



There is an Island Don Kay

The Song of the Maypole
George Dreyfus

The Australian Rosny Childrens Choir
Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra

Cantata: “There is an Island”

Music: Don Kay. Lyrics: Clive Sansom

“There is an Island”, a cantata for childrens choir and orchestra is a short history of the demise of the full blood Tasmanian Aboriginal race, and the early convict days of Van Diemens Land. The cantata was commissioned by the Australian Rosny Childrens Choir, with support from the Australia Council, and completed in April 1977. The music, by Tasmanian composer Don Kay, complements brilliantly the lyrics by the late distinguished poet Clive Sansom. The Australian Rosny Childrens Choir first performed this work in 1979 with the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Gerald Krug, and has included many of its songs in performances both within Australia, and overseas. The ten movements comprise:
1 The Island **2** Song of the Aborigines
3 The Coming of the Great Swans **4** West-country Seamen
5 Free Settlers **6** Convicts **7** Hobart Town and The Black War **8** The Lament of the Aborigines **9** This Land We Share

The Choir takes multiple roles, including “narrator” in 1, 7; “aborigines” in 2, 3, 8, 9; “sailors” in 4; “free settlers” in 5; “convicts” in 7; and contemporary

Tasmanians in 9. There is no attempt to quote or in any way use authentic Aboriginal music as a reference or structural device.

1 THE ISLAND

There is an island in the southern seas
Between the heat and the snow,
Where breakers crash on a rock-lined coast
And the Roaring Forties blow.

Penguins march on the sandy beach;
Parrots fly from the tree;
Mountains lift their peaks to the sky,
And streams flow down to the sea.

Once it was home to an island race
As brown and bare as the sand:
These are their rocks, their broken shells.
And this their ancient land.

2 SONG OF THE ABORIGINES

Children: Spring time, wattle time, all the birds
singing.

Sun light, forest light, all the world dancing.

Before our father’s time or the time of our
fathers’ fathers,
Long, long ago in the days of dreaming,
When the gods were young and the world was
clean as a dawn,
They gave this land to us and to all our people.

They gave us the sea, the fish that lived in the
sea,
The sun for heat by day, and fire by night.
They gave us caves to shelter us from the wind,
And streams of clear water.

Great forests they gave us, and the birds that
flew there.

The wide, green plains were moving with
kangaroo.

Great man, great spear, very great hunter.
See him run, see him throw, great, great hunter!

Year after year, the small brown wallaby
Fell to our spears: possums and bandicoot.
(Women) Year after year, we followed the
hunting,

We dived for crayfish, dug for roots,
And gathered swans eggs.

At night, when Sun had gone, and Moon
Lay bright on the waters, we lit our fires
And sang our songs on the ocean beaches.

Spring time, wattle time, all the birds singing.
Sunlight, forest light, all the world dancing ...

But some places were sacred to the Tribal Spirit,
They held his peace and were holy places.

3 THE COMING OF THE GREAT SWAN

(Spoken) “In the year of our Lord 1642, Captain
Abel Tasman, sailing south from Batavia, sighted
an unknown island. He named it Van Diemen’s
Land.”

Aborigines: From the rim of the world came two
great swans - white swans - riding upon a calm
sea. They came and they went again, and the
wide sea covered them.

(Spoken) “To that island sailed Marion de
Fresne, Bruny d’Entrecasteaux and other French
seamen. They reported a friendly, harmless
people; cheerful, and inclined to laughter. The
brown men applauded with great enthusiasm
when we sang the Marsellaise, and entertained
us with their own singing”.

Aborigines: From far away came the great swans
as our fathers had told us. They carried men,
with skins as white as the birds. Many men came
to us, and left again for their own country.

(Spoken) “The Endeavour, commanded by

Captain James Cook, put into Adventure Bay. He reported favourably on the island and it's people. Captains Bass and Flinders followed him, and other explorers”.

Aborigines: Again came the white swans. They floated on the blue waters. Soon came flocks of these birds; and the white men built pointed houses by the river. This time the white men do not go. They stay on our land. They do not leave.

4 WEST-COUNTRY SEAMEN

We're from Bristol,
Portsmouth, Plymouth Town,
With our sails to the breeze
again.

Of our own accord we have
stepped on board
As the crew of the “Nancy
Jane”.

