SEQUENZA

AND OTHER WORKS BY
IAN BONIGHTON

When Ian Bonighton died, at the age of 33, he had been composing for little more than ten years. He had received no major commissions, none of his compositions had been published, and he was almost unknown outside his native city, Melbourne, Australia.

But he can claim an important place in Australian musical history. While other young composers in the 1960s sought their training and careers in Europe, Bonighton stayed home. His musical training was entirely local, his compositions were almost all written for local performances, and he ventured abroad only at the end of his life. His career was uniquely Australian, and his works are rare examples of musical talent fostered in the Australian environment.

Ian William George Bonighton (1942–1975) was reared in the boom years of prosperity and optimism following World War II. His father was a railwayman, his family was of Anglo-Saxon origin, and his upbringing was not particularly musical. After his schooling he went to Melbourne Teachers College (1959–60), seeking the security of a teaching career in the State service. His musical curiosity was aroused by the training he received at the Teachers' College, and during his first years of teaching he took part-time studies in the piano. In 1964 he surrendered to his musical impulses, resigned from the teaching service, and devoted himself to composition. Supporting himself with odd jobs, he enrolled at the University of Melbourne for a degree in music with a major in composition.

By the end of 1965 Bonighton had produced six works which may be described as precocious student exercises. They are traditional forms: a suite, a woodwind trio, a string quartet, a set of variations for flute, a *missa brevis* and a divertimento. They are serial compositions (using all twelve tones of the chromatic scale systematically) but the techniques are conservative for the 1960s, similar to the techniques of the first Viennese serial music of the 1920s.

In the **Toccata** for organ, completed in April 1966, the composer's first publicly performed work, the conservative serialism of his early works can still be seen. It reflects the overly academic climate that prevailed in University of Melbourne music circles at that time – insulated by great distance from the bewildering proliferation of musical styles and techniques in the European scene, the young Melbourne composer could drift intellectually on a tranquil local sea.

Fortunately for Bonighton, a new and more progressive creative climate was ahead. In 1966 Keith Humble was appointed to the University as a lecturer in composition. An original and enthusiastic spirit sporting no graduate degree and not fitting the mould of his University colleagues at all, Humble brought to Melbourne a detailed knowledge of current trends in European music. He organised performances of recent European music, including Varese, Maxwell-Davies, Cardew and Reynolds, for which Bonighton copied out the parts. He championed Bonighton's music continuously, organising local performances of eight of the works between 1966 and 1971. He promoted discussion of contemporary music aggressively, notably by organising a national seminar on 'The state of the art of electronic music in Australia' in 1971 with Milton Babbitt, the distinguished American composer, as a guest which brought many Australian composers together.

In the **String Quartet No. 2** and **Music for Sleep,** the enriching influence Humble had on the composer can be seen. The String Quartet was completed in May 1968, for a commission from the British Music Society of Victoria, by which time Bonighton had

studied, copied, and performed the latest European scores, and entered the lively debate on contemporary music at its most important levels. He adopted the music notation-symbols of K Penderecki, which have the effect of obliterating metrical rhythm and replacing it with masses of undulating musical lines or circling points. The main interest in the music is no longer melodies or harmonies, but textures and colours. It has little to do with the traditional string quartet form.

Nothing new can be done with the tempered scale ... the only thing now available is textures. It is a narrow field I admit but it is what interests me. (Ian Bonighton, 1969)

In 1968, Bonighton graduated from the University of Melbourne and was appointed to the teaching staff. During the next six years he continued his study with Humble, taking a Masters then Doctoral degree in composition, as well as teaching a heavy programme of classes in orchestration, composition, harmony and counterpoint electronic music, and music history. Throughout this period he composed steadily, producing 17 works, 14 of them being small local commissions. He began experimenting with electronic sound as **Music for Sleep** demonstrates.

Bonighton rarely composed purely electronic music, but prepared tapes began to play a significant role in his music, linked with traditional means. **Sequenza,** composed in 1971 for the Melbourne Autumn Festival of Organ and Harpsichord Music, demonstrates his increasing skill with electronic media, despite a lack of adequate equipment in Melbourne at that time.

