

Jarrah (The life of a giant)

Composers: Lee Buddle and David Pye

First performance: 17 November 2006

Duration: 15'-20'

Jarrah was composed by Lee Buddle and David Pye during pi's Earth Songs residency at Dwellingup in late 2006.

The work was inspired by a gnarled ancient Jarrah tree in the forest near the Lane Poole Falls. Structurally it picks up on the idea that the tree rings found in a cross-section of a log show the history of the tree throughout its life – growth periods, drought, fires, insect attacks. Hence the work consists of a number of short sections that recur as the work proceeds. Originally written for the six members of small pi, it has been adapted for the larger scoring of big pi for this performance.

Sanctuary

Composer: Cathie Travers

First performance: 11 November 2007

Duration: 20-25' tba

My new work *SANCTUARY*, for the ensemble pi, is intended to highlight the Australian Wildlife Conservancy's Mt Gibson sanctuary in Western Australia. Rather than making a work which is musically descriptive of the environment, I've brought together various concepts and ideas, drawing inspiration from the Mt Gibson wildlife, musical instruments in the band, and my own thoughts, beliefs and desires in regard to the planet and the future.

I have the greatest admiration for those who devote their lives to caring for and documenting our environment. It has long seemed to me that the human race is fast becoming a dangerous plague. Our population has exploded and spread across the planet, often at the expense of other life forms. It's our fault that the world will never again see many plants, animals, environments, incredible things that we've managed to lose, permanently! To paraphrase a fabulously 'camp' line from the literary past: to lose one life form is unfortunate; to lose hundreds would seem irresponsible. Certainly I'm not alone in my thoughts. There are growing numbers of individuals who are alarmed at the current state of the planet; governments, corporations and members of the general public are taking steps to preserve the planet's life forms and, where possible, reverse the ill effects of our large population and industrialisation.

One group of people hard at work is the Australian Wildlife Conservancy, acquiring land and establishing sanctuaries for the conservation of threatened wildlife and ecosystems. To date the AWC owns 15 sanctuaries, covering 1.1 million ha (2.7 million acres) across Australia. The AWC's Mt Gibson sanctuary is approximately 350kms north-east of Perth. It covers over 130,000ha and comprises semi-arid ecosystems.

Two animals from the Mt Gibson sanctuary region leapt out and grabbed my attention: the Malleefowl and the Chocolate Wattlebird. The reasons these two appeal are fairly varied, and helped ignite my imagination and commitment to this project.

THE MALLEEFOWL:

- Ground dwelling, with large feet and short wings;
- After excavating a hole and filling it with leaves and twigs, the male bird tends the mound [where the female has laid her eggs] keeping the temperature within a two-degree variation whilst the eggs incubate;
- When the chick is born it digs its own way out of the mound and must take care of itself;
- Chicks have no contact with adults or other chicks. They tend to hatch one at a time, and birds of any age ignore one another except for mating or territorial disputes.

- An early naturalist, K.H. Bennett, wrote of the malleefowl:
“It’s actions are suggestive of melancholy, for it has none of the liveliness that characterises almost all other birds, but stalks along in a solemn manner”

I have a tendency to be a hermit, living on my bush block 55kms north-east of Perth, often ignoring human society. I love Argentinian Nuevo-tango music, which is often solemn, certainly quite heart-breaking, and rarely exuberant. Nuevo-tango is a strong influence on the music I compose, thus the malleefowl seemed a suitable mascot. My feminist tendencies are highly developed; the tending of the mound by the male bird indicates a positive aspect in the sharing of roles and domestic labour. Additionally, the malleefowl is on the list of Threatened Wildlife.

THE CHOCOLATE WATTLED BAT:

Depending on whom you consult, there are five to eight families of bats, one of which is *Vespertilionidae*, vesper or evening bat. The Chocolate Wattled belongs to this family.

