

## 7 | An Early Australian Musical Modernism

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During the mid 2000s the distinct fields of the new modernist studies and Australian history experienced a global or transnational turn.<sup>1</sup> For modernist studies, the global turn was part of an expansionist move made to consider what alternative modernisms might emerge if spatial, temporal and stylistic horizons were broadened. Some Australian historians embraced the inherent transnationalism of modern Australia; for, apart from Indigenous Australians, it is a country of immigrants. A transnational framework offers rich possibilities of telling new stories and of retelling old stories in different ways. These various initiatives share a dynamic vocabulary of networks, circuits, circulation, flows, connectivity and exchange, all imbued with a sense of movement. Mobility is, as Anne Rees has argued, a defining characteristic of Antipodean settler modernity. For a 'conspicuous minority' (a privileged, white cultural elite) the geographical distance from Britain and Europe engendered a keen sense of isolation, even exile.<sup>2</sup> Notwithstanding the vibrant character of a colonial metropolis like Sydney, which produced an active and curious group of musicians, distance from what was understood to be the 'fountainhead' was felt keenly. For colonial cosmopolitans, distance elicited acute anxieties about their place in the world. From the early decades of the twentieth century, the now familiar tropes of cultural cringe and belatedness tinted the pages of the musical press; they went on to shape perceptions of Australian culture more broadly and had a profound impact on the historiography of Australian musical modernism.

The study of musical modernism has also undergone an expansionist moment, offering important opportunities for scholars of early Australian modernist music. Students of twentieth-century British music in particular felt restrained by orthodox, restrictive accounts of modernism dominated by Continental Europe. Their attempts to redefine modernism, always a contested and unsettled concept, has allowed new readings of much twentieth-century British music.<sup>3</sup> These more capacious understandings of modernism, considered alongside ideas of mobility, open up an expanded

conceptual framework to retell an old story. This approach liberates events in Australia from the tropes of lag and derivation.

The story of Australian musical modernism is further complicated by its entanglement with the incipient cultural nationalism in the young federation and its demand for a distinctive Australian culture. This demand only intensified after World War I (WWI), and music closely connected to European modernism sat uneasily with the desire for a national music. Its subsequent marginalisation in a historiography centred on 'Australian Music' has meant that in his contribution to the Routledge Handbook on the modernist world published in 2015, Graeme Skinner characterised early Australian musical modernism as a 'lost era'.<sup>4</sup>

Art music in interwar Australia – a crucial part of Skinner's 'lost era' – is the focus for this chapter. My approach differs from his articulation of a first Australian modernism, in part perhaps because his contribution was for a volume dedicated to *the modernist world* whereas my subject is *Australian music*. The close attention to a more select group provided here necessarily excludes important areas covered by Skinner, and in that way our chapters are complementary. And there are, of course, other Indigenous and vernacular modernisms to consider in depth in an Australian context.<sup>5</sup> After tracing the emergence of a modernist music discourse in the popular press, this chapter looks at the output of a group of composers – albeit partial and selective – before exploring various forms of modernist musicking. In so doing, it reveals a community of Australian musicians who were almost without exception transnational and who actively participated in what can be understood as a modernist music world. They constitute a group of protagonists who shared a particular disposition of curiosity and intellectual openness, and their position as part of a privileged white middle class afforded them the agency and international mobility to realise these interests.<sup>6</sup>

Early Australian musical modernism is a story about mobility: the movement of people, scores, recordings, news and ideas. It is a mobility made possible by the new technologies of transportation and communication including the ocean liner, the underwater telegraph cable, print media and the radio wave.<sup>7</sup> Australia's lively popular print culture long predates the advent of radio in 1923. As media scholars have identified, the press was 'a powerful agent of transnational communication' contributing to 'global senses of community' across distance. London, as the imperial 'news hub', was Australia's main conduit for news about Continental musical modernism.<sup>8</sup> The efflorescence of little magazines and periodicals in Australia from the 1890s was nourished by an 'avalanche of reportage'

from international news agencies such as Reuters and the United Press Association which they printed and reprinted.<sup>9</sup>