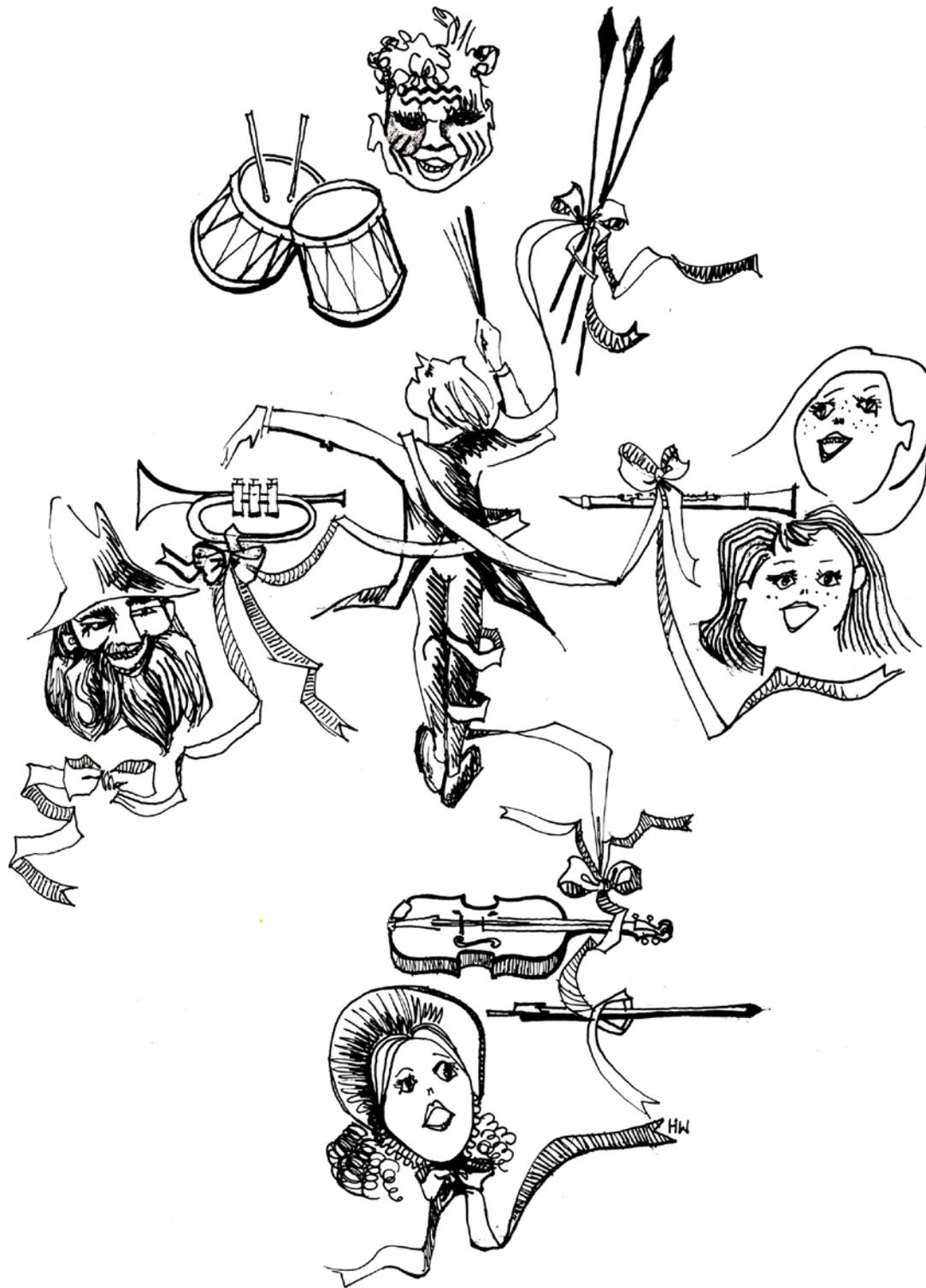
(Refrain) We're sailing for ...
Van Diemen's Land
To the south of the Seven Seas!

There's leering Pip with a scar
on his lip.

And Tom who is like to die;
With One-Armed Mac, and
Peg-Leg Jack,
And Sam with the Nelson eye;
... (Refrain)

Oh, the handsomest crew you
ever knew,

And as trim as a crew could be,
With a ship as neat as any in



the fleet
For our fifteen weeks at sea. ...
(Refrain)

Above our heads the canvas
spreads —
Ten thousand miles before us.
So make your home on the
rolling foam
And join our final chorus: ...
(Refrain)

5 FREE SETTLERS

Leave behind you your home
in Ireland —
Oppression — starvation.
Follow us to this other land in
the far south
To found a new nation.

Fell the forest for paddock and
pasture:
Forget your wrongs of the past!
... Oh, but in the evenings
remember the old songs:

Poverty chained us to the farms
of England;
For years we lingered, like lions
in cages.

