Complexity through simplicity:
How Peter Sculthorpe constructs a unique musical language

by

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Abstract

This report discusses the mature works of Australian composer Peter Sculthorpe between the years of 1965-1976, a time period when the composer reached a peak of compositional output, gained international recognition, and refined his compositional craft and technique. Considered by many as Australia's foremost composer of concert music, and the first to create a national identity, an analysis of Sculthorpe's music creates an interesting case study around the formation of a unique musical language in the context of the twentieth century. A simplistic approach to fundamental musical structures (such as form and texture) delineates his work, combined with a colorful harmonic language, emphasis on melody, and a partiality for repetition. The result is a body of mature works that is consistent in sound and venerated by mainstream concert audiences. Complex subtleties in rhythm, both on the hypermetrical and sub-metrical level, innovative harmonic structures, and a clear sensibility for pacing offer a music that merits in-depth study by the theorist, composer, and performer alike.

An Introduction chapter gives biographical information on Sculthorpe's musical upbringing and early career, includes a global context between the years of 1965-1976 that emphasizes musical innovations in Europe and America, and gives a generalized summary of Sculthorpe's stylistic and idiomatic conventions. Two of Sculthorpe's works, *Lament for Strings (1976)* and *Night Song (1970, arr. 1995)* are analyzed in depth, giving evidence of Sculthorpe's compositional virtuosity and stylistic consistency.

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Acknowledgements

Many lessons have been learned throughout my time at Kansas State University, and any attempt to give acknowledgement to those who have been fundamental in my growth as a student would go well beyond the scope of this report. I have been fortunate to be involved in numerable aspects of the school's musical and academic life during that last two years, from composition to historical and theoretical studies, to orchestral conducting, as well as piano performance. My greatest gratitude goes out to all faculty members who have influenced me and been fundamental in my development as a musician and musical intellect.

I would like to give a special thanks to Dr. Craig Weston, not only for his guidance in my research and valuable and judicious criticism on my early drafts, but for the time and interest invested in sharing his vast understanding of the inner workings of music. Through private lessons, theory classes, seminars, and informal conversations, the time we have spent discussing music has been decidedly influential. His insights have deeply broadened my musical horizons, and for that I am especially grateful.

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Dedication

To my family, for their unrelenting support - my father, Andy, for his encouragement in pursuing a career in music and instilling a passion in me from a young age; my mother, Vicky, for teaching me that determination and persistence are the keys to success; my wife, Maria, for uplifting my spirits each day and reassuring me that no obstacle is too large; and my siblings, Andrew and Natalie, for always keeping me on my toes.

Preface

It might seem unexpected that I, being an American born composer, raised in a small town in the center of the country, someone who has had little to no contact with Australia or its culture, would come to develop a profound interest and respect for the music of Australian composer Peter Sculthorpe. Though his music has been highly regarded and frequently performed within his native Australia, and has received acclaim from critics in Europe, Asia and beyond, his impact within the United States is less evident. Although the United States and Australia share a similar colonial past, speak the same language, and have gone through a comparable recent development of a national musical identity (the U.S. with the music of Charles Ives, Aaron Copland, and the *minimalist* movement that occurred during the 60's and 70's), we are two nations that exist highly separated from one another. Although American concert music has been decidedly influenced by distant cultures of the world, particularly those of Asia and the East, it seems that the many similarities we share with Australia have perhaps diverted our attention elsewhere. Upon deeper examination into Australia's musical horizons, and more specifically the music of Peter Sculthorpe, one finds a robust musical identity.

I first came upon Sculthorpe's music while undergoing postgraduate studies, in a seminar class devoted to music history since 1945. Although Sculthorpe's music was not a principal topic of class discussion, a short excerpt of his piece *Sun Music I* (1965) was included in the textbook. One evening, listening to different textbook examples, I came across *Sun Music I* and was drawn to the orchestral textures evoked and the clarity with which the piece was written. In the context of other bizarre musical experimentations found throughout the book, the work, while modern in idiom, struck me as stylistically conservative. Though I undoubtedly hold in high regards the

modern idioms of such composers as Olivier Messiaen, Anton Webern, Igor Stravinsky, among others, I have always maintained conservative musical tastes. Perhaps it was this affinity that drew me to further explore the music of Peter Sculthorpe.

I quickly realized that *Sun Music I* was the exception and not the norm when considering Sculthorpe's body of works as a whole. In analyzing other works from his canon, I was struck by his overt use of melody, simple textural backdrops, and a sensibility for creating musical expectation and evoking emotional response. The beauty of his colorful harmonic language, clearly modern in construction yet easily understood by the listener, intrigued me further. The more I explored Sculthorpe's music, the more I came to appreciate his consistency in style; it was clear that he had purposefully and with great awareness developed a unique musical language that separated him in an important way from his European and American contemporaries.

When considering a topic for this present report, I found in the music of Peter Sculthorpe a great opportunity to explore a robust body of recent works that has received relatively little attention. As a composer, he achieved an elevated level of virtuosity through personal constraint, consistency in idiom, and musical subtlety. Though the fundamental structures of his musical constructions are visibly simple, the effectiveness with which they are employed demonstrate the underlying complexity that delegates his work. As an individual, his humble upbringings, rise to success, and innumerable achievements serve as a present-day model for a young, aspiring composer. Although I cannot identify with the Australian landscape, culture, or the political environment of Sculthorpe's time, I can and do identify with his journey as a composer and wholly appreciate the brilliance and beauty of his work.

Chapter 1 - Introduction

Biographical Information

Australian composer Peter Sculthorpe was born in 1929 on the island of Tasmania and died in 2014 in Sydney. Celebrated as Australia's foremost composer of concert works, he enjoyed great success during his lifetime. His remarkably identifiable musical voice, the result of a musical synthesis of western and Asian elements with musical material of the Aboriginal Peoples[1], has gained him recognition both nationally and internationally. His long-time popularity, especially among the Australian concert hall audience, has resulted in a status as somewhat of a national icon. His appointment as an Officer of the Order of Australia and honorary doctorates received from five of the country's most recognized universities attest to this.[2] Sculthorpe's compositions span a large range of formats, from works for solo instruments, to intimate chamber ensembles, to works for large orchestras. In addition to the composer's "absolute" works meant for the concert hall, Sculthorpe has also written music for the opera, ballet, and theater, as well as numerous film scores.

In much of Sculthorpe's work, it is possible to hear sounds of the Australian outback. His music often has a programmatic quality that is sonically reminiscent of the continent's physical landscape. Pieces such as *Mountains* (1980), *Mangrove* (1979), *The Fifth Continent* (1963) and *Songs of Sea and Sky* (1987), among numerous others, bring to life the jagged, desolate and vast

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[1] Sculthorpe's affinity for Aboriginal music and culture stems from an early desire to encounter a truly Australian identity; throughout the twentieth century the country went through a phase of seeking out the qualities that made them unique and separated them from their English heritage. The arts and literature often turned to native Aboriginal culture to construct this newly developing identity.

[2] Covell, "Sculthorpe, Peter."

landscape that defines Australia. In fact, one might claim that nothing has inspired Sculthorpe's style more than the Australian experience; the importance of the sun and the vastness of the Australian bush where "space and distance offset vivid detail – the shapes of tree and shrub, strangely lit by the sun and etched by shade, bizarre,[…] but endlessly fascinating."[3] His music in some ways paints this picture; a landscape that is vast and desolate, yet intricately detailed in bizarre ways. The widely spaced textures, intricate rhythmic details, and peculiar harmonic colors found throughout Sculthorpe's works lend to this almost programmatic representation of the Australian landscape.

As a young boy, Peter Sculthorpe was interested in the arts and received not only musical training, but also training in languages and poetry from an early age. His first piece of published creative work was a piece of verse titled "A Winter Morning", published in the school newspaper when he was 11 years old.[4] By 12, he was performing on the harmonium and piano at Sunday morning church services and other religious functions, developing a love for performing. It was around this time that Sculthorpe began to compose, often inspired by the pieces of music that he encountered while studying the piano. Along with his other standard repertoire, he would often perform his original pieces to great praise by those who heard them. Throughout his high school years, he wrote many poems that he also set to music, many of which still survive to this day and comprise his Op. 1 collection of manuscripts and early works.

His affinity for music continued to grow as he finished his schooling, a catalyst in his decision to pursue an undergraduate degree in music from the University of Melbourne (1946-1950). During his time there, he was exposed to the works of contemporary composers such as

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[3] Landscape as described by Scottish journalist John Douglas Pringle, while living and working in Australia.

[4] Skinner, *Peter Sculthorpe: The Making of an Australian Composer*.

