

Clive Douglas and the Search for the Australian Symphony

In 2003, ABC FM marked the 100th anniversary of composer Clive Douglas's birth with a short program of 20 minutes duration containing two orchestral tone poems: *Carwoola* and *Corroboree*. These were the only Douglas works heard all year in 2003 and I am unaware of any live performances by the main Australian orchestras. Clearly, to the uninitiated, this would suggest something about Douglas's relative importance within our contemporary assessment of twentieth century Australian concert music. One cannot be so sure, however, because almost all of Douglas's contemporaries have been similarly treated by our national broadcaster and our major concert organisations in recent years. It is as if an entire generation of Australian composers active between 1930 and 1960 remain silent, as if there was little of value being written in this country.

During the period between 1945 and 1963, Douglas – together with his contemporaries Margaret Sutherland, John Antill, Robert Hughes, Dorian Le Gallienne and Raymond Hanson – was considered one of Australia's leading composers. His music was performed regularly in Australia and overseas and his views on music were widely circulated. He was the winner of national composition prizes in 1933, 1935, 1951, 1954 and 1956. Were these verdicts misplaced? Was Douglas often played simply because as an ABC staff conductor in first Hobart and Brisbane, then in Sydney (Associate Conductor during the Goossens era) and Melbourne he could promote his own works as is sometimes suggested?

Few evaluations of his conducting by those who knew him were positive; he was regarded as a difficult colleague by those who knew him well, for instance by Robert Hughes; his treatment at the ABC left him embittered and disappointed despite 30 years of faithful service and his own discussion of this is played up. Worst of all, largely on the basis of one infamous journal article in 1956, he is 'guilty' of appropriation, of cultural imperialism, of misrepresenting Aboriginal musical culture with his works which include several that use Aboriginal words as titles. His music has been dismissed as derivative and old fashioned – usually on the basis of second-hand views, but his skills as an orchestrator have been almost universally praised (yet sensing that the total effect is as 'mutton dressed as lamb'. Yet, despite being the subject of several recent pieces of research work, including an honours thesis by Matthew Orlovich (1993), an article examining Douglas's memoirs by Jennifer Hill, two articles by Nicole Saintilan largely refuting the 'charge' of Roger Covell that Douglas was the musical equivalent of a 'Jindyworobak', and a book chapter by David Symons answering that he was, the discussion continues with barely a note of Douglas's music being heard to provide a context in sound to the verbiage. Few Australian musicians know Douglas's music today – hence my opening remark. Sadly, Douglas as composer badly needs rehabilitation today.

Like Antill, Hughes and Hanson, Clive Douglas was completely a product of Australian music education. Born in Rushworth, Victoria, Douglas's early life was marked by the early death of his father in 1906ⁱ. After his mother remarried, the family often moved around Victoria, and Douglas's education was therefore unsettled. Like the composers mentioned above, Douglas did not come from a privileged background. He took up full time employment outside music, beginning work as a bank clerk in August 1918, at the age of 15. Douglas had both violin and piano lessons as a child, and played in small orchestras and dance bands during the 1920s in his spare time. During 1924 he became a violin student of Alberto Zelman, the conductor of the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, and through this contact, won a place in the first violin section of the orchestra (then mostly an amateur body) until 1926. Zelman also guided him in music theory studies, in orchestration and conducting as Douglas was conducting the State Savings Bank orchestra. His serious study of music was postponed until 1929, when on the basis of his

first attempt at an opera, fully scored, he secured an Ormond Exhibition to fund his studies towards a B Mus degree at the University of Melbourne Conservatorium. During his time there until graduating in 1934, while maintaining his career at the bank, Douglas studied composition with A.E.H. Nickson. His first works appeared during the early 1930s.

