



Music by Derek Strahan

Revolve RDS007

CELEBRATING AUSTRALIA

Concert for the 1988 Bicentennial

Piano Trio No. 1 in F

Joshua Tsai, piano – Stan Kornel, violin – Margaret Lindsay – ‘cello

Film music

Artisans of Australia

Aliens Among Us

In The Attic

Trans Australia



STRAHAN: PIANO TRIO NO. IN F (1987) composed for the Australian Bicentenary of 1988. (Duration: 33.23)

Recorded during Oz Music week January 1988, at 2MBS, St. Leonards, Sydney.
(First released on Jade CD "Autumn Pastorale" JADCD 1059)

JOSHUA TSAI – PIANO, STAN KORNEIL – VIOLIN, MARGARET LINDSAY – CELLO

This work was commissioned by The Sydney Ensemble as a work to be performed on Australia Day (January 26) 1988, as a contribution to the Bicentenary celebrating two hundred years of European settlement in the continent which became known as Australia, dated from Captain Cook's First Landing. It was performed at a Champagne Breakfast given in Centrepont Tower, the highest vantage point in Sydney from which to observe the events staged on the waters of Sydney Harbour involving a spectacular sail past of many different kinds of sailing vessels. It was given a second performance later that day

at a Champagne Lunch. It was also recorded for broadcast on national radio by the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) and given a live performance at Sydney's fine music station 2MBS during Oz Music Week. The recording of that performance was first released on a JADE CD (see above). As that CD has sold out, here is the re-release of the live recording of the 2MBS broadcast.

The circumstances of the first performance influenced the nature of the work. I judged that it should be a tuneful and celebratory piece. Nevertheless, the conceptual process began with some considerations of historical and political context, as indicated in the following notes, which were written as a preface to the music score.

The twin concepts of Freedom and Equality are simple to state and to describe. However, it has proved extremely difficult for the delinquent human race to apply these concepts, given our tendency to evolve social organisations inspired by greed and designed to protect and serve the interests and privileges of entrenched minorities.

The written record suggests that it is only during the last 200 hundred years that the human race has made any serious global attempt to outlaw unjust practices based on discrimination against people on the basis of class, caste, race or creed. This novel experiment in social justice began in Europe during the eighteenth century with a movement known as the Enlightenment, which provided the philosophical basis for both the French Revolution and the American Constitution, and its influence still pervades today. It is a fragile venture, by no means assured of success. Everywhere in the world we see attempts to retain or revert to social systems that deny absolute Freedom and Equality in law to all citizens. The period of this rare social endeavour coincides almost exactly with the existence of the Australian nation, as defined by the period of European settlement. It is ironical, therefore, that the majority of the first Europeans were brought to Australia in chains, and that these same Europeans and their masters immediately set out to enslave and debase the original inhabitants of the continent. However, this kind of behaviour was quite consistent with the known conduct of the human race over the previous six thousand years of known history and doubtless also during the eras known as pre-history.

Despite this woeful beginning for modern Australia, I believed, when composing this work, that the Bicentenary was worth celebrating, if only for this one reason: Australian society is still evolving, and Australia is one of a handful of nations which are still trying, against the odds, to define and protect basic, universal human rights for all citizens. Efforts may be clumsy, but attempts at reconciliation are being made, and we do enjoy freedom of debate over how to give practical expression to these elusive ideals. It was my wish to celebrate these ideals in music for Australia, as indicated by the titles given to the movements of my Piano Trio No. 1 in F. In doing this I am continuing a practice begun 200 years ago by, among other composers, Ludwig van Beethoven, who explicitly furthered the ideals of the Enlightenment in many of his compositions.

In 1788, Beethoven, aged 18, was absorbing the new politics of his age, through friends and tutors in Bonn, most of whom were members of a radical sect of Freemasonry known as the Illuminati. Beethoven remained true to these ideals throughout his life. Most

Australians would understand Beethoven's reaction when he heard the news that his former democratic hero, Napoleon, had declared himself Emperor. In a fury, he erased Napoleon's name from the title page of his "Eroica" Symphony, saying: "Is he then nothing more than an ordinary human being? Now he, too, will trample on all the rights of man and indulge only his ambitions. He will exalt himself above all others and become a greater tyrant than anyone"

History has repeated itself since that event. Tyrants rise to power, strut their stage and oppress their own people. Beethoven's words quoted above are as relevant as ever, as is his music. In writing my Piano Trio, I sought to pay homage to Beethoven, and composers following him, who have celebrated and perpetuated the desire for freedom. For the above reasons, this work is neo-classical, and in the form of a traditional Piano Trio of Beethoven's time, which is also the time of Australia's First Landing. I have made no concessions to academic concepts of what "contemporary" music should sound like. The work is therefore full of tunes.