A cursory glance at the press from before WWI reveals a rich body of musical news that tell us much about contemporary understandings of European musical modernism. General reports on ultramodernism and futurism were appearing from 1908, including a detailed report on the Italian futurist Marinetti's 1911 London appearance in *The Watchman*.<sup>10</sup> By 1912 Debussy and Ravel were generally considered 'present-day modernists'.<sup>11</sup> Both metropolitan and regional newspapers interspersed their local news with the most up-to-date syndicated reports from Britain and Europe. In Queensland's cane fields, the *Maryborough Chronicle* reprinted an article about Leo Ornstein that also identified Schoenberg, Busoni and Stravinsky as futurist composers. Deep in the heart of New South Wales' main coal-mining district, the *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miner's Advocate* published a long report on modern music, drawing the reader's attention to the ingenious 'harmonic twists and orchestral tricks', not only of Debussy and Ravel, but also Strauss, Reger, Schoenberg and Busoni.<sup>12</sup> Skinner makes a powerful example of coverage in 1913. The hissing and uproar that interrupted performances of Schoenberg's *Pierrot Lunaire* and Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring* in Berlin and London made good copy, as did the 'clashing discords' heard in the London performance of Schoenberg's Five Orchestral Pieces.<sup>13</sup> In the same year, Launceston's *Daily Telegraph* informed its readers that Australian pianist Laurence Godfrey Smith had been present at a Schoenberg 'Abend' in Vienna. When asked about 'futurist' music in the *Australian Town and Country Journal*, Godfrey Smith spoke highly of Debussy, Cyril Scott and Schoenberg, acknowledging that the latter, although 'absolutely unintelligible to the normal musician' was nonetheless a 'consummately great technician'.<sup>14</sup> Schoenberg, Scriabin, and Stravinsky, or the 'three S's of ultramodern music', were considered the leaders of the 'advanced moderns'. They had 'set the world agog'.<sup>15</sup> Later in 1922, Sydney's erudite music critic, George de Cairos Rego, wrote in detail on the 'new phase' of modern music for *Art in Australia* that extended the 'advance guard' to the new French, Italian and British schools who had 'discovered a fresh field of harmonic idiom' represented by Milhaud, Malipiero and Goossens.<sup>16</sup> The following year the *Forum's* Tomi cited Bax's 'Celtic modernism', whereas 1924 saw reports on the London performance of Edgar Varèse's *Hyperprism*.<sup>17</sup>

A transnational modernist discourse is revealed within a broader body of Australian music criticism that shared the terminology found in Europe and the United States. Aspects of this commentary can be distilled into

a definition of modernism that does not lose utility through being overly capacious. Like their distant counterparts, some Australian critics bemoaned the incoherence and lack of melody. One understood that ‘the big modern movement . . . is an harmonic one’: ‘an adventure with tone colors and combinations’.<sup>18</sup> Scriabin and his ‘restless craving for innovation’ and ‘entirely novel harmonic scheme’ looms large in this coverage.<sup>19</sup> A short article in the *Australasian* from 1918 remarked on certain English composers’ efforts ‘in exploiting a new system of making scales from certain chordal combinations’, making note that it ‘originated in the experiments made by the recently deceased Russian composer, Scriabin’. The writer also acknowledged the influence of Debussy’s treatment of the whole tone scale, concluding that ‘modern musicians appear to be aiming for absolute freedom in the construction of scales and for all that can be achieved . . . in using all the resources of harmony’.<sup>20</sup> This summation, with its emphasis on harmonic innovation, synthetic chords and non-diatonic scales, captures key approaches that would preoccupy some Australian composers working during the 1920s and 1930s.