Schoenberg, Bartók, and Copland. Their musical idioms marked and influenced Sculthorpe in the formation of his own compositional voice; in fact, his piano work *Sonatina* (1954) has been commonly compared to Bartók's *Mikrokosmos. Figure 1.1* and *Figure 1.2* show excerpts of Bartók's *Syncopation* from *Mikrokosmos Volume 5* and Sculthorpe's *Sonatina,* respectively. Rhythmically, the pieces are similar in the fact that there is syncopation and rhythmic independence between the two hands. However, an almost constant eighth note compound rhythm exists when the hands are observed together. Also present in both pieces is a repetitive cycling between time signatures; *Syncopation* cycles between 5/4 and 4/4 while *Sonatina* cycles between 4/8 and 2/8. This is seen throughout each piece. Another similarity is seen in a static harmonic accompaniment in the left hand, while the right presents a melody built of non-chord tones, often in dissonant intervallic relationships of the minor second or major seventh when compared to the left-hand harmony. These similarities testify to the significant impression that Bartók left on a young Peter Sculthorpe. Sculthorpe may have never been directly exposed to Bartók's *Mikrokosmos,* yet a particular affinity for Bartok's music shaped many of his early pieces, including *Sonatina* and others that were to come in the years that followed.

Figure 1.1 Béla Bartók, No. 133 Syncopation from Mikrokosmos (1926-1939)
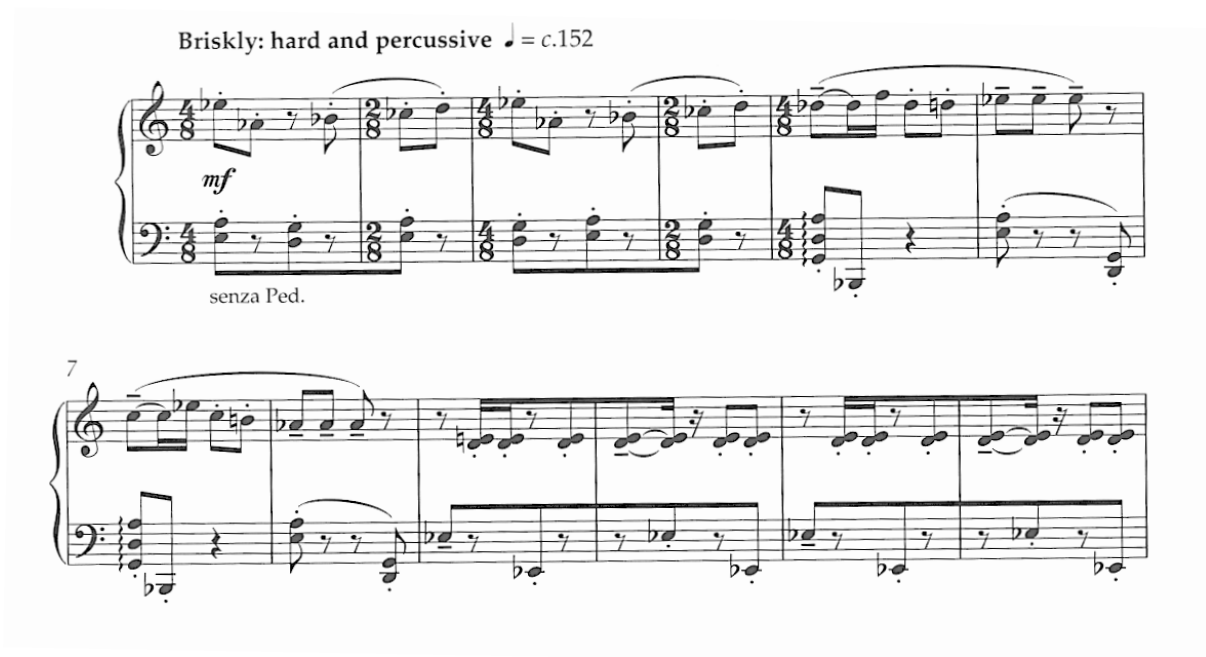
Figure 1.2 Peter Sculthorpe, Sonatina (1954)

During and after his years at Melbourne, Sculthorpe experimented extensively with serialism[5] while simultaneously creating works that adhered to more common-practice idioms. What at first seemed to be a solution to the problem of forming a unique musical style, pursuing serialized techniques soon led to a compositional and identity crisis, forcing the young composer to reconsider what characteristics might define his artistic voice. A subsequent complete rejection of serial practices led Sculthorpe to believe that the essence of his music should be "simplicity, a lack of any arbitrarily imposed order such as the order of the row, and an absence of… cerebral processes such as intervallic inversion and retrogression."[6] Distancing himself even

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[5] Sculthorpe taught himself about 12-tone music through Ernst Krenek's *Studies in Counterpoint*, despite the disapproval of his professors.

[6] Hannan, *Peter Sculthorpe*.

further from the 12-tone idiom, he also rejected techniques of imitative counterpoint and turned to writing primarily chordal textures as the foundation for his harmonic constructions.

Figure 1.3 Peter Sculthorpe, Lament for Strings (1976)

This early identity crisis was fundamental in the later development of the composer's distinct musical voice, one that harbors simplicity in structure, form, and texture. *Figure 1.3* shows an example of Sculthorpe's chordal textural style in an excerpt of the work *Lament for Strings* (1976), which will be examined in detail in Chapter 2 of this report. In this excerpt, violin 1 carries the melody above chordal accompaniments in the other sections. This noticeably simple two-part texture (melody and accompaniment) allows for other elements, such as melodic contour and novel harmonic relationships, to become protagonists within the passage. These

characteristic elements of style, which endured throughout the composer's entire career, began developing very early.

While undertaking postgraduate studies at Oxford (1958-1960), Sculthorpe began to formulate a theory that the Australian experience was "visual," rather than "auditory"; this revelation was paramount in the development of his unique and easily distinguishable musical voice. He noticed how the English spoke of "hearing" the television, and how one's social stature could be determined through their speech. To the contrary, in Australia one goes to "see" a concert rather than "hear" one, and speech is not determinate of social class. These observations, which were encouraged by his colleague Robert Henderson and friend Wilfrid Mellers, made a significant impact on Sculthorpe; he began to define his position as an artist in relation to his own country,[7] giving importance to visual differences between Europe and Australia. From this point forward, Sculthorpe's works were almost exclusively aligned with visual aspects of the Australian landscape.

Returning to his native Tasmania in 1960, spurred by the sudden death of his father, Sculthorpe composed the iconic chamber work *Irkanda IV* (1961) for solo violin, string orchestra, and percussion. The piece, premiered by the Astra Chamber Orchestra in Melbourne in August of 1961, was enthusiastically acclaimed by both Australian audiences and critics alike because of its rich harmonic language, expansive melodic material, and somber undertones;[8] this

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[7] Hannan, *Peter Sculthorpe.*

[8] *Irkanda IV* was written as an elegy for Sculthorpe's father. In writing the piece in a more conventional style, he had hoped to compose something that his father might have liked.

marked the first time that a work of Sculthorpe's was widely accepted within his own country.[9] The title of the work, of Aboriginal origin, loosely translates to "a remote and lonely place,"[10] and shows not only the composer's firm transition towards music descriptive of the Australian landscape, but also an early interest in Aboriginal language and culture, characteristics that would mark Sculthorpe's music from this point forward.

As Sculthorpe's popularity and influence continued to grow throughout the late 20th century, his appreciation for Aboriginal culture and adaptations of their songs and melodies into his works was solidified. From the time period spanning 1974-1996,[11] his works were filled with the use and re-use of favored Aboriginal melodies, dubbed by Sculthorpe himself as the "Kakadu songlines," giving reference to Australia's Kakadu National Park, one of the country's largest nature reserves and once home to prehistoric Aboriginal peoples. He seems to have been selective with which melodies he chose to adapt into his works, often incorporating melodies that closely resembled his already developing style. In the article "Has Sculthorpe Misappropriated Indigenous Melodies?", musicologist Jonathan Paget described Sculthorpe's choice of indigenous melodies as "a [confirmation] of pre-existing aspects of his style."[12]

Although Sculthorpe has received some criticism for appropriating musical material of indigenous origin, whether or not that criticism is justified is a question of debate.[13] His lifelong

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[9] *Sonatina* (1954) had previously been selected by the International Society for Contemporary Music (ISCM) for performance at the Baden-Baden Festival of 1955 in Baden-Baden, Germany, where it was received with considerable success.

[10] Covell, "Sculthorpe, Peter."

[11] Dates defined by Paget, "Has Sculthorpe Misappropriated Indigenous Melodies?" as the zenith of the use of the "Kakadu songlines."

[12] Paget, "Has Sculthorpe Misappropriated Indigenous Melodies?"

