

**PRESENTATION BY**  
**MRS FRANCES UNDERWOOD**  
**IN THE SERIES**  
***MEET THE MUSIC MAKER***  
**FOR UNIVERSITY OF THE THIRD AGE,**  
**PHILIP SMITH CENTRE, GLEBE 20 JULY 2011**

Good Morning, everyone. Thank you for inviting me to talk and make music with you today. Making Music, one way or another, has always been a large part of my life. This morning, for the first 20 minutes or so, I thought I'd tell you a little bit about my music background; talk to you about making music and listening to music; then for the next 20 minutes or so invite you to listen, to examples of short piano works by Bach, Beethoven, Schumann, Debussy, Bartok and Sculthorpe. And then, for the last 10 minutes or so, I'd like to share with you, a short photo story, of making music at Government House.

No amount of talking or reading about music can compare with allowing the music to speak for itself. So, first of all, I'm going to play two short pieces; Bach Prelude No 1 in C major, from Bk 1 of the Well Tempered Clavier, ranked No 8 in the Classic 100 for Piano by ABC classic FM; it takes a master craftsman to write with such beautiful simplicity and seductive use of harmony. It is no wonder that such music speaks to so many including other composers who have used it in their work; Schoenberg, Debussy, Schumann and of course Gounod who appropriated it for his Ave Maria. The other, is an arrangement by Australian composer / pianist Percy Grainger, of the 16<sup>th</sup>

Century's John Dowland's, *Now O Now I Needs Must Part*. This year is the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary Grainger's death.

**Bach:** *Prelude No 1 in C Major from Bk 1 of the Well Tempered Clavier.*

**Grainger:** *Now O Now*

### ***My Music Background***

I was flattered to hear that Ken Chilcott had described me as an accomplished pianist. I think he may have forgotten about the more than 40 years that has elapsed since we competed against each other in the ABC Concerto Competitions. Although offered a scholarship to Melbourne Conservatorium, all those years ago, I chose instead, to do an Arts Degree.

However, I was consistently successful in Eisteddfods. In 1964 I achieved 5 first place awards and a most outstanding instrumentalist award. I was a participant in ABC Concerto Competitions and a regular performer on the ABC National Program, Young Australia. I achieved honours in all my AMEB exams and had gained my A Mus A in performing at 16. Those were the days when the examiners in all AMEB exams were concert pianists from interstate and concert pianist Ronald Farren – Price, speaking to a reporter from the Mercury, predicted a future as a concert pianist for me.

But at 16, the life of a concert pianist seemed competitive, lonely and hard, even for those far more talented and skilful than I could ever hope to be. I knew this for a fact, for I grew up with my prodigiously gifted cousin, pianist Geoffrey Tozer. My parents were not wealthy and I reasoned that I needed to make a living and would probably end up teaching. Accordingly, I decided that if I was going to teach it would be better to have another string

to my bow and complement my natural interest in music by majoring in my other interests, English Literature and Philosophy. So, unlike other presenters in this series, I start with a disclaimer that I am not a professional performer; I just enjoy playing the piano and singing and encouraging others to do the same.

Eventually, I did go into teaching, but with music, as the second string to my bow, a string that got me my first job in teaching, at the Friends School.

I taught piano at the Friends School while I trained, at the age of 30, in Primary teaching. On qualifying I was appointed to the staff of Friends in various positions including class teacher, music teacher and finally for 15 years, Head of Junior School.

So, I prefer to think of myself these days as an enthusiastic amateur musician who was lucky enough, to have had an early introduction to music, by inspirational teachers. Those teachers, Veronica Tozer, concert pianist, knowledgeable educator and mother of my cousin, Australian pianist Geoffrey Tozer, Madam Helen George, pupil of a pupil of Clara Schumann, and Peter Townley, graduate of Sydney conservatorium, ignited in me a life long love of music and learning and engendered a passion that has taken me on so many interesting journeys and opened so many doors such as; the invitation to talk to you today and the stimulation and excitement of studying music education at the Mozarteum in Salzburg in 2005.

Those teachers are responsible for the joy I get from enabling parents and grandparents to make music with young children, and the pleasure I get from teaching beginner adult choristers to sing, and to explore a major choral

work, such as the Faure Requiem, and then take part, with choristers from all over Australia, in a performance in the Sydney Opera House, an experience they find takes them inside music and changes the way they listen to music; and of course, not to mention the pleasure I derive from playing the piano, my instrument of choice; and, singing with the TSO Chorus.