Now we have come, with half
the world between us.
To freedom and fair wages.
Plough and sow for no master;
The harvest belongs to us!
... Oh, but in the evenings
remember the old songs:

They burned our crofts in the
hills of Scotland;
Nothing — no stone remains.
We raise our cattle on new
highlands,
Our sheep on new plains.

Build your home again in the south-land,
Though your heart longs for the north!
... Oh, but in the evenings remember the old
songs.

6 CONVICTS

Our wives and children have nothing to eat,
So I helped myself to a joint of meat
And Jack from the farmyard took a fat goose.
The Judge on the bench said: "No excuse!
If you can't behave as a citizen should
You'll have to leave your country for your
country's good"

"You'll be sent abroad, you understand,
For fourteen years in Van Diemen's Land."—
We've lost our friends and we've lost our wives;
We've said goodbye for the rest of our lives,
For we couldn't behave as a citizen should
And we'll have to leave our country for our
country's good.

We sailed on a ship from Portsmouth Town;
It leaked and it creaked, but it never went down.
Crammed below-deck for a full half-year
With stale salt beef and never a beer,
In that shaky old hulk of rotting wood,
We had to leave our country for our country's
good.

And now at last we have come, as planned,
To join the famous Convicts of Van Diemen's
Land.

But if we behave and do no harm
They'll let us work for nothing on a settler's
farm.

... Well, cheer up, lads! It was understood
We had to leave our country for our country's
good!

7 HOBART TOWN

Millers and bakers, shipwrights, sail-makers,
Visiting Quakers all sailed into town!
Parsons and laymen, Naval halfpay men,
Fat brewers' draymen glad to step down!
Idlers and fishermen, and scarlet militiamen
To warn the law breakers and honour the
Crown!

Farmers and dealers, crafty sheep stealers,
Whalers and sealers arrived at the Quay!
Grocers and tailors, pensioned-off sailors,
Convicts and jailors, the bound and the free!
But none so unshaved as — none so depraved
as —
Those sealers and whalers "The Scum of the
Sea"!

THE "BLACK WAR"

They hunted men like whales,
Clubbed them to death like fur-seals,
Shot them like kangaroo.
They stole their women for slaves,
Murdered defenceless tribesmen,
Threatened the brown race.

And the men of the tribes were angered.
They speared the lonely settler,
Attacking his farm by night,
Burning home and crops. Killing his children.
TAWANA! TAWANA! It was War! War!

8 LAMENT OF THE ABORIGINES

You have taken our lands from us, the wild
forest;
You have driven hawk from his tree, heron from
the marshes;
Ducks have fled the lagoon, and with splash of
wings
Black-swan rise from the lake never to return.
Your cattle feed in the clearings. On slopes by

the river
Your flocks of tame, white sheep are grazing.
To the free Hunting Grounds known to our
fathers,
Where wallaby roamed at will and the striped
tiger,
The hunters come no more, the days of our tribe
are over.

We built our shrine to Fire in the shelter of
sand-dunes.
We cooked meat there, and sang the tales of our
past.
Now only dunes remain and broken shells
The wind that blows from the sea carries no
memories.

9 THE LAND WE SHARE

It is too late to mourn them now: their race has
gone.
Nor can our shame restore them now to the
bright sun.
The great wrong done to these people can never be
undone.

Remember instead their island now. The land we
share.
Protect her lakes and forests now, her smokeless
air;
And give wild creatures who seek her shelter
your love, your loving care.

(Ghost voices of aborigines:) Spring time, wattle
time,
All the birds singing. Sun-light, forest light,
All the world dancing ...

Let no mans greed for money destroy this place,
Nor bring again, in the world's eyes, a new
disgrace;
But let this living land around us speak for the
lost race.

Song of the *Maypole*

Music: George Dreyfus

Lyrics: Frank Kellaway

Composed in 1968, "Song of the Maypole" is designed to make children familiar with the instruments of the orchestra by having them sing songs linked together in a story. To take part in the opera the children form a hollow square on the floor with four choruses facing inward to the conductor at the centre. Behind each of the choruses are arranged the associated orchestral instruments: the children (girls with high voices) with woodwinds, the mothers (girls with low voices) with strings, the Diggers (boys with high voices) with brass, and the Aborigines (boys with broken voices) with percussion.

The five movements comprise

10 Overture

11 Diggers March

12 Childrens Fishing Song

13 The Aborigines Approach

14 The Maypole Dance

The men of a fishing village have joined the rush to the gold-fields, leaving their wives and children to look after their homes. All goes well until the village is threatened by aborigines. Mothers and children take shelter in the village hall, but the aborigines threaten to burn it down. The children save the day by staging a maypole dance outside. The aborigines are intrigued, then delighted, and finally they join in.