### Australian Modernists Here and There

In 1920, Sydney experienced its own frisson of musical outrage akin to those reported earlier in Vienna and London. A concert of Roy Agnew’s music was denounced as ‘ultramodern extravagance’. The unresolved discords of *Dance of the Wild Men* were ‘excruciating’, the audience was ‘unable to determine the key’, one attendee was forced to put his fingers in his ears and the concert was deemed possibly harmful ‘to the cause of British music’.<sup>21</sup> The unbridled rowdiness of Agnew’s *Dance* reminds us of the importance of extreme experience in understandings of modernism. I have argued elsewhere of its direct connections, in terms of scale and approach, to Ornstein’s *Wild Men’s Dance*.<sup>22</sup> Agnew admitted to the *Lone Hand* in the same year that he had, ‘after much anxious consideration been forced to abandon the limitation of key and tonal relationship’.<sup>23</sup> Agnew’s *Dance* is one of several works written without key signature and working outside of functional tonality. As A. L. Kelly wrote for *The Triad*, they were ‘in no key and every key’; ‘pure music . . . coloured with daring and resource’.<sup>24</sup> The *Dance*, however, is stylistically an outlier; most of Agnew’s non-tonal works, as many contemporary commentators noted both in Australia and London, bear the strong stamp of late Scriabin both in compositional approach and sensibility. Before departing for London in 1923, Agnew was interviewed by the *Australian*

Music Example 7.1 Opening sonority from Agnew's *Sonata 1929* and Scriabin's 'mystic chord'.

Music Example 7.2 Openings of Agnew's *Sonata 1929* and Scriabin's *Sonata no. 9* compared.

*Musical News* (AMN). In the article, 'Australia's "Stravinsky"', Agnew admitted a deep admiration for Stravinsky and described Scriabin's ninth sonata as 'wonderful'.<sup>25</sup> In pieces such as his *Three Poems* and *Sonata 1929*, complex harmonies become pitch collections from which motivic material is derived. Scriabin's ninth sonata provided a compositional model for *Sonata 1929*. Its opening sonority bears a strong resemblance to the Russian's 'mystic chord' (see Music Examples 7.1 and 7.2).<sup>26</sup>

Some of Agnew's contemporaries were made uneasy by his engagement with this 'unhealthy' foreign influence. It must be noted here that this body of non-tonal work sits inside a larger oeuvre which includes his overtly Australian orchestral work, *The Breaking of the Drought*.<sup>27</sup>

There is no evidence that Agnew's interest in Scriabin's late music was anything other than musical. This was a period, however, when many

artists were attracted by forms of heterodox spirituality including theosophy and its schismatic offshoot, anthroposophy. Scriabin's connection to theosophy is well known. His 'mystic chord' and synaesthetic experiments with colour and music detained many esoterically inclined musicians. Theosophist and composer Phyllis Campbell was no exception. Campbell was from London where she had trained as a pianist at the Royal College of Music (RCM) and established a friendship with Cyril Scott. Scott had already encouraged her turn to composition before she migrated. In Sydney, Campbell threw herself into theosophical life and a lively modern musical scene. She was active as a writer, lecturer and pioneer broadcaster for the early theosophical radio channel 2GB (an homage to Giordano Bruno), as well as a performer and composer. The 1920s were a fertile period for Campbell. She produced a large body of music between 1925 and 1932, mostly piano miniatures but also songs and chamber music. Her notebooks reveal sustained research into modern compositional techniques and non-diatonic scales. She promoted modern music, focusing on Scriabin's ideas and music in various capacities. The 'mystic chord' and the overtone series were of powerful interest. Campbell, as a theosophist, believed that sonic vibrations and overtones had a 'spiritual significance'.<sup>28</sup> Scriabin's 'mystic chord' inspired her to experiment with aggregate chords in her own composing. The enharmonic spelling found in much of her writing suggests that she was thinking outside of conventional tonality. Melody took a back seat to harmony as Campbell explored the possibilities of creating resonant overtones by way of 'slowly shifting harmonies' (see Music Example 7.3).<sup>29</sup>

