clearly Sculthorpe was attempting to effect aspects of balance befitting his own formal principles. Other passages in Mangrove seem, however, deliberately to contradict established practices. The first cantilena section (m. 57–64) appears unbalanced considering both its rhythmic structure and the composer's known mannerisms (Ex. 139):

The particular homorhythmic concept of this music is unprecedented in Sculthorpe's oeuvre; significantly, the anacrusis-like crotchetts give the impression that the length of the passage for strings is an uncharacteristic five measures. This effect is further strengthened by the composer's decision, unique to Mangrove, to overlap the beginnings and ends of sections. In earlier music, for instance, the end of the percussion pattern (m. 57) would not have coincided with the first measure of the new section.

Although there is no conscious attempt to base the above chordal style upon any strict harmonic principles, the passage appears influenced, both in sound and function, by Olivier Messiaen. With the exception of E♭ (used six times), G♭ (used once) and A♭ (used once), the tones coincide remarkably with those of the second mode of limited transposition {D, E, F, G, G♯, A♭, B, C♯}. In the notes to Mangrove, Sculthorpe claims that this passage and a corresponding later section are concerned with
"love and loving". This is in accord with similar passages in Messiaen's idiom.

In Mangrove, textures of considerable activity relieve the meditative moods of the two kinds of slow music described above. The animated music includes a short section for strings, entirely devoted to birdlike sounds, and a long opening section for brass and skin drums, based on phasing techniques established in String Quartet No. 8. A third section, leading to the climax of the work, combines both these ideas. The opening of Mangrove represents the composer's most successful use of phasing techniques, because the idea is substantially developed, and is combined with other ideas from previous works. The passage contains elements reminiscent of the rhythmic variety of the ostinato section of Sun Music IV (m.47–66), the expanding cluster sections of Music for Japan, and the drumming and punctuation patterns of Rites of Passage and The Song of Tailitnana. Sculthorpe's extension of phasing techniques involves the inclusion of periods of rest, the modulation and inversion of the basic materials, and a certain amount of discreet variation.

The success of Mangrove rests firstly with the assurance and indeed inventiveness with which Sculthorpe handles the techniques and materials he has developed, secondly with his masterly transformations of borrowed materials, and thirdly with his courage to dispense with mannerisms and to create new kinds of textures. In the year of his fiftieth birthday, the composer has managed with Mangrove and Requiem to summon forth the most impressive aspects of his compositional powers; yet preceding works, such as Port Essington, Eliza Fraser Sings and The Song of Tailitnana, seemed to promise a direction depending upon a more immediate response to Australia's own musical heritages. This approach to composition is fraught with pitfalls, not the least of which is a lack of stylistic assimilation. Sculthorpe shows in Mangrove his ability to make the melodic line of saibara his own property, but it seems less likely that the reiterative forms of Aboriginal melody and the harmony-bound lines of colonial music are similarly adaptable. Peter Sculthorpe seems compelled to persist with the problem of making his music more Australian, although he may not be aware of the irony that future Australian composers will be able to respond, in a relatively effortless way, to the groundwork he has laid.
Appendix I

Instrumental Techniques of the Sun Music Period

Strings

1. Continuous glissandi of natural harmonics on a particular string, invariably involving a group of instruments with each player independent.

Notation:

2. Rapid quarter-tone vibrato.

Notation:

3. The slapping of the most resonant part of the instrument.

Notation:

4. The striking of the strings, col legno between the bridge and tailpiece.

Notation:

5. Continuous pizzicato chords (quasi guitarra).

6. The pressing of the bow hard on strings between bridge and tailpiece while drawing slowly across.

Notation:

7. Upward glissandi from any very high tone.

Notation:

8. The rubbing of the bow lightly up and down on open strings.

Notation:
9. Rapid repetition of tones, arco or pizzicato, with each player independent.
11. The rubbing of the body of the instrument with fingers.
   Notation: \[ \text{\textbf{\textdollar}} \]
12. Footstamping (double basses only).
   Notation: \[ \text{\textbf{\textdollar}} \]

\textit{Wind}

1. Pitchless flutter tonguing.
   Notation: \[ \text{\textbf{\textdollar}} \]
2. The use of the mouthpiece only.
   Notation: \[ \text{\textbf{\textdollar}} \]
3. Upward glissandi from any very high tone.
4. Glissandi upwards and downwards from any very high tone.
   Notation: \[ \text{\textbf{\textdollar}} \]
5. Aspirant blowing.
   Notation: \[ \text{\textbf{\textdollar}} \]
6. Rapid repetition of tones, with each player independent.
7. Multiphonics.

\textit{Brass}

1. Continuous glissandi of harmonics, with each player independent.
2. Short upward glissandi from specified tones.
3. Glissando between two specified tones (trombone only).
4. Rapid repetition of tones with each player independent.

\textit{Voices}

1. Short consonant sounds \((t, k, f, b, d, g, p, t, d)\).
2. Rapid alternation of two consonant sounds (e.g. \textit{tk\textit{t}t\textit{k}t\textit{k}t\textit{k}}).
3. Prolonged vowel sound of \(a\) and consonant sound of \(f\):
4. Continuous glissandi on \(f\) and \(a\), produced by constantly changing shape of lips.
5. Short rapid glissandi downwards on \(a\).
Piano

1. Continuous glissandi on strings.
2. Clusters produced by palm of hand and wire brushes.
3. The playing of rapid rhythms on any part of the instrument.
4. Glissandi upwards from a low tone or downwards from a high tone.
Appendix II

Stage Directions for
Rites of Passage

Pre-performance:  
(a) Enter members of orchestra in the following order: double basses, cellos, percussion, tubas.
(b) Enter drummers.
(c) Enter piano player.
(d) Enter conductor.

