

A Meeting of Minds at The Peggy Glanville-Hicks House - Part One

Transcript by Jon Rose (Peggy Glanville-Hicks Resident, 2017)

On 13 October at the Peggy Glanville-Hicks House in Sydney, a meeting of minds took place to discuss 'the state of performed New Music and the options for making the situation better'. The idea was to unlock and air any ideas, however radical, which could be relevant to this debate and which could be carried forward as freelance practice or institutional policy.

Those taking part were:

Stephen Adams (composer and ABC broadcaster, New Waves)
Elaine Chia (CEO, City Recital Hall, Angel Place)
Jim Denley (musician and organiser of West Head project, Machine for Making Sense)
Andree Greenwell (composer, organiser of Green Room Music, teacher)
Cat Hope (composer, bass player, leader of Decibel, academic)
Zubin Kanga (pianist, member of Ensemble Offspring)
Lisa McCowage (clarinetist and co-organiser of La La La)
Kaylie Melville (Speak Percussion and New Music Network)
Damien Ricketson (composer, ex- co-artistic director of Ensemble Offspring, and academic)
Freya Schack-Arnott (cellist, co-organiser of Opus Now)
David Sharpe (strategic and business adviser for creative industries)
Gabriella Smart (pianist, head of Soundstream)
Clayton Thomas (double bass player and organiser of the NOWnow festival and series)
Erkki Veltheim (violinist, composer)
Jon Rose (musician, organiser of Evenings@Peggy's, convener of this meeting)
Paul Mason (Director of Music, Australia Council, observer at this meeting)

The invitees represented the area of new, exploratory, and improvised musics - from concerts and productions that are government and privately funded to performance series and festivals that exist largely without any financial backing at all.

The first part of the evening was taken up with discussion about how our various activities come into existence; e.g. what resources are required, what it costs to hire a venue, do the musicians get paid?, does the audience pay appropriately for the music?, do we break even or lose a pile of money?, etc. In other words, along with facts and figures, an anecdotal survey of the state of things.

The second part was the hard bit. Most musicians play their cards close to their chest as it is an extremely competitive world in which to survive, let alone thrive. But here was a chance for a few hours of altruism and venting. How could we improve the situation, how could we use our resources better, are there loopholes in late capitalism to exploit, could we organise better?

Aided by a few glasses of wine and food, the meeting was collegial, friendly, filled with equal amounts of serious and sometimes passionate talk, witty asides and laughter.

Methodology of transcript:

I made a written text and precis, based on a three-hour audio recording. But as I read through the 'Fred said this, Jane said that', it struck me that the result was pedantic, even tiresome if you hadn't been there, and way too long. So I have mixed the direct quotes and observations in a conversational narrative where the speakers are not identified (indeed some speakers might wish on reflection to be un-identified!). Some of those taking part sent additional material to me post-meeting, and I have included what they sent.

Enjoy!

After acknowledgements to the Gadigal people of the Eora nation, the land question is immediately shoved to centre stage, the massive psychological block at the centre of our political and cultural identity is also a large part of the problem for the survival of the more interesting New Music(s) in a town like Sydney.

Other groups such as dancers, writers, theatre people, have informal conferences such as this, but it is rare in music. Perhaps there are just too many musicians and types of music. And they all hate each other! But we often have a common enemy down at Bennelong Point.

Here's the general state of affairs: the median income of performing artists is going down (currently at \$10,000 per annum), the population is ageing, people are spending more time on their creative work and getting less for it. It's a bleak set of figures. But the disconnect is this: music is still the number one thing that Australian audiences are interested in, much more than sport. There are exceptions to the decline as a few commercially viable types have manipulated the internet as a method of financial compensation.

The post WW2 European model of funded arts has been in decline since the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. The Eastern bloc model of comprehensive government funding died immediately in 1989 too, of course. In a place like Berlin, it meant the operas and orchestras took most of the cake and the alternative music scenes lost out (e.g. the end of generous New Music funding at the arts centre Podewil). The other trajectory is that which prevails in the USA and is based on a philanthropic model of wealthy people donating - most goes to opera and symphony but there are a dedicated few who put their money into the more interesting end of New Music, e.g. National Sawdust and Greene Space. The options in the US are an academic job, or you were just born wealthy with a trust fund (common in the various US music scenes).