[13] Recent discussions have surrounded the topic of wrongful appropriation of Aboriginal culture by colonial settlers, generating criticism towards Sculthorpe and other Australian composers who have used elements of Aboriginal

fascination with Aboriginal culture and activist mentalities in support of Aboriginal rights give evidence that his homage is sincere and comes from a place of profound respect. In fact, long before Sculthorpe began to incorporate Aboriginal melodies into his music, he had already established a precedence of quoting the music of other composers within his own compositions. His *Sonatina* (1954), for example, quotes a theme from the third movement of Beethoven's *Violin Concerto*. The theme, which has a folk-like character, was transformed and reharmonized very similarly to how Bartók incorporated Hungarian folk tunes into his works.[14] As shown by *Figure 1.4* and *Figure 1.*5 the two melodies share a very similar contour and rhythmic design. Years later, when Sculthorpe came upon volumes of anthropological books and recordings of Aboriginal melodies, it was only natural for him to begin to incorporate them into his works in a way that was authentic and original.[15]

Figure 1.4 Ludwig van Beethoven Violin Concert 3rd Movement, prinicpal violin mm. 1-7

Figure 1.5 Right hand melody of Sculthorpe's Sonatina, mm. 1-8

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music in their works. Some have defended Sculthorpe, saying that his motivations have been out of profound respect for Aboriginal music and culture.

[14] Campbell, "'The Whole Work Is Full of Primitive Rhythms.'"

[15] Paget, "Has Sculthorpe Misappropriated Indigenous Melodies?"

Global Context (1965-1976)

The years spanning 1965-1976 marked an important moment in Sculthorpe's career and artistic development. According to the Australian composer and musicologist Michael Hannan,[16] this era marked the pinnacle of Sculthorpe's refinement and craftmanship in his work. This time period comes after the previous successes of earlier works, such as his *String Quartet No. 6* (1965), which led to commissions and awards of scope and importance[17] and preceded several years of prolific compositional output. From 1970–1971 alone, Sculthorpe composed no fewer than ten significant works that spanned a variety of genres and styles, even including experimental works for rock band and orchestra as well as pieces for piano and pre-recorded tape that employed extended performance techniques, such as the plucking of strings inside the piano. Although this roughly ten-year period may generally be described as more adventurous than earlier and later periods in the composer's life, it very well may be the most significant in regard to quality and quantity of his work.

In other parts of the world, specifically Europe and the United States, new musical trends were blooming out of the radical experimentation carried out during the first half of the century. Such early experimentation includes the development of 12-tone and serial techniques by Arnold Schoenberg (1874-1951) and the Second Viennese School (and others), explorations in texture and acoustical phenomena such as those carried out by Edgard Varèse (1883-1965), Igor Stravinsky's (1882-1971) developments in raw primitivism and the intensity of prehistoric ritual,

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[16] Hannan was a student of Sculthorpe's, receiving a PhD in music composition from the University of Sydney in 1982, and also authored the critical biography "*Peter Sculthorpe: His Music and Ideas 1929-1979.*"

[17] Sydney Symphony Orchestra at the Commonwealth Arts Festival in London (1965), Australasian Performing Rights Association for performance at Expo 67 in Montreal (1967), John Bishop Memorial Award for the 1968 Adelaide Festival, Radcliffe Music Award (1968), Encyclopedia Britannica Award for the Arts (1969).

and Charles Ives's (1874-1954) musical juxtapositions, among others.[18] These musical innovations were highly influential in the stylistic developments of the decades that followed. An emancipation of dissonance, a new-found interest in percussive timbres, the inclusion of non-western aesthetics and musical materials, experimentation with microtonality and sound mass, extension of tonality, and even new definitions of consonance characteristically defined in large part the works of the second half of the century.

Looking towards Europe during the years spanning 1965-1976, composers such as Olivier Messiaen (1908-1992) were innovating in areas of harmony and rhythm. Messiaen developed a unique harmonic language[19] based on modes of limited transportation and created rhythmic variation through the use of additive and non-retrogradable rhythms, giving importance to symmetry in many aspects of his works. The work *Des canyons aux etoiles…* (1974), commissioned by Alice Tully[20] in celebration of the bicentennial anniversary of the independence of the United States of America, is a monumental work written in twelve movements, spanning 100 minutes. Its diverse array of harmonic colors and complex rhythmic constructions exemplifies Messiaen's highly personal, highly complex musical language.[21]

Others, such as Hungarian composer György Ligeti (1923-2006), were expanding post-common practice compositional techniques in other ways, creating unique approaches to harmony, timbre and rhythm much different than those of Olivier Messiaen, but in some ways

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[18] Schwartz, *Music since 1945*.

[19] In fact, Messiaen wrote two treatises describing his musical language, *Technique de mon langage musical (1944)* and *Traité de rythme, de couleur, et d'ornithologie* which spanned 7 volumes and was published postmortem.

[20] Alice Tully was an American singer of opera, new music promoter, and philanthropist who donated much of her wealth to support the arts, including the construction of the Alice Tully Concert Hall, New York City.

[21] Knussen, "Messiaen's 'Des Canyons Aux Etoiles...'"

just as innovative. Two elements that characterize his music are the use of long and drawn out gestures as well as rapid mechanical activity. In his work *Cello Concerto* (1966), Ligeti creates tension and dramatic effect through lengthy passages of sustained tone clusters, micropolyphony, and dynamic contrasts, defining timbre as the most important parameters of the work. Another work, *Continuum for Harpsichord* (1968), returns to process-based constructions through the repetition and manipulation of rhythmic groupings. In the creation of this piece, he discovered that "frantic speed, if applied to iterated formulae, could produce an impression of gradual change."[22] The textures that the piece evokes are in fact very similar to those that were occurring in the United States during this same time period.

The mid to late 60's and onward in the United States were marked by compositions of an entirely new character; *Minimalism* was surging forward as a highly celebrated genre by both composers and audiences alike. Developed primarily in New York City by composers such as Steve Reich (b. 1936), Terry Riley (b. 1935), Phillip Glass (b. 1937), and La Monte Young (b. 1935), minimalism widely became known as "the major antidote to modernism."[23] While composers in Europe and other parts of the world were creating new musical possibilities that extended far beyond the traditions of common-practice tonality, often fragmented, angular, and texturally complex, minimalist composers sought to do exactly the opposite. They were creating music rhythmically regular and continuous, structurally and texturally simple, and harmonically static. Through pulsing repetition and gradually shifting relationships, minimalist composers sought to create music that was not suggestive of anything other than itself. As stated by Iuliana Isac in the article *Repetitive Minimalism in the Work of Philip Glass,* when "a pattern is raised to

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[22] Griffiths, "Ligeti, György."

[23] Potter, "Minimalism (USA)."

the power of n… repetition does not modify anything within the repeated object itself, but produces a change in the contemplating spirit."[24] This fundamental attribute perhaps gives an explanation to the popular acclaim that the genre has received across the United States throughout the late twentieth and early twenty first centuries.

Sculthorpe's Stylistic and Idiomatic Conventions (1965-1976)

Not unlike his American and European contemporaries, Peter Sculthorpe was also crafting a unique musical voice very much influenced by the developments of the early twentieth century. His formation in the English tradition while at Oxford, along with an affinity for composers such as Bartók, Schoenberg and Bloch, likened him in many ways to his western counterparts. Similar to Messiaen, for example, Sculthorpe often re-worked and re-used material, which was beneficial in the refinement of his craft and allowed him to solidify a harmonic language that was unique and consistent. Though he was more discrete than Messiaen in discussing his harmonic language, Sculthorpe's music attests to a similarly personalized harmonic style, one that is attainable only through consistent and prolonged replication.

Another way in which Sculthorpe might be likened to European composers of the time, specifically those such as Ligeti, Penderecki, and others working with sound mass techniques, is his use of tone clusters during his *Sun Music* period (1961-1970), a period which exploited orchestral sonorities over traditional elements such as melody and harmonic progression. *Figure 1.6* shows an excerpt from Ligeti's *Cello Concerto* (1966) where clusters of sound are created through sustained semi-tone groupings in the woodwinds and strings. Looking at rehearsal mark

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[24] Isac, "Repetitive Minimalism in the Work of Philip Glass. Composition Techniques."

L, for example, the tones D, Db, Eb, and E are sustained by the winds and trumpet. The strings,

playing harmonics, sound the pitches A, Bb, C, C#, and D two octaves above the treble staff.

These clusters of sound create a sonically intense orchestral timbre more so than discrete

harmonic functions.

Figure 1.6 Gyorgy Ligeti Cello Concerto 1966 mm. 51-55

A similar approach is shown in *Figure 1.7,* an excerpt from Sculthorpe's *Sun Music I* (1961). In this excerpt, each section is divided into multiple parts (violin 1, for example is noted *a 8*), to be played with a wide quarter-tone vibrato. By two measures before rehearsal mark 4, every pitch between E3 and F#5 is being played simultaneously by the strings. When compared to Ligeti's *Cello Concerto,* approaches to notation differ significantly, however the resulting musical effect is very similar.

