

Process and thinking

When scoring the work, what do I consider and what runs through my mind; what is hidden in that broad spectrum of thinking?

Background:

This section is based on the rumination as I began to score the work. It is an edited version of a transcript of that recording. The full [transcript](#) includes marginal comments from my wife Julie, as she transcribed the recording. They inform this process in a most unique manner. She has an insight into how I act, function and live at the most intimate level so I have left her comments in, in all the transcriptions of recordings.

This recounting of the process of preparing to orchestrate is 'real time' and displays all the benefits of such a activity. Its first person locus requires some consideration from the reader in that it has tendencies to wander off the track, but most often only to consider the view from another place.

Right at the very beginning

I have been asked me to record what it is like as I do the scoring and orchestration of *My Sister's Tears*.

I've got a general idea of how many sheets of score paper it will take, and so on and so forth, but it will be interesting to see...like how do I fit the piano in and how do I fit all the mallet percussion parts in because its not a standard scoring? I've got this brilliant manuscript paper drawn up with none of those things in it!

As I've sat and looked, in the last few minutes, at the blank score manuscript paper, but I'm being drawn back to look at these first few pages in the sketch. In the discussions with Stephen and Stephen I talked about being a little unsure but now I am here I am not as unsure; I'm sure about the architecture and I am sure there are ways I can orchestrate it to get the effect right.

(I still having trouble coming to terms with the fact that anybody would be interested in what I ramble about on this machine!)

I wonder how much of what I've talked about before will happen. As I think about it, looking at the first few bars and I'm thinking how I will extend this as I write the score – it's almost like this is the 'painting by numbers' cue and I'm actually about to get the oil paints out.

It's just the process now of drawing up all the manuscript (I'm glad I sharpened all these pencils the other day too). It's time consuming but it

helps me understand the architecture more and prods the compositional orchestrational ideas as I'm drawing up the manuscript. I look at the sketch and work out the correct bar numbers and their placement. This whole idea is so I can just write; I don't have to 'think' or have an idea stifled. As I turn the page the manuscript's ready.

It's good to help me have a sense of architecture again.

Here is much to wonder about!

I think of things like this being a standard instrumentation in the wind orchestra but there's more a variation in this. I've decided now there is no piccolo in this but there will be two flute parts; it's not just a flute part that could be played by multiple players but two flute parts with two or three players in each part. This is an orchestrational thing. There is a thickness in sound that you can get from that multiple player situation, and that is what I hear when it's playing in my head.

I know what I can take away from that to get a more transparent sound. I've written in the sketch times where its defined as being one player on each of those parts, so all of sudden you get the sense of an orchestral wind section as opposed to a concert band wind section which is consistently multiple players.

I know I want the full weight of the full brass sound, three trumpet lines, four horn lines, but I'm going to have to play around with how I actually score this so that I can get the piano parts in and the vibraphones and the crotales and all sorts of things – I'm still thinking.

Going through the process of drawing up the manuscript, one wonders why I've put it in the key I have because of course there is more to do. Adding all the sharp signs on the page – it looks more like a naughts and crosses convention! But it's the way it was heard.

After about 20 minutes, just scribbling, writing key signs in, time signs in and all those sorts of things; it's made me consider the structure more (but I am worried that I'm thinking about the structure because I am talking into this machine!) It is intriguing and as I start to write the notes on the page it may even be worth leaving the machine on so you [hear](#) the grunts and groans as we go so there is not a conscious effort to pick up the machine and make commentary.

Thinking back to the [questions I was asked](#) about composing the work I wonder about *"was there a plan, a form, is there a system...how much was planned, did it just unfold as it expected or did it come out in some unpremeditated form...was I putting things down in a particular way...what did I expect to write"* I said – "It's Mr. Ternary", I expected to write ABA but its not! It's more 'through composed'.

BUT

Look cursorily across at the [structure](#) and you can see at the beginning, with the chorale, lots of changing meters between 3 and 4 particularly with an occasional 5/4 bar, but there is almost a structure there. There is thought to structure here for the conductor. I've added almost a quaver to the end of the phrase so there will be a consciousness in making the phrase shape so that the conductor won't belt through the phrase and make the line head somewhere by going faster. The conductor in me is starting to well up now!

I've changed a note in the melody too. Around 27, when the melody slows down in its final part, the original melody didn't reiterate the three notes as at the beginning as an anacrusis. It played the A then up to a B and then back to an A in the second part of the phrase when I heard it originally, I'm sure, and so that's what I've altered it to.

Thinking

Bar 35. In the sketch it says I've given it crotchet beats per minute definition but its like 27 where I've said to go a little slower. I wonder what I mean?

.... This is the spiritual side...I've just been scribbling away and praying as I write. Have I actually considered how much my spiritual side permeates these things? I know when I wrote Bright sunlit Morning, and that is something I should comment on in the written part of this doctoral work. When I wrote that it was just such an emotional spiritual outpouring – a new Christian, like a reformed smoker! Interesting to write this; this is very much...this is so personal, the death of the sister. It is very interesting, interesting...(YOU'VE GOT TO FIND ANOTHER WORD – marginal note from Julie)...but praying as I write...God knows I've dedicated this work to Him, all my work, but I want to be focused in my writing; that it's as good an expression as I can give; that I'm as thoroughly professional and thoroughly committed and dedicated to every dot I put on the page, as I should be. I'll take a break now and go and have a bit of lunch and do some scoring.