Owing to his contacts with the Ormond Professor at the University of Melbourne, Bernard Heinze, Douglas became a staff conductor for the ABC in 1936 and left the world of banking which he had occupied for 18 years for good. Posted first to Tasmania, Douglas's employment later took him to staff conducting roles in Brisbane (1941-47), Sydney (1947-1953) and Melbourne – a career maintained until his retirement in 1966. Competent rather than brilliant, Douglas did not rise to the prominence of either Bernard Heinze or Joseph Post as conductor. However, his position at the ABC and his regular access to orchestras made the orchestra his major medium of musical expression as a composer.

Most commentators on Douglas's music focus on his appropriation of Aboriginal melodic material in his attempts to create an individual Australian identity to his music. This approach is most famously advocated in his 1956 article "Folk-song and the Brown Man: A means to an Australian expression in symphonic music" (*The Canon*, 1956, pp.81-85). Unfortunately, the controversial area of appropriation of indigenous culture has tended to overshadow Douglas's achievement as a composer. Douglas's travels around Australia as an ABC staff conductor, and his significant work as a film composer for Australian Government promotional films also prompted within him a desire to depict Australian landscapes in musical impressions. His program notes on his scores and his concert programs for the ABC show him as a 'full-blown' Australian nationalist composer, consciously and deliberately trying to project an Australian identity. Some of this 'flavour' will emerge in more detail in individual descriptions of Douglas's symphonic works.

Matthew Orlovich (1993, University of Sydney, B Mus Hons thesis) traces five main phases of development in Douglas's music. The first of these phases are linked to Douglas's formative influences, and can be traced from Douglas's own admission in an article entitled "How They Compose Their Winning Symphonies" (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 24 February 1952, p.7). His interviewer wrote:

His musical gods (apart from the older masters) have been successively Wagner, Strauss, and the French impressionists, Debussy and Ravel.

All four composers mentioned were master orchestrators, and in that area especially, Douglas shows real skill. The second phase and influence was Aboriginal melody and musical culture, which Douglas studied at second hand during the late 1930s and after through the writings of anthropologists such as Gillen and Spencer. There is no documentation, however, of any first hand experience or encounter with indigenous musicians on Douglas's part. The third influence was that of illustrative music for films, techniques that Douglas developed for himself through his own active participation. It is interesting to note that much of his music is linked to a descriptive program and to images of landscape from various parts of Australia. The fourth phase was an integration of all of the above influences, evident in the concert works of the 1950s. Lastly, during the early 1960s, Douglas applied serial techniques to his music. This is evident in his Symphony No.3 of 1963, three movements of which he later renamed *Three Frescoes* in 1969.

To my mind, Douglas's style up to and including 1954 could be described as 'an Australian Respighi' (although his sense of harmonic continuity and flow is not as convincing as Respighi). British composers like Bax, who share a similar range of influences, may also have impacted upon Douglas during his formative years as a composer during the 1930s.

Symphonies composed by Australian composers for local audiences were few prior to 1951. The only examples which are documented in performance were works by English-born composers who had settled in Australia such as George Marshall-Hall, Fritz Hart, George English and Edgar Bainton, or the South African-born Lindley Evans. Alfred Hill and Douglas were virtually the only Australian-born composers to have a symphony performed before 1945 – Hill's 'Life' symphony with choral finale appeared in 1941 (although originally a chamber work of about 1912). Clive Douglas submitted a one movement Symphony in D in 1933 as a prize-winning composition in an ABC competition. This work was performed after editing for small orchestra under the title of *Symphonette* in 1939, but Douglas withdrew the work after airing it in a concert in Sydney during the late 1940s. Apart from several short operas, from 1939 onwards Douglas focused his orchestral works on shorter tone-poems with Aboriginal titles. These included *Carwoola* and *Corroboree*, which both 1939, and the later *Jindarra* (1945) and *Wirra-warra-waal* (1950). The last of these was performed at a Promenade Concert in London during the 1950 season, conducted by Australian conductor Joseph Post. All these works mentioned remain in manuscript at the State Library of Victoria, although *Carwoola* was published by APRA in 1954.