Prelude:  
B Enter chorale singers in procession.¹
C Chorale singers assemble on tiered platform.

First Chorale:  
N Enter rites singers.
O Rites singers assemble near drummers.

Preparing the Ground:  
A Enter all dancers; young men bear totem poles which, under guidance of leader, are placed in position to form sacred space.
B Women move to back of sacred space.
C Older men, seeking young man as initiand, give young men tests of strength.

F Young man is chosen; older men, apart from leader move to sides of sacred space; young women exeunt.
G Young man undergoes process of separation from mother and other women.
N Older men expel women from sacred space.
O Exeunt women.
P Exeunt men.

Second Chorale:  
N Enter women; older women re-enact separation of young man from mother and other women.

Ordeal:  
A Exeunt women; enter young men as ancestral figures.
B Enter older men; ancestral figures assemble at back of sacred space.
C Enter young man; ancestral figures remain in fixed positions; older men move towards young man.
D Young man undergoes painful ordeals at hands of older men.
E Young man undergoes more painful ordeals at hands of ancestral figures.
F Young man undergoes even more painful ordeals at hands of both older men and ancestral figures.
G All move to centre of sacred space and young man is lifted high on shoulders of older men.

Third Chorale:
A Older men move to side of sacred space.
B Young man joins older men.
C Ancestral figures slowly advance upon leader in order to enact ritual killing.
H Ancestral figures kill leader and bring him back to life.
I Exeunt ancestral figures; exeunt rites singers.

Interlude:
A Suspended totem poles appear; leader of older men prepares young man for journey.
B Exeunt older men; poles begin to clash together.
C Young man makes journey through clashing poles.

Fourth Chorale:
A Suspended totem poles disappear; exit young man.

Death:
A Enter young man.
B Enter young men and young women as ancestral figures each supporting large ghost-figures on poles.
C Young man struggles against ghost figures.
D Enter older men, wearing masks.
E Older men and ghost figures slowly advance upon young man in order to re-enact ritual killing.
F Older men kill young man and cover body.
G Enter women; enter rites singers.
H Rites singers assemble near drummers.
I  Women lament death of young man; older men and ancestral figures remain in fixed positions.

L  Exeunt ancestral figures.

Fifth Chorale:

A  Exeunt women; older men lift young man and encircle sacred space.

B  Exeunt older men, bearing young man.

Rebirth:

A  Enter young men as ancestral figures, carrying young man.

B  Ancestral figures place young man in centre of sacred space; enter young woman.

C  Young man is brought back to life; exeunt ancestral figures; young man and young woman dance together.

J  Young man and young woman embrace.

P  Young man and young woman dance as before.

R  Enter all dancers, young men and women no longer as ancestral figures, older men no longer masked. Chorales singers, rites singers and dancers all move in harmonious patterns both within and outside the sacred space; young man and young woman remain in fixed positions.

S  Chorales singers reassemble on tiered platforms, rites singers near drummers.

Sixth Chorale:

A  Dancers assemble within sacred space.

B  Young man and young woman move to centre of sacred space.

C  Dancers remain in fixed positions.

Postlude:

A  Dancers assume more relaxed positions.
Notes

Chapter I

1. The enthusiasm for music and the other arts was perhaps a reflection of the very vital dialectic of socio-political ideologies in Melbourne at this time.
3. Sculthorpe was too young for candidature for the degree and so spent a year involved in interim studies.
5. For a short time Sculthorpe had helped Percy Grainger construct the museum (situated next to the Conservatorium of Music) during its second stage of construction in 1938. As a nine-year-old boy he had been so impressed by a performance given by Grainger in Melbourne that he had persuaded his mother to arrange a meeting.
6. Sculthorpe's response to Conrad is more fully documented in Chapter 7 under the subheading "Collaboration with Tony Morphet".
7. Sculthorpe's involvement with the theatre is fully documented at the beginning of Chapter 7.
8. The works were *Discussion* for String Quartet and *Concerto for Strings* by Sutherland, *Essay for Orchestra* by Hughes, *Sonata* for piano by Badger and *Overture* by le Gallienne.
10. The composer translates the Aboriginal word *Irkanda* as "a remote and lonely place". Throughout this work the writer uses the phrase "Irkanda period" to refer to the period from 1954 to 1965. Similarly, the phrase "Sun Music period" refers to the period from 1965 to 1971.
11. *Prophecy*, n.59-66; *String Quartet No. 6*, Movement II, m.53-64.
13. This idea is supported in G. W. Turner's *The English Language in Australia and New Zealand* (London, 1966), p. 110.
16. Verbal communication with Suryabrata (Dean of the Faculty of Arts, University of Jakarta) at Musicultura '75 (Breukelen, The Netherlands). A report of this conference may be found in the *Bulletin of the International Music Council*, 1 (1976), 4.
18. Transcript of lecture, in the composer's possession.
19. The first performance of *Irkanda IV* took place in Melbourne on 7 August 1961, with George Logie Smith conducting the Astra Chamber Orchestra and with Wilfred Lehmann as soloist.
20. A Vinatone Island Pictures production.
22. “At the Local”, Nation, 20 October 1962, pp. 17–18. Prerauer was at the time unaware of Sculthorpe’s existence.
24. Ibid., p. 20.
27. The first was Irkunda III (1960), the second The Fifth Continent (1962).
29. Metron Bowen, Observer, 3 October 1965; David Cairns, Financial Times, 1 October 1965; Neville Cardus, Guardian, 1 October 1965; Noel Goodwin, Daily Express, 1 October 1965; Colin Mason, Daily Telegraph, 1 October 1965; Eric Mason, Daily Mail, 1 October 1965.
33. Chapter 7 deals in detail with this commission, giving a chronological account of Sculthorpe’s various attempts to compose an opera.
34. The seeming confusion in the sequence of titles is explained fully in Chapter 5, note 3.
35. Tabuk Tabuhan is a Balinese phrase meaning “all kinds of gamelan compositions” (Colin McPhee, Music in Bali (Yale, 1966), p. 376). McPhee used the term as the title of one of his own compositions, but, as Sculthorpe was told that he later disowned his piece, there seemed to be some justification for borrowing the title. Sculthorpe has commented that he may have used it even if McPhee had not come to this decision.
36. “The Stars Turn” became a song for voice and piano, and much later, in 1976, was transformed into a piece for string orchestra.
38. Although Trevor Jones’ transcription of the Groote Eylandt song which Sculthorpe adapted for The Song of Tallitnana had been included as a musical example in Roger Covell’s Australia’s Music (Melbourne, 1967), the composer had been unaware of its existence until he read Berndt’s Aboriginal Man in Australia (Sydney, 1965) in England during the gestation period of Rites of Passage (see Chapter 8, fn. 24).
40. For details see Chapter 7, pp. 000–000.
42. Jill Sykes, Sydney Morning Herald, 28 April 1979; Sculthorpe’s description.
43. The Next Australia (Sydney, 1970), p. 81. The titles are Horne’s.