### ***What is music?***

At its most basic music is an arrangement of sound and silence in a series of aural patterns. The sounds are arranged through the so called elements of music: *rhythm, melody, harmony and texture* and organised according to a *form or template*, chosen by the composer – a word that comes from the Latin *componere* meaning “to put together.” *Rhythm* is *musical time*, it moves the music forward; *Melody* is the pitched *horizontal line* in music; *Harmony* is the *vertical line*, the sounding of pitches simultaneously, built around a central tone. Finally *Texture* is the *interweaving of the melody* and the *harmony*.

So let's make some music.

***Clap beat to count of 4, clap rhythm, add single pitch, add melody, add harmony, experiment with tonality (major /minor/ pentatonic) and texture. (Homophonic, fugal, alberti base)***

So that's easy isn't it? That's how you make music and one of the ways to listen to music is to be *aware* of *rhythm*, to *hear* the beautiful *melody* and *listen* to how the composer uses *harmony* and to what effect. Finally look

for the sort of *texture* that is used to bring it all together, how it is organised and how the performer, interprets and feels the music.

***How do you learn music? In two ways:***

***Like that, just as we did then; by making music:***

The fact of the matter is that the best way to learn music at any age is to make music and to listen, preferably to live performances, with musical hearing and understanding. As the composer and music educator Kodaly said “no one should be deprived of music because their parents are too poor to provide music lessons. The simplest instrument is the voice. Everybody has a voice. Singing does not involve financial cost. The only need is for a competent, good teacher<sup>1</sup>”. Conductor and composer Bruno Walter said “if you want to feel the music, you must first feel it with you own ...natural instrument, the voice.... Sing it<sup>2</sup>”

I won't make you sing today but the fact is, all that the elements of music can be taught though singing: rhythm, melody, harmony, texture and also, most importantly, inner musical hearing: being able to hear a song in your head, read a score and hear it in your head, think in sound, as you would in a language. As Beethoven said “I carry my thoughts about with me for a long time....until I am satisfied... then in my head ..[The work] rises, it grows, I hear and see the image in front of me from every angle...and only the labour

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<sup>1</sup> *Music Should Belong to Everyone* Kodaly, International Kodaly Society Budapest Pub 2002

<sup>2</sup> *Gramophone* June 2010

of writing it down remains ...I turn my ideas into tones that resound roar and rage until at last they stand before me in the form of notes<sup>3</sup>”

***And by listening with musical hearing:***

As a child music was inside me and all about me and I just couldn't get enough of it. Veronica Tozer, as well as teaching me to sing and play the piano, introduced me to a wide repertoire of music, took me to concerts and introduced me to musicians. There were, she said, three kinds of music; music for the heart, music for the head and music for the feet. She encouraged me to draw the music I heard, and to distinguish shapes and patterns and trace them on the table and sing them. This was a foundation, in what I now know to be intelligent listening, hearing with musical comprehension and musical memory.

The importance of the art of listening can never be overstated. Music comes in all shapes and sizes and never before have we had such ready access to music. It is everywhere; piped into shopping malls, public transport, on ipods, in public buildings. In all its different forms it washes over us and we have learnt how to disengage the brain and tune out if we want to<sup>4</sup>. The different kinds of music we hear are no longer classified in neat stacks like books in a library. The means of delivering music are eclectic and ubiquitous. This has led to a mingling of genres and young people, who think like ipods, in *tracks*, not *genres*.

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<sup>3</sup> The Enjoyment of Music Joseph Machlis /Kristine Forney WW Norton and Company new York 2003

<sup>4</sup> Andrew Ford *Illegal Harmonies Music in the Modern Age* Pub.ABC Books 2002

The borders between “popular” and “classic” are becoming creatively blurred as Pop artists and classical composers find they speak more or less the same language. Think Richard Tognetti of the Australian Chamber Orchestra teaming up with Sting, our own TSO pairs up with ABBA, Gospel Choirs, and Black Arm Band. TSO musicians mentor young Sudanese hip hop artists.