Figure 1.7 Peter Sculthorpe, Sun Music I (1961)

In other ways, however, Sculthorpe's music differed greatly from that of Messiaen, Ligeti, and other European composers who were also reaching their peak of creative output around the same time. Influenced by Balinese and Gamelan music and the music of Japan, in some ways much of Sculthorpe's music is more closely related to that of Asia and the east. Often Sculthorpe's pitch material, both harmonic and melodic, is based off of pentatonic scales which have been constructed and varied in novel ways. Though the melodic gestures that Sculthorpe employs carry a chromatic quality that emphasizes the interval of the minor second, perhaps reminiscent of the works of Gustav Mahler and other late Romantic Period composers, a certain eastern quality is ever present in his mature works. Sculthorpe was drawn to Asian music because of how its simplicity in musical concepts hide beneath the surface a great complexity of possibilities.[25]

This attraction to simplicity likens Sculthorpe to his American counterparts at the forefront of the minimalist movement. Although the resulting musical effect is drastically different, minimalist composers commonly used limited pitch material, static harmonic accompaniments, and straightforward structures, as did Sculthorpe. Sculthorpe's early rejection of serial techniques parallels the minimalist mission to be the antidote to modernism. Both the music of Sculthorpe and that of minimalist composers was highly celebrated by concert audiences during the composers' lifetimes. It is curious that two fundamentally similar ideologies, occurring simultaneously in two nations sharing a historically similar past, resulted in such distinct musical outcomes.

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[25] According to musicologist Michael Hannan, *Patet*, for example, a 5-tone modal concept stemming from Javanese music, gives way to subtilties that go beyond the understanding of European audiences and musicologists alike.

Undoubtedly it is Sculthorpe's broad synthesis of musical materials that has resulted in his distinct musical voice. An affinity for eastern musical elements has lent significantly to Sculthorpe's originality as well as his stylistic separation from other western composers. In fact, one might argue that this stylistic fusion of eastern and western elements has been the catalyst in Sculthorpe's creation of an Australian musical style. Sparse textures, representative of the vastness of the Australian landscape, pitch class sets derived from modes of various pentatonic scales that evoke the sounds of Australia's Aboriginal past, and the inclusion of Aboriginal musical material into his works have been vital to Sculthorpe's development of a quintessentially Australian musical voice.

Some of Sculthorpe's most representative works are those written for strings, whether in chamber settings or in the greater context of the orchestra. An analysis of these works testifies to stylistic synthesis, a gravitation towards duality, as well as a fundamental Australian spirit from which his music was created. For the purpose of this report, a selection of two pieces, composed during the time period when Sculthorpe reached a pinnacle of refinement and craftsmanship in his work[26] will be examined in depth; *Lament for Strings* (1976) and *Night Song arr. for violin, cello and piano* (1970, arr. 1995) composed during this period of heightened productivity, give a clear representation of Sculthorpe's musical style and uniquely Australian artistic voice.

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[26] Hannan, *Peter Sculthorpe*.

Chapter 2 - Lament for Strings (1976)

Scored for String Orchestra, *Lament for Strings* was written for the Australian Chamber Orchestra and first performed in 1976 by the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra. According to the composer, the piece was composed in response to the convention of Australian literature and paintings of the time to carry melancholic and desolate hues. Sculthorpe composed the piece as a "farewell gesture to this melancholia." [27] According to the composer, the descending melodic gestures found throughout the work, which reflect that of a typical lament, are used in later compositions, but in a rising, more uplifting manner. *Figure 2.1* shows the work's characteristic lament melody, presented by the solo cello. The melody, which begins on C natural, continuously falls downwards, supported below by B natural. After several attempts to rise upwards, achieving a major third above where it began, the cello falls downwards an octave. Whatever support was previously keeping the melody afloat no longer exists, as another attempt to rise succumbs to a succession of uninhibited falling notes.

Figure 2.1 Peter Sculthorpe, Lament for Strings (1976)

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[27] Program notes, "Lament for Strings | Faber Music."

The music that ensues achieves a mourning, melancholic quality. A persistent use of the falling minor second interval explains what the listener might perceive as sadness. Often referred to as the "sigh" motive, this interval of the falling second has been historically used in music to represent human grief and is commonly seen in works of the Baroque period. Repetition, augmentation, fragmentation and transposition of the melody provide both unification of the piece as a whole, as well as colorful contrasts that create interest for the listener.

The piece is divided into three large, clearly defined sections (A B A'), reminiscent of the ternary forms common in traditional practices since the Baroque period. The opening section presents the work's main theme, the closing section a repetition of this material slightly varied, with a contrasting middle section that separates the two. Each main section can be further subdivided, showing clear structural conception throughout the piece. While ternary forms have a long history in western music, it is less common to see such traditional structures at work during the mid to late 20th century; this again attests to simplicity in compositional technique as a defining characteristic of Sculthorpe's music.

While *Lament for Strings* maintains its melancholic tone throughout, a noteworthy contrast in compositional technique accentuates the middle section of the work. *Figure 2.2* gives a short excerpt of the section in question. The measure that begins at rehearsal marker 4 provides each section of the violins and cellos (in divisi) with a different pattern of notes, that in combination represent all 12 pitch classes. It is up to the performers to decide how they might perform the pattern they are given, assuming they adhere to the following written instructions:

"*The given pattern should be played slowly, but not necessarily evenly, and repeated in a similar manner until the signal to terminate playing is given. Players should be independent of each other."[28]

Also worthy of mention is the unconventional notational style in which this section was written. Sculthorpe has substituted traditional measures for markings of time in seconds, as seen in *Figure 2.2*. Having already presented the pitch patterns in the first measure of rehearsal marker 6, the notations that follow are used to give dynamic changes through time and approximations to when each section should transition to a sustained tone, or silence. The section then shifts, presenting a second theme constructed of a foreground melody against a chordal backdrop, similar to how the piece originally began (*Figure 2.2* rehearsal marker 5).

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[28] Score for "Lament for Strings | Faber Music." Pg. 4

*The given patterns should be played slowly, but not necessarily evenly, and repeated in a similar manner until the signal to terminate playing is given. Players should be independant of each other.

Figure 2.2 Contrasting Section of Sculthorpe's Lament for Strings (1976)

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Figure 2.2 (Continued)

Style Analysis

Following the framework created by Jan LaRue in his book *Guidelines for Style Analysis,*[29] Sculthorpe's *Lament for Strings* can be effectively described, highlighting the differences that separate it from other works of the time period. Departing from solely objective score analysis, it becomes possible to describe musical phenomena that stem from post-common practice compositional techniques. LaRue suggests that a musical work can be analyzed from the perspectives of sound, harmony, melody, rhythm, and growth - aspects that encompass both characteristics of common practice tonal music as well as music of the post-common practice era.

This framework is relevant for analyzing the works of Peter Sculthorpe, as his musical idiom can be described as a synthesis of post-common practice musical constructions set within the context of traditional western structures. Serving as a holistic approach for analysis, LaRue's *Guidelines* allows for this synthesis to serenely coexist. Worthy of note is the author's emphasis on the importance of separating a work's structural aspects from those that are ornamental; identification of the structural phenomena is the key to significant observation.[30]

Sound

There are many aspects of sound that affect the way we hear and understand music; timbre, dynamics, texture, intervallic relationships, and repetition, amongst many others, are responsible for the physical actions that occur when music is performed. These aspects, although

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[29] LaRue, *Guidelines for Style Analysis.*

[30] It is noteworthy that Larue also considers articulation as highly relevant when determining structural aspects of a work.

normally described by musicians in abstract musical terms, such as light or dark in color, accented or subdued, foreground or background, are responsible for the physical singularities that occur in the environment and within the ear and brain. Complex combinations of sound waves, actively occurring through space in real time, create in our brains through our ears the auditive impression that we've come to know as music.

Lament for Strings is a work that creates great complexity in sound, as experienced by the listener. Simplicity in its textural construction, then, represents a paradox to how we aurally understand the music. As previously stated in Chapter 1 of this report, Sculthorpe, in a conscious rejection of serial techniques and what he dismissed as cerebral practices, has maintained a certain preference for simple textures, primarily solo melody supported by chordal harmonic accompaniment in an almost static state. *Figure 2.3* shows how in the opening measures of the piece a characteristically simple two-part texture is used. Long, sustained chordal accompaniment in the double bass, cello, viola, and violin 2 supports the lament melody played by solo cello, which is then responded to at the interval of the fifth by solo violin.

This slowly moving, simplistic texture creates the effect of great openness. The solo cello, which plays the melody in its upper register on the A-string, starkly stands out against the accompaniment figures, scored in the lower, darker registers of the instruments. The solo violin response, also in its upper register, similarly stands out against the rest of the ensemble. The impression that this passage might give the listener is that of two lost souls, calling out for help in a desolate and unforgiving place - again, a clear reference to the harsh and barren Australian landscape. Complexity in this case, is not created through texture or timbre, but through other musical elements primarily related to pitch relationships.