- Any animal with the word chocolate in its name has instant and long lasting appeal ☺
- I’m an evening person, usually working until 3 or 4am, and rarely rising before 10am.
- Vespers is a church service; we have an instrument in the band which is most commonly associated with church music: the harmonium. Interestingly, one of the principal instruments in Argentinian tango music is the bandoneon, invented by a 19th century German for use in churches which were either too small, too geographically remote, or too financially challenged to own a harmonium.
- I like cute furry animals ☺

SANCTUARY is in several movements, played continuously without break, and is about 20 minutes in duration.

The first movement is entitled *Vespers*, and features the harmonium. It is music for sunset, as the church service is; in this case representing the sunset on the lives of so many animals and plants, ecosystems. It is a prayer for the endangered and the dying.

Next is a slow *Milonga* - an Argentinian Nuevo-tango form, followed by a movement inspired by the insect-eating bats and agile flight, and which has yet to be given a title.

The last of the structural forms is a *Winter Tango* inspired by the new European style. Somewhat heavier and grunter than the Argentinian tango forms, it allows me to introduce a little more violence and chaos into the musical language, suggesting the breakdown of a system.

Wrapping up the work is another, shorter, *Vespers* movement. Traditionally, the service of Vespers is supposed to prepare us for the sleep of the night and the dawn of the new day to come. Here it functions as a hope or a prayer that humanity will come to an understanding that our so-called superior position in the animal kingdom is not a licence to exploit. Rather, we would do better to take on the responsibility of caretakers of our environment. We are an element of a large and complex system. A system survives by adhering to a fairly strict balancing act of rules, functions, causes and effects; anything which upsets the balance will incite chaos and the ultimate destruction of the system. My hope or prayer is that humanity’s new day as caretakers will come soon, before we lose anything else.

Finally, I should point out that my piece includes improvisation, in the way that jazz makes use of impro - various players will take solos during the course of the work. In the case of *SANCTUARY* each soloist is asked to consider particular conceptual and narrative elements related to the movement when constructing his or her solo. August 2007

\ *Sanctuary* was commissioned by the Australian Wildlife Conservancy to celebrate their Mt Gibson property, with support from the Music Board of the Australia Council, the federal government’s arts funding and advisory body.

The Seasons

Composer: David Pye

Poetry: Kevin Gillam

Solo violin: Jess Ipkendanz

Narrator: Julia Moody*

First Performance: 26 January 2006

Duration: 36'

* Guest Artist, Julia Moody, appears with the kind permission of WAAPA@ECU

The Seasons is a collaboration between a poet and two musicians fusing text with music, baroque tradition with contemporary textures, to reinterpret the 'traditional' European notion of the change of the seasons in the light of our local Perth climate. Every creative artist interprets their culture in the light of their past looking to their own vision of the future. Inspired by Vivaldi's set of violin concertos, the *Four Seasons* (which was itself written to very precisely accompany and mirror poetic text.) aims to challenge audiences' thinking about their landscape, their seasonal reckonings and references through a seasonal ritual with words, music and time

Everybody has their own thoughts as to when and how the seasons change – in fact many Aussies believe there are only two seasons – the cricket season and the footy season! All is dictated by the various natural cycles of the environment – the solar cycle and its impact on temperature, rain, wind. The biological cycles of animals, birds and insects. The lunar cycle which runs in its own time gradually precessing across the rest of the year. Our cultural and religious cycles, largely imported from other countries and historical eras.

Accordingly much of the music and the poetry has a cyclic nature, using repetition as a structural device. Indeed the entire score is circular, commencing at a different point of the score for each performance depending upon the time of year the work is being performed and returning to that point after the complete year has been circumnavigated.

In addition, each performance utilises the services of eight members of the local community performing sound effects on 'rainsticks' – the weather for an entire year has literally been 'mapped' onto the score and dictates many aspects of the music (July 2003 – June 2004 for those who need to know these things!).

The Seasons was commissioned with support from the Music Board of the Australia Council, the federal government's arts funding and advisory body.