Chapter 2

2. pp. 146–47.
4. Since the composition of Rites of Passage Sculthorpe has changed his position on this subject, having, in his view, successfully integrated Aboriginal melodies into The Song of Tallitnana (1974), Port Essington (1977) and Landscape II (1978).
5. The “flatness” of Australian English, manifested by the limited range of intonation, the deliberateness of delivery and the lack of excitability, is well-documented in G.W. Turner’s The English Language in Australia and New Zealand (London, 1966), pp. 89–111. Although it is generally not possible to establish definite connections between pronunciation and the physical environment, Sculthorpe is not the only Australian to attempt to explain the curious phenomenon of the Australian accent. Manning Clark, for example, has an alternative theory, but one, like Sculthorpe’s, based upon the physical characteristics of the country. He postulates that “sun and wind . . . probably
contribution to the habit of speaking through an almost closed mouth.”
(A Discovery of Australia, p. 20).

7. Ibid., p. viii.
8. Verbal communication with the composer.
9. Quoted, without source, by Robert Henderson in “Peter Sculthorpe,” Musical Timers (July 1966), p. 595. The composer denies having written this on the basis of its style and usage, so presumably the quotation was a paraphrase of part of an interview between Sculthorpe and Henderson.
10. It should be stressed that this is only one aspect of Copland’s harmonic language. The Piano Sonata shows, for example, an equally contrived exploration of the technique of harmonic progression where the tones played by each hand move in contrary motion.
12. The term “feel” is borrowed from jazz and rock music. On its simplest level it refers to the tempo and specific rhythmic counterpoint which define a style. The interaction of rhythmic patterns within a defined chordal framework remains basically the same in each successive measure of each style. The term happens to be appropriate to Sculthorpe’s music mainly because of his fondness for rhythmic repetition within static harmonic frameworks.
13. Although it is conceivable that Sculthorpe’s quick style was influenced by works such as the piano sonatas of Bartók and Copland, the rhythmic textures of the Sonatina are distinctive enough to limit the significance of any comparison.
14. An earlier version of the Sonatina contains passages with semiquavers and dotted rhythms. These were probably removed because they destroyed the feel.
15. The first six measures of the third movement, for example, have the structure \{y, z, z\}, which is like a compound form of the structure cited in the text.
16. Overture (1949), m.1–8, and Nocturne for piano (1948), m.1–4: MSS in the composer’s possession.
17. The term “tonicality” was adopted by Lloyd Hibberd (“Tonality and Related Problems of Terminology,” Music Review, 22 (1961), 13) as a useful term for musical contexts with strong indications of tonal centring (the feeling of a “tonic”) but with no indication of the concept of “key” and its associated harmonic vocabulary. “Tonicality” was suggested by Reti as a possible source of the term “tonality” (Tonality Atontality Pantonality (London, 1958)). Hibberd sees tonicality as an authentic term for a concept which later (through the term “tonality”) took on a more specialized meaning.
18. The intervallic language is discussed in some detail below.
19. Throughout this study pitch in different octaves is indicated by the following plan suggested by the Harvard Dictionary of Music (2nd edn rev. (1970), p. 679) as “the simplest and most logical”:
20. This principle may be found in Sculthorpe’s music as early as Elegy for a Clown (1946) (see Ex. 1).
22. MS of lecture, in the composer’s possession.
23. > signifies a quarter-tone sharp, and < signifies a quarter-tone flat.
24. When the writer suggested this correlation to the composer, Sculthorpe admitted that, although it had not occurred to him, it was, nonetheless, quite valid. He added that he had for some time been considering rewriting the canon in order to make it rhythmically homogenous with the rest of the piece, but that the discovery of the correlation perhaps rendered this unnecessary.
25. The melody of m.3–6 returns at m.23–28, transposed a perfect fourth higher.
26. An example, already mentioned, of this is the opening material of the Sonatina, which is repeated at the conclusion of the quick section of the first movement with a bass tone a minor third lower than the original.
27. Sculthorpe’s practice of adding thirds below already existing triadic-based chords has, for example, resulted in the regular occurrence of A\textsuperscript{b} as a tonal centre. A\textsuperscript{b} completes a cyclic series of tonal centres, following on from E and C.
Notes

(both open strings). The augmented triad as a basis for relationships among
tonal centres is similar in concept to the symmetrical relationships of tonal
centres based on the diminished seventh chord in Messiaen's second mode of
limited transposition.

