

Southern Summer Songlines Suite: Country needs Composers

This project was originally based around key ideas of developing a composition and myself as a composer through taking an Australian and Indigenous take on Christmas Carols. However the original broader base, but less ambitious goal of scoring several extant songs of mine, while composing or developing 1 or 2, and concurrently furthering a new a *cappella* group, swiftly crystallized in composition terms around a focus on the sad and dark Coventry Carol and the larger project of a suite, currently of 5 main pieces. The narrative is built around a translation of the original Northern Hemisphere's Carol story of murdered children, to the Australian context of stolen children and the sad and traumatic story of colonization and the subsequent need for healing, reconciliation and transformation.

The musical challenge was the transformation and development of several pieces in several genres in the mode of the Suite, but with a contemporary take and includes a move from a more traditional setting of the Carol, albeit with an a cappella SATB expression, to an Industrial Age and then Electronic transformation of the tolling of bells of death, to segue into a chamber music piece in the form of a sarabande, and then a spiritual or hymn. The finale is in the form of an extended pop/rock/folk fusion ballad, reprising some musical material, but with a more upbeat message of hope and ending in a true lullaby reprise of the Coventry Carol, and a carillon-like sequence ringing out for change and hope. The work is largely set around minor modes and a tonal structure, but with heterophony supported by didjeridoo. The work also offered me a chance to develop skills in writing for other instruments, in particular the cello, but as the project grew, to gain some experience in writing for piccolo, percussion, violin and, in a late addition, the lever harp with some unusual new friends, such as the blown bottle and music boxes and first attempts at learning to score for drums on Sibelius.

The context of a work speaking of much darkness needs to be a transformative and reparative one, where healing through song and dance and story is a traditional Indigenous way, and the invitation is offered by the composer and the work for Australians to join in the collaboration. In the process of creation of this work this has been embodied in the generous way collaborators, including musicians have taken part in feedback on the work. Some have committed over the challenging Festive

season to be part of a virtual ensemble and offering recorded performances that form part of the first major rendering of this work. Musicians are credited in each track described and listed below. Other generous contribution has come from the permission given to use the audio of a recorded audio track from a PVC didjeridoo from didjshop.com. Their wonderful website also gave important information for those seeking to use a didjeridoo as a harmonizing instrument, requiring an instrument with a tuned fundamental. The didjeridoo needed for this work is a C didj. Furthermore it would be ideal if it were a healing didjeridoo to honour the spirit and purpose of this work. Their website offers some direction around the need for high quality instruments for concert work.

The original *a cappella* group swiftly gave way to the virtual group, initially from necessity, and now with a growing sense that this may be a good skill and way to work. My thanks extend to Paul Smith who kindly offered words of experience and advice around this way of working.¹

While some of the musicians who had intended to contribute were waylaid by life events along the way, I am grateful for feedback on the cello parts by my Indigenous friend and colleague Lynda Skinner, a Gadigal woman and some on the violin parts by Michael Daubney and for the feedback on piccolo from my niece Vittoria Lucia von Caemmerer. I would like to note that I have found the performance of these pieces emotionally challenging, especially the last, the ballad, and would hope that any musician would be kind to themselves and others in the journey of taking part in a work such as this.

Most of the mixing was done in Audacity. A longer time line with virtual rehearsal will improve this kind of rendering, but its purpose for this, which was not a high-end recording or rendering, but a first realization was useful and engaging.

One last but important goal was the use of small amounts of Indigenous Language to join in the current global move to revive and respect local Language. Although this piece is currently using small phrases of Wajarri, it is hoped that local performances might adapt the words to their own local Language and similarly pay respect to the community on which the work is performed (here Gadigal land is cited in 'Incandescent', the final piece, as the current land on which I live). This was only possible because of the extraordinary work done on the Wajarri-English dictionary by elders

¹ Paul Smith, telephone interview on Nov 8, 2017 re *Virtual Choir* Project, Parramatta Lanes Festival, 2017.

of the Yamatji and surrounding communities and language groups, for which I am incredibly grateful.²

The substantive goals of the project in composition, scores and collaboration have been met, but with a need for flexibility and some creativity along the way. The help of others has been surprising and essential. A slight delay on the last day was due to someone dropping in a vocal part from the Blue Mountains to Sydney!

Similarly, although I was eager to try writing for instruments in a chamber music or more orchestral setting, it is hoped that the work could be used by local communities where parts could be rescored for other instruments, and the voices which feature strongly can be amateur choirs. While 'Incandescent' is currently largely scored, it is clear that a ballad in this fusion genre can and should be adapted for a local band and it is hoped that such adaptations of this work would make it accessible to communities all around this Great South Land.

It is perhaps important to say that this was a very personal work, grappling with the Stolen story, so long kept secret in my own family, but undoubtedly contributing the challenges that dogged my Father's life. He loved wildflowers, which are plentiful around Mullewa, WA, in Yamatji country, and he was a man who loved stars and words and conversation. He also played a mean hand of 500, mastering the double laydown *misere* (aptly named), and that is perhaps a lovely image for the way one turns disaster into daring and triumph. I also would like to honour my Mother who did her best to keep myself and my sisters safe and who instilled a love of folk music and the lullaby in me and my maternal grandparents who sang to me and played me old 78s. My deepest wish for this work, other than my own growth is that it might be part of the spirit of change and deep listening and true collaboration that will build new songlines that all Australians might come to share. The central word of 'Incandescent' is 'Ngurra', which means 'home'. This land, our *Ngurra*, must be celebrated, protected and shared. People need Country; Country needs people.