Figure 2.3 Peter Sculthorpe, Lament for Strings mm. 1-9 (1976)

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Harmony

Although the harmonic language that permeates Sculthorpe's mature works does not closely follow common practice harmonic function, it is neither overtly dissonant nor alienating to mainstream concert audiences. In fact, Sculthorpe's international success has in large part been due to the accessibility of his music by the average listener. It is therefore interesting to note that Sculthorpe's harmonic language is actually quite complex. Preference for intervals of the major seventh, the minor ninth, the minor second, and the tritone in his chordal constructions, intervals that are traditionally considered dissonant, might lead one to expect a less inviting sonority for the ordinary concert-goer. It is fascinating then, how through progression and repetition, Sculthorpe creates a musical world that is intricately colored yet simultaneously easy for the listener to follow.

In *Lament for Strings*, Sculthorpe uses widely spaced harmonic backgrounds built principally from intervals of ninths and octaves in the lower voices[31] and a preference for the tritone as the uppermost interval. A progression of three discrete "chords" is formed in measure 1-3 of the piece, and then repeated multiple times. *Figure 2.4* demonstrates how these chordal harmonic relationships are grouped into three-measure progressions of structural importance; the progression is repeated four times in the opening passage alone, followed by a short transition into the piece's contrasting B section. A', the closing section of the piece, again returns to the same harmonic progression as seen in *Figure 2.4*. Although no functional relationship exists, there is a strong emphasis around E throughout the opening and closing sections of the work.

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[31] An exception does occur in the second measure of each three-measure grouping (*Figure 2.3)*, as the bass voice rises up to a minor second beneath the tenor voice. It then falls in intervals of a fifth as it returns to its starting position.

The work's contrasting B section, shown previously in *Figure 2.2,* is similarly centered around a single pitch class, this time G (as seen in the pedal G sustained by the double bass throughout rehearsal maker 4) and again harmonic repetition is a central unifying feature (the final three measures of the figure are repeated a total of 4 times throughout the section).
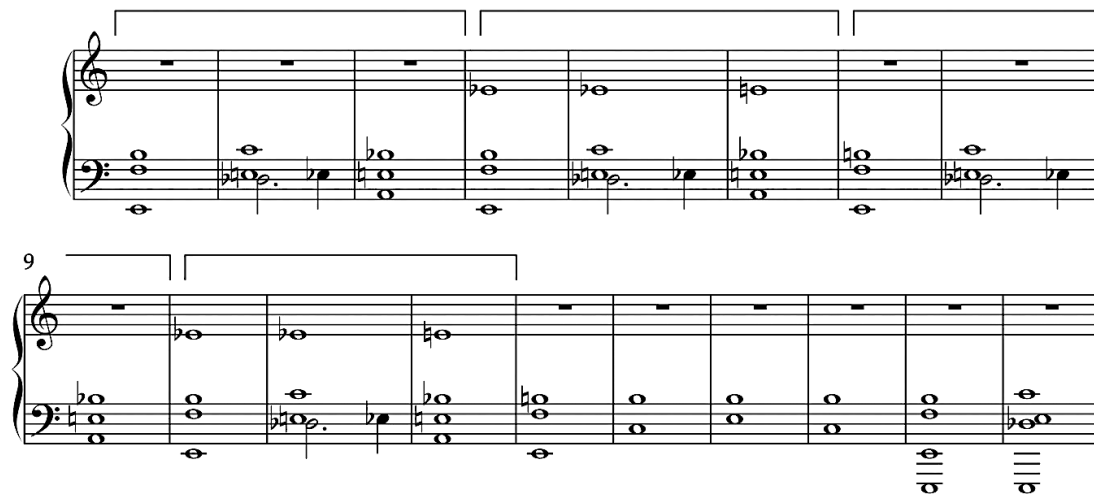
Figure 2.4 A reduction of the accompaniment from the work's opening passage to demonstrate repetition in harmonic progression.

Melody

In another gesture of simplicity that again is derived from western tradition, Sculthorpe presents the work's main theme in a manner somewhat reminiscent of a Baroque fugue. The melody is first played by solo cello, presenting a subject that is then answered by solo violin at the interval of the fifth. It is only presented in these two voices, in a call and response relationship. This quasi-fugal technique is flexible in its conventions compared to that of the Baroque period; the transposition at the fifth is neither real nor tonal. The exact intervallic relationships of the melody do not remain intact, as in a real transposition, nor are specific notes altered as determined by a change in key center in a tonal transposition. Instead, the melodic phrasing and contour remain intact, with only some slight intervallic variation, as evidenced in

Figures 2.5 and *2.6.* Of course, the static, chordal harmonic accompaniment dissimilates the passage from anything sounding remotely similar to an actual Baroque fugue; Sculthorpe has simply borrowed the technique of transposing the melody upwards by an interval of the fifth as a way of creating coloristic variation against a repetitive harmonic backdrop.

Figure 2.5 Solo Cello, melody subject mm. 1-3

Figure 2.6 Solo Violin, melody answer mm. 4-6

The theme, as represented by its subject and answer in *Figures 2.5* and *2.6,* serves as the primary building block for all of the melodic material used throughout the opening and closing sections of the piece. The measures contained within *Figure 2.7,* a transitional passage in the opening section with the melody carried by the solo cello, show how fragments of the theme have been taken from both the original subject (the falling B to E) and answer (the rising F# to G to B) to create new melodic material. The final three measures of the figure show a return to the opening phrase of the theme. The closing section of the work, an almost identical replication of the opening section (the answer in the solo violin is omitted) features a similar melodic conciseness.

As previously mentioned, Sculthorpe, despite his upbringing in western traditions, often demonstrates a strong affinity for the music of Asia in his sculpting of melodies from Asian inspired pentatonic scales; the theme from *Lament for Strings* is not the exception. Referring

back to *Figure 2.5*, it is clear that the work's theme is based on a five-note scale. When omitting

the Eb and Bb from the melody, which serve as appoggiaturas rather than structural melodic

tones, the notes E, F#, G, B, and C remain; these tones comprise the E Hirajoshi scale, a

Japanese pentatonic scale characterized by two half steps and two intervals of a major third. The

inclusion of such a scale in the context of a work rooted in western tradition again testifies to the

importance of stylistic syntheses in Sculthorpe's musical design.

Figure 2.7 Peter Sculthorpe, Lament for Strings mm. 13-19 (1976)

Rhythm

Due to the slow pace and drawn out character of the piece, rhythm takes on a role of secondary importance. The tempo, marked as Desolato (Quarter = c. 58), in the context of the piece's 6/4 time signature moves so gradually that an underlying pulse is hardly felt. Sustained whole note harmonic accompaniment, with very little internal voice movements, adds to this effect of rhythmic understatement. Melodic rhythmic figures move at a quicker quarter and eighth note pace but are heavily syncopated, further weakening a sense of pulse. Repetition, again, is an element of importance, as each instance of the melody maintains the same rhythmic design.

The works contrasting B section, however, differs significantly in rhythmic construction. As previously described earlier in this chapter, the section beginning at rehearsal marker 4 (the reader can refer back to *Figure 2.2* on pg. 19 for reference) relies heavily on individual interpretation by each player in the manner in which they perform the pattern of notes they are given. The resulting effect is that of a dense polyphony that lacks any sense of rhythmic togetherness. Any sense of pulse that may emerge is a result of pure chance. A sustained drone in the double bass and violas further disassociates any sense of rhythmic pulse. It seems clear that the composer's objective throughout this piece was to understate rhythmic pulse, although an underlying pulse may be felt at times.

Growth

Despite non-functional harmonic structures, little sense of rhythmic pulse, and a heavy reliance on repetition, *Lament for Strings* undoubtedly achieves a clear sense of direction,

movement, and shape when considered from the large-scale scope of the piece. How this is achieved demonstrates Sculthorpe's craftmanship and refinement in musical form. *Figure 2.8* outlines the way in which the piece creates shape through dynamics and orchestration.

Initially parting from a clear A B A' structure, the work begins in a *piano* dynamic with a limited orchestration, omitting the violins and supported only occasionally by the double bass in pizzicato. As the piece progresses, the dynamic intensity gradually increases, arriving at a *forte* for the first time in section *B-i*. A fuller orchestration, defined by the participation of all sections in the harmonic accompaniment, lends to a clear sense of growth. As Section B progresses and repeats through its Subsections, dynamics rise and fall, building intensity as they piece arrives to its high point, both melodically (violin 1 reaches an Ab two octaves above the staff) and dynamically at Section *B-iv*. Although the orchestration remains consistent throughout this section, a climatic arrival is clearly felt at this point in the music. As the piece returns to A', nearly identical to how it began, the orchestration becomes less dense, dynamics fall, and there is clear sense of return and resolution. A final sustained chord, built of densely spaced intervals, crescendos and decrescendos to serve as a final cadence and conclusion to the work.

