



# Anthology of Australian Music on Disc

**CSM:28**

REMASTERED HERITAGE RECORDINGS

**MUSIC FOR FILM: DORIAN  
GALLIENNE AND JOHN ANT**

CD 1140

## Music for Film: Dorian Le Gallienne and John Antill

This disc is one of a number of remastered recordings to be included in the Canberra School of Music's *Anthology of Australian Music on Disc* series. Australian heritage recordings, like those on this disc, add a new dimension to the *Anthology*, providing access to compositions and performances which are historically significant.

The two composers represented on this disc wrote purpose-built music for Australian films. Their styles, and the results of their work, are very different.

Dorian Le Gallienne was born in Melbourne in 1915. His father was a native of Lille in France and his mother, a vigorous suffragette, the daughter of the assistant astronomer at the Melbourne observatory. Dorian was a sickly child, but he quickly demonstrated a considerable musical gift. After initial studies in Melbourne, he became a student of Herbert Howells and Arthur Benjamin at the Royal College of Music in London. Later he worked in London with Gordon Jacob.

On his return to Australia, he formed an enduring relationship with notable Australian economist and Ritchie Professor of Economics at Melbourne University, Richard 'Dick' Downing. From the 1950s they shared Downing's house in the leafy Melbourne suburb of Eltham. It was out of the artistic ethos of this outer suburb, home to many important artists and academics, that his film music arose. Eltham Films, its energy and direction provided by Tim Burstall and Patrick Ryan, first produced short films. The most significant of these was *The Prize*, which won a bronze medal at the 1960 Venice Film Festival, inspiring confidence in the ability of the company and its artistic mainstay, Burstall. Eltham Films

quickly developed a profile and was confidently commissioned by the ABC, among others, to produce short films. Most of these were examinations of the works of contemporary Australian painters and sculptors.

Le Gallienne, who became an Eltham identity and who taught composition at the Melbourne University Conservatorium, was an obvious choice to provide music especially written for films. As he had already written numerous scores for amateur theatrical productions, including some of the plays of Shakespeare, his move to scoring for films was natural enough.

In addition to his work as a composer, Le Gallienne wrote extensively as music critic for Melbourne newspapers. His 'work', then, included teaching, composition and journalism. Nevertheless, he found time to write scores for amateur dramatic groups, and for Burstall, who was another denizen of what the composer described as his 'village', Eltham. Le Gallienne found purpose and direction in this cooperation with sympathetic neighbours. He spoke of the composer's function within a community, serving its needs and creating its culture.

Film provided him with a requirement for sustained musical support for incident and character similar to that he had experienced with *Hamlet* or *Othello*. But film music was, in effect, more pervasive and less incidental than the odd song or dance sequence in a play and, in the long run, probably more satisfying. Had he lived longer, he might have become a central figure in the film music industry. His contribution, as it stands, is significant enough to accord him an important place in what has become known as the renaissance of Australian film in the 1960s.

Tim Burstall went on from his roots in short films, often made for the infant Australian

television industry, to produce a number of successful feature films, but by that time Le Gallienne was dead. He died at the age of 48 in 1963, just as support for Australian film making developed and young directors and producers realised their visions. What the result might have been had Le Gallienne survived to write for feature films must remain a matter for speculation.

What is beyond doubt is the place of Eltham Films in the revitalised Australian film industry. *The Prize* stands at the beginning of a new seriousness, rising levels of energy and support for film-making and the stirring of a new vitality.

A long playing recording of *The Film Music of Dorian Le Gallienne* was published by the Melbourne record company W & G (White and Gillespie) in 1965. The mastertape for this recording has survived and is held in the collection of the National Film and Sound Archive. Although this tape is beginning to show signs of decomposition, it has been carefully prepared by the Archive's technical staff, and the resulting digital recording is a considerable improvement on the vinyl disc.

John Antill, a near contemporary of Le Gallienne, wrote scores for about twenty documentary films, most of them for Film Australia.

Antill was born in Sydney in 1904. Even though he showed early signs of a musical gift, he was steered into a 'sensible' career as a railway workshop draughtsman. Having completed an apprenticeship, he left the security of his trade to pursue a musical career which was to extend over the next half a century. Antill is best remembered for his highly successful score for the ballet *Corroboree* and, although he was a prolific composer, few of his other works are played or known today. He wrote almost as many scores for radio drama as he did for film, and

other compositions include operas, orchestral suites, concertos, and a symphony written for the city of Newcastle (NSW).

