

The Remarkable Norman Kaye

1927-2007

★★★★★
AFI
Best Actor
1983



“... brilliant
musical
imagination”

“His playing demanded
absolute attention.
A great talent.”
Douglas Lawrence

“Norman Kaye brings
distinction to whatever he
performs, in whatever medium”
Michael Shmith

“... mastery
of
improvisation”
David Carolane

“Norman Kaye is
an expert in organ
playing”
Dr AE Floyd

“... a fine musician – a
wonderful actor, and a
compassionate lover of life”
Paul Cox

It was as accompanist that Norman Kaye wove much of the musical magic for which he will long be remembered. His improvisations and varied harmonies to hymns frequently took surprising turns into 'uncharted harmonic waters', and the modes of his 'return to dry land' always gave evidence of his brilliant imagination

Geoffrey Cox, organist and director of music, St Patrick's Cathedral, Melbourne

- 1 Prelude** (Norman Kaye) 0'56"
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Geist BWV 651** (JS Bach)
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- 12 Impromptu** (Vierne)
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- 14 O praise ye the Lord**
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- 15 Christ is made the sure foundation**
Cantus Choro 3'34"
- 16 All creatures of our God and king**
Cantus Choro 3'40"
- 17 In the bleak mid-winter** (music:
Norman Kaye) Tudor Choristers 4'00"



- 18 O little town of Bethlehem**
(arr. Norman Kaye) Tudor Choristers 4'26"
- 19 Postlude** (Norman Kaye)
Our Lady of Victories' Church 1'37"
- 20 Preludium** (John Bull)
St Patrick's Cathedral 1'01"
- 21 In Nomine** (Richard Alwood)
St Patrick's Cathedral 1'34"
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St Patrick's Cathedral 1'43"
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- 24 Improvisation, 1989** (Norman Kaye)
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- 27 Extemporisation** (AE Floyd)
Trinity College Chapel 3'45"
- 28 Comment on improvising**
(Norman Kaye) 0'29"
- 29 Improvisation, 1997** (Norman Kaye)
Trinity College Chapel 5'08"
- 30 Lonely Hearts** (composed and arranged
by Norman Kaye) 1'56"

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Records,
Melbourne

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My dear friend and comrade in arms, fellow artist. We worked in harmony always. The more difficult the task, the closer we became. You taught me to trust my heart and be brave.

A great actor on the other side of the world once said to me, 'If I ever meet Norman Kaye I will throw myself on the ground and kiss his feet'. He knew you were one of the greatest: you didn't perform or put on a face: you became. Your ability to be real made you soar, and infused our creations with a hidden light.

You were modest and gentle, even when you played that mighty church organ and flew above us mere mortals.

You have peace now, and we have to be thankful. It is not an easy farewell. You were too unique, too human. My God, we loved you, dear Norman.

Paul Cox

It was my privilege to have known Norman from 1977 up to the time when his illness precluded any further contact. 1977 became a memorable year when for a short tenure I was the choirmaster of the Canterbury Fellowship Choir and Norman was the organist.

We forged a bond in music and a wonderful friendship which endured beyond our Canterbury Fellowship years. Norman played on some occasions for The Tudor Choristers, particularly at the December recitals which he enjoyed and at which he performed brilliantly to add lustre to the beautiful Christmas music.

His mastery of improvisation and of extemporization on a prevailing theme were to my mind without equal and demonstrated his shining creativity. His choices of registration on any occasion were always interesting and could cause delighted anticipation.

Our friendship strengthened as time went on. He visited and stayed with my family on many occasions and my sons idolised him. While missing him personally, it is fortunate that we have this permanent record of his music.

David Carolane

To me Norman Kaye was a friend and inspiration. I admired his organ playing and his acting and when he offered advice it was always wise.

I remember his advice with affection, when as a young organist I asked him to help me with the accompanying Anglican Chant on the organ. I expected a session at the organ but Norman simply said "Don't take your hands off the keyboard". He was of course pointing to an important aspect in this particular area of music making. I suspect that he had heard me accompanying the psalms and knew that this was the central issue I needed to deal with.