Section	A		B			(B')				A'	
Subsection	i	ii	i	ii	iii	i'	ii'	iii'	iv	i	ii
Rehearsal Marker	1	2	3	4	5	m. 5 of 5	6	7	m. 4 of 7	8	9
Dynamic	p	mp - pp	mf - f	pp - mp	mf	mp - p - f	p - f	mf	f - ff	p	mp - pp - f - pp
Orchestration	Solo melody, reduced accomp. of viola, cello, d.b.	Orchestration thins even more, accomp. by violas, d.b. only	Fuller accomp., all sections now involved. Violin 1 carries melody as section	All players involved, drastic change in textural density	Full orchestration	Full orchestration	Full orchestration	Full orchestration	Full orchestration, wider spacing in harmony	Solo melody, reduced accomp. of viola, cello, d.b. only	Orchestration thins even more, accomp. by violas, d.b. only
Observations	Main theme of work presented, basis for A and A' melodic material	Though dynamic increases, texture is more sparse	New melodic material presented for first time	First instance of independent patterns, "chance" notation	First high point - Gb 2 8ves above treble staff	Similar to B-i, but w/ softer dynamic	Similar to B-ii, but w/ louder dynamic	Repetition of B-iii	High point of entire piece, Ab in Violin 1	Nearly identical to opening passage A-i	Ends with dense harmonic cresc, dim.

Figure 2.8 Shape and Growth in Lament for Strings

Chapter 3 - Night Song arr. For Violin, 'Cello and Piano (1970, arr. 1995)

Night Song arr. violin, 'cello and piano is a work that stemmed from an experimental piece written for rock band and orchestra, titled *Love 200* (1970), in a collaboration that occurred between Sculthorpe and the Australian rock band Tully. In its original format, the excerpt that later became *Night Song* was written for solo vocalist and orchestra (the only portion of *Love 200* where the rock band is silent) and acts as a slow movement with a nocturne-like character. The original text sung by the vocalist is about the solitary thoughts one has at night while contemplating the sea.

In 1995, Sculthorpe arranged the piece for violin, cello and piano for performance and recording by Trio Melbourne. The trio arrangement closely matches the original work, with the violin following the original vocal line in the same strophic manner in which it was originally composed. An instrumental head motive serves as a prelude, interlude and as closing material to separate the work's four verses, played by the cello. The piano gives harmonic support and creates coloristic accents in an approach, although more subdued, similar to that of Sculthorpe's early *Sonatina for Piano* (1954). The piece, in its original form as well as in its arrangement for piano trio, exemplifies Sculthorpe's sensibility as a composer; through the simplest of structural tools, consistency in harmonic language, and a masterful understanding of pacing, he reaches unexpected emotional heights that have the capacity to move the listener in a way that other works of the time period rarely achieve.

Style Analysis

Sound

Night Song, despite the intimate format for which it was arranged, creates the impression of a large ensemble. Consistent in style with Sculthorpe's representative works, a two-part texture is used involving melody supported by harmonic accompaniment. As seen in *Figure 3.1,* the main theme, which begins at rehearsal marker 1, is played by the violin, while piano and cello offer harmonic support; the sustained tones in the cello and repetitive harmonic figures in the piano enhanced through pedaling create the sonic effect of great openness, contributing to the large ensemble sound. The work's program notes state that "the solo violin follows the original vocal line, which is concerned with solitary thoughts at night, while becalmed on a distant sea."[32] This gives further insight to the composer's intentions, as the open nature of the piece's texture correlates to the vastness of the sea.

The work's textural fabric evolves as the piece progresses; the vertical range of the accompaniment expands drastically at the third appearance of the theme, and arpeggiation of harmonic figures in the piano create more complexity in sound. *Figure 3.2* shows the theme's third appearance, with development in the accompaniment figures. The piano arpeggiations and A1 bass notes (the lowest note of the piano), combined with a drastic lengthening of pedaling, further enhance the effect of ensemble mass. Despite this change in accompaniment, a two-part texture is still present; the melody, an inner dialogue of solitary thoughts, is heard above the rolling movement of what might be understood as waves crashing against the shore.

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[32] "Night Song | Faber Music."

Figure 3.1 Peter Sculthorpe, Night Song (1970, arr. 1995). First appearance of main theme

Figure 3.2 Peter Sculthorpe, Lament for Strings (1970, arr. 1995). Third appearance of main theme with increased activity in accompaniment

Harmony

Similar to *Lament for Strings*, the harmonic patterns and underlying rhythms found in *Night Song* are of structural importance. *Figure 3.3* shows how a repetition of two measure harmonic units is present throughout the exposition of the main theme; the three discrete units are labeled a, b, and c in the figure for clarification. It is interesting to note, that despite repetition on a small scale, the large-scale harmonic progression is not repetitive. Through accretion, repetition of these smaller two measure units creates a large-scale progression that is linear rather than circular.
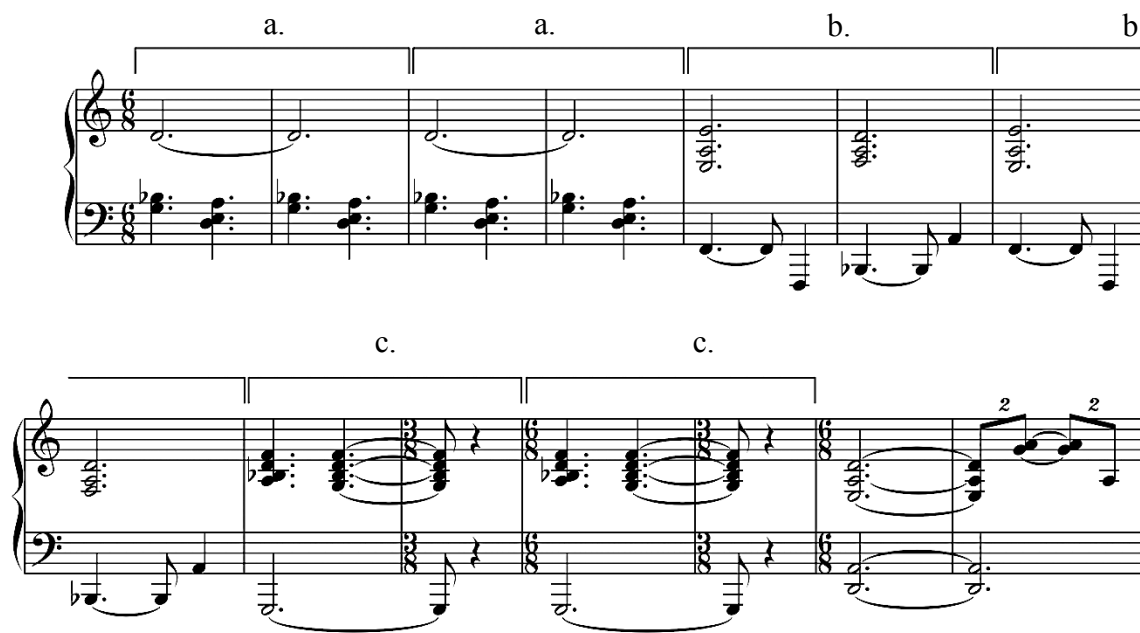
Figure 3.3 Harmonic reduction of accompaniment, first, second and fourth appearance of main theme

The main theme is presented four times, representing the work's original four verses. The first, second, and fourth appearances are accompanied by the same harmonic progression as shown in *Figure 3.3*.[33] The third appearance, however, has a distinct harmonic accompaniment; the "a" harmonic sets have been lengthened to four measures, reflecting an elongation of the melody through augmentation, and the chordal accompaniments differ significantly throughout the section. *Figure 3.4* shows how the "a" harmonic sets at the third appearance of the main theme have been expanded, both horizontally in time and vertically in pitch space. The original "a" harmonic structures were contained within a single octave. Here, they have been expanded to encompass nearly five. Worthy of note is the substantial expansion in range and greater density in harmonic structures throughout the section in its entirety (with the exception of "c," contained within three octaves in both instances).

Figure 3.4 Harmonic reduction of accompaniment, third appearance of main theme

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[33] A slight variation in how the harmonies are voiced occurs in the fourth verse, but the progression remains the same

The harmonic structures used by Sculthorpe in *Night Song* show a preference for the interval of the perfect fourth and the major second, often combining to create the perfect fifth. The major second is frequently found inside of the perfect fourth as well, forming both the major and minor third - intervals avoided entirely in the harmonic structures of *Lament for Strings*, for example. *Figure 3.4,* a reduction of the works harmonic accompaniment, shows how these intervals were used within the harmonic structures. Another significant observation is the avoidance of the interval of the tritone within harmonic structures; its infrequent use in *Night Song* differentiates the work from many of Sculthorpe's other pieces that show a preference for this interval. The resulting effect is that of a harmonic accompaniment that is less biting, more ringing and sonorous, and on the brighter spectrum of Sculthorpe's harmonic idiom.

Demonstrating once more Sculthorpe's preference for pentatonic pitch collections, the harmonic structures found in *Night Song* are based off of five-note pitch class sets. Harmonic set "a" from *Figure 3.3*, for example, is built from the pitch classes D, E, G, A, and Bb. The pitch classes D, E, F, A, and Bb are used in harmonic set "b," which pertain to the D Hirajoshi scale.[34] Harmonic set "c" uses pitch classes D, F, G, A, and Bb. These three collections are very closely related, each sharing four pitch classes with the other two collections. The measures that follow "c," with sustained tones in the accompaniment, are heard as a cadence point as the melody comes to a resolution and a certain release is felt, implying the importance of D as a harmonic center.

