

Tape No. 2

Here we go again. This is an interesting process.

Steven and Steven asked me to sit and record what it is like as I do the scoring and orchestration of *My Sister's Tears*. So this is right at the very beginning. I've got a general idea of how many sheets of 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 and I've got this brilliant manuscript paper drawn up with none of those things in it. Anyway...lets see what we come up.

It's really quite interesting – 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 discussions I talked about being a little unsure but I'm not as unsure, I'm sure about the architecture and there might be ways I can orchestrate it better 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 – anybody would be interested – even Emerson and Cronin. They've got to get a life haven't they – all of us!

I wonder how much of what I've talked about before will happen. When I think about it, I've got a general idea - and this sketch has given me a general idea, general architecture – and as I think about it I'm 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” queue and I'm actually about to get the oil paints out.

I'm glad I sharpened all these pencils the other day too. It's just the process now of drawing up all the manuscript. It's time consuming. It helps me understand the architecture more and interestingly it pushes the compositional orchestrational idea as I'm drawing and I'm looking at the sketch working out the correct bar numbers and the

placements – the whole idea of that is to so I can just write, I don't have to think about how to fill in the lines or have an idea stifled as I turn the page cause the manuscript's not ready. It's so I can just write when I start to score the sketch. It's good to help me have a sense of architecture again.

Things like because this is sort of a standard instrumentation in the wind orchestra, like there is in an orchestra, like two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, that sort of thing in an orchestra, and here there is a sense of being, flutes, double reeds and clarinets, but there's more a variation in this – like 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 – there's two flute parts with two or three players in each part and its an orchestrational thing. There is a thickness in sound that you can get from that and that is what I hear when its playing in my head so I know what I can take away from that to get a more transparent sound because I know I've scored in the sketch so far, 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 – still thinking.

Going through the process, one wonders why I've put it in the key I have because of course there is more, it looks more like a naughts and crosses convention, but it's the way it was heard.

It is a very interesting process, I've probably done 20 minutes, just scribbling, writing key signs in, time signs in and all those sorts of things. It does make you consider the structure more as I think about it, but I worry about the fact that I'm thinking about the structure because I have to talk into this machine! But it is very very interesting and as I start to write 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. Let's see....

This is interesting too. We talked the other day, the Stevens' and I about the formalism. One of Steven Emerson's questions was 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 and was I putting things down in a particular way; what did I expect to write and I said – it's Mr. Ternary, I expected to write ABA and its not its more through composed than that. Just cursorily look across at the structure and you can see like the section at the beginning here with the chorale is lots of changing meters between 3 and 4 particularly and the occasional 5/4 bar but there is almost a structure to that. So the metrical structure, and I think I talked about this the other day, I've added almost a quaver to the end of the phrase so there'll 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 is starting to well up now!

I've changed a note in the melody too. Around 27 - it's easier to talk about this numbers wise and not musically wise and not sing a tune because you can't transcribe the tune this way. When the melody slows down in its final part the original melody didn't reiterate the three notes 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 I'm sure when I heard it originally and so that's what I've altered it to.

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. (phone rings) My spiritual encounter interrupted by a phone call from my darling wife! It is very interesting. I know when I wrote Bright sunlit Morning, and that is something I should comment on in my work as well, when I wrote that it was just such an emotional spiritual

outpouring – new Christian, like a reformed smoker. Interesting to write this. This is very much ????? cause this is so personal, the death of the sister. It is very interesting, interesting.....(YOU’VE GOT TO FIND ANOTHER WORD)but praying as I write and God knows I’ve dedicated this work to Him, all my work, but I want to be focused in my writing that its 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 come back – I’ve got 30 pages to drawn up and I’m on page 10! – Yakking does something I guess.

Long break I’ve just had. I had some lunch with Julie and interesting discussion about. I’ve had quite a deal of difficulty emotionally since Christmas time and Julie said do you think that 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 Philip Bracanin 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.

It’s interesting I’m scribbling on and I’m thinking about that comment that I made about Bracanin. I mean why do I have to say things like that – interesting isn’t it. I wonder about why I’ve got to say things that I do in my music, so it’s interesting to ask why I have to say negative things when my music is always trying to positive things.
Interesting.

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. It's really quite interesting because I mean, 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 what are the negative things in my work – ha ha!!