Norman was a great trainer of boys voices. I was blown away when I first heard the trebles in his choir at Caulfield Grammar. They sang with a vibrancy and clarity I had not heard before in this country. This individuality extended to all he did. As an improviser at the organ he was inventive and indeed fearless. He went into unknown territory and somehow always extricated himself. When Norman played the organ all else went from the listener's mind. His playing demanded absolute attention.

A great talent; an individual approach to most of life's common experiences and a wonderful friend. I and many others will miss this extraordinary human being.

Douglas Lawrence

Behind closed doors, Norman Kaye, a man blessed with a remarkable array of artistic gifts, used to describe himself as, 'Norman Kaye, star of stage and screen, star of Carson's Law, Prisoner and Cop Shop'. The ironic twinkle in his eye and his playful emphasis on those roles for which he will be least remembered were typical of a gentle, self-effacing individual who quietly contributed so much to Australian cultural life.

Norman's rise from a tough, dislocated childhood in Depression-era Melbourne to the top of his professions as both an actor and musician was an unlikely story. One of four children of a maimed, impoverished Boer War veteran and a mother who suffered from mental illness, Norman had to battle his way from the ground up, and few would have foreseen that he would emerge as one of the most subtle and articulate artists of his day.

Two strokes of good fortune put him on his eventual path. In Melbourne he was taken in as a child by the Norton family, who lodged him for long periods and provided a safe haven from the hardships of his family home. By Norman's own account, it was they who instilled kindness and taught him many of the refined values that would characterise him in adult life.

Then, coming from nowhere and with nothing to lose, in the mid 1940s he approached Dr AE Floyd, the revered organist of St. Paul's Cathedral,

Norman Kaye: actor, musician

17 January 1927 — 28 May 2007



*Fabian Muir, a lawyer
and writer based in
Munich, Germany, is Elke
Neidhardt's son whom
Norman Kaye helped
to raise. This obituary
appeared in the
Melbourne Age and Sydney
Morning Herald on
1 June 2007.*

Melbourne, in search of musical guidance. Dr Floyd immediately recognised Norman's immense potential as an organist and granted him free tuition. His generosity would change Norman's life forever, and ultimately set him on course for England and France, where he was taught by Pierre Cochereau of Notre Dame de Paris and won a Premier Prix for conducting at the Nice Conservatoire and another for organ in 1966.

Norman's musicianship was top class, but he fell victim to loneliness and an irresistible homesickness, which eventually prompted his return to Australia. Back in Melbourne, the city for which he always harboured the greatest affection, he continued his music with success, including as an organist at Trinity College Chapel. He returned to teaching and for 20 years, he was director of music at Caulfield Grammar School. At the same time, however, he also dedicated himself increasingly to acting, the art for which he would become best known.

That Norman was perfectly content to play in small theatres, making do with minor roles and no pay, is proof that he was an actor out of passion, not ambition. He took joy in acting and, with television still in its infancy, loved the world of the stage. In an industry so often characterised by rampant egos and self-adulation, the fame and commercial success he enjoyed in later years were by-products rather than goals unto themselves, and part of his charm was a disarming ability to laugh at himself.

