

**MUSIC LIBRARIES IN AUSTRALIA :  
A Visitor's Impressions**

-Kathleen McMorrow  
University of Toronto

For two weeks late last "northern summer" (late winter there), I was able, with the gracious assistance of the Canadian High Commission in Australia, to visit ten music libraries associated with universities or conservatories, and five special collections.

McLuhan's metaphor of the "global village" offers little enlightenment in the face of the eighteen to twenty hours of flying time between Canada and Australia, the reversal of the seasons, and the puzzling variations in the impact of colonialism. There are apparent similarities, in geography (large urban centres backing on to immense wilderness), political structures (parliamentary federalism), history (comparatively recent European settlement after violent dislocation of the aboriginal population), and much else. A visitor from Canada may at first feel at home, or "non-other", but will soon meet with greater or lesser shocks. The first for us, for example, was the news that the capable and knowledgeable francophone cultural officer who had organized the tour was not a Canadian from Chicoutimi or Caraquet, but an immigrant to Australia from New Caledonia, French Polynesia, who had never seen snow in her life. More seriously, the varying powers and responsibilities, despite names similar to Canadian ones, of agencies of state and national governments, created a more intense version of the disorientation of the change of road driving sides.

Four of the major cities are clustered along the south east coast, an hour or two by plane away from each other. Canberra, a planned city, is in the National Capital Region, on an interior plateau.

The Australian National Library occupies a graceful pillared building in a park, with exhibition halls, a general reading room, a reference area, information desk, and catalogue terminals on the main floor. Further resemblances to the NLC are few.

The previously distinct music division has recently been rationalized as part of a general restructuring. Its small staff was folded into the academic reading

room complement, so is available to researchers only a few hours per week or by appointment. The printed music stacks include, like the rest of the collection, more non-Australiana than one might expect. The ANL was at one time the only library in the city, and continues to serve more general needs of the local public. Books on music and serials are shelved with the rest of the collection, and there is no particular collection of concert programs. Sound recordings are in another institution, the National Film and Sound Archives, and like all "non-book" formats, are exempt from legal deposit. The Australian Bibliographic Network functions as the national cataloguing support service, but music holdings in Australian libraries are listed only on cards, not yet on line.

The Library of the Canberra School of Music is a long narrow room on the ground floor of a new wing, which also includes a concert hall and classrooms. It's a compact, idiosyncratic collection designed to meet the practical needs of a performance program, with a bank of lockers for large ensemble materials, full scores shelved by size, then by composer, rows of etudes and concert works for solo instruments, then duets, trios, etc., kept in labelled portfolios ("violin D-F", "Beethoven quartets") to be browsed by medium. A few study spaces, and listening equipment for a select group of sound recordings, are placed against the windows along the length of the room.

Sydney, with its four million people, is the second largest city in the Commonwealth, and the cultural centre of the country, enjoying all the admiration and resentment such a position entails.

The University of Sydney Library System includes "research materials" in the main Fisher Library (musicology is part of the general arts faculty) and "supports performing music" in the Music Library, Seymour Centre, where composition and performance are housed. Fisher has random strengths (every scholarly publication and facsimile of lute music for example) and weaknesses (even in Dewey, four

locations for books on Wagner?) perhaps reflecting the interests of a few teaching staff, plus the absence of a specialized music librarian. There is a separate listening area, with a small collection of classical, jazz and popular recordings. In Seymour, there is a more rounded collection of study and performance materials, with a dozen cabinets of recordings.

The New South Wales State Conservatorium of Music was recently also made part of the University, and further changes because of government cutbacks are felt as threatening. The Con Library is on the second (public areas) and third (technical services, large ensembles collection) floors of a downtown office building, several blocks from the heritage building where performance is taught, and several miles from the University and its two music departments. It's a large, well-developed collection in all formats, serving a large undergraduate student body in music education, composition and music history as well as performance. For recent materials, the catalogue is on line. A union catalogue on CD-ROM includes all NSW tertiary institutions, rivalling, and in music bypassing, the ANL Network.

Sounds Australian (Australian Music Centre): This resource centre for contemporary Australian composition is located in a restored historic building on the waterfront. The library has about three hundred historical manuscripts, but its focus is on current scores and performance parts, including published, "near print" and photocopies, and formal and informal recordings of works by "registered" composers, hundreds of clipping files, current and back files of dozens of Australian journals and newsletter titles, and a remarkably large collection of reference works. The Centre has issued an extensive run of composer information brochures (newer ones are subsidized by their subjects) and produces printouts from its computerized catalogue for repertoire and other inquiries. About one third of the floor space is a shop featuring CDs of all kinds of Australian music, scores, books, mixed media packages and videos, plus the excellent journal also called *Sounds Australian*.

Denis Wollanski Library of the Performing Arts: This library serves the information needs of the administration of the Sydney Opera House, and is open to the public with its documentation of the performing arts, mainly in Sydney and New South

Wales -- fifty cabinets of clipping files on performers, 60,000 programs, and extensive archives of local theatre and music companies. While dipping into the clippings, the first name I encountered was Alannah Myles, with a notice of a Sydney appearance! There is an extensive reference area, hundreds of current periodicals in music, theatre and dance, and a good collection of monographs. The high-ceilinged space under a rehearsal hall is decorated with costumes, props, and posters from Opera House productions.