### *So should music be classified?*

Musicologists are keen to pigeon hole what is commonly known as classical music, by shared characteristics of a period in time: Baroque, Classical, Romantic, Impressionist, 20<sup>th</sup> Century and so on. This is understandable but can also be unhelpful because it encourages us to identify composers with historical periods and styles, rather than viewing them as unique individuals, with a distinctive personal style. For example Beethoven is often boxed into the Classic period when in fact much of his music, although classical in style, could be called romantic; in the way he uses harmony to elicit emotion. His later works are even more innovative looking both forward to the 20<sup>th</sup> Century and backwards to Bach’s counterpoint.

Likewise, Debussy hated being called an Impressionist, thinking of himself as Symbolist. “What I am trying to do” he said, “is an effect of *reality*, that some *fools* call impressionism<sup>5</sup>.” He wanted to “free music from the barren traditions that stifle it” (he meant dominant Germanic traditions). He didn’t want to be harmonically restricted to major /minor tonality. He had heard the whole tone scales of the Javanese Gamalans at the world exhibition in 1889

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<sup>5</sup> Andrew Ford *Illegal Harmonies Music in the Modern Age* Pub. ABC Books 2002

in Paris and was captivated. Composers have always pushed the boundaries by flouting so called “existing” rules to challenge the way we listen. <sup>6</sup> I wish I’d known this *when I* was studying harmony. What Debussy does with what’s called consecutive 5<sup>th</sup>s was strictly forbidden when I studied harmony.

### ***So, how do we listen?***

American composer, Aaron Copeland said you can listen to music three ways; you can let the sensuous enjoyment simply wash over you; you can be touched by an expressive meaning or feeling that is personal to you in the music; or you can listen musically, not just listening **to** something but, for something.<sup>7</sup> In reality we listen in all those ways simultaneously, but it is actively listening with musical understanding, that deepens the knowledge, the appreciation and ultimately the enjoyment of the music.

### ***So, with that in mind, let’s listen.***

Bach was a prolific composer, expected to compose new works for church services every week. Remember musicians then, worked under the patronage system and were not free agents. But Bach also wrote for the keyboard and perhaps his most important work for Keyboard is the Well Tempered Clavier. It was written as instructional exercises for his eldest son and “for the profit of all youth desirous of learning<sup>8</sup> ...”and also to show that the clavier could be tuned so that it could be played in all the keys without sounding out of tune, quite a feat in those days, hence a Prelude and Fugue in each of the 12 major and 12 minor keys.

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<sup>6</sup> Andrew Ford *Illegal harmonies Music in the Modern Age* Pub.ABC Books 2002

<sup>7</sup> Aaron Copeland *What to Listen for in Music* Pub. New American Library ( Penguin) 2009

<sup>8</sup>

Bach was the unequalled master of counterpoint. Counterpoint is the setting of one or more voices against each other, “punctus contra punctus”, point against point. From this art of counterpoint came the fugue, from the latin “fuga” possibly implying the flight of the subject from one voice to another\*. It is this flight of the subject that moves the fugue on like a race to the end. This is what you can hear in this Fugue in G Major. Not only can you hear the flow of independent voices, but Bach teases us with a counter melody, that makes delicious harmony, and just when the ear is used to it he turns it upside down.

**Bach:** *Fugue in G Major Bk 2No 15*

After his death, Bach was largely forgotten. The so called *intellectualism* of counterpoint was abandoned, even by Bach’s sons, in favour of the classical style of lyrical melody, a homophonic texture that sustains the melody, and a rhythmic tension that moves the music on. The **then** new technology of a sustaining pedal, which gives the piano the ability to sing, enabled the manipulation of the major /minor tonal harmony, to allow for the expression of personal feelings, in a way that Bach never had access to on the clavier.

And Beethoven was a master at it, and still is today, perhaps the most popular composer of art music, in the world. He was a free agent as a composer, a celebrity pianist and quite a business man. It is said that his *deification* set the acceptance of contemporary music back, because no one could match his achievements; whereas, in Bach’s time, new composition, or contemporary music, was the expectation. The first movement of his

*Moonlight Sonata* was voted No 1 in the Classic 100 for piano in 2002. As I play it, I invite you to especially listen to the harmony and texture, for to me it speaks less of moonlight and more of the emotional turmoil Beethoven was in, having been rejected by the family of his young pupil, with whom he was deeply in love. He was 31.