Similarly, the harmonic structures that make up *Figure 3.4,* are also constructed of pentatonic pitch collections (with the exception of harmonic set "b" which uses only four pitch

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[34] Japanese pentatonic scale characterized by two half steps and two intervals of a major third

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classes). Harmonic sets "a" and "b" are closely related to the D Hirajoshi scale, while the "c"

harmonic set is starkly contrasting, containing the pitch classes D, E, F, G#, and A. The interval

of the augmented second within this collection, F to G#, likens it to A harmonic minor; in fact, it

contains five consecutive pitches from this scale. In this structure, the G# serves as a leading tone

that up to this point has not been heard in the accompaniment. As might be expected, this

passage resolves with importance given to the note A, before quickly re-transitioning back to D

at the appearance of the fourth and final verse.[35]

The harmonic structures used throughout this piece are consistent with Sculthorpe's

major works, attesting to a concise, personal harmonic language. Chordal structures built from

novel intervallic relationships, harmonic progressions, and the use of repetition are crucial

unifying elements of *Night Song*. This overt consistency in style and conciseness in structure is

seen in Sculthorpe's compositions throughout his career, with very few exceptions.

 Melody

Melody plays an important structural role in *Night Song*. Initially written for vocalist and

orchestra, the integrity of the original melodic line has been preserved in this instrumental

arrangement. With the exception of a head motive performed by the cello[36] (a short passage

which serves as an introduction, an interlude, and as closing material) the melodic line in its

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[35] Tonicization of the note A (the V of the works "tonic" D) at this point in the piece, before the final verse is presented, is reminiscent of the retransition in a traditional Sonata-Allegro form. That it occurs right after a section of musical development and serves as an abbreviated transition to the exposition of the theme is not a coincidence; Sculthorpe's musical training in Western traditions is clearly at work in this structural organization.

[36] It is interesting to note that the opening interval of the head motive is that of a tritone, an interval that is frequently used by Sculthorpe, but avoided almost entirely in *Night Song*.

entirety is played by the violin. *Figure 3.5* shows the melodic line as played by the violin in verses one, two, and four.

Figure 3.5 Night Song principal melody, played by violin

The melodic phrasing of this passage is very clear; the first phrase is four measures long, the second six measures, and the third four measures in length. This three-phrase period illustrates an antecedent-antecedent-consequent relationship, determined by how the last note in each phrase (all three end on A) is approached. Phrase one rises stepwise (G to A), phrase two arrives by an upwards leap of a fourth (E to A), and phrase three by a falling minor second (Bb to A). Using the analogy of human speech, a rise in intonation at the end of a phrase is universally understood as an expression of doubt, while a fall in intonation signifies a response. When heard in a musical context, the same holds true. The harmonic structure that accompanies the melody also supports this three-phrase period relationship, as the first two phrases end harmonically open while the third ends strongly centered around D, the "tonic" tone of the piece.

The pitch classes used in the first two phrases of the period (A, C, D, E, G) pertain to what is commonly known as the A minor pentatonic scale. The third phrase of the period, while also closely based around A minor pentatonic, includes the note Bb, used to resolve downwards to A.[37] It is noteworthy that although the harmonic structures of this passage are based around D,

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[37] Another example of Sculthorpe's preference for the falling minor second "sigh" motive as an interval of importance in the construction of his melodic material.

the melody is centered around A. This creates a curious relationship with the supporting

harmonic structures, so subtle that the casual listener would certainly not take notice. While the

piece is not heard as bi-tonal, it is interesting to note that the melodic and harmonic structures are

based around two distinct pitch classes a fifth apart. This again reflects Sculthorpe's tendency to

present a melody in a "dominant" relationship centered a fifth above the harmonic

accompaniment, often first preceded by a "tonic" presentation;[38] in this instance, only the

"dominant" relationship exists.

Closely linked to the work's overall form, a variation of the melody is presented in the

third verse. Rather than resorting to transposition as Sculthorpe often seems to do, the melody

has been lengthened through augmentation. Of the three phrases comprising the period, only the

first has been transformed through augmentation, and only certain notes have been lengthened.

Figure 3.6 shows how the phrase has been manipulated. In measure one, the dotted quarter note

A has been tied to a second dotted quarter note, doubling its duration. The third note of the

phrase, D, has also been doubled in duration, while the next D (pick-up to A) has not been

lengthened. Rests have also been interspersed between these motives, further stretching time.

When compared to *Figure 3.5,* one can see that points of emphasis, primarily notes of longer

durations, have been doubled in length, while notes of eight and sixteen note durations were

maintained. Although this phrase is now eight measures in length, the auditive difference is so

subtle that when experienced by a casual listener it is unlikely the augmentations will be heard.

When considered in the context of a more active harmonic accompaniment, these nuanced

transformations become even more concealed.

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[38] E.g. *Lament for Strings, Figures 2.5 & 2.6*

Figure 3.6 Night Song, melodic variation in third verse

A much more obvious variation in this third verse is a diversion from the passage's climatic arrival, which occurs at the ending of the second phrase. In *Figure 3.5* we see how the highest point of the melody reaches A above the staff, an emotional highpoint in the passage. In *Figure 3.6*, we expect this same A to be reached at the beginning of the third system. However, the melody instead falls downward to a C#. This difference is very much heard by the listener, as an expectation to reach the climatic A has been created by its appearance in the first two verses. This denial of an emotional arrival leaves the listener dissatisfied; an intensification in harmonic activity, novel harmonic structures, and a lengthening of the passages create the impression that the work is preparing to achieve a major climatic moment, one that doesn't come. Of course, in the fourth and final verse of the work, the climatic arrival is achieved, and the listener is left contented.

Rhythm

Night Song is full of rhythmic subtilties, both on the small scale of the subdivision and on the hypermetrical scale. From the very beginning of the piece, the sense of both meter and pulse are manipulated. As shown in *Figure 3.7*, the use of different time signatures creates variation in the hypermetrical structure. Within this passage, unaccompanied cello plays a melodic line

comprised of elongated tones and duple figures that very much highlight the importance of hypermetrical groupings. Assuming the dotted quarter note to be equal to the hypermetrical pulse, the phrase begins with a 5/4 hypermeter. The Gb pick-up note leads to C, which is held for three pulses; the Db is then heard as beat four of the hypermeter, falling to Gb on the *and* of beat five. The rhythmic pattern is repeated in the second hypermetrical grouping, as seen in the fourth measure of *Figure 3.7*. These two 5/4 hypermetrical groupings are followed by a grouping of 4/4 and two groupings of 3/4. Visually, this is easy to see, as each measure of 6/8 contains two large pulses, each measure of 3/8 one pulse, and each 9/8 measure three pulses. The melodic line, which is based on multiples of the dotted eighth note or its equal division, cleanly aligns within this structure. The duple figures seen in measures 3, 6, 7 and 8 reinforce this effect, as they are essentially heard as eighth note figures within the context of the hypermetrical grouping.
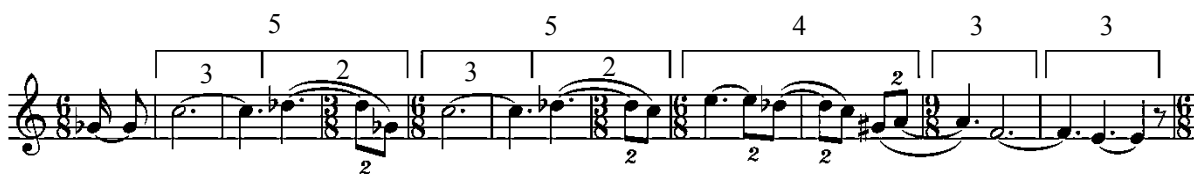
Figure 3.7 Night Song, head motive. Brackets show hypermetrical groupings

The irregular hypermetrical organization creates a sense of ambiguity; while the structures are clear to the eye, they are possibly less obvious to the ear. Though it is not difficult for the listener to identify the pulse of this opening passage, the change from 5/4 to 4/4 to 3/4 within the hypermetrical plan diminishes the sense of a clear sense of large-scale meter. A lack of accompaniment throughout the passage and a substantial use of syncopation strengthen further rhythmic vagueness at the auditive level. These groupings, however, clearly are of structural importance when considering how the melodic phrasing was organized.

At the exposition of the first verse, a regular pulse is introduced for the first time in the accompaniment, marking the duple strong beats of the 6/8 meter. The pulse is steady, and a hypermetrical scheme exists based around groupings of four strong beats. The climax of the passage sees a hypermetric lengthening through the interpolation of a 3/8 measure, its purpose to lengthen the climatic notes of the passage (ledger line A, and later A on the staff), *Figure 3.8*. The effect to the listener is that time is temporarily lost, or perhaps forgotten, as the extra pulses allow the melody to soar at its peak for just a moment more. A simple tool relatively similar to basic augmentation, this hypermetrical lengthening at this precise moment in time creates in the listener a powerful emotional response.