In the same year he completed his most ambitious and perhaps least characteristic work. **Herod**, a neo-medieval miracle-play, is designed for a cast of actors, mimics, dancers, singers, instrumentalists and at least four conductors, who all move in and out of the audience. Masses of phonetic syllables and an ensemble which includes gongs, bells, guitars, recorders, drums, strings, and winds mixes with lines of solo atonal plainsong. Though its ceremonial splendour and colourful gestures are compelling its struggle with an ancient musical genre seems too self-conscious for comfort.

The composer's progress through masters and doctoral degrees in these years meant little in terms of real challenge, apart from the contacts he made with English composer Tristram Cary, French percussionist Jean-Charles Francois, and American avant-garde trombonist Stuart Dempster, who all spent brief periods teaching at the University. He gained expertise with the EMS Synthi 100 electronic music system too, after the expansion of the University's electronic music studio in 1972. But Europe could hardly have been far from his mind in these years – he must have known that to stay in Melbourne indefinitely would lead him to stagnation and frustration.
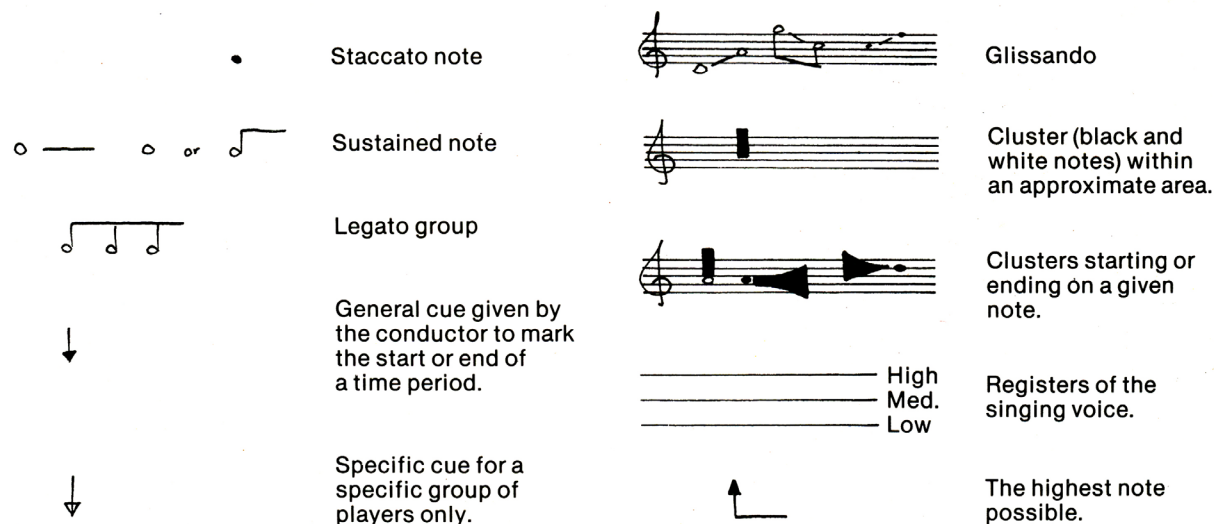
Bonighton finally left Australia in January 1974, supported by a generous grant from the Australian Council for the Arts (now the Australia Council). His departure had become not just artistically wise, but financially necessary, for he had been passed over at the University when a permanent appointment had become available, largely because of his lack of European experience. In Europe he visited electronic music studios in Stockholm, Utrecht, London, York, and Cardiff. In October 1974 he secured a lectureship in electronic music at the University of East Anglia, where he was teaching at the time of his death.

Ian Bonighton never lived to write an *opus magnum*. But his music deserves an audience – it has a distinctive personality. While he never strove consciously to make his music 'Australian', it is uniquely so; and listeners who compare it with European or American works of the same era may sense a subtle but unmistakable difference of flavour as well as personality differences.