University of Wollongong: About two hours drive south of Sydney, the general library of this new "uni" is surrounded by exotic (to me) flowers and shrubs, a duck pond, and an outdoor sculpture resembling a giant potato masher. Staff areas are on the top floor, tree-top level, with lots of windows. The collections in all formats were very modest, and like almost all in Australia, classed in Dewey (even recordings), with many, I guess unavoidable, inconsistencies.

Resources in Brisbane, the sub-tropical capital of Queensland, are analogous, though differently distributed than in NSW.

The Music and Architecture Library, University of Queensland, occupies about 8,000 square feet on the ground floor of the Faculty. It is a substantial and well-organized resource, more easily judged since, unusually, it uses LC classification. Other distinctive features were books in languages other than English, and appropriate bindings for music. Selection, and the assignment of uniform titles and subject headings, is done by the music library, with ordering and other technical functions by the central library.

Queensland Conservatorium: An impending amalgamation with Griffiths University should make possible the upgrading of this collection and its handling. The present tiny, cramped facility has very few resources for the student body of over 500.

State Library of Queensland: This collection was described to me as a major public resource for the city, and for smaller towns across the state through interlibrary loan, with holdings running from parts for large ensembles, standard and contemporary solo and chamber repertoire, to archival and historic music materials of Queensland origin.

Adelaide is another capital city, the gateway to the

Barossa Valley, famous wine-producing area of South Australia, but I did concentrate on business as well.

The Performing Arts Library, University of Adelaide shows the effects of earlier amalgamations, by the state government from the late 1970s, and the federal government since the late 1980s. Former "Colleges of Advanced Education" (like community colleges, I believe) were one by one upgraded and merged into university departments, and unlike the University of Sydney situation, the libraries were all added in. The current library has been in its present configuration -- a converted split-level space of three main rooms, one of them directly beneath a small rehearsal/concert hall sans sound-proofing -- for just a year. Shelves show multiple copies not only of the *Harvard Dictionary* and *Peter Grimes*, but of Xenakis' *Formalized music*. Scholarly editions and facsimiles are well-represented, but there are few recent foreign-language books. *Music Index* and *RILM* are available on CD-ROM, but the journal collection is slender. LPs and CDs are on open shelves in a classed sequence, as is often the case.

In Melbourne, state capital of Victoria, we stayed at a hotel, and on a street, named after Ada Crossley, another locally born opera star of the early part of the century. It was Sept. 1, the official start of spring, and daffodils for charity were everywhere.

The Grainger Museum is on the grounds, and now administratively part, of the University of Melbourne. We were told that the building was modelled on the public lavatory design developed for the city by Percy Grainger's father. The interior is equally eccentric, stuffed with memorabilia of his career: keyboard instruments from near and far, including one in sixths he built in 1952; a huge contraption of tubes and pulleys to produce "free music"; various exotic costumes on North American Indian themes; recreation of a complete sitting room; and a photo montage of all his girlfriends. The archives -- his own manuscripts, letters and publications, and manuscripts he collected of several contemporaries -- are in storage and being microfilmed.

The University of Melbourne Library includes a self-contained music section with its own staff. The collection is medium-sized, but includes collected works, monumenta, and scholarly monographs sufficient to support a graduate program. Full scores

are shelved in size groups -- miniature, conductor, folio -- then by composer. Solo and chamber works are organized in a homemade scheme involving multiple letter codes, and coloured tape on spines.

The Victoria Music Library includes performance materials, from chamber to large ensembles, which circulate both locally and across the country to individuals or groups who join for a small fee. It is located in a little house in the grounds of a suburban high school, and operates vigorously on a shoestring.

At Monash University the Music Department occupies an upper floor of a tower, with classrooms, a musical instrument collection including a gamelan, and a working collection of scores and recordings, some of them field tapes, supporting a program which emphasizes musicology. The main library, an elevator ride and a few steps away, holds a substantial number of books and journals in music.

Throughout this brief visit, my standards of judgement, based on my own local, limited experience, required regular readjustment. The responsibilities for collecting and organizing archival, research and performance materials, and the services available to students, scholars, and the public were not in the expected places or of the sorts I was used to, but were based on other models and historical circumstances.

I would like to thank my Australian colleagues and hosts for providing this intense and enlightening experience. All these music librarians welcomed me warmly and shared their time and professional knowledge most generously: Philip Weeks and Marianna Pickler in Canberra; Tony Green, Caroline Symes and Paul Bentley in Sydney; Mary O'Mara, Laurel Garlick and David Barkla in Brisbane; Gordon Abbott in Adelaide; and particularly Christine Vincent who spent a whole day taking me around Melbourne. Paulette Montaigne of the Canadian High Commission did a brilliant job of contacting people and arranging the meetings, and laid on many other discussion opportunities and social events.