Figure 3.8 Hypermetrical groupings of the work's main theme

At the sub-meter[39] rhythmic scale, the combination of sixteenth and dotted eighth notes create syncopations across individual beats of the measure. The duple pulse of the measure is not affected, as it is steadily marked by the accompaniment. As seen in measure three of *Figure 3.8,* a repeated C is given as a dotted eighth note-sixteenth note-eight note pattern. This rhythmic motive is then slightly varied in the next measure, now seen as a sixteenth note-dotted eighth

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[39] In the context of a discussion of hypermetrical structures, sub-meter refers to rhythmic phenomena happening internally within each measure, as represented by individual note durations.

note-eighth note pattern (the dotted eighth note and dotted eighth notes are tied). Measure five has returns to the first pattern, while measure six has the second pattern followed by the first. These subtle rhythmic events happening internally within the measure create not only interest in the melodic figures themselves, but a defined separation between melody and accompaniment.

Subsequent appearances of the head motive and the main theme receive nearly identical hypermetrical and sub-metrical treatments. Any differences in an auditive understanding of the piece result primary from harmonic development, changes in orchestration, dynamic contrasts, and textural intensifications. These aspects, in context of variation in hyper-rhythmic structure, create large-scale musical shape that goes well beyond the piece's simplistic strophic formal design.

Growth

An auditive experience of *Night Song* takes the listener on a journey, one that moves between open space and steady pulse, between moments of calm and of heightened activity, one that reaches moments of emotional climax before returning to the grounds from which it departed. A simple strophic structure, with a short head motive interspersed throughout the work, does not detract from the piece's ability to create a strong sense of shape and form; to the contrary, simplicity in structure allows for subtle differences within each repetition of the verse to affect the listener's response in significant ways.

Figure 3.9 shows the structural form of the piece, and how a sense of shape is achieved through slight variations of musical material. The dynamic contours of each section, as well as throughout the piece as a whole, gradually rise and fall; although no stark contrasts are at work, a dynamic shape is clearly outlined. The composer's intention was to perhaps emulate the rolling

of the waves of the ocean as experienced by the observer, dynamic intensity increasing ever so slightly in each subsequent passage with the rising of the tide.

A gradual evolution of orchestration is also at work within the piece. The opening passage, an introductory head motive, is played by solo cello in its upper register. At the entrance of the first verse, the cello transitions to a secondary role, functioning together with the piano as accompaniment. Violin enters for the first time, carrying the melody above the background of the accompaniment figures throughout the first and second verses. A return to the head motive sees an orchestral development, piano now accompanying the cello as it plays the motive while violin transitions to silence.

The third verse sees the introduction of new harmonic structures in the piano that are now arpeggiated, creating a heightened sense of activity within the accompaniment, drawing the listener's attention. An increased use of range in the piano further supports the illusion of growth within this passage. Again, the orchestral transformations have been subtle up to this point throughout the work, consistent with the dynamic plan as outlined by the composer. The fourth verse, though harmonically consistent with the first two, sees yet another variation in orchestration; the right hand of the piano has now risen above the melodic line, centering the melody within the accompaniment as opposed to above it.

The final presentation of the head motive returns to the cello carrying the melody supported by piano as harmonic accompaniment. A brief coda, which presents a fragmented transposition of the main theme supported by long sustained tones in the cello and piano, gradually fades away at the works conclusion, all sense of pulse erased. The solitary observer, consumed by their thoughts while contemplating the distant sea, perhaps has found peace as the work calmly comes to a close.

Section	H.M.	Verse 1 & 2	H.M.'	Verse 3	Verse 4	H.M."	Coda
Rehearsal Marker		1	3	4	6	8	9
Dynamic	p - mf - p	p - mp - mf	mp - mf - mp	p - mp - mf	mp - f - mp	mp - mf - mp - f - mf - mp	mp - p
Orchestration	Solo cello	Chords in piano mark hypermetric pulse, sustained tones in cello in upper register. Melody in violin 1 above accompaniment	Motive played by cello with sparse chordal harmonic acccompaniment in piano	Increased activity, expansion of range in piano accomaniment.	Less rhythmic activity in accompaniment, however vertical range expands upwards; R.H. of piano now above melodic line	Identical orchestration to that used at H.M.'	Piano sustains densely voiced chordal accompaniment, sustained tones in cello, violin plays transpositon of opening motive from theme
Observations	Tritone structurally important interval of Head Motive	Verse 2 is an exact repition of Verse 1	Short transitional segment connects verse 2 with H.M.'	Active accompaniment, augmentation of melody, instrumental range, novel harmonic structures create the expectation of climax; expectation not met	Return to original harmonic progression. Climactic moment of piece occurs at rehearsal marker 7	The Head Motive is repeated twice during this passage, now with the additon of an extension that leads to Coda	Both melody and accompaniment have been transposed, now centered around the tone Ab. Sense of pulse erased by sustained accompaniment, sparse melodic fragments

Figure 3.9 Shape and Growth in Night Song

Chapter 4 - Conclusions

When one considers the innumerous musical innovators of the twentieth century, the radical experimentations with sound, timbre, pitch material, rhythm and instrumentation, and the nearly rock star status of the industry's most celebrated composers, the name Peter Sculthorpe does not immediately come to mind. It is astonishing, then, that a deeper look into Sculthorpe's life and career reveals not only a composer with a rich and robust musical language, but one who also celebrated great notoriety during his lifetime both within his native Australia and abroad. Despite his innovations in uncommon notational practices and stylistic synthesis, a conservative approach to music's fundamental aspects perhaps turned away many a western academic. Half a century has now passed since he first gained international recognition, allowing us to look back at his work with a fresh perspective.

It is the simplicity that delineates Sculthorpe's music, in fact, that attests to his compositional virtuosity. Simplicity in form, melodic phrasing, harmonic progression, and instrumentation testify to an incredible restraint; when subtle alterations of these fundamental elements occur, a powerful response transpires in the listener. Unpretentious fundamental structures allow other aspects of Sculthorpe's works to be protagonists: aspects such as colorful harmonic constructions, nuanced melodic transpositions, and hypermetric irregularities. Though Sculthorpe's music may not be outwardly eccentric, its inner complexity and intricacies can be appreciated by both the listener and theorist alike.

Sculthorpe, as an individual and as a composer, was influenced both by the music and spiritual belief systems of eastern Asian cultures. This affinity is seen in his music throughout the entirety of his career. Pentatonic pitch collections, often directly sourced from Japanese and

Javanese music, are used almost exclusively in his harmonic and melodic constructions. The two works examined in Chapters 2 and 3 of the present report, *Lament for Strings* and *Night Song,* give evidence to this. It can be argued that his musical voice, one that expresses outward simplicity yet harbors great complexity beneath the surface, is an embodiment of his appreciation for eastern Asian music and culture.

A seamless synthesis occurs, then, when considering Sculthorpe's music from the perspective of western musical tradition. An analysis of his works shows that almost every other structural aspect (form, harmonic progression, cadence, texture, instrumentation) stems from western practices. The A B A' ternary form of *Lament for Strings*, with its repetitive harmonic progression and melodic transposition at the interval of the fifth, clearly demonstrates western tradition at work. Melody set against chordal accompaniment, as seen in both previously analyzed works, is a defining aspect of Sculthorpe's fundamental style, and similarly rooted in musical practices of the west.

A development of a unique musical language, and more importantly, a language that was uniquely Australian, was Sculthorpe's lifelong pursuit. In many interviews he stated how creating a personal musical idiom, one representative of the Australian experience, had been his mission from an early age; through stylistic synthesis of eastern musical material with western practices this was achieved. The Australian landscape, harsh and barren, vast yet intricately detailed, served as a perpetual inspiration. Widely spaced harmonic backdrops, often harshly colored, and solo melodic lines comprise a style that is almost programmatic in its representation of how one might experience the Australian bush. References to Aboriginal culture, often as direct quotations of Aboriginal melodies, further enhance a sense of the truly Australian experience.

Although Sculthorpe enjoyed great success during his lifetime, receiving numerous accolades and widespread acclaim, his music has nevertheless been underappreciated. A respectable body of works has in large part gone unexamined by scholars outside of Australia, and even within the country it has not received the attention it deserves. A virtuosic composer who understood how simplistic structures could serve as a fundamental pathway to achieve complexity in sound, Sculthorpe shows a sensibility for nuance shared by very few of his contemporaries. Interesting to the eye and to the ear, his abundant catalogue of works merits a deeper examination by not only his Australian compatriots, but by academics elsewhere. Serving as a recent case study of how a national musical identity was formed, there is much to be learned both musically and historically from the life and works of composer Peter Sculthorpe.

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