Warren Bebbington
New York
January 1977

The opening of SEQUENZA

The notation used in SEQUENZA and MUSIC FOR SLEEP

Symbol	Description
•	Staccato note
o — o or ♩	Sustained note
(legato group symbol)	Legato group
↓	General cue given by the conductor to mark the start or end of a time period.
↓ (with marking)	Specific cue for a specific group of players only.
(staff with glissando)	Glissando
(staff with cluster)	Cluster (black and white notes) within an approximate area.
(staff with clusters)	Clusters starting or ending on a given note.
High / Med. / Low	Registers of the singing voice.
(arrow symbol)	The highest note possible.

Sequenza for 8-part choir, organ and tape was commissioned by Sergio de Pieri for the First Melbourne Autumn Festival of Organ and Harpsichord and performed in St. Patrick's Cathedral on Friday 21st May, 1971. Later in the year, Bonighton submitted Sequenza as part of his doctoral thesis. On the opening page he wrote:

"Sequenza is based on the Easter Sequence 'Victimae Paschali Laudes', using the text and melody of the first line (*Victimae paschali laudes, immolent Christiani*) and the Alleluia with which the sequence ends. The melody of the first line resolves itself into two clusters of a fifth(C– G and D– A) and the Alleluia into a cluster of a 4th. (C–F, the inversion of a 5th). The work examines these clusters, juxtaposing and extending them and constantly changing their colours and textures to present a continuous kaleidoscopic development."

Music for Sleep for 16-part choir and tape was composed for John McCaughey and the Monash University Choral Society in1969. It was one of the first works in which Bonighton used a prepared tape of electronic sounds.as part of the score. For the text he used part of the 'Fragments' of the Latin poet Petronius.

TEXT:

Somnia quae mentes ludunt volitantibus umbris,/ non delubra deum nec ab aethere numina mittunt/ sed sibi quisque facit. (Nam cum prostrata sopore/ urgent membra quies et mens sine pondere ludit,/ quidquid luce fuit, tenebris agit.) Oppida bello/ qui quatit et flammis miserandas eruit urbes,tela videt versasque acies et funera regum/ atque exundantes profuso sanguine campos./ Qui causas orare solent, legesque forumque/ et pavidi cernunt inclusum chorte tribunal,/ Condit avarus opes defossumque invenit aurum./ Venator saltus canibus quatit. Eripit undis/ aut premit eversam periturus navita puppem./ Scribit amatori meretrix, dat adultera munus;/ et canis in somnis leporis vestigia lustrat./ In noctis spatium miserorum vulnera durant.

TRANSLATION:

Dreams that mock our minds with darting shadows-the shrines of the gods are not their source nor powers from heaven: each man makes them for himself. (For when rest embraces limbs relaxed in sleep and the mind plays unburdened, whatever was happening by daylight becomes the business of the dark.) The man who shakes up towns in war, who overwhelms hapless cities in flames, he sees weapons and routed ranks and kingly deaths and plains awash with blood outpoured. The barristers envisage statute books and the court setting; they tremble at the judgment seat surrounded by a guard. The miser hides his wealth and unearths buried gold. The hunter sets the woodlands pulsing with his hounds. The sailor manages to save his boat upturned by the storm waves: or on the brink of death clings to its prow. The mistress writes to her lover, the adulteress sends a gift: and the dog in his sleep ever follows the tracks of the hare. The pangs of the distressed persist into the reaches of the night.

Derivations III for percussion and tape was written for the Australian Percussion Ensemble and first performed by them in 1972. The work is written for a group consisting of any multiple of three players. There are three sections to the work. In the first, the percussion play according to the given score for exactly two minutes. The second section of one minute is for tape only and in the third section, the percussion players repeat the same pattern of their score, again for two minutes.
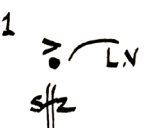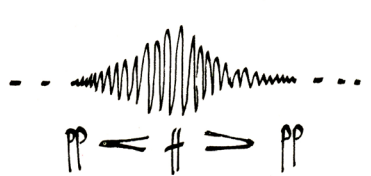
Each player is to stand in the middle of a group of five percussion instruments. If possible these should include some pitched and some non-pitched instruments. When the tape starts each player must begin to play at his own independent tempo, working around the circle of instruments in order and playing the musical events set out below. Thus the order of instruments and events will be:
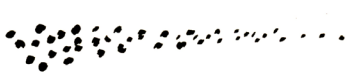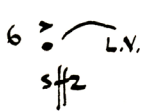
Instrument: 1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 4 5 etc.