As I have pointed out in other contexts, the major stimulus for the local creation of symphonies in Australia was the 1951 Commonwealth Jubilee Composer's Competition which required competitors from across the British Commonwealth to compose a symphony of no more than 40 minutes duration. Apart from the first prize of £1000, a special prize of £250 was reserved for the best Australian entry in the event that an Australian was not the winner (which was considered likely by the organisers, headed by Eugene Goossens, then conductor of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra. Of 89 entries, 36 of these were composed by resident Australians. One of these was Clive Douglas who warmed to the task of writing a large-scale work on a national theme. All competitors had to submit their work under a nom de plume. Not untypically, Douglas submitted his under the Aboriginal name 'Karawora', the lead male character in his opera *Bush Legend*. Douglas's Symphony was a large-scale affair in four movements, and with its 34 minute length probably one of the biggest Australian entries. Its attempt at grand, epic gestures made an impression on the adjudicators Goossens, Bax and Barbirolli, and Douglas was awarded a special third prize of £100 (not originally planned by the competition organisers).

The symphony of 1951 seems to be free of Douglas's consistent habit of recycling elements of previous works into new ones. Douglas was upfront in admitting this in a note within his catalogue of works which he submitted to the Australian Music Centre which was connected primarily to his *Symphonette*.

At this point I should state that it has been part of my method of composition, to revise after a lapse of time, immature works that contain sufficient merit to justify a further analysis to preserve their better qualities. By the same process, ideas that do not stand the test of time and a more mature judgement, are discarded altogether. In this way, the final selection after many years of creative effort, results in about one third of the original output being passed on to posterity.

However, it was to become a source of musical ideas which he recycled in later works. The symphony was also a piece in which he avoided aboriginal references and in which he attempted to 'modernise' his idiom. In the program note to the first performance of 19 July 1952, which was based on Douglas's own notes, some of the background to the symphony and Douglas's intention behind it is revealed.

The thought of writing this symphony occupied the composer's mind for two years prior to its completion in March 1951. Always keenly interested in creating a musical style germane to Australia, the operas and symphonic poems of Clive Douglas have exploited aboriginal folklore as a means of national musical expression. He has become convinced, however, that modern Australian life demands a more elastic idiom and that aboriginal art, however important in its own right, obviously expresses nothing of the life and thought of the average Australian.

The symphony is thus not only a conscious attempt to break away from the traditional laws of harmony and melody which were developed in Europe, but is also the composer's first step towards a musical language arising more directly out of the atmosphere of Australian life. One result is a strong tendency to atonality as in the scherzo of this symphony where the composer uses harsh atonal harmonies to suggest some of the harsher aspects of Australian life.

He amplified this view when interviewed by the Sydney Morning Herald ("How they compose their Winning Symphonies" *Sydney Morning Herald* 24 February 1952, p.7).

"I wanted to suggest something of our huge expanse, and something of the conditions under which we live", he explains.

The symphony is the result. The four movements he says, represent the historical development of Australia. It took only eight weeks to write it down, but two years to plan in his mind before the symphony competition gave him the stimulus to put it on paper.

The description of the symphony in the program notes for the Sydney premiere on 19 July 1952 show that the work is associated with an extra-musical program of epic, nationalistic character. A descriptive program seems to have been Douglas's main tool of conveying nationalist feeling – that, and the use of Aboriginal works for many of the titles of his works. In a significant article ('The Composer's Lodestone', *Canon*, March/April 1958, pp.295-6), Douglas discussed the role and function of program notes in his own practice as a composer. I suspect this was written in response to trenchant criticism by Melbourne composer and music critic Felix Werder which appeared in *Meanjin* in June 1957, pp.140 ff. Although Werder did not name Douglas in the article, he was clearly in his sights as Werder criticises 'the rage' for French Impressionism and attempts towards a conscious Australian nationalism by utilising Aboriginal modes and rhythms.