28. The first example of Sculthorpe's revival of sparse harmonic accompaniments
does, however, occur in the opening pages of the third movement of String
Quartet No. 6.

29. Australia's Music, p. 203. Although this work is an obvious model for a
contemporary work for solo violin, Sculthorpe was unacquainted with it at
that time.

30. For example, Sun Music II (1969), Music for Japan (1970) and Rites of Passage
(1972–73).

Chapter 3

1. For publication by the Australian Music Fund in 1964 Sculthorpe did,
however, arrange Irkanda IV for string orchestra and percussion, since Robert
Hughes, adviser to the publishers, felt that the work would be more in demand
in this form.

2. In orchestral scoring Sculthorpe uses the customary octave transpositions for
double bass and piccolo, and adheres to the common twentieth-century
practice of writing for all instruments in C.

3. Irkanda II, m.61–88.

4. m.89–96.


6. Sculthorpe was equally attached to works such as The Voice in the Wilderness
(1934–36) and Schelomo (1915–16).


More detailed commentary can be found in Curt Praeurer's letters to
Sculthorpe, in particular those of 27 February 1963 and 11 March 1963, in the
composer's possession.


9. The composer acknowledges that the idea of crescendo and accelerando in a
contrapuntal passage that is rising in pitch is taken consciously from Bela
Bartók's music, especially works like Music for Strings, Percussion and Celesta
and Sonata for Two Pianos and Percussion.

10. Some examples of the use of canon in Sculthorpe's music are located as follows:
The Loneliness of Buñuel, m.59–68; String Quartet No. 6, II, m.88–95; III,
m.24–38; III, m.104–10; Sun Music I, m.25–39; m.87–93; m.93–102; Morning-
song for the Christ Child (1966), m.15–22; Sun Music IV, m.46–63; Rites of
Passage, Second Chorale, m.5–30; Fourth Chorale, m.1–16; Rebirth (double
canon), [] to []

11. The opening chord of the Sonatina is added to, in the same way, when it is
employed in the first movement of String Quartet No. 6.

12. Bonnie Drysdale was Russell Drysdale's first wife.

13. Movement III, m.11–29 and m.39–47.


16. The naming of inversions is based on the tone of the chord representing the
tonal centre of the passage.

17. Peter Sculthorpe, "Sculthorpe on Sculthorpe", Music Now, 1, 1 (February
1969), 11.

Chapter 4

1. This period also coincides with a period when the Australian Broadcasting
Commission, on the recommendation of the then Director of Federal Music,
John Hopkins, pursued a policy of commissioning short orchestral pieces
rather than works of any other kind.

2. Night Pieces does not fit into this category.
4. Ibid., pp. 84–88.
5. Ibid., pp. 205–32.
7. Japanese *sakura* was used in Landscape II (1978) and Mangrove (1979).
9. McPhee, pp. 294–303, especially Ex. 2.90, pp. 301–02. The parallel does not go much further than this for the *arja* accompaniment is non-chordal and the melody lacks a strong tonal connection with the accompaniment. The tempo of *arja* is also more than twice that of these passages.
10. A diagram is used in preference to a musical example since it represents the technique more clearly. The musical idea first appears in String Quartet No. 7.
11. Sun Music I, m. 53–62; Sun Music III, m. 89–92. The glissandi of Sun Music I were suggested by Penderecki’s Threnody for the Victims of Hiroshima.
12. This will be fully discussed in Chapter 6 because Naihiu was further adapted and extended for the composition of Night, a piano piece which in many ways motivated the writing of Snow, Moon and Flowers and Stars.
13. This row is taken from Luigi Nono’s *Il Canto Sospeso*.
14. Sculthorpe was also unaware of Henry Tate’s *Australian Musical Possibilities* (Melbourne, 1924), which had advocated the use of bird-calls.

Chapter 5

1. These are m. 7–16, m. 19–25, m. 45–48, m. 79–87, m. 103–08, m. 109–20, m. 121–32 and m. 147–52. The writer has, in the case of Sun Music I, chosen to consider the technique of free continuous glissandi of harmonics by a group of players as a fluctuating cluster since, of the two cases, one (m. 125–32) is an integral part of another cluster and the other (m. 79–87), though basically appearing by itself, does not have much structural viability if it is not interpreted as a cluster. The measure numbers given in this note and in the text refer to the revised score of 1977.
2. Published as a supplement to Musical Times, 1481 (1966).
3. The material for Sun Music IV originally appeared in Tsi’i Chuan (Red Landscape), which is now entitled String Quartet No. 7. Later it was transformed into a work for string orchestra, then called Sun Music III. As Sculthorpe did not care for this work, he withdrew it and reworked it for Sun Music IV. The work which is now known as Sun Music III was originally called Anniversary Music. Sculthorpe renamed it because it fitted into the idea of “Sun Music” and the title was, as a result of the earlier withdrawal, available.
4. Sun Music for Voices and Percussion (1966) was originally called Sun Music II, and the orchestral work which is now called Sun Music II was composed under the title of Kejak. Kejak (1972) is a work for six male voices. In so rearranging the titles Sculthorpe’s intention was to make the Sun Music I to IV all orchestral works, to relate Sun Music for Voices and Percussion to the Sun Music style and to restore the Kejak to being a work which imitates the vocal sounds of its Balinese model.
7. The writer defines the phrase “broadly symmetrical structure” as being a pattern of the form A; B; A; B; A; N; B; A; or A; B; C; A; A; B; A; N; A; B; A; where the repeated letters sometimes involve material which is actually the same or a close variant of that of the first letters, and at other times involve material of the same style or structural concept as that of the first letters.
8. In Rain three of the gamelan sections occupy whole movements so that stylistic integration is not so great a problem.
9. The short chordal sections are similar to those mentioned under the subheading Sun Music IV.
10. This motive was included in the ballet so that Sun Music IV would relate more closely to Sun Music III.
Notes