I hope you engage and enjoy, and go forward companionably, deeply listening, singing and dancing!

Loyola Woods-Cameron, Jan 20, 2018

² Wajarri is spoken in by the Yamatji people in WA. The extraordinary achievement of a dictionary is a landmark in cultural restoration and is available at <https://itunes.apple.com/au/app/wajarri-dictionary/id938026682>

The Southern Summer Songlines Suite

Loyola Woods-Cameron, Composed Nov 2017- Jan 2018.

Acknowledgement to Country and People

I pay my respect to the Gadigal Elders, past, present and future, of the Eora nation, on whose land this work was conceived and to the Elders of the Yamatji and the Wajarri speakers whose land, people and language are referenced here. I also acknowledge all those of Indigenous background and those who may have suffered as a result of the Stolen Laws and experiences in Australia. Please be aware that this music speaks of the loss of children and Country and Language and Life but hopes to be part of the creative and collaborative conversation that moves us all forward. Take care of yourself and those around you as you listen, but “deep listening” is what we must do if we are to transform.³

The current accompanying mp3 track renders the full suite (15' 40" of music). This is not currently a commercial release, but all rights are reserved and listeners are to please note the limited use with permission of the didjeridoo sample by the didjshop.com.

Scores are available on request and by negotiation from the author at woodscameron@gmail.com. The author is happy to discuss performance of the work by communities and musicians and welcomes the collaborative commitment to making any performance locally relevant and culturally appropriate and safe.

1. The Coventry Carol: A minuet of mourning. SATB – A cappella (triple time) 80 BPM

This track begins the musical and historical journey. It was originally arranged in 2012, and has provided the traditional kernel from which the rest has grown.

Singers

Sopranos: Andrea Quaglia, Merri Bell, Jessica McLean and Loyola Woods-Cameron

Altos: Merri Bell, Jack Stacey, Loyola Woods-Cameron

Tenors: Jack Stacey

Baritones: Peter Nichols, Ray Whittaker and the Bass voices of Sibelius 7.5

2. The Company of Bells: The Horror and Sorry Business Remix - Electronica.

This track offers a sense of the collision of cultures and the fear, disorientation and dislocation of our Indigenous owners when their home was colonized and children lost or taken in this huge land of desert and stars.

An electronic remix of a Music Box and Percussion rendering of an arrangement of the Coventry Carol Sibelius Score was used, rendered by Sibelius 7.5 sounds and then manipulated in Audacity and remixed with permitted of an audio sample of a PVC Didjeridoo in C from the didjshop.

³ Judy Atkinson, *Trauma Trails: The Transgenerational Effects of Trauma in Indigenous Australia* (North Melbourne: Spinifex Press, 2002). In her substantive work the culturally appropriate approach to listening is termed 'Dadirri'. Deep listening has been practiced for generations by the Indigenous healers, such as the Western Desert *ngangkari*.

It is hoped that in future performances the Composer will have secured an actual Music Box. However the work could be performed as written by bells, chimes and percussion and recorded live and manipulated on stage to give the audience an *in vivo* experience of distortion and dislocation. Those interested are free to contact me to discuss possibilities, but to be aware that no commercial use can be made of any of the material including the recorded material utilizing the didjshop.com recording. All use requires permission.

3. Dreaming the Lost Children: A sorrowful sarabande (triple time, adagio, 80 BPM)

This track begins with a sense of the secret and insidious taking of children and then the heartfelt cries in Wajarri of the womenfolk: "Bilyurr, bilyurr, yanmanha. Mundungu. Yayiliri, Yayiliri, yayiliri, Oh!"

Soprano: Andrea Quaglia

Altos: Sonia Kumar, Loyola Woods-Cameron

Female and male voices also rendered additionally by Sibelius 7 sounds

Piccolo: Vittoria Lucia von Caemmerer

Didjeridoo: PVC didjeridoo sample from the didjshop.com

Finger Cymbals, Blown bottle, Violin, Cellos and Bassoon all rendered by Sibelius 7.5 sounds

4. Stolen our Children Away: A Sorrowful Song in the style of a hymn or spiritual (4/4, Con dolore BPM 100)

This work speaks to the deep sense of loss around connection to family and country. So much has been "spirited away". The important journey of healing requires moves such as the recent native title decision for the Wajarri-Yamatji region, one of the largest in Australia.

Soprano: Andrea Quaglia

Altos: Sonia Kumar, Loyola Woods-Cameron

Female and male voices also rendered additionally by Sibelius 7.5 sounds

Didjeridoo: PVC didjeridoo sample from the didjshop.com

Violin, Cellos, Piano and Bassoon all rendered by Sibelius 7.5 sounds

5. Incandescent: Ballad and Finale with Reprise of Coventry Carol (Cut common time, BPM 120)

The journey to heal our home, "ngurra", takes "deep listening" and Love and genuine and generous recognition of our mutual humanity but ancient spirit. Country, Language and Lore/Law need acknowledgement. Then perhaps we can see and feel that we are 'Incandescent' and journey together to "heal our home".

Solo Alto: Loyola Woods-Cameron

Soprano: Andrea Quaglia

Alto: Sonia Kumar

Female and male voices also rendered additionally by Sibelius 7.5 sounds

Piccolo: Vittoria von Caemmerer

Didjeridoo: PVC didjeridoo sample from the didjshop.com.

Harp, Violin, Cellos and Bassoon and Drum kit, all rendered by Sibelius 7.5 sounds

Extra score use of clave, percussion and tambourine from GarageBand Loops



**From the “Field of Light” Exhibition, Uluru, Bruce Munro, August 2017,
image by Loyola Woods-Cameron.**