

## **A journal about My Sister's Tears and the reaction to it.**

### **The University of St Thomas premiere performance and at the Midwest Conference – December 2005**

I am writing this as I sit in Chicago airport. There has been an amazing reaction to My Sister's Tears during this last two weeks.

#### **I quick chronology:**

Matthew George, the conductor who premiered the work in Brisbane, presented the American premiere at St Paul, Minnesota on the 8<sup>th</sup> of December.

The work was released on compact disc at the Midwest conference by studio Music form London. The recording was by the band of Her Majesty's Coldstream Guards.

The published music was also available for perusal at Chicago and will be available for commercial release in January.

#### **The reactions:**

St Thomas:

The work had been presented by Matt with a sense of its narrative but he asked me to talk with the group about the work and also to speak at the performance. Two things arose from that position.

Firstly, the ensemble began to play with a more directed sense. One might suggest that I may have 'heard' a more directed sense but I know, through my work with such groups, that the narrative can produce a much more focused engagement with a work and a more defined and consistent application to it.

Secondly, the short talk I gave at the concert (the program notes I wrote for the world premiere in Brisbane were printed in the program itself) added another dimension to the ensembles playing. Such groups always "lift" at a performance but what happened that evening was even more than such "lifting". Apparently the group members were intent in listening to me. Matt said he could see the group's engagement and when I had finished what I was saying there seemed an inordinate break before they began. He said he had to wait for eyes and noses to be wiped!

What I said about talking and not despairing.

Significant in that is that they then played a most superb performance of the piece. This was a surprise given that amateurs, even quite competent ones, can be found wanting in such situations. The Wind Ensemble at St Thomas was not so lost that evening. The performance had great integrity and sensitivity and the reaction was really significant.

One audience member was a counsellor for tertiary students and her reaction was one of great moment. "There should be discussion of such things", she said. Discussion between family members, discussion between school friends and not just discussion in the media which she said is somewhat dislocated from the reality of the personal distress present.

Rod Loeffler and his reaction and the Star Tribune story of that same day

Alan Bryant and his reaction

Jennifer George

Chicago and the folk there:

Many of my colleagues and friends visited and chatted in Chicago at the conference and, as usual, asked what was new. I referred them to the Studio recording and the reaction was quite astonishing. Astonishing often because there were no programs notes available for review with the score or the recording and it wasn't until later that discussion ensued about the active narrative of the piece.