11. Other similarities with shakuhachi music include the use of long-held tones and grace notes at the beginnings of phrases.
12. Although the outer movements of Sonata for solo violin were used to create Sonata for Viola and Percussion, this movement had not been reworked in any way until String Quartet No. 8.
13. The composer has also remarked upon the parallel between his use of this row and the opening and closing of a Japanese fan.

Chapter 6

2. Sculthorpe’s practice of using previously written material in new pieces has already been documented. For him the act of composition is usually so laborious that almost every musical sketch that he might make in the course of composing or teaching is preserved for possible inclusion in some future piece.
3. Anton Webern, Variations for Piano, Vienna, 1937. The order of the row is included on the score of Haiku (Ex.70).
4. Sculthorpe used this interval in Sun Music I in an attempt to break with his Irkanda intervallic language, but in the context of Night, where it only appears in two measures, it has no structural raison d’etre; it does not even relate to an interval in the tone-row.
5. Exhaustive analyses of all the piano pieces may be found in the author’s The Piano Music of Peter Sculthorpe, B.A.(honours) thesis, University of Sydney, 1971.
7. Musoaka Shiki (1867–1912); composers’ translation.
8. Thomas, pp. 31–35. Sculthorpe employs this story as the programmatic basis for How the Stars Were Made for percussion ensemble (1971).
9. String Quartet No. 6 and Irkanda IV are obvious examples.
10. It is curious that Sculthorpe should also choose the tonal centre of B to end Night.
11. The composer was not aware of the consistent rules of resolution described above. The refinement of harmony was principally an aural rather than a theoretical process.
12. It should be realized that, by altering the sequence, the intervallic shape of the first four tones of the new section follows that of the last four tones of the first section, and that the tones of the last five notes are common with tones of the new chord. The reappearance of the A³ would have disturbed this relationship.
13. This situation occurs again in Stars where m.37–38 is the same as m.39–40, again except for the dynamic.