**Play:** *Moonlight Sonata (first movement)*

In the 19th century the industrial revolution brought further technological improvements to the piano, cast iron frame and thicker strings giving a deeper more brilliant tone, eventually leading to the development of the concert grand. The piano became very popular, also, with amateur players like Jane Austen. Keyboard instrumentalists had access to a whole new range of nuances. Composers were able to write piano music for a totally different instrument to that of Bach, or Mozart or even Beethoven. “We have learned to express the more delicate nuances of feeling by penetrating more deeply into the mysteries of harmony<sup>9</sup>” said Schumann

With all the insecurity and upheaval of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, childhood or the recollection of a lost childhood and a longing for far off exotic lands, became a common theme for composers. Schumann’s *Kinderszenen Op 15* is one such work. Note the realistic titles and the evocation of mood in the use of melody, harmony and texture.

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<sup>9</sup> The Enjoyment of Music Joseph Machlis /Kristine Forney WW Norton and Company new York 2003

**Schumann:** *Of Foreign Lands and People, (echoes Bach's C Major Prelude Bk 1) Pleading Child, and Big Event*

As we've heard, Bach, Beethoven and Schumann all composed within the major /minor tonal system and the accompanying harmonies that pull towards the tonic or home tone. In this harmony, dissonance is used to effect but eventually resolved.

Debussy however, as we have heard, wanted to be free of tonal restrictions and the need for dissonance to be resolved. "Music" he said, "should sound as if it has been improvised". He wanted to "free the piano from its percussive sound. ...The pedal should give "power for the piano to breathe" creating sounds to "stir the emotions" with "thin texture and soft muffled chords"<sup>10</sup>.

In his music he uses floating, gliding chords that hover between major and minor, settling on neither, and that slide across the bar line obscuring the pulse. Proust, an admirer, commented on the beauty of his "rapt" stillness's<sup>11</sup>. In his short lyric pieces for the piano you don't hear the rhythmic accent on the first beat of the bar but you do hear the piano's resources being exploited and the contrast between high and low, the blending of sounds with the pedal, the clash of overtones and the parallel succession of widely spaced chords, which is almost atonal.

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<sup>10</sup> Maurice Dumesnil *How to Play and Teach Debussy* (Endorsed by Madame Claude Debussy) Published by Schroeder and Gunther, Inc. New York 1932

<sup>11</sup> Andrew Ford *Illegal harmonies Music in the Modern Age* Pub. ABC Books 2002

The Girl with the Flaxen Hair is a representation of natural, pre Raphaelite beauty, a return to pre industrial, by gone values, as in the paintings of Rossetti and the Arts and crafts Movement led by William Morris.

**Play:** Debussy: *The Girl with the Flaxen Hair*

To finish, I'd like to play two very short pieces. Bela Bartok's, *Evening in Transylvania*, imitates the original folk music of Hungary. It represents an early 20<sup>th</sup> century determination, amongst many composers to save national folk traditions from extinction. Its distinctive harmony almost makes a feature of dissonance, its longing ancient melody and "rapt" sillinesses are reminiscent of Debussy, but the rhythmic Slavonic dance patterns make the most of the piano's percussive qualities, qualities that Debussy wanted to get rid of.

**Play:** Bartok: *Evening in Transylvania*

And finally a little gem by our own Tasmanian composer Peter Sculthorpe, who along with Grainger is perhaps most representative of National Australian composers. It's called *Left Bank Waltz* and was written on the train as he was arriving in Paris in 1958. Peter Sculthorpe says it was his mother's favourite piece<sup>12</sup>.

**Play:** Sculthorpe: *Left Bank Waltz*

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<sup>12</sup> Peter Sculthorpe *Sun Music: Journeys and reflections from a composer's life*, Pub. ABC Books 1999

As I said at the start, making music has always been part of my life and is something I continue to do as part of my role as spouse of the Governor. I have been able to encourage and enable the making of music by continuing my work at Adult education and at Government House by; teaching the hundreds of school children who visit, a dance to do in the ballroom; or showcasing Tasmanian musical talent at receptions; or holding choral concerts and workshops by Australia's leading choral conductors and composers for young choristers, particularly those who wouldn't otherwise have access to such opportunities; or simply inviting Virtuosi, Elanee Ensemble and other musicians to record in the ballroom.

I have a 6 minute collage of musical happenings at Government House to show you on the basis that (a) you might be interested and (b) a picture is worth a thousand words. I invite you to relax and watch while you listen to *Handel in the Strand* by Percy Grainger, performed by my cousin, Australian pianist Geoffrey Tozer, with the BBC Philharmonic and recorded on the Chandos label.

Thank You Frances Underwood July 2011

