

Trombone work – Journal No. 1

Day 1 of scoring – 17th Feb 2006	First entry – 12.29 pm	This morning was a trip to the official opening of the new AMEB centre – terrific! This is about a work commissioned by Michael Morgan for Jamie Kennedy a third year, trombone performance student at the Con
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Location and context:

In a discussion with Stephen Emmerson the other day I said I did not want to 'write' about any more pieces but then, subsequent to that conversation, I considered the work I have to do on this as yet un named piece and I realised I must write because this work might be very different.

Why?

Because this work is absolute music; it was a commission to write a trombone concerto but I am not sure I would call it that. It's a concertino at best and maybe a simple concert piece. It has no apparent narrative and, though we can all invent one, I felt that to write about this as I score the work and fiddle with the sketch, I may gain insight into its absoluteness or its hidden narrative or meaning.

History:

A short history is in order especially as it illuminates why the work exists and it may also be considered that it also displays the impact of my work on others.

Michael Morgan is the Head of Ensembles at the Queensland Conservatorium. He is in fact in charge of the group that premiered My Sister's Tears last year. He is 'in charge' in that he is responsible for concert outcomes and the management of performing groups such as the wind orchestra. It is my group to conduct but I answer to him in a manner that accounts for outcomes and repertoire etc.

Michael has been to only one concert in the theatre that I have conducted but over the years he is becoming a very solid supporter of what I am endeavouring to do. Last June he came to the concert which featured my works juxtaposed amongst the works of some of the 20th centuries leading composers for band and orchestra.

After the concert, which featured the world premiere of MST plus a performance of Bright Sunlit Morning and Masada, Michael said to Peter Luff,

head of brass, that I was a real asset at the Con and that he thought my works were very good and he wished to commission me to write a work.

My heart leapt at such a solid endorsement of what my music says. I am thrilled that he has found the reason to commission me though there is no money! Of course, it is the conservatorium and if I was a foreign national there would be a fee but the local boy isn't honoured in the same way. I guess Michael has no money but it would be nice if he did that he asked me again. It is a livelihood for me as for any other composer.

Political statement out of the way I must note that I am very excited to write for Jamie and pleased that the world premiere will be on May 12th at the Con Theatre.

The work:

The work is different for me in that it is not a program piece, it doesn't have an evocative title (none at present though musing with my youngest children the other night provided some ideas and some amusement!) and it is for solo instrument and ensemble. Though Bright Sunlit Morning was for a solo voice it was conceived more as a total work rather than as a solo and ensemble construction as this one appears to be.

It is in three short movements or sections and it has a theme rather than a narrative. The concert on the 12th of May is titled "Symphonic Dances" so the work was constructed with that theme in mind.

There is a degree of alliteration in the titles of the sections (are they movements?); Parody, Pas de Deux and Primitive.

Part 1

The first part is called Parody and it is in the form of a waltz. The descriptions of parody include caricature, spoof, satire, distortion and so on and I feel they are reasonable descriptions of what I have done. The style of the waltz is there and at times the format is so very 'waltz like' that tonality is the major distortion and in so doing the work becomes a satire or a spoof. I know I have endeavoured to make it dance like and ballet like sequences present themselves along with robust beer garden style oompah band sections.

The soloist speaks in all of those styles and I would think that the dialogue between the soloist or narrator (hhmm!!) is less than subservient, noting that I said above that it was more of a solo and ensemble style of piece.

Part 2

Movement 2 is Pas de Deux, a movement for two. The original idea was to have a ballerina come on and dance here but the staging would be too difficult.

Here the soloist 'duets' with other members of the ensemble. The scoring will be much smaller than the full ensemble I have at my disposal (another venture into chamber music as Ellerby suggests so often in discussion with him – and in print!). There is piano in this scoring. I thought of possibly harp and I changed to piano for two reasons. The first is purely logistical – there is more chance there will a piano and a pianist than harp and harpist and, secondly, I heard a much more piano like timbre and contribution to the ensemble timbre in my minds ear.

I have thought that possibly the soloist might move to where each other solo voice is sitting but that will depend on the logistics of that and also the sound projection. The section is only small and simple in its structure but I hope it might be very beautiful – maybe pretty.