Elsie Hamilton, Australia's earliest microtonalist, was one of the few Australian composers to bypass London for Paris. She left Adelaide in 1910 to study composition with André Gedalge at the Paris Conservatoire. Here she was introduced to Rudolf Steiner's anthroposophy, which led to her enduring collaboration with fellow anthroposophist and British music theorist Kathleen Schlesinger. Steiner's teachings led them to explore in highly speculative ways the harmonic series, the scale systems of Ancient Greece and the production of what Hamilton called the '7 great Planetary modes'. Hamilton became a 'habitual international traveller' undertaking a vast body of research across the globe into theories of scales and modes. For her, engagement with the ancient world produced 'a new language of music' based on 'natural' or just intonation (see Music Example 7.4).

Music Example 7.3 The opening of Campbell's *Nature Study* no. 1, 'Seaweed' (1926), bb. 1–15. Phyllis Campbell Collection, University of Technology Sydney.

Hamilton produced a body of work experimenting with 'detuned' music and used her private wealth to organise public performances in London and establish orchestras in Britain and Germany. Like Campbell, almost none of her music has been published, and she remains virtually unknown.<sup>30</sup>

Hamilton's work received the public support of her friend and fellow Adelaide composer Hooper Brewster-Jones. After initial study at the Elder Conservatorium, Brewster-Jones' temperament was formed in Edwardian London, where he went in 1906 to study with Charles Stanford at the RCM. After a disagreement with Stanford over aesthetic differences, Brewster-Jones turned to expatriate Australian composer George Clutsam for guidance. Apart from German successes with light opera, Clutsam contributed regularly to the *Musical Times* on modern musical matters such as Scriabin's harmonic language and the whole-tone scale. At this time the Société des Concerts Français was introducing the latest French music, and much modern Russian music was being heard. In 1908, Debussy came to conduct *L'après-midi d'un faune* with Henry Wood's orchestra. It was

Music Example 7.4 *Natur-Stimmung* [natural intonation] (n.d.), bb. 1–26, manuscript score, [www.anaphoria.com/lee/hamiltonscores.pdf](http://www.anaphoria.com/lee/hamiltonscores.pdf).

*Jupiter and  
Machius Scates...  
ven. et bicent.* *Natur-Stimmung* *für Flöte, Geige und Cello.* Elsie Hamilton

*Allegro moderato.*

1<sup>st</sup> Flöte  
2<sup>nd</sup> Flöte  
1<sup>st</sup> Violine  
2<sup>nd</sup> Violine  
1<sup>st</sup> Cello  
2<sup>nd</sup> Cello

mp

Heerst Creat

Geige (10)

mf

Pizzicato (17)

Geige pizzicato

arco

expressivo

mf

mp

123

a formative moment for Brewster-Jones. On his return to Adelaide, he founded his own eponymous orchestra to perform the English, French and Russian moderns. Like Agnew, he produced a significant body of music, including the overtly national orchestral work, *Australia Felix*. Although recognised during his life as a modernist, his contribution to early Australian modernism was largely unknown. He was a profoundly curious musician who engaged with many contemporary approaches drawing on non-diatonic and synthetic scales. His large music library reveals a long-standing interest in



Music Example 7.5a Marginalia in top left-hand corner on manuscript of *Prelude on New Formula*.

Music Example 7.5b The overtone series and its relation to the opening chord.

a wide range of modern music. The 1920s was his decade of experimentation. He produced hundreds of piano miniatures – brief, aphoristic fragments – that often explored a particular musical idea or element. All were written in an almost illegible shorthand and remained (like the music of Campbell and Hamilton) unpublished during his lifetime. Of particular importance for this chapter, however, is a body of piano miniatures in which Brewster-Jones explored his idea of the ‘formula’. Formula implies abstraction, scientific rigor and interest in systematic construction. The direct engagement with the American acoustician Dayton Clarence Miller’s *Science of Musical Sounds* appears on the manuscript of his first *Prelude on New Formula*. The manuscript includes marginalia showing how the synthetic scale has been derived from a complex stacked chord, and how the overtone series has determined the chord’s voicing. (See Music Examples 7.5a and b.)