In Australia as in Europe, government funding is always going to be less not more. The problem is even more basic - nobody will pay the real cost of what it takes to put a musician on stage, whether that be the NOWnow or the Opera House. In other words, music (any kind) has little value. People may say they love it, but they don't love it enough to pay for it (they will pay for a car, house, holiday, and - around here - the notorious smashed avocado breakfast). People are constantly told they are 'consumers of product' (even the ABC is non-stop with this propaganda on the ubiquitous talking head shows)

The notion of the professional musician is maybe over for most musicians. 'Creative Industries' is a furphy used by bureaucrats when talking to other bureaucrats, but to call what goes on in New Music an 'industry' is a misuse of the English language. John Blacking's *How Musical is Man?* looks to the Venda people in South Africa in the 1970s where everyone in town, young and old, talented and not so, was still engaged in music making, active and amateur.

Creative Industry: the worst term ever, almost everybody seems to agree. It's a bad joke.

There are other models - in Indonesia, villagers work a full day then turn up for three hours of practice on the newly acquired gamelan, an expensive instrument collection collectively paid for by poor villagers. Other values have gone missing in our age of instant gratification. The story of Schoenberg refusing to give Varese the permission to perform *Pierrot Lunaire* in New York is told (the composer not believing that they would put enough time into rehearsing such New Music) seems quaint in terms of today's mad rush to put on concerts with the minimum of time expended on rehearsal or preparation.

With respect to Andrew Ford's ABC program, the show perpetuates the illusion that there are hundreds of musicians whizzing around Australia playing dozens of shows, making good money, before disappearing into the sunset. No one dare say what the real situation is because musicians have to boast about how busy they are, how loved and adored by their fans.

The regular mail out for the NOWnow series of improvised music has the signature 'Money isn't the only value system'. \$10 is the entrance charge, musicians know they may get paid or not, and 20% of what comes in goes to helping asylum seekers in Newtown. The NOWnow raised \$2,000 this year. This is what we stand for, this is what the music stands for, there is no conversation about how do we pay rent. That's another issue.

All the music schools across the country are losing money. If they aren't, it's because they have cut all the important activities that make music what it is. Music students are not looking for a

career as a star, but they are looking to change something. They don't buy the master/apprentice model anymore.

I'm very conscious that I'm in the cohort of 60 undergraduate composers about to be launched into the market place. There is pressure to force through the 'student load' for the tertiary institution to access the funding - a higher student-to-teacher ratio. Courses are changing away from the soloist, the lone composer genius, to preparation for a portfolio career. Curricula are starting to recognise the independent artist will not fund themselves - ideally the Australia Council will fund, but more likely it's private.

Isn't 'vocation' a better word than 'profession'?

Is any musician in screen culture making money? Very little, it seems: the serious session work for films went out in the 1980s when synthesisers and sampling came in. Music embedded in games? Yes, an income source for those few dedicated nerds. A bit of functionality there, in the same way that music was made for dancing, the harvest, or getting married, waging war, etc. Clearly the advent of recording changed everything in the 20th century, and music was one of the first activities to be hollowed out by web 2.0.

There are predictions that the whole notion of work is going down the plug hole in any case, with at least 40% of current jobs becoming obsolete by 2030.

Is our music there to support capitalism or there to support humanity? That's maybe the difference between music made for a consumer and music made by a citizen.

Money is often the bottom line (it's how most people in a capitalist economy value most activities and the ownership of things). According to the stats from the City of Sydney: in an average venue for live music, 30% goes to the musicians, 40% goes on booze, and the rest goes to the owner or manager.

Would you reckon on there being more money for music available through taxpayer funding in five years time or less? There are moments when a government might chip in a bit extra, but the overall trend is down. It's about the same under either party, but under the present lot, it feels like there's been a sharp decline in support for the medium to small sector.

Governments are concerned with supporting organisations that are best at marketing, so the pool of money can be shown to attract the biggest audience/most voters. They are not interested in what the arts are about: you create the art and we may support you selling it. There is also a strong survival instinct for those in power and with privilege - they are protecting their position at the top of the heap, as Brandis demonstrated with his sudden hit on the Australia Council.