Chapter 7

1. This is inferred from the existence of several drafts and arrangements indicating progressive degrees of compositional finesse. The same could be said of the settings from the later production of Twelfth Night.
2. This incident was reported to Sculthorpe by Sidney Nolan. Nolan had arranged the meeting with Britten at the home of Sir Kenneth Clark, and had been present at the meeting.
5. Early in 1978 Sculthorpe composed a short music theatre work entitled Eliza Fraser Sings, the text of which was written by Barbara Blackman.
7. Ibid., pp. 126–32.
8. Ibid., p. 70.
9. Leonard French, another Harkness Fellow, also helped with problems related to design.
10. Sculthorpe’s contract with the Elizabethan Theatre Trust specified a full-length opera.
11. Notes for opera, MS in composer’s possession.
12. This phrase is undoubtedly prompted by an appreciation of Russell Drysdale’s paintings. The artist himself discusses his concept of “a lone man in a landscape” in Geoffrey Dutton’s *Russell Drysdale* (London, 1964), pp. 101–02.
13. Sculthorpe has been profoundly influenced by Conrad’s *Lord Jim* and also by Richard Brooke’s screen adaptation of the novel. The composer also identifies with what he interprets as the inevitable schizophrenia of a European living in the East.
14. Apart from skin drums, he especially refers to slit and pole drums because of the sexual symbolism, and, considering their usually enormous sizes, because of their theatrical effect.
15. The title of this piece is derived from the fact that 1970 was the bicentenary of Cook’s discovery of Australia and that the purpose of his voyage was to observe the transit of the planet Venus, named after the goddess of love.
16. This movement has been primarily based in England. For example, Pink Floyd’s *Dark Side of the Moon* (Harvest, 1973) uses sophisticated electronic media and is, in parts, unmistakably influenced by Terry Riley and John Cage.
17. In this respect it is worth mentioning that some exponents of experiment between rock band and orchestra, and notably Rick Wakeman, have allowed the orchestra to dominate and thereby have lost the rhythmic energy which gives rock music its unique status in contemporary music.
18. Josipovic’s supplied typewritten notes to Sculthorpe during the course of their collaboration. These contain summaries of ideas, and were presumably meant to serve as the basis for verbal expansion and dialogue. Quite often they present arguments in a kind of stream of consciousness style. Although the notes have proved to be useful in determining some of the steps towards the formulation of *Rites of Passage*, they should not be construed as coherent literary documents but rather as personal memoranda or agenda. The original copies of these notes are in the possession of the composer.
20. Ibid., pp. 2–3.
22. Here Josipovic is referring to one of his own theatre pieces.
23. Notes for “The Sun”.
24. Letter to the writer. The sixth librettist was the poet, Rodney Hall, who produced an elaborate script and scenario for a work on William Bligh; little collaboration ensued.
25. Much of Sculthorpe’s thinking at this time was influenced by Norman O. Brown’s *Life Against Death: a Psychoanalytical View of History* (London, 1959).
27. Peter Sculthorpe, “Rites of Passage”, *Opera Australia*, 3 (July 1974), 31–32.
28. In Sculthorpe’s plan for the work the order of movements was: Requiem, Birth, Requiem, Puberty, Requiem, Marriage, Requiem, Rebirth, Requiem. The stage of death is conspicuously missing from the Birth, Puberty, Marriage, Rebirth sequence, presumably because the Requiem movements were felt to have been compensation, or else that the inclusion of “Death” would have seemed redundant.
33. Ibid., p. 368.
37. (Sydney, 1971).
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40. Antonin Artaud, p. 68.
41. Ibid., p. 68.
42. Ibid., p. 70.
43. Ibid., p. 70.
44. Strehlow, pp. 129-46.
45. Ibid., pp. 138-39.
46. Artaud, p. 95.
47. Peter Brooke, The Empty Space (London, 1968), p. 54. Although Brooke has doubts about the artistic value of Artaud's theatricality he does concede that it is effective.
48. Strehlow, p. 138. In Birth and Rebirth, Mircea Eliade mentions a pole, three yards high, with emu feathers tied to the top. This was used specifically for the initiation rites of the Yumir Wiradjuri and Kanularai tribes (p. 5).
49. Strehlow, p. 137.
50. Ibid., pp. 131-32.
51. Ibid., p. 131.
52. Ibid., p. 110.
53. Ibid., p. 401.
54. Ibid., p. 577.
55. Ibid., p. 580.
56. Ibid., p. 614.
57. Berg, for example, based the whole of the Lyric Suite on the number, 23. The numbers of notes in phrases, the numbers of bars in sections, and even metronome markings were determined accordingly. Berg also based compositions on names of people, using the number of letters and the rhythm of the syllables. His fanaticism in fact allowed Sculthorpe, in early years, not to feel inhibited in his own use of numbers.
60. Ibid., p. 232.
61. Ibid.
62. Ibid., p. 233.
63. Ibid.
64. Ibid., p. 234.
65. See earlier in this chapter.
68. Cirlot, p. 274.
69. Composer’s notes, April 1972 (Glynde, Sussex); MS in composer’s possession.
72. In Literature and the Irrational (New Jersey, 1960), W. Schumaker establishes a connection between mature Greek tragedy and the Greek initiation rite. This has been paraphrased in J.S.R. Goodlad’s A Sociology of Popular Drama (London, 1971): “The Greek form of initiation... consisted, in order, of an escorted procession, a contest or trial, a rending, or tearing as in the Dionysian celebrations, an unveiling of the reborn god, a teaching by means of dark sayings or riddles, an examining or catechizing and finally a festal procession back to the village. All these parts of the total ritual have left an impression, it is claimed, upon mature Greek tragedy. The tragic equivalent of the procession is the entrance of the chorus. The protagonist’s trial or contest is initiated by the “perepeteia”, or reversal of fortune, which in turn is followed by a ritual lament, comparable to that which accompanied the rending of the sacrificial victim at the Dionysian ceremonies. The tragic recognition is co-ordinate with the unveiling of the reborn god.” (p. 21).
74. Artaud, pp. 89-132.
75. Ibid., p. 85.
76. Ibid., p. 84.
Notes