His place in Australia's musical history needs to be assessed at two levels. As a composer there is much to be said for his craft. Roger Covell (*Australia's Music*, 1967) speaks of Antill as a "fastidious and thoughtful musician", yet one whose musical contribution it was difficult to judge in the mid 1960s. Almost thirty years on, we are better placed to measure him against his contemporaries and younger composers, yet the great poverty of good performances, recordings and published scores still inhibits informed judgement.

But Antill should not be assessed entirely on his compositions: he was also a notable music administrator, working for many years for the ABC, where he encouraged other musicians, and exercised some control over items that were broadcast. He died in 1985, probably disappointed that so little of his music had attained any enduring currency.

James McCarthy, who is currently researching and writing an account of the Film Australia music section, has noted that the listing in Antill's biography (*Gentle Genius*, 1987) includes works 'recycled' from earlier scores. McCarthy, who was the Musical Director at Film Australia for much of his professional life (from 1964), was responsible for commissioning scores and for liaison with composers and performers.

The Antill music on this disc has been remastered from a mastertape of the original performance which was used in 1958. The tape is held in the collection of Australian Archives (Sydney), and is one of several hundred such tapes which document the work of Film Australia.

The Film Australia Music Collection Project will not only ensure the survival of the various

elements from which soundtracks are made, but will also consolidate knowledge of what is currently an invisible part of Australia's musical heritage.

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***The Crucifixion* (1962)**  
Dorian Le Gallienne

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This film, which is sometimes called the *Stations of the Cross*, depicts the work of Eltham sculptor and jeweller Matchum Skipper. The bas-relief sculptures upon which the film is based were made for the Church of Mary the Immaculate in Ivanhoe, Victoria. The music, which follows the passion of Christ, is angular and sinewy.

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***Dance of the Angels* (1962)**  
Dorian Le Gallienne

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Images of the ceramic sculptures of John Perceval have been linked in this film to form a sequence of events. There are fanfares, amorous encounters and wrestling. The sculptures, which are paradoxically both robust and finely detailed, create a rather medieval impression. They are filmed to suggest activity even though they are inanimate, and the music is a vital element in the sense of movement and the heartiness of the dance.

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***Sebastian and the Sausages* (1961)**  
Dorian Le Gallienne

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*Sebastian and the Sausages* was made for children's television. The simple story-line follows the adventures of a fox called Sebastian who, in this episode, steals sausages from a swagman's pan. Le Gallienne died during the production of this television series, and the work of providing music passed to George Dreyfus.

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***The Prize* (1960)**  
Dorian Le Gallienne

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1. Merry Go Round Waltz 2. Escape of the Goat  
3. The Jinker Ride 4. Lisa's Run 5. Searching the Farm  
6. The River 7. The End of the Day.

*The Prize* is the story of a boy, Snowy, who wins a goat at a country show, but loses it on his way home. The goat is caught by two larrikins who attempt to steal the animal, but their plot is thwarted by Snowy's persistence in pursuing his new pet. He is eventually successful. The film was shot in black and white; the strong Australian light is subtly controlled, the whole given a slightly European feeling with soft focus and an 'art house' style.

Le Gallienne's music is rich, evocative and mimetic. It cleverly follows the film's action, heightening visual events and providing atmosphere and narrative support. The sections of the score have been separated on the mastertape, forming a suite of contrasting pieces.

Roger Covell, in the Autumn 1994 edition of *Sounds Australian*, adds to his earlier opinions (1967) of Le Gallienne's music: "The special claims I enter for Le Gallienne are that, more than any other resident Australian composer of his time, he provided a persuasive example of possessing the composer's equivalent of outstanding draughtsmanship in an artist working with visual materials. His melodic-thematic gift was exceptional, not less so (indeed, arguably more so) for being expressed in a conservative and recognisable idiom ... His music sounded competent within recognisable styles of composition; but it did more than this: it appeared memorable and fresh in its own right, to a

repeatable extent avoiding staleness and the air of repeating what others had said earlier or better."

These comments seem apposite for Le Gallienne's film music. It was skilfully draughted, its structure linked to the edited final cut, and its movement and mood adding immeasurably to the whole. It was and remains memorable and fresh.

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***New Guinea Patrol* (1958)**  
John Antill

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This film, true to its title, documents the work of Australians in the jungles of New Guinea. The film follows the discoveries of a Government patrol and its journey to distant valleys where the local people had experienced little or no previous contact with Europeans. Antill's music is business-like, his masterly professional skills well in evidence. The sequence of the musical materials and their arrangement into a chamber orchestral suite is the work of James McCarthy.