I was mistakenly invited to an up-market visual arts event where wealthy people were writing cheques for really quite cutting edge artworks - normally it just doesn't happen with any edgy music. Why is that?

Because music has no exchange value.

It's art collectors essentially hedging their bets. To be seen with the right bunch of philanthropists, it's transactional. For the Australian pavilion in Venice, \$6 million was raised and the government put in \$1 million. This does not translate into music.

It might in a place like New York where \$16 million was raised for National Sawdust (a new New Music venue). But that ends up primarily in real estate investment. The donors can't lose as land values continue to rise. But they did provide seeding money for 5 years.

In Australia we have the Walsh thing in Hobart: certainly he spends more on visual arts and celebrity than music, but he does something for music too. But when the music is over, there is no return.

I have another example from New York. An ex-Mormon who made a pile of money from selling dodgy drugs to Third World countries feels obliged to redress his moral imbalance and he loves New Music, so he supports it with cash.

Would we accept money from straight-out criminals, or do we already? Does anybody feel that government money is cleaner than private money? Or as Robyn Archer once said, funding is like a sausage, you don't ask what's in it. Stony silence.

All donors have an agenda and they all want their say, whether they're putting in \$2,000 or \$2 million. It's all getting more corporate, and if they're investing in music, they want that big public moment, they want bragging rights.

There are three tertiary institutions that are paying for their online lessons with philanthropy instead of university government money. Philanthropy actually encourages the widening of the divide between rich and poor: opera gets more, experimental music less through philanthropy. The agenda of the donors.

A Brief History of the Future by Jacques Attali (who wrote *Noise: The Political Economy of Music*) suggests that live performance will become more valuable, digital artifacts valueless. Everybody jumps in with 'that's not the future, that's now!'

The uniqueness of many of the musicians assembled is highlighted - they cannot be replicated by anyone. Live performance in the future will be valued because the experience cannot be replaced or digitally transmitted. It could be that the more ubiquitous the download file becomes, a small but significant counter-movement will develop. But very few people are going to make a living out of it.

The discussion moves to examples of concert series in Sydney that are self-organised.

Two members of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra have salaries and give back to the community by putting on concerts, guaranteeing a fee to the musicians. The *Opus Now* series has free access to an art collective at *Alpha Gallery* in Newtown, so the rent is free, which in Sydney is a substantial contribution. Such an old-style artist collective and community is very rare now in Sydney. Because there is a Beethoven String Quartet in the middle of a New Music concert, people are happy to pay more than if there is no Beethoven.

Do people complain about the mix? Yes, without fail! Mostly people complain about the contemporary, not the Beethoven. Others try to sneak in without paying, or bring their own booze so they don't have to use the bar (which is supporting the gallery).

La La La is basically funded by our salaries (full time music teacher, SSO bass player). We want to nurture and support both new and old music culture in Sydney. We never break even, but we don't lose heaps either, maybe a few hundred dollars each concert. We see it as an investment in the community. The upper echelons of society will only put money into classical groups playing old European music. We will persist.

Yes, that says it - the upper echelons and classical music. It's reaffirming white supremacy, really.

It's not funding per se, it's context. And as funding dries up, what is left goes to the powerful. We will rely more and more on the development of networks that take time to grow, but then our advantage is 'in kind' contributions to events. The initiatives taken by Sydney and Adelaide city councils in providing free or low-rent buildings to artists and musicians is noted. The problem with these spaces is that you can be out on your arse with a month's notice when the property gets sold on to developers.

What does New Music actually need? A space (normally not so big), seats, a PA sometimes, accommodating neighbours?

An audience!

Nick Shimmin runs *The People's Republic of Australasia* in Camperdown. It's his own place and a loft-style space with a high ceiling, wooden floor, great acoustics; somehow he has persuaded his neighbours that live music is acceptable (providing it's not too often, I guess). Arguably the best place in Sydney to play new music, with audiences of 60-100 comfortably accommodated. Entrance by donation, all the money goes to the musicians. There are some nights when the musicians walk out of there with \$800 cash in their pockets and it feels very good indeed! There's no denying that.