Soon after, in 1922, Brewster-Jones produced the *Formula Series*. Each of the six preludes explores a particular music idea. In his *Ten Etudes* he

isolates a particular scale, for example the octatonic or whole tone, or delves into polytonal excursions using popular dance forms to produce ironic music of quite a different sensibility to that of Agnew and Campbell and much closer to Les Six.<sup>31</sup>

Fritz Hart would have taken a dim view of this music. A student of Stanford and friend of Vaughan Williams and Holst, Hart came to Australia on tour in 1909 and stayed to become a major composer and teacher at Melbourne's Albert Street Conservatorium. Hart made his views on Australian music clear in an article for *Art in Australia* published in 1922.<sup>32</sup> Perhaps with some of the aforementioned individuals in mind (he is resolute about the inauthenticity of any 'Australian Stravinsky' or 'Australian Scriabine'), Hart asserted that the foundations of any genuine Australian music must be British: 'a new Britannia in another world'.<sup>33</sup> Europe was foreign and to be avoided. Hart's considerable output contains one unpublished foray into an 'advanced' idiom – his *Fourteen Experiments for Piano* of 1917 – but his main contribution to the story of early Australian modernism is as the composition teacher of Margaret Sutherland and Peggy Glanville-Hicks.

Sutherland is an important figure in Australian music. Her multifaceted contribution is all the more impressive given that an abusive and controlling marriage virtually silenced her for almost twenty years. Consequently, the bulk of her work was written after the marriage ended in 1948. Much earlier in 1923 she had travelled to London, where she quickly decided 'that her feeling was definitely not with any kind of Conservatorium', and after careful consideration chose Arnold Bax as her private teacher.<sup>34</sup> In 1925 she premiered her Violin Sonata with fellow Australian, violinist Leila Doubleday, at a concert organised by the Society for Women Musicians. This work of 'astonishing precocity' reveals a composer already in full command of her craft.<sup>35</sup> Sutherland was exacting in her attitude to composition.<sup>36</sup> The Sonata's rich complex harmonic language belongs in the sonic worlds of Bax and Scriabin. Her technical facility allowed her a command over large-scale musical form in which, as David Symons notes, 'harmonic and tonal organisation is exceedingly free, in that harmonic centres continually fluctuate and are successively focused or superimposed in polytonal combination'. He identifies it as 'one of the more strikingly "advanced" works written by an Australian composer at this time'.<sup>37</sup> Melbourne's *Australasian* considered it 'very intriguing' as well as 'elusive' and 'somewhat baffling'.<sup>38</sup> Also an accomplished pianist, Sutherland had trained in Melbourne with the Czech migrant Edward Goll. Goll was known for his interest in new music, introducing

Melbourne audiences to repertoire such as ‘ultra-modern Bartok’ in the mid 1920s. His modern European sensibility was a counterpoint to Hart’s Anglocentrism. During her time in London, Sutherland also visited Vienna and Paris. This introduced her to ‘non-English [*sic*]’ music that she remembered as ‘tremendously’ interesting, an influence which was ongoing.<sup>39</sup> A programme she presented in 1936 in Adelaide, for example, included music by Florent Schmitt, Ravel, Manuel de Falla, Germaine Tailleferre, Bartok and Milhaud.<sup>40</sup>