Chapter 8

1. There are three other sections: a Prelude, an Interlude positioned between the Third and Fourth Chorales, and a Postlude.
2. If *Rites of Passage* is performed in a proscenium-arch theatre, the composer sees no reason why the chorales orchestra as well as the piano should not be in the pit. It is, however, an essential part of the presentation that the drummers are staged.
3. *Sun Music for Voices and Percussion* (1966) was the first piece with a predominating vocal conception. Ketjak (1972) for six male voices with tape echo should be considered as an experimental piece for techniques intended for use in *Rites of Passage*.
4. All the groupings of the poem are in two lines except “Hanc rerum seriem ligat/Terras ac pelagus regens/Ei caelo imperitans amor/” and “O felix hominum genus/Quo caelum regitat regat”.
5. These textures will be discussed later in this chapter.
6. Original manuscript, p. 112.
7. Programme annotation, 1974. Since the composer wrote this annotation, the Chorales and Rebirth have been performed and recorded in this way (World Record Club, R03074).
8. It is worth noting again that the last three lines of each stanza of the text, that is, the ones containing the word *amor*, are set a number of times throughout the work.
9. In the Second Chorale beginning at measure 7 and in the corresponding positions in Rebirth a non-cadential setting of *amor* appears. This consists of the syllable “a” set to a fixed tone prolonged for approximately two measures followed by the syllable “mor”, whispered in a sighing manner. See Ex.79.
10. Sculthorpe adapts this idea from Jacquetta Hawkes’ observation that the myth of Prometheus, who steals fire from the gods to give to man, is realized in the twentieth century by the discovery of the secret formula of the sun: the formula of nuclear power (in *Man and the Sun* (London, 1962), p. 239).
12. Ibid., liner annotations by Robert E. Brown.
13. Verbal communication with Suryabrata: see Chapter 1, fn. 16.
14. Verbal communication with Sculthorpe.
15. There are other instances of this kind of tonal predictability in Sculthorpe’s music. There is, for example, a predominance of the melodic note, C, in passages with a tonal centre of E (See *Irkanda IV*, *Sun Music III*, *The Song of Tailinama* and *Lament for Strings*).
16. Japanese Masterpieces for the Shakuhachi, LLST 7176. Although Sculthorpe is familiar with this recording he was not aware of the similarity until it was suggested to him by the writer.
17. Space does not permit a detailed analysis of these sections. The omission can be justified on the grounds that their principles of organization and the musical vocabulary itself are adequately dealt with in the chapters concerned with the *Sun Music* series and other related works.
18. Other reasons were the impossibility of staging a large group of players, the
avoidance of the gestures of full-orchestral writing, and the intention, through
the use of bass instruments, of creating a sombre sound.
19. Known, for the purposes of this analysis, as pattern 4.
20. Originally a prerecorded tape was prepared by the composer and the writer,
but it was decided that performers may rather devise their own in order to be
consistent with their own style of improvisation.
21. Improvisations occur at the beginning of Ordeal and at the ends of Death and
Rebirth. Punctuation occurs in the opening 2' 40" and in the middle section of
Preparing the Ground, in the second and fourth sections of Rebirth, and in the
"Lament". The punctuation for the "Lament" takes the form of an insistent,
periodic, single-drum stroke ( = 52), to be known, for the purpose of this
analysis as pattern 6. This rhythm also introduces Death.
22. The different combinations of Patterns A, B and C appearing in the work (e.g.
from letters (a) to (g) of Preparing the Ground, ([(A) + (B)] × 6 + C × 6)
are to be known collectively as pattern 3.
23. The composite pattern of skin drum rhythms in the Third Chorale is to be
known as pattern 5.
24. As the availability of literature was somewhat limited in England, Sculthorpe
studied transcriptions from only two sources: Songs of Central Australia and
Trevor Jones’ chapter in Aboriginal Man in Australia, ed. R.M. Berndt and
C.H. Berndt (Sydney, 1965).
26. The writer takes the term "structural score" from Willem Adrianae’s research
in Japanese koto music. A structural score involves a system of replacing
composite units by single nomenclature so that the structure of a piece is more
readily seen. Ideally, a structural score accounts for every detail of the original
notation: hence the inclusion of the word "modified" ("A Japanese
Procrustean Bed: A Study in the Development of Damono", JAMS, XVIII, 1
29. It should be remembered that Sculthorpe avoids the use of both major sixths or
minor sixths as melodic intervals, although either may sometimes occur in
broken chords.
30. The word regis is similarly set in the Sixth Chorale.
31. Discussed above under the sub-heading Harmony.
32. Olivier Messiaen, The Technique of My Musical Language, tr. John Satterfield
33. Wenzel de Neegaard, ed., "Rites or Wrongs? A cross-section of reactions to
Peter Sculthorpe’s Rites of Passage", Opera Australia, 5 (December 1974),
6–12. A large selection is available in the Australian Opera’s file on Rites of
Passage.
34. Michael Hannan and Peter Sculthorpe, "Rites of Passage", Music Now, II, 2
(December 1974), 14.
35. "Rites of Passage: The Chorales" (liner notes for World Record Club,
R03074).
37. Ibid.

Chapter 9
3. See Examples 103–04 and Chapter 8, fn. 23.
4. Movement III, m. 29, 50.
5. These sections of The Song of Tailtinama were suggested by material originally
composed for Ordeal (Rites of Passage) but discarded because of the difficulty
of their memorization. Actual passages in this early through-composed version
of Ordeal have been transferred to String Quartet No. 9 with little change to
their musical substance, and the final score of Ordeal also contains elements unmistakably linked to the quartet. It would have been uncharacteristic for Sculthorpe not to have made use of the discarded material in some later piece, but the existence of the more detailed and energetic corresponding passages in The Song of Tailituana seems to lessen the impact of the quartet.


7. While researching colonial music, Sculthorpe discovered that one of the earliest serious Australian chamber works, John Phillip Deane’s Trio, was scored for two violins and cello, a common combination because of the shortage of violas. The decision to adopt this grouping for Port Essington was probably influenced by the dearth of violas in the Australian Chamber Orchestra.


9. Throughout the work the C string is tuned down to B.


11. In the performance directions of Mangrove Sculthorpe writes: “The term fuori di passo—literally, ‘out of step’—is used to indicate that the given notes be played a little behind and sometimes a little ahead of the beat … approximately one-third of the ‘cellos, from the front desks should play the [strictly notated] upper part; the remaining ‘cellos play fuori di passo”.

12. Ibid., p. 31.

Appendix II

1. The letters refer to rehearsal cues in the score.
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_____. Sketches for Irkanda IV.
_____. Sketches for Night Pieces.
_____. Sketches for Love 200.
_____. Sketches for Rain.
_____. Sketches for Sonata for Viola and Percussion.
_____. Sketches for Sonatina.
_____. Sketches for String Quartet No. 8.
_____. Sketches for Tabuh Tabuhan.
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Glossary

**Aleatoric music.** Music composed or performed by chance operations.

**All-interval row.** In twelve-tone music (see *serialism*), a tone-row that includes all intervals less than an octave.

**Aphonic scale.** A scale involving no semitones.

**Appoggiatura.** Throughout this book this term refers to harmonically dissonant tones that are in strong rhythmic positions and which resolve to less dissonant tones in weaker rhythmic positions.

**Architectonic structure.** The broader levels of structural design, i.e. movements and large sections rather than phrases and groups of phrases.