It's head space, isn't it; that I can even think about these things; it's all head space. I mean I'm jumping in every three or four minutes and making a comment because I'm sitting here writing - I've got the time to reflect I've got the time to consider, and the hack work of setting the score up is really interesting the things that run through your mind.....I'm glad I've got such a small work load (*better than a small mind!*)

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

I'm thinking more – its such a broad spectrum – I had some interesting looks at phenomenology – I did a pursuit of that through the university library and I got some materials on order and the connections with aesthetics and blah and I try to look up autobiography but there is not a research thing for it in the Griffith University – its autobiography as a form of literature, not as a research structure, which I found really interesting and I was thinking about...so I went to Search, feminist autobiography and I thought to myself, well, you know, you've got to have this - under the feminist things there's got to be some autobiographical stuff – and listen to this to Stanley, the woman I quoted in my Masters. I didn't have that there so I couldn't look up that title. But the only Elizabeth Stanley I could find was an Elizabeth Stanley who wrote children's books (and I didn't quote from a children's book). So I'll have to pursue that even more, I just don't understand what the situation is because there has to be discussion about it and considering the autobiographical thing, I mean, where o.k.,..... when I wrote from a

feminist autobiographical perspective, I got into trouble with some of the folk at QUT because I was surrounded by female lecturers in the area and also in females in the class I was the only male in the class of both research methods I and II and I was just totally frustrated by the fact that to appropriate a feminine perspective was considered wrong, but what is ...I mean, looking at composition, where is the sexuality in composition, is it, pardon me speaking, because we are male and female in essence?, the Ying and the Yang, and Ya Ya Ya, but what is speaking? If it is my feminine side (ho, ho) – I look in the mirror and I can't even imagine that – if it is, then what is speaking and is it wrong to appropriate that methodology. It is really interesting. Gee I ramble.

....and then.....this is tangential but typically Ralph – what of the interpreter. If this is the Ying and Yang thing and this is male/female thing – I don't know I don't understand it enough – obviously and that's why I'm looking at it, but if it is a male/female thing, what of the conductor. You know what's really interesting – this is anecdotal, because I can't *prove* this, I mean I can look back over competitions I've adjudicated and see the number of women that have won and the number of men that have won, and then some boof-head turns around and says the women have won because I like nice bottoms or something – which may well be the case - but it is really interesting because in my experience with youth music, consistently, the women produce more musical ensembles at the upper level - well at all levels actually – but at the upper level particularly, the young men seem to be more interested in how they look from the back and whether their music is showing off and playing faster, louder higher. It is very interesting and so I know the composer has faster, louder, higher like *Whirr Whirr Whirr*, and me and some of the stuff I write, are they pursuing that visual thing like the young conductors in that time when they write something like my piece now , *My Sister's Tears*, its more reflective, its more introspective. But it is really worth considering and maybe in a project we do next year, maybe its something Deb could look at – the male and female side of things. Its something I should look at too and the interpretation of it and maybe when we do the recording maybe we could record my childrens' music with both me and her conducting it and then get people standing outside to review it. Maybe it's getting bigger than Ben Hur that project but interesting....

...another tempo thing...not so much the tempo itself but when I get to around 79, I'm actually using a descriptor, moving a little more, - yes I know, *poco piu mosso*, - but I've got the tendency to use English unless its an '????', I mean *rall*, everybody just reacts to *rall*. Its all the years of writing children's music. If you write in an English word they understand what you are talking about...but I really want the music to have a sense of a little more motion here and so *poco pui mosso*, yes, but all I've done on the sketch is actually written a tempo, crotchet equals tempo, and not a descriptor.

I've made a scoring change here at 87. It's the last part of the chorale that was at the beginning at its re-visited again and I've scored it exactly the same way as I did before with the trombone and the tuba etc etc but when I wrote it back at 27, I said change voicings here, and now as I review I get to hear I want change the voicing again, so I want to do almost like it happened at the beginning, well maybe exactly the same, but add the solo trumpet voice. Lots has been speaking, such as been speaking in the few 8 or 10 bars preceding this entry of the recurring nature of this theme from before (rambling) but I think that solo, that clear, almost no vibrato tone.

...I know the sound, I said no vibrato, I know the sound I want, boy soprano - not that high and ringing obviously, but the same sort of idea, exactly the same sort of idea. Clear, that uncluttered, un...not unsophisticated, not uncultured...I don't know what to call it, but its an innocent sound.

Hey at 96 I've just done two Italian words - isn't that good - I've done a *rallentando* and a *tempo primo*. I've used *tempo primo* 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 that 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. So, 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*, talks about style systems didn't he. And he talked about them being learned habit responses and 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 – how much of the American influence is in my writing. When I think of some of the scoring for the clarinets I hear the British Military Band. Then when I score for some of the brasses, despite my British brass band background, I hear an American writing – well maybe not, maybe a European writing.

An interesting ???ge 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 – it's an interesting thought isn't it.