Part 3

This is meant to be a primitive dance and when I first began to write it didn't lend itself to ethnic or native connotations. BUT – it is in six eight and the closest connection I can get to that metre and 'primitive' dance music is the hemiola overlays that happen in African drum and dance music. Lose connection hey!

BUT, the soloists work is more 'primitive' and more emotional. Maybe it would be best to describe it as less constrained. He has the chance to 'wail' to an extent and his range is stretched in a number ways. I actually like this and I can see the similarities there are between this movement and the allegro from the work I have just completed on commission from Chatswood High School in Sydney. It's like the 'battle music' in Joshua!

What to do now?

I have had Julie photocopy manuscript templates for the scoring of the work because none of my score papers has a template like this requires. Sadly I did it on the computer and I didn't 'hide' the rests so there are pages of blank score with bars rest all over them! Still, it is just a working through thing. I had Emma, my youngest daughter, work with me on Joshua. I wrote the manuscript score and she entered the notes into the Finale template. I will do the same here. The bar rests might cause problem for her but it will only take a little looking for her to overcome that.

I will sit now and work through the sketch and look at where I might draw up the manuscript with bar numbers etc. It always helps when I am writing. This is the same as for my other works, it's; like a cross check of what needs to be done and therefore e across check of what I have done.

I will keep this open but start a separate section for any comments I might have as the process rolls along.

It's now 1.11 pm and I have to leave at 1.40 for a Faculty Review meeting at the Con – O bliss, O joy!

Trombone work – Journal No. 2

Day 1 of scoring – 17th Feb 2006	First entry – 5.52 pm	This is the process I have engaged in every time I write. At present nothing is different from my previous journals in this study
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Location and Context:

I have begun the process of drawing up the score manuscript. As noted above, I have produced pages from a computer set up for the piece and had Julie run off blank pages with all the key signs and clefs etc. I have not allowed for the change of key in the first section but that is easily accommodated for the moment. I can have more produced tomorrow and I can start writing when ever I like. The pages are ready for the Parody, more will be produced for the Pas de Deux tomorrow and I will draw up the Primitive section after making these comments.

Some comparative thoughts:

Every thing seems the same as before up to now. I am looking at notes and annotations in the sketch and seeing the same things I have been aware of before, such as:

- Little annotation about what plays what
- Scant dynamic markings except for the extremes
- Phrase shape information is scant also
- Inflection is present but not overly notated
- A need to remedy some less informed portions such as the end and moment into the second section, the Pas de Deux.

There is not the feeling of this part is this part of the story and that is another as there was in recent weeks with Joshua. I feel as connected in many ways but maybe a little more dispassionate about the piece. It will be different I sense when I am writing the notes in the page and enmeshed in the orchestration – I love that part!! – rather than just drawing up the page.

As I flick through the sketch to check where I am going with 'copy this or that bar' etc. I sense the piano more. Above I suggested that I was considering either piano or harp and it seems that my subconscious had made the decision. That is illuminating isn't it Stephen!

So, to drawing the pages for the final movement and preparing for an evening out. Young Con wind orchestra with Brydie Bartleet tomorrow. I am looking forward to working with her and sharing much!

Trombone work – Journal No. 3

Day 2 of scoring – 19th Feb 2006	First entry – 3.29 pm	Here I am again – into the drawing up and thinking!
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Location and Context:

This process is illuminating! I am finding things as I go along, simple things, which really fascinate me. For example, right now I am drawing up the score pages for movement three. I have let my writing go here and not tried to fit into a form or mould; yet I am writing in 4 and 8 bar phrase!!!

Amazing!

I am on to the 17 page and they fit into neat structures. When I wrote it didn't seem like that but now...

BUT – it doesn't necessarily sound like that. With the hemiola and the dialogue and at times antiphonal nature of the piece it looks but doesn't necessarily sound like 'four square'.

The second section looks like that too but I had no sense of that. Am I bound by conservatism here??? I know that there is some "D.C. al Coda" style writing in the first and third movements but the second was through composed I thought. HHHMM!