There does, however, exist an amusing apology for Australian music when some composers attach to their impressionistic outpourings some such label as 'On the Road to Wagga-Wagga' or 'Murrumbidgeana'.

Douglas defended himself by showing his preference for an illustrative title and "fanciful story to aid the listener's understanding" to "an involved analysis of theme and development, which is often highly technical and beyond the comprehension of the average concert goer" or "a simple number at the top of a score". He illustrated his approach to this concept with reference to his works *Wongadilla*, *Namatjira*, *Coolawidgee*, *Carwoola* and *Sturt 1829* (or *Kaiela*, its alternative title). This would seem to be an extension of his practice when introducing works at his ABC school concerts and youth concerts in his role as a conductor. (He was sharply criticised for his introductions by Arthur Jacobs in his two articles on Music in Australasia which appeared in the *Musical Times* during 1953.) In the article he acknowledged that the listener might come to other conclusions about the music's meaning than the composer indicated. "The composer is the first to admit all this, and as the ideas behind the music are personal and abstract, should therefore be accepted on trust, with a maximum of poetic licence". Towards the end of the article, and describing several of his works, Douglas writes:

None of these works are programme pieces in the material sense – the ‘story’ to each is meant merely as an aid to the listener. Remove the title and the synopsis and the music becomes purely abstract – it does not pretend to ‘lead’ any school of Australian composition, but is entirely personal. It is not held as a model for others to follow – this is left for posterity to decide. Sincerity of purpose has always been the aim of serious minded composers, and this is the ideal I try to follow.

Unfortunately, Douglas’s explanatory notes and comments about his first symphony make him very vulnerable to criticism. To 21st century eyes and ears the program seems pretentious, precious and bombastic, in a way that probably would not have been the case within the public discourses of post World War 2 Australia. Besides, the work was written for the Jubilee of Australian Federation, and the patriotic tone was not entirely out of place. Douglas in his program notes insinuates that this is the ‘epic’, ‘great Australian Symphony’. It does not give him a fair chance to be heard on the basis of his music alone.

This symphony attempts much, being cast on an ambitious four movement scale with big ‘cinemascope’ gestures in the outer movements. The scoring is for a standard large symphony orchestra. Amongst other Australian symphonies of the 1950s the 34 minute duration is only exceeded by Bainton’s Third Symphony, Antill’s Symphony on a City (both approximately 37 minutes) and Horace Perkins’s Elegiac Symphony (1951 – 43 minutes). The order of movements is conventional with a moderately fast, sonata form first movement, a slow second movement, a fast scherzo and trio and a broad finale. Each of the movements are unified by recurring appearances or transformations of the opening motif of the work. Douglas labels this theme ‘Spirit of Adventure’ in his program note, adding that:

This motive appears in various guises in all movements and is meant to suggest a national characteristic of ruggedness.

The first movement is cast in sonata form, with clear structural divisions shown in the expected places. In its original shape, without cuts, the movement consists of 305 bars and approximately 11 minutes playing time. Douglas describes the movement as follows:

The spirit of adventure dominates this movement with the strong opening subject for the brass section against soaring passages for strings and woodwind. . . A more jocund second subject conveys a feeling of freedom and subsequent sections reflect varying moods – the mystery of a vast unknown land, the drama of its early exploration, moments of strife followed by periods of tranquility [sic.] and even romance. However all these moods are fleeting and give way to the dominant force of the opening.

The slow, second movement is of approximately 7 ½ minutes duration and 121 bars in length, with three main sections. Douglas describes the music as follows:

This movement is a period of contemplation of fertile coastal lands, separated by age-old mountain ranges from the solitude of the inland plains and the vast dead heart of the desert.

It really tells us nothing about the musical content. The second main section of this movement is one of the strongest parts of the symphony, adding yet another influence to Douglas’s eclectic range of styles – this time Vaughan Williams in *London Symphony* style.