Right in town on Harris Street, Peter Rechniewski runs *Foundry 616*. He has a staff of three to pay. There are door deals for musicians. He needs to bring in \$100,000 through the door every year to break even. He sunk \$250,000 of his own money into bringing the space up to council regulations, but they continue to hound him with inspections; he spent \$350 on a ramp giving wheelchair access to the stage (required by law) - a council inspector said it was the wrong type of ramp, and the new one cost \$3,000. What we are talking about here is bureaucracy run amok, it's not about denying access to musicians with disability. Public Liability laws, Health & Safety laws, these are killers of live creativity.

I'm currently researching the whole idea of entrepreneurship in Australia. It will be no comfort, but everyone in film, and theatre, is thinking the same thoughts as everyone here. There is this prevailing myth that entrepreneurship means tech start-ups, wearing sneakers and carrying tablets, working in code, sitting in cafes - this is the image. My experience is that those people aren't making any money either. If you see yourselves as sole traders, then you have to win each customer, supporter, audience member, philanthropist, one by one. The hard slog until a critical mass is reached. A thousand people you can rely on.

The critical mass is one - in Europe, what's left of the festival circuit for alternative music comes down to one person hanging in there year after year and making it happen.

That's how *Decibel* started, the group was concerned about WA composers, curating the local. We never made any money, though.

It's not about making money, it's about the amount of time, energy, effort you have to put in to make something happen that's unpaid - uphill struggles with bureaucracy, that's not accounted for. You may lose money, but it's more a question whether you lose your life (in terms of time).

The biggest philanthropists in the arts are the artists themselves. It comes down to why we do what we do, and what do we want to experience in doing it. We live inside someone else's business model and we are wrongly trying to apply that to what we do.

At *The City Recital Hall* the biggest philanthropists are the ticket buyers. And they often spend more on tickets than they do as official philanthropists.

Access and venue problems in Sydney are so huge. In London the venues are cheap and accessible by comparison. *Cafe Oto* takes all kinds of New Music and it's the door: even big name conductors and ensembles play there, might do an official symphony concert, get paid, but then drop in and do a gig for less than 100 pounds. Then there's *The London Contemporary Music Festival* that holds events in an underground carpark.

We have our carpark concerts too! Seems easier to make it happen in London - here we are hampered by laws, bureaucracy. Class divisions in the UK are still massive, the ruling elite still mostly feature in the symphony concerts, the poor composers and improvisers at *Cafe Oto* have a job at a regional university (if they're lucky) to pay the bills. In London, the snob factor is played down, the surface is made to look hip, but the class structure behind it remains solid.

The conversation moves sideways. We get funding also from the local council. What does that mean? You rock up and they know who you are? We're all on the drip in Melbourne!

There's talk about connectedness to ANAM, students, ex-students, donors that cross over. This is community talk, something more difficult to achieve in cut-throat Sydney. *Speak Percussion* has two full-time employees and two part-time. Hard to imagine. The part-timers have portfolio careers but one at least still makes most of her living from performing.

Is there pressure to keep coming up with new ideas for the round of grant applications, to fill in the forms - to be ahead of the curve?

Clocked Out in Brisbane actually stopped applying for Key Organisations funding so they wouldn't have to deal with this continual pressure of box-ticking - 'innovation', 'cutting edge', 'visionary', 'pioneering'. All of these Alice in Wonderland words are in any case applied to organisations like *The Australian Chamber Orchestra* playing Vivaldi in front of mountain movies.

It took 18 years to get *Ensemble Offspring* to the point where they could get funding. Before that, even dole payments were redirected to the group. Now I have a job at the Conservatorium. There are ethical problems around philanthropy - the give, the get or get-off culture of boards and governance that are required for an organisation like *Offspring* presents structural risk for diverse artist-led infrastructure. In recent years, between joining the Australia Council club and getting new philanthropic income, funding almost tripled but it only resulted in limited growth of the number of concerts we put on because everything had to be professionalised and the money went on that - wheelchair ramps, three layers of public liability insurance, etc. The extra funding mostly goes to lawyers to pay for compliance and talking to bureaucracy. It's culturally acceptable to fund the administrators but not the artists.

On philanthropy: several people, including Stephen Adams, have said to me they now think the *Adelaide Symphony Orchestra* is one of the foremost orchestras to support New Music in this country because of their new three-year Composer in Residency Program, commencing with Catherine Milliken in 2018. What they don't know is that the passionate advocate (and supporter of *Soundstream*) Mary Lou Simpson is the sole benefactor of this new residency program. One person can make a life-changing difference. So Mary Lou has by default created the beginnings of a bridge between *Soundstream* and the ASO, something I have tried to do unsuccessfully for years.