Event: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 1 2 3 etc.
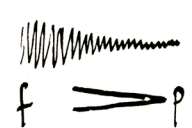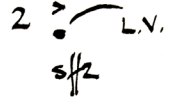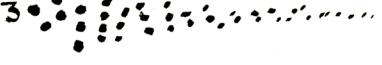
From the 30" mark the second player must gradually accelerate or retard his tempo so that he will be playing exactly at the same speed as the first player by the time the 90" is reached. At the 1'00" mark the third player must also gradually adjust his tempo until he is also playing at the same speed as the other two players. This should be achieved by the 90" mark. The movement ends at exactly 2'00".
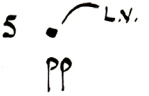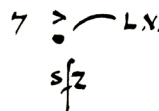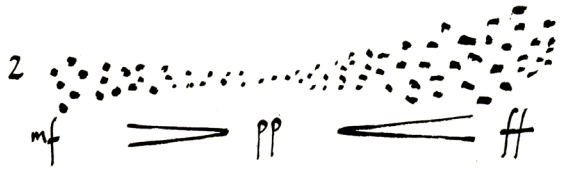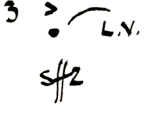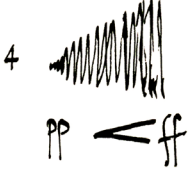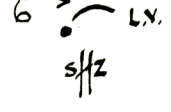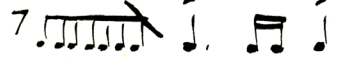

The percussion score for DERIVATIONS III

String Quartet No. 2

Ian Bonighton

The first two pages of STRING QUARTET NO. 2

In Nomine for tape, percussion and optional organ had its first performance at the Melbourne Autumn Festival of Organ and Harpsichord in 1973. It is basically an electronic work with very flexible instructions for the percussion players: each player plays one event each 30 seconds. The organ part, which seems to be based on a plainchant, consists of a series of long held single notes.

Toccata for organ is the earliest work of Bonighton's represented on this album. Written in 1966, it was first performed by Douglas Lawrence at a recital in Trinity College Chapel in 1968. The work is in the traditional toccata spirit with a free exploration of abstract passage work for the organist. This recording was made in St. Patrick's Cathedral, Melbourne. The organ, built in 1964 by George Fincham and Sons, was at this time an instrument of four manuals and 73 speaking stops and has subsequently been enlarged.

Derivations I for solo horn is really an incomplete work. Bonighton planned to use it as a cadenza-like bridge linking two movements in a work for horn and strings. He first thought of writing something for horn after hearing Alex Grieve play at an ISCM concert in 1970. Bonighton had several discussions with Alex Grieve as the work took shape in his mind and a rough sketch of the work was performed in March 1971.

The work is essentially one which explores the tonal qualities of the instrument rather than technique, and its poignant quality has led to the work being played off-stage or at a distance. Alex Grieve has performed it frequently, notably on a tour of the United States in 1974 and on a West German Tour of Australian contemporary music in 1976.

String Quartet No. 2 was the work which Bonighton was commissioned to write as a result of being given the Dorian Le Galliene Trust Award in 1967 – an award which was set up as an encouragement for young, promising composers. One of the conditions of the award was that the British Music Society of Victoria should have the privilege of holding the first performance of the commissioned work. Bonighton completed his score on 23 May 1968 and presented it to the Society.

A problem then arose in finding a quartet who were willing to perform the work. Performance was made difficult by several problems of co-ordination between players in some of the 'ad-lib' sections. Finally the Melbourne String Quartet took up the challenge and solved the problem by the leader, Leonard Dommett, playing from a full score. After several strenuous rehearsals, they performed the work for the Society on 21 March 1974, just two months after Bonighton had left Australia. As in most of Bonighton's compositions, a pulse of one beat a second predominates throughout all five movements. The opening four notes, each a semi-tone apart, form the basis for the textural explorations which follow. The writing, though rich in colour, is always kept within the bounds of conventional string playing. There are no instructions for the players to hit or strike their instruments.

