

ROBERT LLOYD NULLARBOR



move



influences of American Minimalism and traditional Balinese gamelan music, which Lloyd has both studied and taught. Like both of these styles, Lloyd's music finds its poetry in rhythm – or more precisely, in rhythms, and in the various ways of combining, recombining, reconstructing and deconstructing rhythms. Percussion instruments and percussive sounds from the keyboards when used are the backbone of Lloyd's work.

Percussion of course is universal - and perhaps that's why this music has a sort of 'trans-ethnic' or global sound (to borrow composer Lou Harrison's phrase). But there is a distinctive voice at work here.

Nullarbor (1987), for example, is entirely percussion - based, and somehow evokes both Steve Reich and the master drummers of Ghana without sounding like either.

Bold New Buildings (1986) is one of Lloyd's more poetic titles (along with 1990's **Telling Time By Passing Clouds**); its ensemble of electric keyboards produces a brilliant shimmer of interlocking bell-like figures that sound like the music of a sci-fi gamelan.

Feral is the earliest piece here, from 1985. As the music for the Ohio Ballet work of the same name, it introduced Lloyd to dance audiences throughout the Americas. This driving yet lyrical score uses the combination of keyboards and percussion that has since become the Robert Lloyd trademark. Like many of his later works *Feral* is unpretentious but deceptive music; its apparent simplicity and repetition quickly reveal multiple layers of rhythmic patterns, woven into a fabric as complex as anything that ever came from an Indonesian loom.

With this release a wider audience will now discover the rhythmic poetry of Robert Lloyd's music.

John Schaefer NEW SOUNDS WNYC New York

The three dance scores on this disc share a common thread with all my music – a patterning principle. This began as a childhood fascination with the patterns of sand dunes, tree branches and, later, moon cycles. More recently this approach has manifested in observing the body's rhythms while walking (moving feet

Robert Lloyd's reputation rests largely on a kinetic, brightly coloured series of dance scores, several of which are collected here. In fact, as far away as the United States, Lloyd's name is probably better known among dance circles than musical ones. Perhaps that's not surprising, given the propellant energy of Lloyd's work. It has attracted the repeated attentions of Molissa Fenley and the Australian Dance Theatre, and has been performed to – or danced to – on four continents.

Lloyd's music draws on a world of musical inspirations; the most immediately apparent are the surprisingly complementary

on the pavement), breathing and heart-beat (pulsing).

Combining different length rhythmic and melodic material, learnt from my early experiments with tape recorders and studies

in Pitjantjatjara and Balinese music, led me to explore musical interdependence as a compositional tool. Thus interdependent voices interlock with other lines and merge with yet others at common downbeat sections to form implied narrative structures.

Listening to this process, one's attention can move from a single line to many lines, from foreground to background, to create one's own musical and spatial experience.

For these works I have used the clear ringing sound of metallophones, keyboards, octabans (small, tuned high pitched

drums) and percussion instruments. The polyrhythmic nature of these compositions has inspired several dance works.



Feral

The Ohio Ballet commissioned **Feral** in 1986, with choreography by Molissa Fenley, and had its world premiere in Cleveland in the same year.

My early works were for mallet

keyboards and tuned drums only and **Feral** reflects an impulse to further develop this work. I chose digital keyboards for toy piano, gong and bell sounds, and synthesizers for long-held bass lines.

This augmenting of pitch and timbre made it possible to place fast-moving rhythmic cycles in the high drums, against medium speed cycles in the metallophones against slower speed cycles in the low keyboards. These cycling patterns change places with each other in the unfolding of the composition.

The work is divided into nine sections, comprising units of five-beat cycles against seven-beat cycles, interlocking drumming, simultaneous rhythms and an interlocking keyboard with cyclic melody in the last section.

Bold New Buildings

My first work for four keyboards, **Bold New Buildings** was commissioned by the Adelaide Festival Centre in 1986. It was subsequently choreographed by Nanette Hassall for Australian Dance Theatre (with design by Mary Moore) for seasons in 1987 and 1992. **Bold New Buildings** is scored for four keyboard players, playing six digital keyboards programmed with toy piano, tubular bells and orchestral bass sounds.

At the time I was inspired by the shapes and structures of contemporary architecture and decided to divide the composition into sections, each with its own rhythmic structure.

Section one

Starting with tubular bells against toy piano chords

Section two

Electric toy pianos play melodic figures in six beat units against four beat units

Section three

Simultaneous Rhythms – all musicians have different length melodic material that fall into unison after many repeats

Section four

Interlocking Parts – short metallic phrases dovetail into each other in six beat units

Section five

Passacaglia – a falling bass line supports interlocking inner rhythmic keyboard parts with echoes of the opening tubular bell theme

Nullarbor

dedicated to Dr Catherine Ellis

Nullarbor, Latin meaning 'tree-less', is the name of the vast desert covering a large part of south western Australia. This is a harsh environment and the traversing of it was once considered a rite of passage – three days by car.

Nullarbor was inspired by my childhood in Adelaide, a city placed on the outer edge of the central Australian desert where Aboriginal people lived. Part of my later education was to learn songs and dance from these people. The

instrumentation of octabans and timbales played with sticks evokes the harsh, brittle atmosphere of the desert and recalls the sounds of dry twigs snapping underfoot when walking in the bush.

Nullarbor was written in Sydney in 1987 and became the score for Molissa Fenley's 1993 dance work of the same name. Even though different sections can be heard, the piece is one continuous creation. The composition is based on fast interlocking drum patterns played by three percussionists.

After an opening section in a ten-beat rhythmic cycle, an Aboriginal-inspired song is played, first in the high drums and then in four middle-pitched drums.

Section three explores simultaneous canonic drumming – rhythmic phrases played several beats apart using the same material, against an independent two drum pattern.

The final section uses fast interlocking rhythmic cycles, in six against four, with an eighty-beat cycle in the low drums.

ROBERT LLOYD 1995

Nullarbor is a dance work inspired by the vastness of the Nullarbor limestone

plateau which runs along the southern edge of Australia. The dance embodies our feelings toward the raw and unrefined environment, the monotone of the land and its sense of isolation. The dance is staged laterally against a sculpture created by Richard Long, a line of stones that

meanders from the top of the stage to the bottom in a long serpentine line. The sculpture acts as a barrier, a coastline, a place of transition, between one state of mind and another. The dance is choreographed in a series of dance lines that extends the idea

of the Aboriginal songlines into a dance form. Each danceline travels the dancer toward the

with the music. The musical score, having few landmarks itself, demands

concentration and rhythmic precision from the dancer to keep her place both in space and in time. The memorisation of these dance lines then becomes the key to the unfolding of the dance.

MOLISSA FENLEY

1995



sculptural barrier/coastline and back out again with a different approach and departure each time. As the chanting of the song tells an Aboriginal where s/he is in the terrain so the execution of the danceline demarcates where the dancer is in space and in coherence

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