What would constitute a musical culture or a more musical culture than the one we now inhabit? In 1890s central Adelaide, there were seventeen registered Italian String Bands playing on the street, there were even by-laws insisting that they keep one foot on the kerbstone at all times because they were getting in the way of the horses and carts - too much live music in central Adelaide causing traffic flow problems! But that did constitute a musical culture. What's there now? Not much, a few forlorn guitar strummers.

Our New Music sector has no guild, has no one who will go into bat for us. Bureaucrats speak the same language, tick boxes, understand the rules of engagement, and are generally more comfortable dealing with each other than musicians or artists. Our sector is always excluded from any discourse in general culture (even on ABC Radio National we barely exist).

Our status as artists is being eroded. I've noticed the change in the language of funding bodies over time. There are many things we can do in terms of advocacy - it's a long haul, but changing the language of grant applications is one area. I'm sick of 'Are you a mature artist? If you mean 'How old are you?', then say it!...Yes, I'm over 30!

Talking of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, I think it will continue to exist, although the form broadcasting will take is a big unknown. We thought in the last 12 months that we would be turned into an algorithm-run digital playback platform. It didn't happen largely due to *Musica Viva*, *APRA* and other institutions screaming at the ABC board. The ABC is under constant pressure to make everything cheaper with bigger audience figures. There are tensions between the various levels of management, between those genuinely interested in culture and others who want bland MOD programming, something to just fill up the digital space which costs nothing. But I have a suspicion there may be a return to late evening programming of New Music that may

be more challenging and require some intellectual effort and curiosity about the world we live in.

What are the listener figures? Figures for radio are vague: we can quantify how many are listening during a certain part of the day, but the incidence of audiences switching on or off during a difficult piece of New Music, we can't say. A surprising fact is that Classic FM is more diverse in age and socio-economic range than any of the other networks at the ABC. Podcast stats are now clear, but coming from a very low base. It depends on what is being podcast - it's not like a functioning subscriber base where the audience listens to everything that is available. The *New Waves* podcast is still nowhere near the audience for *New Music Up Late*. So an on-air program makes a huge difference to the reach. Radio is something you may or may not bump into by chance, a podcast is a different kind of activity - you already know what you are about to hear. There are no quotas for local content, but there are targets. Most broadcast material is live or recent, the archives are not used very much unless someone famous dies. That's so typical of classical music. (much laughter).

As with all culture, consumption becomes a reinforcement of your identity. The user pays model is the user decides model. You only go to what you know. It's the Facebook, YouTube algorithm at work - you like that, you'll like this. The convergence of culture into a targeted audience of one.

That's why recordings are still important. Bands are data-mining downloads and social media to see what their potential audience is listening to, and based on that, they determine where they'll put a concert on.

I'd like to work towards 40 musician houses like the Peggy Glanville-Hicks House across a town like Sydney. The musician/composer/sound artist/whatever would be responsible for improving the music in that area, and also responsible for the sonic ecology. The local council is responsible for the road signs, the lights, the sewage, the parks... they should also be responsible for the sound of their neighbourhood and employ a musician to fix it. It would be a job contract for a year and they would live there and work in the community, transforming the culture in a continual, incremental way, a way that a once-a-year festival does not.

The mayor of Leichhardt had a plan to turn Parramatta Road into a cultural precinct. That's ambitious and advanced thinking, he's a young guy, but what he's after is probably Mission Impossible. Would the Australia Council go into bat for this and approach the local councils, suggest part funding? The Australia Council pays the artist's salary and a practical working fund, the council foregoes the rates and pays for electricity, services, any renovations.

This is the idea of the musician as 'animateur', the person who makes stuff happen within a variety of social contexts.

Shane Simpson has set up two more houses in Perth and in Adelaide. They are National Trust houses and they are sitting there doing nothing. He uses the word 'cultural engagement'. This is a possibility all over the country: there are houses being bequeathed to the NT, not to artists, but artists could get hold of these buildings.

The Bundanon Trust works quite well and draws sizeable audiences from Nowra and surrounds, and it's also responsible for running all four houses under the program *Prelude*.