1. FREEDOM. This movement in sonata form has a broad melody as its first subject. The second subject is a cheeky jazz-based tune that gives the music a twentieth-century reference. In the development section, various attempts are made (no doubt by the enemies of freedom!) to stop the first subject being played. These futile attempts at repression and censorship do not succeed, and the first subject returns for the recapitulation. There's a surprise when the second subject is re-stated. We find that, all along, it has been the counter-melody to a well-known Australian folk-song ("Click Go The Shears"), which takes over to bring the movement to a close. *Duration: 12'37"*

2. EQUALITY. Australia today is a multicultural society, and in this Scherzo & Trio we hear rhythms and melodies that echo the music of Eastern and Southern European cultures. These regions produce fascinating songs and dances, which are widely played in ethnic communities throughout Australia. I was reminded of this when I was invited to judge a Macedonian Song Contest at the Marrickville RSL Club. (*Re: RSL Club, see note below ***) My enjoyment of that evening is reflected in this movement. The Scherzo is 9/8 time (subdivided 2;2;2;3), the Trio is in 5/8 time. *Duration: 6'58"*

3. LOVE. It might be impertinent to give such a title to a movement of chamber music. In an opera you can have love music, and call it that. But in chamber music? Isn't that supposed to be abstract music? Let me quote what Clara Schumann said to Brahms about a movement of his Violin Sonata in D minor. "I love very much the third movement which is like a beautiful girl frolicking with her lover - then suddenly in the midst of it all, a flash of deep passion; only to give way to sweet dalliance once more." As programmatic content for music, this seems to me quite acceptable! I should add that Brahms and other composers of the Romantic movement wrote "love" music in an era when love for love's sake was regarded as a subversive idea, and was presented as such in many opera libretti which depicted death as being the reward for falling love across social barriers. It's easy to forget today, in "Western" countries, that the right to fall in love with anyone is a democratic right guaranteed by law. We have that right in Australia. It's a freedom we should never take for granted. In other countries on this planet the battle to establish this particular freedom is still being fought. *Duration: 7'51"*

4. THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS. The fourth movement is a little soufflé, a passing moment. Many of our moments of greatest happiness are like this. Gone in a flash. We value them in retrospect. The main theme is in 6/8 time, as were many of the light-hearted Rondo finales of Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven. But this movement is not a true Rondo, as the main theme is heard only twice (instead of the obligatory three times). The contrasting section begins as a melancholy, almost mediaeval melody, which is transformed into something more joyful. The brief Coda re-asserts our right to happiness, and to the enjoyment of life. *Duration: 5'57"*

***RLS stands for Returned Servicemen's League. The clubs are an institution, for long open to membership by the general public, kept afloat financially by poker machines, providing many popular social services, including sensibly priced food and popular entertainment.*

The music score and parts can be ordered at Derek Strahan's website – <http://www.revolve.com.au>

STRAHAN - ARTISANS OF AUSTRALIA

Music for a Film Documentary Series (1984-85) – (13'00")

Recorded at 3 sessions at Film Australia, Linfield, Sydney (1984/1985)

(First released on Jade CD "Artisans of Australia" JADCD 1054)

MICHAEL KENNY- KEYBOARDS

HOWARD OBERG – RECORDER & FLUTE

JOHN CRAN – BASSOON

ULPIA ERDOS – HARP

VOJTEK HLINKA – VIOLIN

ALEX TODICESCU – VIOLA

CLAUDIA DOUGLAS – CELLO

DANIEL MENDELOW – TRUMPET IN Bb/TRUMPET IN C

DEBORAH HART – FRENCH HORN.

The Award-winning "Artisans Of Australia" was directed by Paul Humfress in 1984/85 for Film Australia, as a 4-part series of film documentaries on traditional crafts still being practised in Australia. It was widely shown on TV in Australia and overseas, on cable and on film and video in education. I devised an original theme of Irish character to provide me with the basis for a series of miniatures to depict work on timber, iron, glass, stone and plaster. These recordings of music specially composed for the series are released on CD by kind permission of Film Australia.

Flute/Recorder/Keyboards

Track 19. Artisans of Australia (solo piano)	1.12
Track 20. Artisans of Australia (solo recorder)	0.35
Track 21. Paddington Lace (wrought iron balcony fence)	1.03
Track 22. Tall Trees	0.58
Track 23. Iron Craft	1.24
Track 24. Jig	0.48

Track 25. Paddington Lace (reprise) 1.06

Organ

Track 26. Stained Glass 1.35

String Trio & Harp

Track 27. Haunted Ballroom & Dance 1.30

Viola, Cello, Trumpet, French Horn

Track 28. Mini-Suite: Irish Baroque, Town Hall, Traffic.
Important Persons, Irish Baroque reprise 2.39

STRAHAN – “ALIENS AMONG US”

Music for Film Documentaries (1974) – (7’07”)

Recorded at Studio 301, Sydney, 1974.