The third movement, a fast scherzo and trio, is the shortest movement of the symphony. Douglas is especially pictorial here in his description of the music:

Frequently atonal and harshly discordant, the scene of the Scherzo is set first in the din of cities, changing shortly to wide, wind-swept pasture lands and the stark, overwhelming

devastation of an inland dust storm (and an allusion to the panic-stricken bleating mobs of suffocating sheep). The rhythm continues, leading to a great outburst of the “Spirit of Adventure” theme by the full orchestra in unison. Then follows the clanging of steel foundries, the pounding of a modern locomotive, the whirl of textile mills, the crystal sounds of glass making – a return to the cities of an industrial empire.

Douglas grossly overstates the dissonance component of this movement. The second main theme of the movement is very tonal, in fact it sounds very redolent of Dvorak in Eighth or ‘New World’ Symphony vein. It is, however, one of his most successful extended essays in fast music and maintains a continuity that is often missing in the other movements.

The fourth movement is cumulative in character, and midway through the movement a diatonic theme emerges, first plaintively then, towards the end of the piece, in blatant ‘flag-waving’ apotheosis. Douglas’s program note outdoes even the hyperbole of the third movement:

The finale reflects the dignity of Australia taking its place in the affairs of nations. Lighter moments appear suggestive of a sport-loving people, but the more serious tones of national achievement predominate. With the measured rhythm of the drums of war as a background, the symphony ends as a song of freedom rises in simplicity and strength pointing towards a yet unformed future.

The British judges’ report of Douglas’s symphony is especially redolent of the tone of the Commonwealth Jubilee Competition, and captures some of the essence of this work.

There is much that is attractive in this optimistic and truly “colonial” composition. It is spaciously laid out, so that there is plenty of air to breathe. It may be considered somewhat naïve, but it “is the naivete of youth”.

In the aftermath of the competition, Douglas’s symphony was, initially, given considerable exposure in a way that was unprecedented for a large-scale Australian symphony. The premiere in Sydney, conducted by Goossens was followed up two days later on the 21 July. Later in 1952, on 3 August, the Scherzo was played in a S.S.O. Free Matinee concert. The entire symphony was given three times at S.S.O. Youth Concerts on 30 September, 1st and 2nd of October under Douglas’s direction. Douglas recorded the work with the S.S.O. on 11 December 1952 for the ABC. The Melbourne premiere followed in the 1954 Youth Concert series on 31 August and 1 September, under Douglas’s direction (by then he was Associate Conductor of the Victorian Symphony Orchestra). Reviews of the work were mixed, including some negative reviews by Sydney Morning Herald critic Lindsay Browne which offended the extremely sensitive Douglas.

The symphony was never published, and though recorded for broadcast, never released commercially. It remains in manuscript as part of Douglas’s bound Doctoral thesis at the University of Melbourne Library and in short score at the State Library of Victoria. A complete set of orchestral parts is located in the Symphony Australia Collection within the National Library of Australia.

In 1956, Douglas withdrew the symphony from performance and submitted the full score as part of his successful D Mus thesis (together with his opera *Kaditcha*) at the University of Melbourne). This did not prevent him from taking sections of the work and reusing them in at least three subsequent works. The second subject group from the first movement was reworked to form a portion of Variations Symphonique (1961): the Scherzo reappeared with a few cuts as the Finale of his Sinfonietta, which he wrote for the Festival of Perth of 1960. In its new home, Douglas entitled the movement ‘Pantomime’, with the main tempo marking *Allegro bizzarria*, and the metronome indication quickened to crotchet = 168. The new title suggests that the

original program has been completely obliterated from any association with this music. Towards the end of his life, he came back to the slow movement of the Symphony and reproduced it with cuts as *Pastorale for Orchestra*, Opus 92.