But the scoring is more like My Sister's Tears than Masada. That's interesting because it makes me wonder whether I am moving into a different orchestrational mind set. More on this later in the process I guess.

Day 2 of scoring – 19th Feb 2006	Second entry – 7.59 pm	Finished the drawing up
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It's all done, the templates are complete but I won't work on this tonight I will get stuck in tomorrow. The family are all busy and because I work on Saturdays at Young Con I have Mondays to do what I want and tomorrow I want to score this work! – Well, begin to score it anyway!

I stick with my thoughts about structure. It seems conservative but I don't know that it will sound 'sonata form'. The scoring will be enjoyable. Looking at the ideas I have put down there will be some challenges to make it 'sound', given the soloist and the dialogue, but that is part of the fun.

'Til tomorrow then.

Trombone work – Journal No. 4

Day 3 of scoring – 20th Feb 2006	First entry – 8.14 am	Planning the day
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Location and Context:

The work has a name now – it has had for a couple of days. Emma and James aren't happy because I haven't taken their considered advice! It is: Dance Diversions – A Concertino for Trombone and Wind Orchestra. The section or movements stay the same – Parody, Pas de Deux and Primitive – but the whole has a title now!

Today I will set about the scoring. There are the children to take to school and then some time to pick up some office supplies. I am not concerned about this apparent interruption because the mind is running all the time and both in the fore ground and the back ground decisions are being made about the orchestration of the work – well, those that haven't already been made. I find it informative in this process that much of what happens in the narrative style works is happening here. The sketch is an *aide memoir* and a cue for what has been decided. As an example, I have suggested some of the percussion rhythms for the Primitive section but I sense when I get there the choice of instruments will have been made – I will just write them!

Let's see!

Day 3 of scoring – 20th Feb 2006	Second entry – 10.44 am	The plan has gone out the window!
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Have I ever told you how much I loathe computers?! I have been held up by these machines here so much and now I finally get to write this and wonder at the miracle of them – but only in a simple way!

The score begins now.

Day 3 of scoring – 20th Feb 2006	Third entry – 11.27 am	Ploughing ahead
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I am on to page 5 – simple scoring compared to some of the other work but only simple in some ways. This movement is very transparent and not overly scored as it is accompanying. I wonder about that still. I know I commented on this before but what I have here is a very really and vigorous dialogue between the soloist and the ensemble. As it grows the dialogue is almost antiphonal in that it is not the full ensemble against the soloist but more a dialogue between choirs of families.

More to do now....

Also – I'm not writing as neatly as I usually do. I wonder if that is because the music holds no story or meaning for me or because I want to get it out fast. It feels fast but there is no feeling as such.

Day 3 of scoring – 20th Feb 2006	Fourth entry – 7.54 pm	Wrapping up for the day
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It's been a good day. I won't review what I have written before but just note some things that have come to my mind. I did have a somewhat fractured timetable – computers, pick up of kids and a visit from Ella, my grand daughter but when I write like this my mind is always thinking about the work. I have been sitting having dinner and laughing and chatting and thinking about the work. I have sat and watched the news and I've been thinking about the work.

What have I been thinking?

Mainly it's about the orchestration.

I have little idea why I am concerned but I sense some apprehension about balance. I also sense some apprehension because this is a standard narrative work with the subsequent unconscious tonal and timbral selections that might happen. I am not sure that I can comment on them as I would like and so I am not sure that my assumption about them is correct. I do know that I am finding this intriguing!

The structure is also intriguing.

I have no doubt the Parody is very tongue in cheek. Given that, there are things there I would not write in a serious work. Hhhmm – what I mean is that I would not attempt to portray that idea in the way I have here. I am making fun, spoofing in fact! That must then impact on the timbral choices and also the structural decisions.

The use of the piano is also intriguing because I often leave it out. When I bring it in it is for lightness. It's a good colour to have at my disposal and a great texture as well. I have enjoyed this work on the Parody!

I will work some more now and write again when I get to the next stretch of time I can have to do so.

Trombone work – Journal No. 5

Day 4 of scoring – 22nd Feb 2006	First entry – 7.32 pm	The second section is intriguing!
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Location and Context:

I have worked the last two days at the Con and done little bits of scoring in between the requirements of those who pay my wage. I finished the first section on Tuesday morning (it's Thursday evening now) and yesterday I spent time commencing the second section but today I have spent a good deal of time on it.