Peggy Glanville-Hicks' generous and forward-thinking gift of a house to the nation for the purpose of music is an extraordinary model. Wealthy people should be encouraged to leave their property to the nation and its artists, not to their boring children. It's not a bad deal - your name lives on in perpetuity. You get an official plaque on the door, and your name on the signposts at each end of the street!

In Sydney, Clare Cooper's Frontyard Project is a great community model. The property was acquired during an interim 6-month lease period before they put it to public tender. The deal was to pay \$40 per month. We're now on a rolling month-to-month lease with the new council (Inner West). It costs just under \$500 to run the space each month (electricity, water, internet, subsidised rent, basic tea and coffee and cleaning supplies). We have to have public liability for our

events and residency program. The art gallery DA stipulates NO LIVE MUSIC on site! Musicians in residence are giving workshops and composing, but no concerts are allowed per se.

The refurbishment of buildings such as The Studio at the Opera House and Carriageworks haven't delivered for New Music. If we've spent all this taxpayer money on such places, then there should be quotas for Australian New Music. They wasted \$14 million on The Studio (which was **once** a perfectly useable space for New Music), spent up to \$60 million on Carriageworks, \$202 million more on the Opera House, \$139 million to redevelop Walsh Bay. These are staggering sums of money!

The new concert halls **in** Melbourne are the same - they say they're going to incorporate local New Music groups, but almost immediately they're priced out of the building.

There are other models. In Amsterdam, the artists themselves own and run the place (though they also get substantial funding), but you'd need agreement between the various groups for it to be viable. Singapore gives over a new floor to cultural activities when there is a tower block re-development.

To be fair, Sydney City Council is incorporating cultural spaces within new developments like Green Square. But I've been trying to get a response from Sydney City Council to bring me up-to-date on their 5-year Live Music and Performance plan, but no response after four calls and two emails.

Anyway, the website says the following:

The 5-year plan: 60 actions, 1846 free student rehearsal bookings made by 139 users across 31 city spaces, \$572,696 paid in artist fees for city produced events, \$10.89 million in grants to live music and performances since July 2014, \$2.77 million in small grants (under \$100,000) to live music since July 2014, \$20,650 average small grant, 8 musicians and performers housed in City of Sydney live/work spaces.

Is this real money or in kind? Because City of Sydney 'gave' me \$110,000 worth of access to one of their commercial venues but it was bullshit because I wouldn't have been able to give them \$1,000 to use it. So they're paying themselves - like Third World development funds go straight back to the donor country because that's where the work is farmed out.

Major performing arts companies should have to put money into small arts organisations - you can't have one without the other, so it would be a legal requirement on receipt of taxpayers money. That also deals with the class thing too.

Institutional policy that is biased against freelance artists is a natural consequence of the degradation of arts culture in Australia and internationally. I believe that this bias exists simply because of Darwinian law - when the going gets tough, conservatism prevails, freedom of expression and its various avenues are tightened, the stronger powers close ranks to look after their own (large organisations) and leave the less politically and materially powerful (small to medium organisations and freelancers) to sink or swim.

In many countries - Finland, Holland, France - there are substantial 3-year fellowships which roll over for another 3 years for the artist to create. The reason there was so much activity in the 80s and 90s was that the dole was enough to live on and provided security, and the artists worked within a community, built a community, were valued by a community. Now the dole is not enough and there is pressure to take any job.

That also leads to the idea of a basic wage for all, no more jobs - sorry, Australia Council, you'd be out of work. Great, no more writing tedious ministerial briefings! Such a society would overthrow the entire Judaeo-Christian ethic that has dominated our culture for 2,000 years - we are supposed to work and suffer!

The fellowship is the most transformational act we do at the Australia Council. I'd be happy to make it all that we do; fellowships for established artists and early career artists. The reason this doesn't happen is that funding agencies are much more comfortable giving money to other administrators. We trust other administrators, we prefer to give money to somebody who looks like us, there is a natural distrust of giving money to artists. So we encourage artists to form organisations with administrators, and the glittering prize is to become a major performing arts company. We have 200 million at the Australia Council which is not a bad amount, but 110 million of that is locked up to fund 28 companies - and that's a problem.