Glanville-Hicks followed Sutherland into Hart’s composition studio in the late 1920s. By 1932 she was at the RCM studying composition with Vaughan Williams and piano with Australian expatriate Arthur Benjamin. Six years later, in 1941, Glanville-Hicks was at the epicentre of modernist music-making in New York as a composer, critic for the *New York Herald Tribune* under Virgil Thomson, and musical director at the Museum for Modern Art. Her path from London to New York went by way of Vienna – where in 1936, determined to understand the twelve-tone system (which she immediately deemed unsuitable), she briefly studied with Egon Wellesz – and then on to Paris for more sustained tuition with Nadia Boulanger. This brought her directly into the world of Stravinsky and French neoclassicism, and her earlier pastoral style was now instilled with a neoclassical economy. This musical language is heard in her *Chamber Suite* selected for the 1938 International Society for Contemporary Music (ISCM) festival. Glanville-Hicks’ later music, including large-scale orchestral works, ballets and operas, was shaped by a persistent interest in musics across the world. Like Hamilton, Glanville-Hicks returned to Australia only briefly during World War II and again for the final years of her life. As Suzanne Robinson has recently observed, ‘Like many other modernist women, Glanville-Hicks was more at home abroad than she ever was in her birthplace.’<sup>41</sup>

Glanville-Hicks was not the first Australian modernist to pursue a career in New York. Percy Grainger was. Grainger was a musical phenomenon, constantly on the move both physically and intellectually. His multilayered identity, personal, musical and national, was in constant flux. Despite taking American citizenship in 1919, Grainger remained committed to Australia and an idiosyncratic conception of a young Australian democracy. His febrile mind and boundless energy took him in many directions looking for ways to innovate all elements of music. As his friend Sutherland observed, the ‘tragedy’ was that ‘the-all-too-well-known small pieces he tossed off in a vein of buoyancy and youthful exuberance were destined later to obscure the serious, controversial, experimental and far-sighted

extended works of this maturity'.<sup>42</sup> Sutherland was referring here in part to Grainger's radical concept of 'free music' based on 'gliding scaleless and non-metrical sounds' that actually stem from around 1895.<sup>43</sup> There is a substantial body of research on Grainger, and much has been written about his modernism. *In a Nutshell* and *The Warriors* of 1916 are, as Dreyfus and Robinson suggest, 'compendiums of Grainger's experimentalism'.<sup>44</sup> Robinson's rich description of Grainger's 1934–35 Australian tour takes account of his deep involvement in American experimentalism and his productive relationship with fellow iconoclast Henry Cowell.<sup>45</sup> Grainger's roving eye looked at music from all places and all times, a disposition that informed his tour hosted by the new Australian Broadcasting Commission (ABC). The ABC was established in 1932, the same year that the BBC launched its Empire Broadcast Service to connect Britons across the globe.

### Modernist Musicking in Australia

Brewster-Jones was greatly interested in Grainger's tour. During the 1930s, as his compositional output waned, Brewster-Jones contributed a large body of musical criticism to Adelaide's *Advertiser* as well as the new periodicals *Meanjin* and *Progress in Australia*. The wireless transformed Australia's musical world and Brewster-Jones was one of many who embraced its potential. In the three years before Grainger's remarkable tour, Brewster-Jones had produced twenty broadcasts for Adelaide's 5CL. Brewster-Jones' broadcasts bore many resemblances to Grainger's in terms of an insatiable curiosity about the world. Brewster-Jones' broadcasts were similarly eclectic, ranging from ancient music to jazz to music from all points of the compass.<sup>46</sup> In this way Grainger and Brewster-Jones provide an Antipodean example of Simon Gikandi's characterisation of modernism as 'perhaps the most intense and unprecedented site of encounter between the institutions of European cultural production and the cultural practices of colonized peoples'.<sup>47</sup>

After several difficult years in London during the 1930s, Agnew returned to Sydney in search of work. His exposure in London to the BBC's Concerts of Contemporary Music series convinced him of the importance of wireless and its usefulness in the dissemination of modern music and as a way to mitigate 'Australia's complete isolation from the world of European thought'.<sup>48</sup> Fortuitously the ABC engaged Agnew to develop a series that would 'present a comprehensive view of the trend of modern music'.<sup>49</sup>