The *Australian Rosny Childrens Choir*

The Australian Rosny Childrens Choir, now in its 28th year, has toured extensively within Australia, performing in all the major concert venues, and appearing with the Sydney, Melbourne, South Australian and Tasmanian Symphony Orchestras, earning high praise from such eminent conductors as Prof. Henry Krips, Patrick Thomas, Georg Tintner, Gerald Krug, Vanco Cavdarski, Jose Serebrier, Richard Duval, Thomas Meyer, George Dreyfus and Leonard Dommett. The choir was the first from the Southern Hemisphere to take part in the International Eisteddfod at Llangollen Wales, in 1971, and after receiving international acclaim for its performances there, it was then selected by the Australian Government to represent it in the first Cultural Exchange with the People's Republic of China in 1975. The Choir has also performed in Singapore, Hong Kong, the Philippines, New Zealand and Japan. It is constantly in demand to perform at conventions, recitals, cruise ship dockside welcomes and on board performances, church services, charity concerts and television appearances.

Australian music plays an important role in the repertoire of the Choir, and it has commissioned and performed several new works. "There is an Island" is the second cantata by Don Kay recorded by the Choir. The first, "The Songs of Come and Gone", was featured on an earlier Move release "The Sound of Rosny"

Don Kay

Don Kay was born and educated in Tasmania before completing his music degree at the University of Melbourne. During his time in London (1959-64) he studied composition privately with Malcolm Williamson. Since returning to Hobart he has composed much music for professional individuals, ensembles, young performers, amateur groups, theatre, concert, and public occasions.

Over time his music has increasingly resulted from responses to Tasmanian landscape, ecology, and history. His compositions include two one act operas, three concertos, a symphony, vocal, choral, chamber, film and theatre music. In 1991 he was appointed a Member of the General Division of the Order of Australia for his service to the Arts, particularly music composition.

George Dreyfus

George Dreyfus was born in Wuppertal, Germany in 1928, and migrated to Australia in 1939. After a formal education at Melbourne High School, he joined the orchestra of Her Majesty's Theatre, Melbourne, in 1948, playing bassoon in opera, ballet and musical comedy. In 1953 he joined the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, working under many internationally renowned conductors.

Since 1968 he has been a freelance composer with two operas, two symphonies, choral and chamber music and many film scores to his credit. Dreyfus's public persona as a composer was transformed in 1974, when his theme music for the ABC television series "Rush" became a best selling 'hit'. Dreyfus has

received numerous awards and has been Composer in Residence at the Australian National University in Canberra, the German Academy, Villa Massimo in Rome, the Mishkenot Sha'ananim in Jerusalem and the Conservatoria in Tienjin and Shanghai.

Jennifer Filby

Jennifer Filby, the Founder/Director of The Australian Rosny Childrens Choir, has had the pleasure of seeing many hundreds of young people experience the joy and friendship which comes through being a member of this dedicated group of young international ambassadors of song. A Tasmanian by birth, and proud of it, Jennifer trained as a teacher at the University of Tasmania, and her subsequent years as a demonstration teacher for the Education Department, and her musical background as pianist and singer provided a solid foundation for the dedication, skill and commitment required for such a large Choir family.

Jennifer had no particular aspirations to form a children's choir and certainly never envisioned that such a group would become so nationally and internationally known and respected, but in retrospect says she is grateful to God for the privilege of being able to reach out to audience far and wide, to bring a message of joy, peace, and love to a hurting world.

There is an *Island*

Don Kay

The Song of the *Maypole*

George Dreyfus

The Australian Rosny Childrens Choir choir founder/director: Jennifer Filby

Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra conducted by George Tintner ('Island') and George Dreyfus ('Maypole')

- 1 The Island 3'45"
- 2 Song of the Aborigines 5'38"
- 3 The coming of the great swans 3'56"
- 4 West Country seaman 2'04"
- 5 Free settlers 5'34"
- 6 Convicts 2'08"
- 7 Hobart Town / The black war 3'53"
- 8 Lament of the Aborigines 4'25"
- 9 The land we share 4'04"
- 10 Song of the Maypole – overture 2'44"
- 11 We're off to dig golden dust 1'09"
- 12 Children and mothers song 3'10"
- 13 From the mulga thicket 2'01"
- 14 Maypole dance 4'56"

Recording © Australian Broadcasting Corporation

Recorded at the ABC Odeon, Hobart — Producer: Robert Smith — Engineer: Max Absolom

CD master tape prepared by Martin Wright, Move Records

Cover painting: "Natives Dancing at Brighton" by John Glover (1767-1849), reproduced by permission of the Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales — Layout: Martin Wright

Released 1993 by MOVE RECORDS, AUSTRALIA