One Two Three for three percussion players was written for the Australian Percussion Ensemble but not completed until after Bonighton had left Australia in 1974. The work is in three sections, each of which are played three times. Each section consists of 60 seconds of score followed by 11 seconds of improvisation. The three players first play sections 1, 2 and 3 in that order. They then re-arrange their scores and play the three sections again, each in a different order. Finally, they play the three sections again in the original order - only this time the improvisations are different.

On this recording, John Seal (left), plays glockenspiel, tam-tam, marimba, wood blocks and timpani. Dal Barbare (centre) plays vibraphone, gongs, temple blocks, guiro and tom-tom. John Wise (right) plays cymbal, triangle, xylophone, wind-chimes, tambourine, snare drum and bass drum.

Canonic Variations written for Ronald Farren-Price is one of Bonighton's last works. The score is dated 7 August 1974. There are four variations on the Elizabethan air 'Sweet Was The Song' by John Attey. The air is first stated in a simple two-part arrangement. The first variation consists of the bold addition of the upper part in canon with itself – only half a bar behind. The second variation has the upper part in the bass, with a chromatic inversion of itself above. In the third variation, the inversion idea is extended still further, and in the fourth variation, the original two part arrangement is restated – only this time both the upper and the lower part are mirrored by exact chromatic inversions of themselves.

Acknowledgements

move

KEITH HUMBLE is one of Australia's leading contemporary composers as well as being an outstanding pianist and conductor. He has toured frequently throughout Europe, and also in the US from 1970 to 1974 as Professor of Music in the Unversity of California, San Diego. He was appointed Foundation Professor of Music at Latrobe University, Melbourne.


ALEX GRIEVE is a principal horn player with the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra and a soloist of distinction. In1974 he took part in a concert tour of the United States and recorded with the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra. During1976, he played on an extensive tour of Germany which featured Australian contemporary music.

ROSSLYN FARREN-PRICE graduated from the Melbourne University Conservatorium of Music in 1964. She has studied piano with Ronald Farren-Price and also with Ruth Nye and John Lill in England. As well as teaching, she has broadcast a number of times for the ABC and has lectured for the Council of Adult Education. She now lives in London.

DOUGLAS LAWRENCE is one of Australia's best known concert organists and has made regular tours of Europe giving recitals in Germany, Switzerland, Italy, Scandinavia and England. He studied in Melbourne under Sergio de Pieri and subsequently in Vienna under Anton Heiller. He was at the time of this recording organist at Toorak Presbyterian Church and at Ormond College in Melbourne.
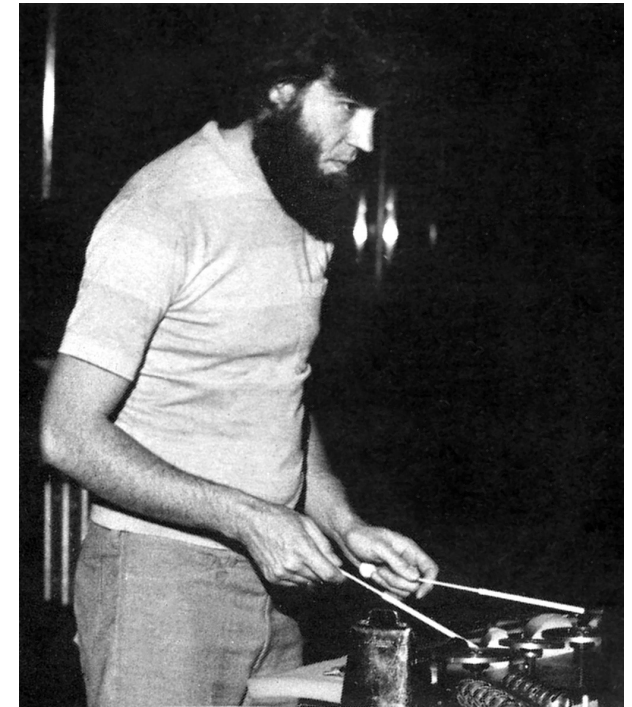
The AUSTRALIAN PERCUSSION ENSEMBLE was founded by John Seal in 1970. Their main objective was to encourage an interest in Australian contemporary music through the performance of new works. The group has given regular concerts, demonstrations and workshops over the years and has provided a stimulating forum for composers, performers and audiences.