*Modern and Contemporary Composers* ran between 1937 and 1942. The music performed live over the first year shows Agnew had taken his brief seriously. In addition to music by Bartok, Milhaud, Schmitt, Scriabin, Delius, Goossens, Bax, Pijper, Ravel, Honegger and Szymanowski, Agnew also programmed Schoenberg's piano works op. 11 and op. 16, his second string quartet and Webern's *Five Movements for String Quartet*. Agnew's decision to broadcast the music of the Second Viennese School at this time is significant as it belies the flawed assumption that atonal and dodecaphonic music was not performed in Australia until much later, an assumption that has been used as evidence of Australia's backwardness.<sup>50</sup>

*Modern and Contemporary Music* drew upon Agnew's personal network, which spread from Sydney to London to Europe and back again, a singular example of what Stephen Ross and Allana Lindgren have described as 'global circuits of exchange'.<sup>51</sup> A summary view of the performers playing modernist music in Sydney reveals a mobile and transnational community comprising a mixture of travellers and migrants. London-trained Cyril Monk was long considered a champion of the moderns both as a soloist and as leader of the Austral String Quartet. Winifred Burston and the New Zealander Ernest Empson studied with Busoni in Berlin, a relationship reflected in their promotion of his music in Sydney. Burston was a powerful influence on key composers of the 1960s generation Larry Sitsky and Richard Meale. The Austral Quartet's cellist, Carl Gotsch, trained in Dessau. Nigel Butterley's teacher, Frank Warbrick, and violinist Patrick Moore MacMahon were particularly active introducing new music to Australian audiences. Warbrick trained in London, and MacMahon spent several years in Geneva studying with Szigeti. Benjamin, the creator of many jazz-inflected modern scores, donated his considerable pianistic skills during his visits home from London. Soprano Ila Turnbull, who had sung the vocal part of Schoenberg's quartet, like so many others, trained in London. English pianist Henri Penn, a stalwart in this community, had arrived from London in the teens, bringing with him vivid memories of Diaghilev and Stravinsky and accounts of the outrage caused by London's premiere of *L'après-midi*.<sup>52</sup> Wilfred Arlom, a linchpin in the modern music scene, hailed from Yorkshire.

By drawing on his Sydney networks, Agnew took to air much of the repertoire that had previously been the domain of small societies and clubs. One of these was Gotsch's Collegium Musicum. This endeavour focused on early and modern music. In addition to concerts, the Collegium broadcast at least two modern music programmes on ABC radio: one featuring modern Italian music and the other an entire programme of

Hindemith's music. Over a decade earlier in 1921, the music publisher Louise Hanson Dyer established a Melbourne branch of the British Music Society (BMS).<sup>53</sup> Under her energetic sponsorship, the BMS introduced a range of modern British and European music to Melbourne. Dyer made Paris her base from 1928, where she later founded her publishing and recording company, L'Oiseau Lyre. Although its main focus was early music, she was deeply embedded in the modern musical world of Paris and published works by Milhaud and Honneger among others. She also supported her fellow Melburnians, Sutherland and Glanville-Hicks. L'Oiseau Lyre's catalogue includes Sutherland's Violin Sonata and Glanville-Hicks' Choral Suite. A Sydney branch of the BMS had its inaugural concert in December 1920. It responded to the establishment of the ISCM in 1922 by noting new 'opportunities for the exchange of compositions of performers and musical information in general' and expanded its programming accordingly.<sup>54</sup> In 1927 it officially affiliated with the ISCM. It should be noted here that Australians had a presence in the ISCM from its inception. Percy Grainger, although identified as an American, had a work performed in the inaugural Salzburg festival in 1922, and Roy Agnew's close friend the mezzo soprano Dorothy Helmrich along with violinist Alma Moodie participated at Salzburg the following year. Later during the 1930s, Dyer became involved in the ISCM, attending several festivals and serving as its Australian delegate in 1938, the year Glanville-Hicks' work was performed.