**Acknowledgments**

James McCarthy provided information about Film Australia and the important joint project of Australian Archives and the National Film and Sound Archive (together with Film Australia) which will ensure the future accessibility of taped performances and scores which form the Film Australia Music Collection. Viktor Fumic was responsible for tape restoration and transfer. The W & G masters were 'bleeding' at a number of splices, causing damage where the splicing tape adhesive was compressed between windings of the tape. Cathy Bromley was responsible for digital remastering using CEDAR and Sonic Solutions' No Noise. Attempts to discover ownership rights to this material have been undertaken

by the publisher. Enquiries concerning ownership should be directed to the National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra.

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**A Brief History of Australian Sound Recording**

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It is likely that the earliest sound recordings made in Australia were produced by Alexander Sutherland in Melbourne in 1878, in the year after Edison patented his tinfoil phonograph in the USA. (Sutherland was an uncle of the composer Margaret Sutherland.) Descriptions of Edison's machine were widely disseminated, so it is not surprising that, during Sutherland's research on the human voice, he turned to the somewhat primitive apparatus. The tinfoil recording cylinder was low in fidelity to the original sounds and tended to self destruction in its first 'playback'.

Various improvements to the phonograph were made during the 1880s and 1890s. The development of wax cylinders provided reliable multiple playback, higher fidelity and a range of pre-recorded performances as off-the-shelf products. Phonographs quickly became available in Australia in goodly numbers, and, like compact cassette recorders today, had record and playback functions. There is evidence that people thought of the phonograph as a tool for recording spoken communication in place of written letters. Newspapers of the day made various satirical proposals for the use of the device in their cartoon pages. Witness statements in court cases was one suggested use; another was complaints to the Minister for Railways!

Serious singers initially viewed the distant, distorted record of their performances with scepticism. Singers such as Melba asked what

possible value this pale shadow of their singing could have?

The answer is complex. Today a listener has access to whatever has survived. In the case of early cylinder recordings, the signal is often barely audible in the crackle and grind of the old wax. The voices of Australians like Frances Saville, recorded in New York in the middle part of 1896, struggle through the heavy encrusting of surface noise which is added to what was, at best, an inefficient recording technology.

Later that year, Thomas Rome, a citizen of Warmambool in Victoria, enhanced his presentations on an Edison phonograph (which he used as a 'side show' attraction at a local Exhibition) with performances which he had recorded in that town. He utilised commercial pre-recorded cylinders, but also made what are believed to be the earliest surviving group of Australian recorded cylinders – the earliest known surviving Australian sound recordings. Local folk could pay to listen through seventeen listening tubes (rather like a bank of stethoscopes) and to be amazed.

Improvements in recording in the last years of the nineteenth century and in the first decade of the twentieth century produced even better results. Many performers were attracted to the idea of leaving some representation of their prowess; furthermore they soon found that recording sales boosted their incomes.

Many Australians made sound recordings in the earliest years, and several became household names in Australia because of their recording. This was especially true of popular singers like Billy Williams, Florrie Forde and Albert Whelan. Williams' voice was particularly suited to the acoustic recording process, unlike that of Melba (and other sopranos), who sound less life-like than recorded baritones.

A few recording companies made cylinders and discs in Australia from the late nineteenth century on, but there was no early mass production on the scale seen in Europe or the USA.

Early in 1926, the His Master's Voice (HMV) company and, earlier still, the Brunswick company established record pressing plants. Later the same year, the first large recording enterprise was established in Sydney, offering increased opportunities for Australian performers to record. The opening of a Columbia studio and factory complex at Homebush, and the simultaneous introduction of the microphone and electrical recording meant that Australians took two steps forward at once. All sorts of musicians—jazz bands, ballad singers, and others—came forward to record. The soprano Elsa Stralia cut some tracks late in 1926, and was closely followed by the celebrated Amy Castles. Much of this early material was not released, due to deficiencies in performance, or to a lack of familiarity with the microphone and the new electrical technology.

During the late 1920s and the 1930s, many Australians produced commercially successful discs, and the Homebush factory continued to produce 78 rpm disc recordings until the early 1960s.

In the early 1950s, audiotape became commonly available. It greatly improved the recording process, enabling the splicing together of various 'takes'. The old system, with its need to record a whole side in one take, was superseded. Audiotape was used to record domestically, much as the wax cylinder had been used in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. A further development of the tape technology, the compact cassette, was taken up in Australia soon after its international release in 1964.