The MELBOURNE STRING QUARTET was formed in 1973 from the leading string players of the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra. Leonard Dommett is concert-master, Donald Scotts is deputy concert-master, Paul O'Brien is the principal viola and Phillip Green principal cello. Together they have made regular recordings for the ABC. They have played at 'promenade' concerts and have toured Australia for the Musica Viva society.

AUSTRALIAN PERCUSSION ENSEMBLE
during the recording sessions

The tragic death of Ian Bonighton in May 1975 robbed Australian music of one of its most promising young composers. That he should have died so far from his home and family is sad indeed: but it is also indicative of the success he was beginning to discover outside his native land.

He had come to England in1974, having been awarded a Fellowship in Composition by the Australian Council for the Arts. Working with the composer Tristram Cary, he carried out an important research programme concerned with the application of certain studio techniques to the performance of electronic music, at the same time composing a variety of new pieces for performance in England. It was to the great fortune of the University of East Anglia at Norwich that he happened to be in this country at a time when we were looking for someone to develop the Electronic Music and Recording Studio, then in its infancy but already one of the largest and best equipped in Britain.

He was appointed University Lecturer in Music in October 1974,and during the next eight months worked in close collaboration with his Icelandic colleague,Tryggvi Tryggvason, planning the development of the studio, and attracting to it composers from many parts of the world. That together they should have established the Studio as one of the leading centres for electronic music in England, and

should have done so in such a short space of time, testifies to their excellent working relationship and to Bonighton's extraordinary energy and dedication. By any standard, it was and is a remarkable achievement. This sense of dedication, of determination to carry out any task, however important or trivial, to the best of his ability marked everything Bonighton did. Yet he was a man of exceptional humility. He rarely talked about his music, never about his past achievements. His concern always was with the problems and aspirations of others; this, together with the great breadth of his musical interests, made him an invaluable colleague and a lively and sympathetic teacher. His students were devoted to him, and in the short time he was at East Anglia he did much to influence their development.

His untimely death is a tragedy for all who knew him. Without him the University is the poorer, as is the wider musical world. This recording is a fitting tribute to the achievements of a versatile and exceptionally talented young composer.

Peter Aston,
Professor of Music,
University of East Anglia,
Norwich, England.

SIDE 1

Sequenza
(1971) for 8 part choir, organ and tape (10'0")

Music For Sleep
(1969) for 16 part choir and tape (10'01")

Choir: David Batterham, David Bernshaw, Ann Coish, Catherine Cox, Peter Cox, Chris Dunstan, David Grenness, Keith Hoban, Heather Leviston, Ron Nagorcka, Gerri Savage, Aline Scott-Maxwell, Helen Seymour, Barry Skelton, Helen Tanner, Yvonne Turner

Conductor: Keith Humble
Organ: Douglas Lawrence

SIDE 2

Derivations III
(1972) for percussion and tape (5'02")

The Australian Percussion Ensemble: John Seal (director), Dal Barbare, Wendy Couch, Malcolm Leek, Brenton Mouy, John Wise

In Nomine
(1973) for percussion, tape and organ (8'48")

The Australian Percussion Ensemble with Douglas Lawrence (organ)

Toccata For Organ
(1966) (3'34")

Douglas Lawrence (organ)

Derivations 1
(1971) for solo horn (3'00")

Alex Grieve (horn)

SIDE 3

String Quartet No 2
(1968) (4'50", 6'31", 1'33", 2'07", 3'08") ')

The Melbourne String Quartet:
Leonard Dommett (violin), Donald Scotts (violin), Paul O'Brien (viola), Phillip Green (cello)

SIDE 4

One Two Three
(1974) for three percussionists (12'18")

The Australian Percussion Ensemble:
John Seal (Director), Dal Barbare, John Wise

Canonic Variations
(1974) (7'10")

Rosslyn Farren-Price (piano)

Move

The track list from the original 2 LP vinyl record set