**Augmentation.** A developmental process whereby musical ideas are manipulated by proportional addition. Traditionally, augmentation refers to rhythmic manipulation, but the process may be extended to other parameters. The term *diminution* refers to proportional subtraction.

**Batonal.** The simultaneous use of two keys or two tonal centres.

**Choral ostinato.** See ostinato.

**Cluster.** The simultaneous sounding of any number of adjacent tones.

**Colotomic structure.** The network of punctuation in a composition. See punctuation.

**Danmono.** A seventeenth-century genre of Japanese koto music.

**Diminution.** See augmentation.

**Dodecaphony.** See *serialism*.

**Expressionism** (pertaining to music). Donald Mitchell in *The Language of Modern Music* (London, 1963), p. 148, provides a useful definition: "... whereas in Impressionist music we expect, and meet, harmonic invention in which dissonance is muted, however acute, an often low level of dynamics (think of Debussy's *Pelleas et Melisande*) and transparent textures, in Expressionism we move into a world of sound that presents a reverse situation: heavy, dense (which is not to say impenetrable) textures, an often high level of dynamics (certainly extreme contrasts in dynamic range) and harmonic invention charged, well-nigh explosively so, with explicit tension (i.e. a high rate of dissonance)."

**Feel.** See Chapter 2, Note 12.

**Gagaku.** The traditional orchestral music of the Japanese court.

**Gamelan.** Any of the many Indonesian ensembles comprised primarily of percussion instruments.

**Gamelan gong.** A large Balinese orchestra with a predominantly ceremonial function.

**Gender.** An Indonesian metallophone with keys hanging over bamboo resonators.

**Gender wayang.** An ensemble consisting of four genders used to accompany wayang or shadowplay.
Glissando of harmonics. Though not strictly continuous, gliding effects may be obtained on stringed and bass instruments by progressing rapidly through the natural harmonics.

Guilo. A notched gourd which is scraped by a stick, producing a rasping effect.

Hemitonic scale. A scale involving semitones and larger intervals.

Hiraizushi. The most important tuning of the Japanese koto, yielding the basic scale formation \{E, F, A, B, C\}.

Impressionism. See expressionism.

Inversion. As pertaining to twelve-tone music (see serialism): a mirror-image of a series of tones about the first tone. Thus the inversion of \{a, b, c\} is \{a, g, f\}.

Kakko. In Japanese court music, a small horizontal drum with two lashed heads made of deerskin.

Kebay. A virtuosic Balinese dance performed by a boy enclosed by a square of gamelan instruments. The music of kebay, a twentieth-century adaptation, by North Balinese composers, of gamelan gong music, is characterized by extremely rapid and percussive techniques.


Kumiuta. Japanese compositions, from the seventeenth century, for voice and koto.

Microtonal music. Music employing intervals smaller than the semitone.

Mode of limited transposition. A scale that can be transposed in fewer than twelve unique ways (as distinct from diatonic scales, which can be transposed uniquely to every available tone). An example of a mode of limited transposition is the whole-tone scale, which has only two unique forms: \{c, d, e, f, g, a\} and \{b, c, d, e, f, g\}.

Multiphonics. Chords produced by unconventional fingerings and other techniques on woodwind or brass instruments.

Multitracking. A modern recording technique whereby layers of sound material may be successively added to the one tape.

Musique concrète. A branch of tape composition where recorded natural sounds are grouped together to form a kind of sonic collage.

Nagauta. An extended lyrical idiom which dominates the music of Japanese kabuki theatre.

Octave displacement. Changing the melodic or harmonic characteristics of a passage of music by selectively transposing a number of the constituent tones by an octave.

Ostinato. A musical pattern, usually a series of tones, which is persistently repeated throughout a piece or a section of a piece, and often acts as an accompaniment for a melody. Any clearly defined musical event that is so repeated may be considered as an ostinato. Thus it is possible to refer to chordal or rhythmic ostinati.

Parameter. Any of the variable aspects of musical events, namely pitch, duration, volume and timbre.

Pass. The modal system of Javanese music.

Phasing. Any of various techniques involving the employment of ostinati of differing lengths or tempi so that the starting points only coincide after a calculated number of repetitions.

Pianissimo. Equivalent to pp.

Punctuation. The marking off of sections of a composition by percussive or quasi-percussive means.

Quarter-tone. An interval equal to half a semitone.
Rhythmic canon. A canon which employs unpitched or non-melodic materials and relies for its interest upon rhythmic interplay.

Rhythmic ostinato. See ostinato.

Row. See serialism.


Serialism. A twentieth-century compositional practice which subjugates freedom of expression to rules related to the use of a series of musical characteristics. Twelve-tone music, for example, is a branch of serial music based upon series of twelve pitches (called rows) which employ all the tones of the octave arranged in particular ways. All the melodic, harmonic and contrapuntal characteristics of a twelve-tone work are derived from a row. Similarly, series of rhythmic values, dynamics, timbres and modes of articulation may be used as compositional determinants. Twelve-tone music is sometimes referred to as dodecaphony.

Series. See serialism.


Shomyo. Japanese Buddhist chant based on sacred texts (sutras).

Spatio-temporal notation. A method of presenting a score in relation to a time-scale rather than proportional values (notes).

Tonality. See Chapter 2, Note 17.

Tritone. The interval equal to three tones, i.e. an augmented fourth or diminished fifth.

Tumbling strain. A phrasal shape (typical of primitive musics) characterized by vocal lines that begin at a high pitch and descend to a lower pitch.

Twelve-tone music. See serialism.
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