During the 1940s and 1950s, Australian performances of a few works by Australian composers were recorded. These tended to be chamber music rather than the more expensive full orchestral repertoire, although the Australian Broadcasting Corporation actively promoted local composers, and broadcast live and recorded performances of Australian orchestral works. The latter were generally not intended for commercial release.

By the 1960s, the 78 rpm shellac disc was replaced by vinyl long playing microgroove recordings which provided about twenty minutes of playing time per side. Both tape and vinyl formats carried Australian performances and, occasionally, Australian compositions.

The difficulty of earning a living as a composer outside the academies, and even within them, drove some Australians in directions they might not have taken had there been ample sources of patronage and support. The film industry, for example, required large amounts of music to set a mood and to establish and sustain character or action. Even if it was not an option to generate a reasonable income, writing for films offered some composers a public hearing.

By the 1950s, British composers like Vaughan Williams and John Ireland helped to elevate the status of scoring for films. Ireland provided the evocative music for the successful Anglo-Australian production, *The Overlanders*. Many

local composers took up the challenge of writing for films, especially for one of the busiest film producers, a government agency called the Commonwealth Film Unit. Later called Film Australia, it produced quality documentaries. The film collections of Film Australia and the master recording tapes of specially written film music offer another source of significant recordings of Australian composition and performance. John Antill, for example, wrote some twenty specially commissioned film scores.

Digital recording and the arrival of the compact disc in Australia in the mid-1980s improved the playback quality, providing both extended playing time and enhanced frequency response, and allowing further replication without generational quality loss. Australians took up the new technology, quickly establishing Australia as one of the international leaders in per capita sales of compact discs.

Digital audio tape (DAT) followed after the introduction of the CD. Although it has had few domestic applications, and because there have been few pre-recorded releases, it has been widely used by broadcasters, field collectors and oral historians. Compact DAT tape recorders offering high quality digital recording have proved to be invaluable for professional collectors of sound.

Dr Jeff Brownrigg  
National Film and Sound Archive

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## **Anthology of Australian Music on Disc**

The *Anthology* now comprises thirty discs. CSM 1-15 were released as a boxed set with an accompanying handbook providing information on the works, composers and performers. CSM 16-21 (Series II) and CSM 22-30 (Series III) are available in separate boxed sets with individual liner notes. Future series will add to this collection of Australian music. All titles are available individually.

**SERIES I – CSM 1: FLEDERMAN CSM 2: SYNERGY CSM 3: MAYS CSM 4, 5 and 6: ELECTRO-ACOUSTIC MUSIC CSM 7: PETRA STRING QUARTET/CUBBIN/BOLTON CSM 8: MORTON CSM 9: AUSTRALIAN CHAMBER ORCHESTRA/CANBERRA HORN CONSORT CSM 10: PETRA STRING QUARTET CSM 11: KAIN CSM 12: ZOCCHI CSM 13: DE HAAN/SCHIEMER/VINE/LEAK CSM 14: CANBERRA WIND SOLOISTS/CUBBIN CSM 15: CAMPBELL/FOGG**

**SERIES II – CSM 16: PIANO MUSIC OF MIRIAM HYDE CSM 17: HERSCOVITCH/SCHNEIDER CSM 18: McSULLEA/HARVEY CSM 19: PIANO MUSIC OF ROY AGNEW CSM 20: ELECTRO-ACOUSTIC MUSIC CSM 21: SITSKY AT SIXTY**

**+ 9034993**

**SERIES III – CSM 22: DEEP IN MY HIDDEN COUNTRY: MARILYN RICHARDSON CSM 23: CHAMBER MUSIC MADE AND PLAYED IN AUSTRALIA 1945-1952 CSM 24: PIANOS AND PERCUSSION CSM 25: SAMSARA: AUSTRALIA ENSEMBLE CSM 26: ELECTROACOUSTIC MUSIC CSM 27: RETROSPECT: PRE-WAR AUSTRALIAN PIANO MINIATURES CSM 28: MUSIC FOR FILM: DORIAN LE GALLIENNE AND JOHN ANTILL CSM 29: MIZU TO KORI: NOVA ENSEMBLE CSM 30: PERIHELION**

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Remastered at the National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra, January 1996

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|-----------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|
| Producer: Jeff Brownrigg                      | Booklet Editor: Deborah Crisp                |
| Tape Restoration and Transfers: Viktor Furnic | Production Editor: Jaki Kane                 |
| Digital Remastering: Cathy Bromley            | Typesetting/Design: Peter Campbell/Jaki Kane |
| Disc Artwork: Kurt Olofsson/John Mackerras    | Project Co-ordinator: Margaret Ziersch       |

Joint Project Development: Robyn Holmes

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