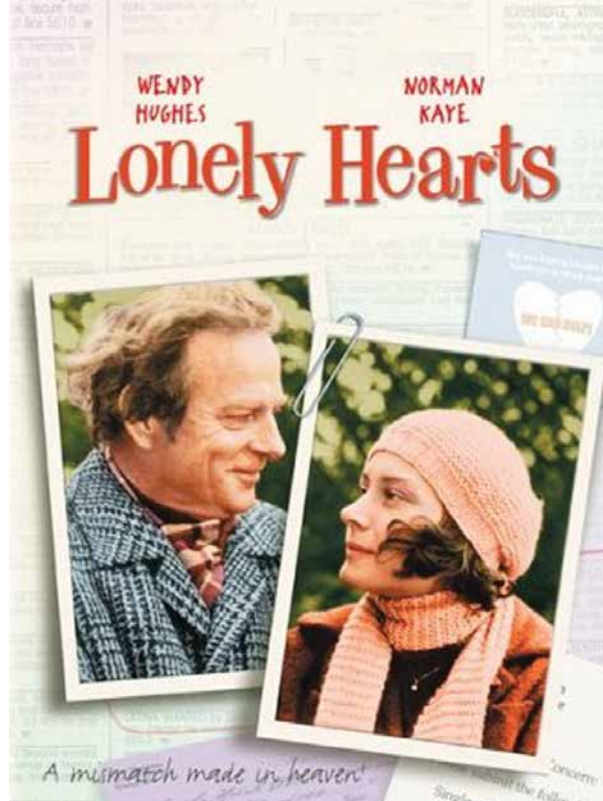
As with music, acting came to him naturally, thus it was almost inevitable that his ability would find recognition in the close-knit artistic circles of 1960s Melbourne. This natural talent was invariably on display in private, and he was often at his most hilarious sitting at a dining table, where he would slip into an improvised role or parody. Those privileged to witness such performances soon discovered that in Norman's world nothing and no one was too sacred, except perhaps for Dr Floyd.

For this reason he was particularly well suited to comic roles, although his complex and moving performances in films such as *Man of Flowers* showcased his depth and versatility. It was for this role in 1983 that he won the AFI Best Actor award, a vaguely cubist piece of plastic that soon found itself used at home as a doorstop.

Norman acted in more than 30 films, that included *Mad Dog Morgan* (1976), *The Killing of Angel Street* (1981), *Unfinished Business* (1985), *Turtle Beach* (1990), *Oscar and Lucinda* (1998) and *Moulin Rouge* (1999).

He also wrote the scores for many films. For those who listen closely, his variations on the otherwise banal melody of 'Bye, Bye Blackbird' for Paul Cox's *Lonely Hearts* bear the trademark signature of Norman's humour and whimsy.

It was with Cox, his long-time collaborator and friend, that he had his most public partnership, and together



they carved out their niches in the Australian film industry. It is difficult to imagine one without the other. Cox recently paid tribute to their friendship with *The Remarkable Mr. Kaye*, a documentary that was screened on ABC television in 2006.

But behind the scenes there was another, more private partnership with opera director Elke Neidhardt, with whom he enjoyed a loving relationship spanning decades. It was notable that as the twilight of Norman's Alzheimer's disease descended, it was she alone who was by his side to the end.

For a man whose memory had been engraven with concertos and lines from great theatrical works, there can

be no illness more insidious than that which marked his final years. It was a sad and unjust ending, this slow fading of the light. Yet even as his condition deteriorated, Norman continued to show his warmth, humour and love of life.

He was always welcome to play the organ at St Mary's Anglican Church, Waverley, Sydney, escaping into extraordinary improvisations, his music still stronger than the illness inexorably shutting down his mind.

He retained his house in Melbourne but moved north with Elke in the early 1980s. And, each morning he would present Elke with a self-plucked bouquet in hand, proposing marriage for the umpteenth time and introducing himself as, 'The Man of Flowers'. True to his title, he would then spend hours marvelling at the colours of her garden.

But he was far more than the *Man of Flowers*. Those fortunate to have been touched by him personally will take inspiration from him not just as an actor and musician, but above all as a man of compassion, humanity, modesty, spontaneity, wit and wonderful imagination, as well as a man who could fly a Tiger Moth, place a pinpoint drop kick and bowl a befuddling flipper.

For those who knew him only at a distance, and for those living in an age fixated on the artifices of short-lived celebrity, Norman's passing, at 80, gives pause to reflect on another loss to a more humble generation and the lasting legacy of a true gentleman actor.