The Myer Fellowship in Melbourne is way too much money for way too few people to be used in way too little time. (much laughter)

In improvised music, the historical precedent lies with musicians taking all the responsibility into their own hands since the 1970s. If what is suggested was enacted - perhaps 400 two-year fellowships awarded every year, instead of the piecemeal mess that we presently have - that would be an extraordinary transformation of culture in this country. Add to that the notion that the Australia Council can approach city councils and deal with them in a way that musicians cannot - that's a case where institutionalised power can help individual musicians who live outside of it. Bureaucrats could avoid all the bullshit rules and regulations because they're the ones who made them up in the first place. This would be transformative in a way that a festival is not. It used to be that in Europe a festival was a special event, different to all the gigs that went on all year, but now there are pretty well only festivals, no more regular concerts - another collapse of language.

New Music Network has talked about trying to become a body that lobbies. What's the situation there?

I'm relatively new to my role, but there are completely new faces involved in it since the beginning of the year and we are assessing what we should be doing. I think there are changes ahead.

Can I put a massive spanner in the works? We've been talking about buildings and organisations in a country which until 230 years ago had a great indigenous music culture with none of this infrastructure. For all the earnest work that's been going on in New Music, it's taken the public's imagination nowhere. We are all to blame for that.

Isn't the public an ideological construct? We all have our public, our community - you choose your community. If the SSO was a free improvisation ensemble, we might all be playing Haydn quartets as a counter-cultural activity. Jon Rose might not be playing improvised music on the violin, but Beethoven.

There is this constant unease - a disease - about us even being here in this place, and high art is particularly clumsy at dealing with this - John Anthill's *Corroboree*, Sculthorpe's *Kakadu*, the *Jedda* film. I'm uninterested in guilt and the cultural cringe, but deeply concerned with our sonic abilities to 'be here'. This involves complex issues around acoustemology - our knowing and being in the world through sound. Almost all the technologies we use in 'serious music' in this country are acoustemologically foreign. Hence the clumsiness. It is right to point out the naming temerity of the *1788 Orchestra* (now politely called *The Australian Romantic and Classical Orchestra*), but they are being bluntly honest - I prefer it to Sculthorpe's *Kakadu* hypocrisy.

They were probably pumped up with 'Hey, what an audacious name for an audacious group!' - thinking with their feet and stumbling ashore in wet military boots.

What we do in music may be done well, but it is largely out of place. And if you want society to value our work, then we need it to be relevant. That's our No 1 job - get that right and everything else might flow (more money and buildings). We are discussing real estate and other contested spaces, like radio airwaves, but ownership of land and buildings is a really problematic area in a postcolonial musicscape. Plonking recital halls in our cities and giving Eurocentric traditions access to them isn't even post-colonial, it's just colonial.

And someone should point out to the ABC that smothering an FM network in Eurocentric classical music is a form of cultural bleaching.

Positive steps to addressing these issues might be:

Australian music studies in all music institutions employing indigenous singers and musicians to teach (not ethnomusicologists to analyse).

Before a note of Mozart, Boulez, Coltrane or Snoop Dogg is heard we should be singing songs from this place.

Then artist residencies should relocate from Paris or New York to Arnhem Land, or Mungo National Park, or Middle Head, or Kangaroo Island, etc.

Let's take Germaine Greer seriously when she wrote 'If we climbed out of the recreational vehicle and sat on the ground, we might begin to get the message that we can't afford to hear, the message that, since contact, Aborigines have never stopped transmitting. The land is the source of everything...'

We might be asking artists to solve the impossible here - the massive issue of the Australian psyche (whilst earning a living). We are not mature enough as a country and artists will never be trusted to create the kind of appropriate art that will demonstrate that maturity.

Why do we wait for the public? We can lead by example. Reverse mentoring, anybody?

I don't have a solution. But there are priorities. The benefits of bringing people together in a place like Sydney. People are putting in, and we benefit from that. Why are we artists? I get value from what I do. I earn my money doing other things. When I fill in a grant application for a project, I feel compromised, boxed in, because I have to tick boxes.

If the Australia Council changed its funding model from projects to a whole bunch of fellowships, then you are able to do important gigs for no money and you can spend time worrying about the philosophical implications of music-making here in Australia.