Although this practice of ‘cannibalisation’ was noted earlier (and will be seen again), it is intriguing to note that Douglas was so meticulous in preserving his scores in their original shape and in reference scores. His lists and careful storage of his scores indicate the Douglas envisaged future generations investigating his music and, perhaps, reviving his works in performance. This is in marked contrast to, say, Brahms who destroyed all the manuscripts that did not meet his critical standards. In later notes about his work, and in the numbering of his subsequent symphonies, Douglas continued to ‘own’ Symphony No.1.

Although claiming to move away from Aboriginal motifs in his work in the Symphony No.1, Douglas returned to this inspiration in several orchestral works of the 1950s, including the symphonic poem *Sturt 1829* (or *Kaiela*), the large three movement symphonic suite *Wongadilla* (1954), the suite for small orchestra *Coolawidgee* and, arguably Douglas’s most important work, the Symphony No.2 ‘*Namatjira*’ of 1956.

Namatjira represented a watershed in Douglas’s output with its consistently dissonant idiom that largely eschews traditional triadic tonality, unlike his earlier works. The work shows a mixture of Romantic and impressionistic scoring with a dissonant, non-triadic harmonic idiom which seems to retain, at times, a sense of tonal centre. Certain parts of the work sound atonal. Rarely are there signs of conventional harmony, rather chords are used for their colouristic potential. Douglas’s symphony is brilliantly scored, featuring much use of the percussion section including vibraphone, celeste, piano and wind machine. However, I wonder whether the colourful percussion and static, lonely musical landscapes owe at least something to Vaughan Williams’ *Sinfonia Antartica*, a work one suspects Douglas had heard in its Melbourne performances not long before Symphony No.2. Nevertheless, Douglas uses a more advanced harmonic idiom than Vaughan Williams, and his scoring for orchestral tutti is infinitely superior.

Like many other Douglas works, *Symphony No.2 ‘Namatjira’* seems to have gone through several different stages. In its first performances and recording it was known as the *Symphonic Suite:Namatjira*. A note on the score describes the dates of composition to be 1952-1956. What Douglas describes as his “Original work-out sketch” amongst the Douglas collection at the State Library of Victoria, is his short score of *Namatjira* – A tonal thesis in the form of a symphonic suite. On the score is also written: “Used as basis of sister work “*Terra Australis*” with added soprano solo and chorus. Qv ABC recordings of both versions.” At the top of the first page of the sketch score is written: ‘Sketch 27/7/52 to 31/8/52’. In his article for the journal *The Canon* entitled ‘The Composer’s Lodestone’ of March April 1958, Douglas describes the work as a ‘symphonic suite’. In 1959, Douglas rewrote the piece for radio broadcast (with the intention of entering the piece into the ‘Italia Prize’) to include soprano soloist, narrator and chorus, entitling the revision *Terra Australis*. The work for orchestra alone was also known as Suite from *Terra Australis*. An optional version of the work leaves out the first two sections of the score. Titling the work Symphony No.2 may have been a later decision, perhaps from the early 1960s – or even 1963, when Symphony No.3 appeared. Yet, there is also another manuscript in Box 4 of MS 7656, titled Symphony No.2 beginning with a movement titled “Eclogue – The Timeless Land” which opens differently to the ‘official’ score of the work which is unfinished, and which is dated 1954. This full score consists of 67 bars only. As time passed it appears that the status of the work became clear to Douglas, and all of Douglas’s official lists of works lodged with the Australian Music Centre in Sydney describe the work as *Symphony No.2 ‘Namatjira’*.

The work is not laid out in traditional four movement form as is the Symphony No.1. Rather it is cast in eight continuous sections, each one representing a specific landscape or event so it is intentionally impressionistic.

Douglas wrote as follows in the score:

Since there is no musical idiom which can be regarded as essentially Australian in style, nor any folk song source, an attempt has here been made to write music of national significance by creating a tonal thesis wedded to the land itself... The real Australia is that vast and little known interior; the environs of the aboriginal painter, Namatjira... A land of vast distances and a grim, remorseless and forbidding desolation of sandy desert or gibber plain, contains incredible mountain formations and geological wonders unique in the world. It is a dramatic land conforming to no ordered pattern, a law unto itself.