(First released on Jade CD “Classics of Australian Music” JADCD 1060)

KEVIN MURPHY - CLARINET,

ERROL BUDDLE – FLUTE (*DOUBLING CLARINET)

ROBERT GOODE - HARPSICHORD

MICHAEL CARLOS - MOOG SYNTHESIZER

JOHN SANGSTER, DEREK FAIRBRASS- PERCUSSION

This Suite of 6 short pieces is drawn from music written for two Australian film documentaries, “Aliens Among US” and “Garden Jungle” which were given repeated showings on national TV, shown widely overseas and used in education. Made in 1974 by Densey Clyne and Jim Frazier, these used innovative micro-photography to reveal strange and sometimes macabre detail about the life of insects dwelling in Australian suburbia. For example: “Murder in Miniature” was written for footage showing a female St. Andrews Cross spider killing and eating her mate after mating! Two original themes heard in counterpoint in the title music are then developed separately in the following two tracks, and other ideas follow. Recording released on CD by kind permission of Mantis Wild life Films.

Track 29. Aliens Among Us (title music) 1.23

Track 30. Arachnid Hop 0.35

Track 31. Garden 1.05

Track 32. Murder in Miniature 1.30

Track 33. Flutterby 0.34

Track 35. Busybody (Ant’s nest) 1.41

STRAHAN – ‘IN THE ATTIC’

An exercise in baroque, for String Trio & Flute (1968)

(First released on Jade CD “Twin Towers” JADCD 1055)

LINDA VOGT – FLUTE,

GORDON BENNETT

VIOLIN , WINIFRED DURIE – VIOLA

BARABAR WOOLLEY – ‘CELLO

This was written as a playful exercise in baroque style – to sound like a piece discovered in an upstairs room! To record it, professional equipment was in fact placed in an upstairs attic room of a North Sydney house, hence it can be said to have received its first performance “in the Attic”. The gifted performers soon after recorded several sessions of film music for me in more conventional venues. The 1968 recording was made on analogue tape, at 15 i.p.s.

Track 36. In The Attic 2.10

STRAHAN – TRANS AUSTRALIA SUITE

Music for a Film Documentary (1968) – (19’38’)

Recorded in 2 sessions: full ensemble at Supreme Sound, and then a quartet at Channel 9 TV station, 1968.

(First released on Revolve cassette RDS 001, “Derek Strahan Media Music” and then in 2 suites on Jade CDs, “Best of Australia Classics” JADCD 1065 and “Music For A Champagne Breakfast Vol. 2” JADCD 1075)

COLIN EVANS – FLUTE,

LINDA VOGT – FLUTE,

GORDON BENNETT – VIOLIN,

WINIFRED DURIE – VIOLA,

BARBARA WOOLLY - ‘CELLO,

CLARENCE MELLOR – FRENCH HORN,

(RECORDS LOST – TRUMPET, TROMBONE)

JOHN SANGSTER & DEREK FAIRBRASS – PERCUSSION,

DEREK STRAHAN – CONDUCTOR

This Suite is drawn from a film score commissioned by Robert Raymond in 1968 for a Documentary by the Leyland Brothers on their epic transit of Australia on a 4-wheel drive vehicle, screened on TV as **WHEELS ACROSS AUSTRALIA**. Three themes provide the basis for this music which consists of varying treatments of an original melody (Trans Australia), the Queensland version of “Waltzing Matilda” and the traditional Australian folk song “The Shearer’s Dream”. As indicated in track titles below, this selection portrays transit from the West coast through the interior to the East coast. Extreme weather conditions were experienced ranging from a serene stop at a billabong through travel in desert heat to a sensationally filmed rainstorm on Uluru. All themes are contrapuntally combined in the finale. The music was recorded in 2 sessions, a full ensemble at Supreme Sound Studios, and a quartet (flute, viola, ‘cello, French horn) at TCN-9. The documentary was produced by Robert Raymond for TCN-9 and the Leyland Brothers.

(* = quartet)

Track 37. Shearer’s Dream 0.52

Track 38. Waltzing Matilda (solo horn) 1.08

Track 39. Waltzing Matilda 1.12

Track 40. Trans Australia * 2.14

Track 41. Panorama 1.17

Track 42. Into the bush* 2.11

Track 43. Trans Australia (solo Viola) 1.35

Track 44. Shearer's Dream (Billabong)	0.48
Track 45. Shearer's Dream & Waltzing Matilda (cello solo)	1.02
Track 46. Moving along (all themes in polymetric patterns)	1.02
Track 47. Shearer's Dream (Desert heat)	1.02
Track 48. Rainstorm on Uluru*	2.08
Track 49. Red Centre (a delirium of all themes)	
Track 50. Shearer's Dream*	0.30
Track 51. Counterpoint (Trans Australia/Waltzing Matilda)*	0.47
Track 52. Finale	1.55
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Derek Strahan at Dover Heights, Sydney, with score of Piano Trio No. 1 in F, 1988.