Maybe the Australia Council is a wrong model. It should be a company with salaried employees who deliver cultural impact rather than grants because the public thinks they're just handouts to artists. It might be intangible, but such an organisation would be offering a return to the country.

It would have to prove it or go bust?

Social Impact Bonds would save the government money in the long term, e.g. money goes to the Uniting Church as a non-profit which develops solutions for homelessness. After 5 years they can prove that they have made an impact and saved the government money. Could we apply this to the arts?

Unfortunately you need people like me who can put it into a language that bureaucrats and business people understand - notions like 'return on investment'. These people understand risk but it has to be presented in a way they understand. I get between 3 and 10 proposals a week, I have to make a call. I like a group of artists coming to me with a strong idea; let's sit down and see how we are going to do it.

Focus is important. If you have a strong story, you don't need to change the idea to fit the protocols of bureaucracy, but you have to use their language to speak to them.

We, my team, are nothing without the artists. I'm interested in audiences. If I can't put you in front of an audience, I have nothing. It costs 1 million a year just to open the doors of *City Recital Hall*. The old model was transactional - we put on an artist, people buy tickets. The new model is that we open our doors and see what happens, so we run this series downstairs in the foyer, we don't have to open the whole space, and we make our money from the bar, but we still lose money all up. For an arts administrator like me there is a balance, we figure it all out through the 240 events we put on throughout the year, but what gets me to work in the morning is the creativity of artists, the creativity that I don't have. The festival *Unashamedly Original* lost a bucketload of money, but each ensemble was paid \$5,000 because that's what other artists are paid. That's the level we have to work through because that's the value you bring to

us. We have database of 45,000. This is the music they need to hear - they hear enough Beethoven already.

Whether it be *The NOWnow* or *City Recital Hall*, we're all doing the same thing in the sense that we are building a community, a network, that comes together.

And it's a skill set that can be applied - my job is to convert your creativity into a viable outcome. There is a line in the sand. I will not go to the Australia Council and compete against the artists who I'm trying to put on. That would be nonsense.

Sydney has a population of over 5 million. Have we done the work developing audiences?

I'm optimistic that we have a small but developing audience. It's important to develop the multiple artform connection, bring in the visual arts, dance, the tech thing, together with music (it's where the digital age is situated). We seek the transformation of a narcissistic property-obsessed population into one that values New Music, but that will take education and time.

There are many occasions where people are assembled and something of interest is going on (that's why I choose to play a fence, a large interactive ball, or a car wreck) - people with little or no prior knowledge of the more adventurous aspects of 20th century music will still engage. We can also get them there under false pretences - free beer, porn, lotto, TAB, betting, something for nothing, a new gold rush. It's about creating New Music without the audience feeling that it is not for them, it's for the elite (even if they are a very poor elite).

Or as Belgian composer Annelies van Parys put it: 'We need to infect our audiences so that they are inspired by New Music without even knowing it'.

It's interesting to note that the youngest producers in the room are very optimistic about the future.

Postscript:

Looking to the future when a host of industries will have been hollowed out (law, medicine, retail, insurance, stock exchange, coding itself) - will live music make a strong comeback? Significantly, no one in the meeting addressed the demise of the musician in terms of the David Cope futuristic 'Emily Howell' persona - new music(s) generated from a massive database. Most of it does pass the Turing test and would be acceptable as generic music in specific styles to many people's ears. Even composers who (maybe deludedly) think they have an original style will be able to load up all their compositions and influences into a program and churn out a new work. In some ways we are already doing this if you use Sibelius or Finale by cutting, copying and pasting - it's using algorithms to shift data around. AI and AR are here and now (that is very different to consciousness and we won't get past that until we have at least a general theory of cognition). Collaboration in defiance is the only way forward. It's possible soon that you may not be able to use any digital network to compose without the 'permission' of one of these metadata empires (Facebook, Apple, Amazon, etc) as computation and storage become controlled closed systems for the few and the powerful. But remember, with improvisation, they can't really touch us!

Goethe Institute-sponsored composers like Johannes Kreidler may traverse the world showing off how they outsourced a commission ('I received €1500 for my commission, whereas to my workers in Asia who wrote the score I only had to pay \$150') but our discussion at the Peggy Glanville-Hicks House didn't have the time to deal with all the perversions of our digital world...