Its one that is really worth considering because as a conductor and teacher of conducting, I'm prone to say that the composer gives us the most information as possible and what the composer is doing is telling us as much as possible through the musical descriptors and so on and so forth, but if the composer can be ambiguous in their use of language, just like language can be ambiguous now, 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 (NOW YOU'RE SOUNDING LIKE PHD MATERIAL!). There is such ambiguity in language in many many ways – the truth is contextual – thank you Mike Smith, the truth is absolute, language is contextual – and 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.

This is getting bad now. I've got to go to work tomorrow and I don't want to . I want to sit home and write this now – this is just aching now. It's just incredible. I'm talking into this machine more often and all the things that are running through my mind are coming from the music – they are being brought to me from the music and so these questioning and answerings.....so I just want to write...I don't want to go to work – I just want to write, but I guess they don't pay me for that do they – well, they do – but not very much, that's for sure!

O.K. I've got the real ramble thing going now. I've waited 2 minutes before I've turned this on again to talk. If, and this is something that can come out of Sheldon's work next year possibly and its something that directly connects with what Huib was talking about in his presentation Ideals to Idols the other night, if we're in pursuit of truth and meaning through our research as a composer/performer or whatever, what about the quality of the performance, what about the integrity of the interpretation and all that, but what do we give them and how much do we give them and how much leeway and how much of their humanity has to enter in and what draws that in, what makes them want to play. The thing I wrote, almost 2 years ago called A Joyful Noise, that I wrote for the Composition and Competition thing which was internal research grant, premiered at the end 2002, US. premiere the end of 2003 and now its been picked up as a competition piece in Queensland; its published, the research centre's waving it around because it's a published product of internal research grant money (*even though its vanity press and doesn't count*). I got an email yesterday from a woman whose ensembles have won the prize for the competition. So, they've got two new works – *Cyclone* for their high school band and *Quinque Quatro alla Martiza* for their primary school band and they are also playing A Joyful Noise and she said the kids just love it. Why? Its absolutely unlike any American band piece they have played before. It's unlike any Australian band piece. It's just different. What gets them? What draws them in? What is it? If I hark back to Mayer, what is it about it, is it a learned habit response. Is it? If its not in the same sort of style that they are used to. Is it Blacking's children's song thing, because its very childrens' song in style – its very chant-like, West African chant-like. So it is that?

What do I do now...I've finished the drawing up of the score so that everything is ready to begin writing. I've got an hour before I have to be at a meeting. So what do I do – not email that's for sure. You know, I think I might sit and listen to something, or read something because I think this needs a big space like all day Friday afternoon after rehearsal – it needs something.

This is diverging from the path just a little bit. It is now Friday afternoon and I've come home after rehearsals through the week and I'm just wacked and tired but I'm really compelled to sit down and do this string arrangement of Simple Song. Now if we hark back to what this is about, this is based around the piece I wrote for wind band after the challenge from Peter Francis from QYO Wind Symphony from last year at the Maryborough Education Conference that composers and publishers don't write enough and produce enough simple, slow $\frac{3}{4}$ pieces for young band. So the next day I wrote him a piece as the program notes say in the score. Then in Summer School this year I had a couple of string people do the Summer School and we used the piece Simple Song as one of the conducting pieces and they just loved it and they said it would make an excellent string arrangement. So we've thought about it, Julie and I and we've talked, then I've started scoring it and I find it really interesting because what I'm looking at now, and I talk about this when you write for high level ensemble you don't have to worry about technique too much, you've got to be aware of it, because its got to be playable – but fine technique mitigates a lot of the problems and immature technique produces a lot of problems. So its really an interesting experience for me to look at how I'm changing some of the things to re-score it and using bowings to get some lightness in some things. It'll be interesting to see how it works. A bit of independence between the cello and the bass – only a little bit but I think that's important – so its probably going to be a level higher for strings than it was for band and some *divisi* in the 1st violin part. I don't know how that will go, but I might get Anne Svendsen or somebody to have a look at it and see what the bowings are like.

I've finished the scoring of this piece now – Simple Song – its very interesting, yes, its did sound very simple and I can remember when I started the band piece, I wanted it to

be something for a first year band to play but the melodic material and harmonic material is beyond that and its not that they might not be able to play it, but they haven't learned it yet, and so, to be able to play some of the ranges in this setting, they are going to have to be into their third year of playing, so I've actually taken out the piano part (WHAT!) that goes with it because people would use it as an accompaniment part and its either got to be integral or its not in it and as I've gone on I've scored it more fully. At 49 in the biggest section of the piece there is a bit of *divisi* in the 1st violin and then there are double stops in the last bar – I don't know how well that's going to work – anyhow I'll get one of my string mates to have a look at it and see what they say.