A visit to the dentist this morning meant I couldn't go immediately to work so I sat here and wrote the score. It has intrigued me more than the first movement.

Why?

I think it's the chamber music nature of the orchestration. The end has all the mid and lower brass enter but the rest of the time there is not one full section play and the wood winds are like an orchestral wind section with the addition of one alto saxophone. The piano is an integral part of the texture and not like an accompaniment. The bass for most of the movement is double bass and bassoon. It's only at the end that the lower brasses come in to make a 'band' sound.

I am reminded of Ellerby again and his assertion that my scoring is so chamber music like. I look forward to his commentary on this work.

So, it's after 7.30, there is a music supporters meeting from the school going on up stairs (and I have done my job by opening the wine) and I intend on finishing the second section and commencing the third.

Most intriguing is how quickly this is coming out. The scoring is much lighter than the full symphonic band orchestration BUT it is no more lightly scored than My Sister's Tears.

I do think about it and I have made some changes as I progress – just as I have done in other places – but here I am working my way through more rapidly than I had expected. I wonder why. As I write the reason may present itself.

To writing now – 7.43

Day 4 of scoring – 22nd Feb 2006	Second entry – 8.34 pm	Finished the second section
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Done – and a very pleased sensation inside! I just feel that I have written honestly and in a way that is not a way people are accustomed to me writing.

BUT – MST and Bright Sunlit Morning and even Joshua may have changed those perceptions.

The closing section, just after the simple brass interlude is open and transparent and unaffected. I look forward to hearing it – live!

I will check on what I need to do up stairs and if I can I will come down and attack the third section.

Day 4 of scoring – 22nd Feb 2006	Third entry – 8.43 am	The third section
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Energetic and Brash – a dotted crotchet = 120. I hadn't placed any descriptors on the sketch yet I had been singing the tempo and style all along. This is the movement where Jamie can let fly. Here is where his energy and technique can just show off!

I want energy but brash? What does it mean? Showy – yes; arrogant – no; pushy – maybe; self confident – my word; loud – often! Strident – very often! Brazen – maybe; presumptuous – no; brassy – indeed (but in a musical sense not a tarty way); cheeky – not this piece. Loud, garish, vulgar – I think not.

It's the show piece part of this and it has much energy written in so what he presents himself will only enhance it.

A side note: I have finished the first section and passed it on to Jamie. He is a very quite lad and hasn't reacted. I would love him too. I don't mind if he says he doesn't like this or that; I just want him to say something I guess he has to get his head around the work and find some connection with it. I have been so connected to it these last few weeks and months and I am expecting too much of the young man.

Up stairs to clean up – 8.50

Trombone work – Journal No. 6

Day 5 of scoring – 26th Feb 2006	First entry – 8.02 pm	On to do more of section three
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Location and Context:

I haven't been at this desk since last week – the entry above. It has been very busy at work and then meetings most nights (school and church) and also a school concert. Yesterday was Young Con and then I worked in the yard and today a little of that also.

I have sent the first two sections to Jamie. The full score – so he can have sense of how it all fits together. I will sit here now and work on the third section again and enjoy what is coming up. There are portions I have begun to adapt a little from what is in the sketch – the *aide memoir* situation again.

This section is much more heavily scored than either of the other two and I know that it will be solid putting it together. I am looking forward to this. I just love this time!!!!

Day 5 of scoring – 26th Feb 2006	Second entry – 8.21 pm	Am I less attached?
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I spoke with Stephen about this during the week. I sensed and noted above that I don't have the same feeling for this work as I did for My Sister's Tears. I would assume that would be reasonable given the scenario but I am no less drawn to this score and the process of orchestrating than for that work. So, I would assume I am 'as drawn' and only seeming something less because of the enormity of the emotion involved in MST.

Here the sense is the same – the engagement, the working through of the sketch outline in my mind, the 'knowing' when a section is to be scored in a particular way and when I am unsure; it is all very similar. I love this time and I love the pencil and paper and the whole wonder of it filling the page. I wonder where it all comes from?