Norman Kaye, ARCM, ARCO

1927 — born 17 January
1941 — first heard St Paul's Cathedral organ played by the incomparable Dr AE Floyd
1944-1948 — organ tuition under Dr AE Floyd; and an assistant organist at the Cathedral
1949 — first trip to England where he spent just 6 weeks
1950s — organist at Littlejohn Chapel and music teacher, Scotch College
1956 — started a 20 year position as choirmaster and Director of Music at Caulfield Grammar School
1959 — England, again, for two years studying music and organ, achieving ARCM and ARCO
1960s — acting roles in Melbourne's Little Theatre, later St Martin's Theatre
1960s — organist for Canterbury Fellowship, Trinity College, Melbourne for the next 30 years
1966 — won a Premiere Prix for conducting in Nice
1967 — won a French government scholarship for organ study in France
1967 — met film director Paul Cox
1973 — Melbourne Autumn Festival of Organ and Harpsichord recital at St Paul's Cathedral
1976 — TV mini-series *Power without Glory* (just one of 17 television series he appeared in)
1980s — many roles in film, television and live theatre
1981 — *Lonely Hearts* (his first leading role)
1983 — *Man of Flowers* (won Australian Film Institute best actor award)
1990s — theatre roles for the Sydney Theatre Company
2000 — Alzheimer's disease diagnosis
2001 — Nicole Kidman's doctor in *Moulin Rouge*
2004 — *Human Touch* (the last of 30 films he appeared in)
2005 — Paul Cox's tribute *The Remarkable Mr Kaye* at Melbourne Film Festival, and later on ABC TV
2007 — died 28 May

THE ORGANS

Melbourne Town Hall: William Hill & Son and Norman & Beard Ltd. London and Melbourne 1929. Rebuilt 2000.

Littlejohn Chapel, Scotch College, Hawthorn: 1936 Hill, Norman & Beard. 1993 removed.

Caulfield Grammar School, Memorial Hall: 1916 J.E. Dodd for Congregational Church, Malvern; rebuilt and installed in its present location in 1967 by Laurie Pipe Organs. (Sadly it was destroyed by fire in 2000)

Trinity College Chapel: 1923 J.E. Dodd. 1959 rebuilt by Hill, Norman & Beard. 1989 rebuilt by Laurie Pipe Organs. 1997 removed.

St Andrew's Church, Brighton: 1962-64 Davis & Laurie

St Patrick's Cathedral: 1962-64 Geo Fincham & Sons

Our Lady of Victories Camberwell: 1920 T. W. Magahy & Son, of Cork, Ireland. 1979-80 rebuilt George Fincham & Sons.

From the Melbourne Town Hall organ recording, c 1960

Norman Kaye was a former pupil of Dr AE Floyd, and at one stage acting organist of St Paul's Cathedral. When this recording was made he was music director at Caulfield Grammar School and organist at Littlejohn Chapel, Scotch College. One of Australia's most gifted recitalists, he has displayed through radio and live performances an unusually thorough understanding and mastery of both the English and Continental schools of organ playing. He has given further proof of his artistic versatility by appearing in a number of leading roles at Melbourne's famous Little Theatre, later St Martin's Theatre. The Melbourne Town Hall organ at the time had 110 stops and 6494 pipes. It was built in 1929.

From the Trinity recital, 1997

Norman Kaye's great contribution to organ playing in Australia is through his understanding of and practice of "the French style". More detached than either the German or English styles and more audacious in exploration of the colour palette of the organ, this style is demanding of clarity of sound and careful attention to development of rhythm patterns. The French organist is also expected to be an original improviser and so, in the lineage of Vierne, Dupré and Cocherneau, under whom he studied in Nice, Norman excels in this technique.

1 Prelude

(Norman Kaye) 0'56"

The opening prelude from the Tudor Choristers Carol Concert of 1982 at Our Lady of Victory's Church (now Basilica) Camberwell, is actually a carol accompaniment which Norman obviously thought well enough of to let stand on its own.

2 Spoken introduction

1'22"

Dr AE Floyd was known to a vast audience through his talks and broadcasts on music and musical appreciation. He was organist and choirmaster at St Paul's Cathedral, Melbourne from 1915 to 1947. He continued to broadcast his Music Lovers Hour on ABC radio until his death in 1974. The notes for the next three items were written by Dr Floyd for an undated recording, probably in the late 1950s.

