

Don Banks, Australian Composer:

Eleven Sketches

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Don Banks: An Introduction to his Work

Don Banks was Australia's most important modernist composer in the third quarter of the 20th century. His most important works were probably the orchestral and chamber works which he wrote while living in London between 1950 and 1971, but he also made a significant contribution to Australian jazz, wrote a great deal of imaginative film music, composed the most important Australian contributions to the 'third-stream' genre (combining aspects of jazz and 'classical' practice), and made some isolated but distinctive contributions to developments of a more 'experimental' nature, including facets of Australian electronic music.

He was born in South Melbourne in 1923, and had a good start in life for a future composer, being the son of a professional band musician who played numerous instruments: all the saxophones (soprano, alto, tenor, baritone and bass) as well as percussion, piano and trombone. The young Banks' memories of those early years include performances given by his father's band at functions at Government House in the thirties. During his schooldays at Melbourne Boys' High School (1937-9) Banks acquired a passion for jazz, which remained with him all his life. The following decade was to see him become perhaps the most important pioneer of early bebop in Melbourne in the late forties, with various bands, including his own: the Donny Banks Boptet.

During the earlier years of this period (1941-6), Banks served with the Army Medical Corps in Melbourne, while playing jazz at night in various Melbourne venues. After the war (1947-9), he joined the large number of ex-servicemen who undertook belated tertiary studies: in his case the Diploma of Music at the Melbourne University Conservatorium. But he also continued to play jazz with his Boptet. The Boptet's final appearance was on radio station 3AR in January 1950 as part of the ABC's programme Thursday Night Swing Club (though the music it played was almost certainly not swing but bebop), just before his departure for London.

In early 1950 Banks left Australia to study in London, and thereafter jazz took a secondary part in his life, and although he always insisted on being identified as an Australian composer, he became quite a cosmopolitan in outlook. Certainly, the first few years of his period of residence in Europe were spent studying with three of the finest teachers of that (or any) day -- Matyas Seiber (who was Hungarian), Milton Babbitt (American) and Italian Luigi Dallapiccola (Italian) -- none of whom had any serious connection with Australia. He studied privately with Matyas Seiber in London, from early 1950 until mid-1952. During the summer of 1952, he took a course at the American Institute in Salzburg with Milton Babbitt, and then spent the 1952-3 academic year studying with Luigi Dallapiccola in Florence. After this he settled back in London, though there was one further significant period of study three years later, when he attended a summer school at Gravesano in Switzerland in August 1956. This took place at the villa of the famous conductor Herman Scherchen, who had a passionate interest in new music, and the principal lecturer was the Italian composer Luigi Nono. Sessions were devoted principally to the study of the Orchestral Variations of Schoenberg and Webern (at that time works comparatively little-known in Europe, but widely regarded by composers such as Nono as heralding the future of music), and to electronic music (Scherchen had a private studio of his own in situ).

These early years of apprenticeship also saw his first significant compositions. His first substantial success was with his Duo for Violin and Piano, written under Matyas Seiber's tutelage during 1951, which was awarded the Edwin Evans Prize in 1952. The prize was presented by Professor Edward Dent at a performance in London in February 1952. The visit which Banks made to Salzburg in the summer of that year to study with Babbitt also enabled him to hear his Duo played at the 1952 ISCM Festival there. His Four Pieces for Orchestra, written during his period of study with Dallapiccola, was given in 1954 by the London Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Sir Adrian Boult. His Three Studies for Cello and Piano, composed soon after his return from Florence, were premiered by Nelson Cooke and Eric Parkin in London's Royal Festival Hall in April 1954.

Towards the end of the fifties, Banks began a significant career in composing for film. Essentially this remained the principal means by which he earned his living for his remaining years in London, along with teaching work at Morley College. He composed a huge quantity of music for film: documentaries, features, animated films, even TV advertisements. No account of Banks' work would be complete without reference to – in particular – those classics of vernacular culture, the 'Hammer Horrors'. Banks wrote 19 feature films, of which the 10 or so for Hammer Productions form the centrepiece. Into these scores he poured huge quantities of music which drew on every one of the musical idioms in which he had developed expertise, as occasion demanded. Although these film scores (and indeed most of his music outside the symphonic and chamber output) has been taken as peripheral in some accounts of Banks' work, they nevertheless allowed him to 'let his hair down' – free of the sometimes restrictive constraints of expectation imposed by audiences for jazz or 'classical' music, and in some respects show the different sides of his personality in even more vivid form than the symphonic and chamber works.

These films for which he wrote such huge quantities of music (something like 15-20 hours altogether) should probably be described – frankly – as 'B' movies, though this somewhat severe judgement is by no means universally shared, as can be deduced from the fact that Hammer has found it worthwhile during the nineties to re-issue quite a number of them on video as 'cult' movies. These re-issues include *The Mummy's Shroud*, *The Reptile*, *Rasputin the Mad Monk*, *Nightmare*, *The Torture Garden* and *The Evil of Frankenstein*. Nevertheless, 'B' movies or no, we should recall that many of the greatest popular songs of the century come from musicals which 'bombed' after a few performances, and that often the songs they contained took on a new life of their own thereafter. In the same way, I believe that a good deal of Banks' film music is considerably stronger than the films in which it appeared, and deserves to be re-recorded for its own value. Indeed, in the cultural climate of the end of the century, when the rather patronising view of film music as inherently a second-class genre – quite a widespread attitude amongst composers of previous generations – is gradually fading away, and re-issues of film scores have become a more and more ubiquitous feature of the CD catalogues, this is now quite likely to happen.