Trombone work – Journal No. 7

Day 7 of scoring – 28th Feb 2006	First entry – 9.41 am	Plodding
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Location and Context:

I have been doing more work on this section but not making entries here; that's why it has been noted I am now on day 7 above instead of 6 (the next number in the sequence) because I wrote yesterday but didn't put anything in here.

I just feel defeated that I can't get to finish this!

I know I have to go to work but the engagement I refer to above means I am drawn and almost compelled to work on this. I come home from work and do a half an hour, the kids get ready for school and I am called away to take them. I come home, like now, and work out how much time I have to write before the bus to work. It's just the nature of things and it will be edifying to see if it produces more errors, both errors of technique and errors in realisation.

Let's get on with it now – even this is a burden today!

NO! I must tell you about where I am and what I am doing in the work and not just complain about my lot!

I am at bar 55 of the third section and this is intriguing; I am using the piano and double bass to score sections (from 39 onward) that I have looked at and

wondered how I would make them work. Then lightness here is something that isn't easily realised in the wind orchestra environment. It is transparent here and the lightness is seen in sparse scoring but it's the timbre that makes it light mostly and the changing timbre as instruments leap across their range. Slowly add the wood winds and then the brass and then make it thin again. No, not thin just transparent.

I know – I wasn't going to write much just score the piece but what is happening, as has come out of 39 f.f. is that the transparency continues. I have come to 55 where it is 'big' in thickness of chords and spread of instruments and I have left out the trombones and euphonium which I would normally have used to thicken the sound in a place like this. Using the tubas as I have thins the sound (upper part of the range and thinned timbre – or changed more to the point) and when it comes towards 63 I will add in the instruments left out and really thicken the scoring and the when the bar 39 effect returns it will be like black and white.

Trombone work – Journal No. 8

Day 12 of scoring – 7th March 2006	First entry – 4.49 pm	On the way to Taipei
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Location and Context:

I have almost finished the work! There are four bars to go and I am in the process of engraving now as I fly to Taiwan to work for the week.

I tried desperately to finish it this morning but got to within the last four bars – finished the trombone solo line – and had to shower and go to the airport.

I have noted above that this process has been very similar to that for My Sister's Tears. The major difference I thought was my emotional connection with MST. What is intriguing though is I have become more involved and almost enraptured with this.

I just love the process of taking the sketch and making it the full score. Like other works I am just drawn to the pages. Is it an infatuation each time? Maybe it's a new love each time? Right now I want to stop this and get to the engraving because that has become almost like a proofing process which is one step closer to the orchestration process than real proofing.

It's the engagement! I just sit and write and the time goes! Some of the complex pages might take me an hour – maybe 45 minutes – of thinking and then writing. There is no doubt that the sketch is a definitive *aide memoir*. But some time I reach a point where I have made some notes on the sketch and then I have to work through what it is I want in detail. I recall very quickly and then set about adding in the extra notes to the sketch.

For instance, on Thursday last I had a Church Council meeting and had to leave the scoring for a couple of hours. I was not pleased because everything

was rolling along easily and smoothly. The lines were flying onto the page and I felt very comfortable with what was being orchestrated and how it was flowing onto the page.

Church council is not necessarily the place one goes for musical inspiration BUT what I found was that the ideas for the percussion and trombone section in the work (I will check the bar numbers and add them in) began to arrive. I had noted a concept on the sketch (add an example here Ralph) but the rhythms on the percussion section were not defined.

I sat quietly (a novelty for me) and began to sketch the ideas on a piece of writing paper. The ideas seemed to come easily but I was also well aware of the meeting going on around my creative process. I appeared to be able to go in and out of the meeting and the compositional process – sitting and thinking about both and reacting to both. The sketched ideas can be seen here (add them in after scanning Ralph) and can be compared with the annotations found on the sketch itself.

Well, I will finish this for a while, watch a movie and engrave some notes into the first movement score.

Jamie has the final movement up to what is in fact the coda. I have asked Julie that if anything happens when I am away that she has Stephen Cronin finish scoring the last four bars because the work has to be 'born' now, it has to 'happen'!