3 Noel

(Daquin, 1694-1772) 5'04"

Here we find Daquin (famous harpsichord player, composer of a popular piece *The cuckoo*, and organist of the French Chapel Royal in the mid 18th century) writing variations on an old French Christmas carol. Notable are some fascinating echo effects and an abundance of 'grace notes' characteristic of the period.

4 Scherzo (Percy Whitlock, 1903-1946) 1'46"

The composer of this very effective piece was one of the outstanding writers of



English organ music towards the middle of the 20th century. He evolved a style of his own admirably suited to the instrument of his choice.

5 Melbourne Town Hall Improvisation

(Norman Kaye) 0'51"

The object of this improvisation is to demonstrate the build-up to full power of this large 4 manual organ, with powerful reed stops added to the full-toned foundation stops.

6 O Song of Courage (Norman Kaye) 1'22"

7 A Song of Victory (Norman Kaye) 2'50"

These two songs were written for inhabitants of 'The Hill', boarding

students at Scotch College, Melbourne. The recordings were made in the school's Littlejohn Chapel, part of a collection of anthems performed at Sunday evening services in 1958, directed and accompanied by Norman Kaye.

8 Postlude, 1963

(Norman Kaye) 1'03"

Recorded at Trinity College Chapel, University of Melbourne.

9 Communion Service in D minor

(Norman Kaye) 4'07"

Norman Kaye wrote this setting of the Eucharist especially for the Choir of the Canterbury Fellowship, and it has been frequently used for services. This recording of *Sanctus, Benedictus, Agnus Dei* and *Gloria in Excelsis* was made in 1968 at Trinity College Chapel, with the Choir of the Canterbury Fellowship directed by Peter Chapman and Norman Kaye at the organ.

10 Improvisation, 1968 (Norman Kaye) 2'03"

Recorded at Trinity College Chapel.

11 Fantasia super Komm heiliger Geist (Come Holy Ghost) BWV 651 (J S Bach, 1685-1750) 6'36"

Recorded at Trinity College Chapel in 1966. The antiphon which opens with the words 'Veni sancte spiritus': 'Come, Holy Ghost' was adapted as the Lutheran chorale Komm, Heiliger Geist, the basis of Bach's exuberant *Fantasia* which ushers in the Pentecost sequence.



12 Impromptu (Vierne) 3'24"

Played on the Archer Memorial organ at Caulfield Grammar School in 1967. The instrument was originally built by JE Dodd of Adelaide and installed in Malvern Congregational Church in 1916. It was rebuilt and installed by Laurie Pipe Organs at Caulfield in 1967. The organ was sadly lost in a fire that also destroyed the hall in 2000.

13 Three Variations on the carol 'Lord Jesus hath a garden full of flowers gay' (Flor Peeters, 1903-1986) 2'48"

These three variations, rather unconventionally registered here, are

from a set of five. They appear on a recording made by Norman with the Caulfield Grammar School Choir at St Andrew's Church, Brighton in 1966 on a Flageolet 1' stop to illustrate, approximately, the sound of a sifflute stop which Norman was keen to have added to the new organ at the school and towards which the proceeds of the recording sales were directed.

14 O praise ye the

Lord (words: Henry Baker, music: Charles Parry) 2'49"

This hymn is inspired by Psalms 148 and 150. This performance, recorded in 1989 at Trinity College Chapel, appeared on Cantus Choro's third collection of hymns from The Australian Hymn Book, entitled 'Songs and Praises' (Move MD 3142). That CD used take 3, but here we have the first take which sounds a little more spontaneous, especially in Norman's organ accompaniment.

15 Christ is made the sure foundation (words: Latin 7th/8th century, trans. John

Mason Neale, 1818-1866, music: Henry Purcell, 1659-1695, adapted by Ernest Hawkins, 1802-1868) 3'34"

This previously unreleased 1989 recording is by Cantus Choro.

16 All creatures of our God and king (tr. Draper, arr. Vaughan Williams) 3'40"

Peter Chapman directs Cantus Choro on its first collection of hymns from The Australian Hymn Book, entitled 'Sing out with Joy' (Move MD 3032). Norman accompanying at his best.