I've just had a long break; lunch with Julie and an interesting discussion about the deal of difficulty I have had emotionally since Christmas time. She asked if I thought the whole thing has to do with Heather – it is quite cathartic. Anyway I'll get back to doing some scoring now and see what we can come up with.

Interesting (*there's that word again*) just thinking; I'm not even through an extra page, and just thinking.

There was a time when I heard a leading Australian composer say that when he goes into this stage of writing, where he's doing orchestrating and the scoring onto super dooper manuscript, that he actually puts on music and listens to it – like Mahler or whatever – can't remember the names of the pieces, not being overly infatuated with the man – but it is interesting that he could actually listen to somebody else's music while he's working on his own!

Just looking at the *accel* that happens after 40 somewhere, and you wonder whether it's a *molto* or not. Let's see.

As I'm scribbling on I'm thinking about that comment that I made about the composer. I mean, why do I have to say things like that? I wonder about why I have to say things that I do in my music, so why do I have to say negative things about people when my music is always trying to positive things. It really is an interesting point isn't it because, if my argument is that my composition is a means for me to communicate and I want it to be uplifting and all those sorts of things and its contextual and its autobiographical and blah, blah, blah; why would I say negative things? What makes my composition...positive? The whole idea of autobiography is truth-telling, isn't it? Contextual truth-telling I suppose, but, if its truth telling why would I say negative things, or, is that pointing to negative things in my work?

Just changed the tempo; I'm sure the tempo at 59 shouldn't be as slow as I've marked it. When I do the final edits I'll check, but it just seems too slow – melodramatically so.

(I'm thinking more – it's such a broad spectrum. I will leave the transcript of the thinking and go on with the scoring. There is so much thinking going on as I am writing the music!)

Writing the music again

Another tempo thing, but not so much the tempo itself; when I get to around 79, I'm actually using a descriptor, '*moving a little more*'. I have a tendency to use English unless it's an obvious Italian term, such as '*rall*', because everybody naturally reacts to '*rall*'. I'm sure it's all the years of writing

children's music! If you write an English word the players understanding more quickly what you are talking about. I really want the music to have a sense of a little more motion here and so *poco più mosso* would be correct but all I've done on the sketch is actually written a 'crotchet equals' tempo, and not a descriptor.

I've made a scoring change here at 87.

It's the last part of the chorale, like the beginning, and I've scored it exactly the same way as I did before back at 27. Then I said 'change voicing here'. Now, as I review, I want change the voicing again. I want to do exactly the same, but add the solo trumpet voice. Lots of instrumental voices have been speaking in the 8 or 10 bars preceding this entry, the recurring chorale theme but I think that solo, that clear, almost no vibrato tone, is required. I know the sound I want, no vibrato; I know the sound I want. The boy soprano – not that high and ringing obviously, but the same sort of idea, exactly the same sort of idea; clear, that uncluttered...not unsophisticated, not uncultured...I don't know what to call it, but its an innocent sound.

Mixed messages?

At 96 I've used two Italian words! I've used '*rallentando*' and '*tempo primo*', which I've used before.

*Why do I use some Italian words and not others? Why do we use some foreign words and not others? They just become part of the lexicon don't they and I'm well aware that I pick up words and throw them in. Some colloquialisms I don't like and some I think are good. Some Americanisms I detest, like, 'impact'. "So and so will 'impact' the..." It's 'impact on'! I'd like to 'thrash' them to get their grammar working correctly. That's a fascinating thing to consider but what's even more fascinating is what are the things that impact on my writing. What language, what style systems and meaning systems impact on my writing. Leonard Meyer, in *Emotion and Meaning in Music*, talked about style systems didn't he. And he talked about them being learned habit responses. John Blacking, in his writing, said that the children's songs learnt were not just the striving after the meaning of the overtone system, they were actually a cultural resonance. So what things am I putting in to my music – how much of an American influence is in my writing? When I think of some of the scoring for the clarinets I 'hear' the British Military Band, and the US service bands too. Then when I score for some of the brasses, despite my British brass band*

background, I hear American writing – well maybe not, maybe it's European writing.

There's some rambling going on today isn't there. If I appropriate and utilize words from different places and therefore arguably different systems of meanings, if I do, how do I ensure the musicians understand? What are the things, the intrinsic things in the score itself and then the tonal material that add to the meaning outside the musical descriptors that I use...

This influences my use of language and signs in the score – it makes me wonder as I write each note and nuance.

The questions just asked are really worth considering because as a conductor and teacher of conducting, I'm prone to say that the composer gives us as much information as possible and is doing so through the musical descriptors, sings and so forth. But, if the composer can be ambiguous in their use of language, just like language, as I have described, can be ambiguous, how much does the tonal material tell us?

I'll give you an example; if we say 'tenuto' means held, what does 'held' mean? Held means different things depending on who you holding or what you are holding. So what is it in the tonal material that tells us to hold in a particular way? Is it the accompanying harmony or is it the melodic direction or is it the harmonic structure that's producing an impetus to move forward or is it a harmonic structure which is resolving and producing an impetus to be held back? There is such ambiguity in language in many, many ways so what 'truth' is there in the harmonic material and what can we do to attest to that truth and give veracity to a conductor's interpretation – to be rue to the composer's intention.

What do I do now? I've finished the drawing up of the score so that everything is ready to begin writing. I've done nothing else but ramble and draw lines and squiggles on score paper!