What is beyond the limitations of words to describe might be conveyed in the abstract quality of music – a music which, like the land, must be defiant of precedent.ⁱⁱ

Aboriginal melodic material occurs in two sections; towards the end of the second section *Arunta* there is a theme labelled ‘Aboriginal stock rider’s chant’, and one of the main themes in the final section *Larutja*. In addition, there are musical depictions of Aboriginal ceremonies; in section five, *Corroboree at Ooldea* and in the final section. Douglas’s program note about *Larutja* is very revealing:

Primeval ritual of the Tors. In a dramatic setting of fiery cinnabar mountain ranges, stone-age man enacts the savage rites of his race.ⁱⁱⁱ

Both sections feature driving rhythms, ostinatos and colourful scoring for percussion. The slower sections of the work feature shimmering, static, and lonely musical landscapes in a strikingly individual style. It is a shame if evocative and colourfully scored music like this is to be permanently discredited on the basis of Douglas’s unfortunate views on appropriation, or on the overstated case that his music was ‘defiant of precedent’.

As Douglas was wont to rework his scores into different shapes, in 1957 he telescoped excerpts from section 3 ‘Mirage’, section 5 ‘Corroboree at Ooldea’, end of section 7 ‘Catacombs’ and section 8 ‘Larutja’ to become a ‘Readers Digest’ version of *Namatjira* for violin and piano under the title *Pastorale and Ritual Dance*. Later, in 1959, Douglas added a narrator (reciting a text of Douglas’s own making) and a wordless chorus to the symphony as an Italia Prize entry, the new version being called *Terra Australis*.

Douglas’s Third Symphony was completed in 1963, and represents the final stage of his compositional development with its personal use of twelve-tone serialism. Gone are any references to Australia or Aboriginal motifs. The work is cast in four movements. Although recorded and broadcast in 1965, there is no record of a concert performance of the work in its original shape. Following Douglas’s trip to Europe in 1966, the work was reduced to three movements (those three remaining movements being unaltered from the symphonic original) and given titles connected to impressions of Ancient Rome. It finished up as *Three Frescoes* and was released as a commercial recording during the early 1970s. It is ironic that despite beginning as an abstract piece, Douglas could not refrain from affixing programmatic associations to his music, this time from Europe.

In my opinion, Douglas torpedoed his own music by his use of programs throughout his career. They have led, almost invariably, to his music being judged because of these extra-musical associations rather than on the basis of the value of his music as music. They have also dated his

compositions, and were a major factor in his almost total eclipse as a major figure in Australian music in the period since his death in 1977. He protested too much and too late in his final published article, which appeared in January 1976. Even here he contradicted himself.

I have used titles said to be of Aboriginal origin to add local colour here and there in my output; but a mere title detracts not one jot from the fundamental abstract quality of the music. What I have written does not require a “program” for its understanding – the music speaks for itself. I am averse to attaching “program notes” to any work of mine.

For Douglas to be taken seriously today, he needs to be taken at his ‘last’ word, and be judged on the basis of his music. This shows him to be the Australian musical pioneer that he considered himself to be – and within the context of the music of his own time, the best of his symphonic music is an important, but flawed, body of work. For a real perspective of Australian music of the 30s, 40s and 50s, Douglas’s oeuvre cannot be ignored. For that to happen, these works deserve fresh recordings commensurate with present day standards of performance and recording quality.

ⁱ Douglas, C. *Autobiography of an Australian composer*, unpublished, State Library of Victoria, Dr Clive Martin Douglas papers, MS 7656, Box 15.

ⁱⁱ Facsimile of autograph score, Australian Music Centre Library.

ⁱⁱⁱ Douglas’s program notes were written for ABC concert performances of this work, Clive Douglas file in the Australian Music Centre Library, Sydney.