Given the rich, vibrant nature of the account above, how did this period become Skinner's 'lost era'? The lack of infrastructure was a serious impediment, especially for composers who were largely unsupported. Further development of the ABC, the university system and the establishment of cultural bodies such as the Australia Council and the Australian Music Centre were decades away. Much of the music was not published, and the ephemeral nature of music-making makes the picture harder to reconstruct. The central role of women may have contributed to the ease with which the story has been marginalised in the historiography of Australian music.<sup>55</sup> Some composers chose to work outside institutions, and they were widely dispersed within and beyond Australia. Moreover, the emerging discourse of belatedness and imitation, palpable from the mid-1920s in the commentary of influential figures such as the *AMN*'s editor, Thorold Water, has further obscured this small but important story.<sup>56</sup> Amnesia was helped by the disruption of World War II, from which emerged a younger generation with different sensibilities, new possibilities and scant interest in what had come before.

Interwar cosmopolitanism was increasingly inimical to a desire to develop a national music. From the late 1930s the nationalist project gained momentum. Although the relationship with Britain remained strong, if increasingly complex (British race patriotism persisted into the 1950s), Europe became increasingly problematic. The call for a distinctive national culture came from many directions, from Jindyworobaks, such as Ian Mudie and Rex Ingamells, and in the polemics penned by P. R. Stephenson. An emerging trend – the co-option of Indigenous Australian culture to represent the Australian nation – was evident in John Antill's ballet suite *Corroboree*. Its 1946 premiere was celebrated by Roger Covell as introducing Australian music 'truly belonging to the twentieth century', but it is perhaps better considered under the heading of what Rachel Campbell has called 'settler primitivism'.<sup>57</sup> The 1930s also experienced the beginnings of the influx of refugees fleeing Europe. Critic Curt Prerauer (who had close connections to the Second Viennese School), who arrived in 1933, and violinist and founder of Musica Viva, Richard Goldner, who arrived in 1939, are only two individuals whose contributions transformed Australian music. Michael Hooper's work on Australian modernism of the 1960s and 1970s looks beyond the 'celebratory' discourse of 'Australian Music', which he sees as having obscured other important aspects of the music and its context. Clearly, however, his assertion that 'the 1960s were the *first time* [my italics] that a large number of composers living and writing in Australia were also keen to embrace a variety of modernist ideas, and to draw on musical modernism from Britain and Europe' needs qualification.<sup>58</sup> Important here is the question of scale (the 'large number') and where they lived. There was an Australian modernism prior to 1945, but the number of women and men who composed and promulgated it was small, and some of them were expatriates. This earlier generation thus in many ways represents a prehistory from which threads of continuity can be pulled.

## Notes

1. See for example, D. Mao and R. L. Walkowitz, 'The New Modernist Studies', *PMLA*, 123 (2008), 737–48; A. Curthoys and M. Lake (eds.), *Connected Worlds: History in Transnational Perspective* (Canberra: ANU Press, 2005).
2. A. Reese, 'Reading Australian Modernity: Unsettled Settlers and Cultures of Mobility', *History Compass*, 15 (2017), 7–8.

3. M. Riley (ed.), *British Music and Modernism, 1895–1960* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010); J. P. E. Harper-Scott, *The Quilting Points of Musical Modernism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); A. Forkert, 'British Musical Modernism Defended against Its Devotees', unpublished PhD thesis, Royal Holloway, University of London (2014).
4. G. Skinner, 'Australian Musical First Modernism' in A. Lindgren and S. Ross (eds.), *The Modernist World* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015), pp. 273–81.
5. See for example A. Harris, *Representing Australian Aboriginal Music and Dance, 1930–1970* (Canberra: ANU Press, 2014); B. Johnson, 'Towards a New Cartography' in N. Brown, P. Campbell, R. Holmes, P. Read and L. Sitsky (eds.), *One Hand on the Manuscript: Music in Australian Cultural History (1930–1960)* (Canberra: HRC Monograph Series, 1995), pp. 243–57; J. Matthews, *Dance Hall and Picture Palace* (Sydney: Currency Press, 2005); J. Whiteoak, *Playing Ad Lib* (Sydney: Currency Press, 1999).
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