17 In the bleak mid-winter (words: Christina Rossetti, music: Norman Kaye) 4'00"

Sung by Tudor Choristers at their annual carols concert, directed by David Carolane, at Our Lady of Victories' Church, Camberwell on 15 December 1982.

18 O little town of Bethlehem (English traditional carol arranged by Norman Kaye) 4'26"

Sung by Tudor Choristers directed by David Carolane, at Our Lady of Victories' Church. It was included in the carols program in 1981 and 1982 with considerable differences in the arrangement each time. This is the 1981 version.

19 Postlude (Norman Kaye) 1'37"

Played at the very end of Tudor Choristers annual carols event at Our Lady of Victories' Church, Camberwell in 1982.

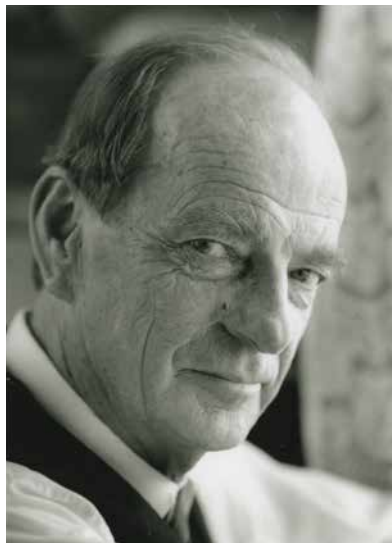
20 Preludium

(John Bull, 1562-1628) 1'01"

21 In Nomine (Richard Alwood, 16th century) 1'34"

22 A Duo

(Richard Farnaby, c1590) 1'43"



23

Praeludium

(Giles Farnaby, c1565-1640) 0'54"

These four short items were recorded at St Patrick's Cathedral, Melbourne during a Tudor Choristers concert

entitled 'A Tudor Pageant' in March 1982. Norman's somewhat flamboyant registrations are perhaps more in the spirit of the occasion rather than being limited to the resources that would have been available to the composers on the small English organs of the Tudor period.

24 Improvisation, 1989 (Norman Kaye) 1'42"

Played at Trinity College Chapel during a recording session break.

25 Three fanfares

(Norman Kaye) 1'33"

Recorded at St Patrick's Cathedral with the Melbourne Brass Ensemble, these fanfares introduced three of the hymns on a CD called 'Hymns for all Seasons' (Move Records). Peter Chapman directed Cantus Choro in an inspiring collection.

26 Chant de Paix, 1945

(Jean Langlais, 1907-1991) 3'43"

This comes from Neuf Pièces written 1942-44. *Chant de Paix*, number three of the set, shows some of the softer stops available on the JE Dodd/Hill, Norman & Beard/SJ Laurie organ in Trinity College Chapel. This performance, as well as the next two items, comes from the final concert of 18 April 1997 on that instrument before it was removed in 1997 to make way for the current organ by Kenneth Jones.

27 Extemporisation

(AE Floyd, 1877-1974) 3'45"

Dr Floyd recorded a number of extemporisations on the TC Lewis organ at St Paul's Cathedral in 1947. Three of these were later transcribed and



then published by Hinrichsen of London in 1957. This is the third, marked *Andante* and in the key of G.

28 Comment on improvising

(Norman Kaye) 0'29"

29 Improvisation, 1997 (Norman Kaye) 5'08"

30 Lonely Hearts

(composed and arranged by Norman Kaye) 1'56"

Thanks to the many people who contributed in various ways to this CD:

Norman Kaye
David Carolane
Douglas Lawrence
Paul Cox
Oliver Streeton
David Agg
Simon Colvin
Ken Falconer
Kay McLennan

John Mallinson
Peter Wakeley
Warwick Papst
Rhys Boak
Geoffrey Cox
John Maidment
Gordon Hawley
Ivan Collins
Barry Wilkes
Fabian Muir
Elke Neidhardt
Susan Wright
Marilyn Thomas

The recordings used came from many sources, and are of greatly varying quality. We have done our best to restore and enhance the older ones in particular.

*Martin Wright,
Move Records*

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