If you look up Don Banks in the 1980 edition of the *New Grove Dictionary*, the article there by British journalist William Mann concentrates, as you might expect, on the side of his work by which he became best-known in Britain: the composer of "serious" works for orchestral and chamber forces in a 'modernist' idiom – works which make considerable demands on listeners' powers of perception and conception, and are predicated on a deep background knowledge of the development of 'progressive' musical styles in this century. The pieces on which Mann's assessment is based are essentially the chamber pieces beginning with the *Sonata da Camera* (1961) and the *Horn Trio for the Edinburgh Festival* (1962), leading to successes with larger orchestral canvasses such as the *Horn Concerto for Barry Tuckwell and the London Symphony Orchestra* (1966) and the *Violin Concerto for the 1968 London Promenade Concerts*, although the final work in this impressive sequence was written after his return to Australia in the early seventies: *Prospects for the opening of the Sydney Opera House* (1973).

Certainly these pieces do in some sense manifest the cosmopolitan qualities to be expected of an 'expatriate'. Nonetheless, the tone of Mann's article (basically a sympathetic one) makes a good deal of Banks' 'regional' origins. Conversely, and perhaps ironically, it's in Australia that writers have tended to emphasise the European, 'expatriate' aspect of his work.

Even if we regard these chamber and orchestral pieces as the 'core' of Banks' output, there are several other genres to which he made significant contributions, and which should be mentioned here. One was 'third-stream' music, in which jazz idioms and jazz performers were integrated with the 'classical' idiom and forces such as string quartet, chamber ensemble and orchestra – works such as *Settings from Roget*, *Intersections* and later *Nexus*.

Another was electronic music. As he was reported as saying on the subject many years later: 'The language of music

must be constantly reworked, and I believed that in time the avant-garde of today will become the mainstream of music in the future'. Experiments with electronic music began in the sixties, but there were many trials and tribulations involved in getting access to facilities for electronic music in London at that time. Considering the magnitude of these problems, it is hardly surprising that electronic music never became more than a secondary component of his output (as it might have done, had he come to maturity a generation later, when better equipment had become cheaper and more widely accessible), and when he did call on electronic resources, it was usually in combination with 'live' instruments.

In *Meeting Place*, written for the London Sinfonietta in 1970, he went a stage further still, combining both the 'third-stream' idiom and electronic media. But it was not until after his return to Australia that he was involved in the event in which this 'experimental' side of his musical personality reached its apotheosis, in one of the major events in which he was involved in Canberra in the early seventies, the 'no-holds-barred' audio-visual extravaganza *Synchronos '72*, which combined these elements plus yet another: visual images created and projected by Stan Ostojka-Kotkowski.

In 1970 Banks paid a visit to Australia, and then decided to return to Australia to live, which he finally did, after a further year in London, in 1972. He joined the staff of the Canberra School of Music for several years, and eventually moved to the Sydney Conservatorium of Music in 1978. For much of this period his work was hampered by the illness from which he eventually died in 1980, and although he wrote a number of successful works during the seventies, it would not be an unreasonable assessment that the major scores which he had written in London during the sixties remained his best.

Much of Don Banks' music is published by Schott. This means that performing scores of some of the solo and chamber works are available for purchase, as well study or miniature scores of some of the larger works. But a good number of these Schott works are still available only on hire. The works which were not published during his lifetime are now available for purchase from Southern Voices through the Australia Music Centre.

The principal repository of Banks' documentary material is the National Library of Australia. The manuscript collections of the NLA are, as one would expect, a rich resource for Australian Studies in most fields. But, compared to the resources for the study of literature, painting and other art forms, those for music are as yet rather more limited. Fortunately, the Banks Collection is one of its most significant musical resources. It is divided into two principal components: the Manuscript Room Collection (MS 6830) and the Petherick Room Collection (MUS BANKS). The most important things in MS 6830 are the music manuscripts (scores, parts, drafts, and sketches of chamber, orchestral, film and TV music, in the main) of most of his compositions (25 large black boxes) and the personal papers (34 large grey boxes, containing correspondence, programmes, scripts, diaries, and much else). The Petherick Room Collection consists of Banks' personal library: scores by other composers, books and journals (322 catalogued items, some of which are themselves bundles of several or many items) and recordings, on cassette, reel-to-reel tape and disc, not only of music, but also of broadcast talks, interviews and other spoken material (several hundred items in all). The collection was acquired by the NLA on the 10th August, 1982, but various bits and pieces have been added to it in the last sixteen years.

Overall the Don Banks Collection presents a remarkably rounded portrait of the composer and his activities, but there are some lacunae, above all the film scores. Unfortunately, the NLA's archive contains only the short-score sketches for most of the film music (in pencil on three- or four-stave systems). The composer's widow, Valerie Banks, who now lives in Canberra, holds three or four full scores. The rest are probably somewhere in the Hammer archives, but since the musical manuscripts in the Hammer archives are largely uncatalogued and in a state of some disorder, I have not yet managed to reassemble complete and coherent full scores for the whole series of Banks

movies in a form which precisely matches what is on the sound-tracks, though I hope to do so in the next year or two.

Writings about Don Banks are rather in need of updating. Since his activities, as sketched above, covered several fields of composition which ordinarily have little to do with one another, most writers who have attempted an assessment of his work have concentrated on one or two of these fields and ignored or skimmed over the others. There have also been several symposia with chapters in which his work has been discussed – albeit mostly quite old ones by now. However, in one recent one (see the bibliography, below) Randall D Larson discusses Banks' music for the Hammer horror movies, and describes him as 'the crown prince' of the genre. None of these quite gets to grips with the many identities which were an essential part of Banks' musical personality.

In the eighties and nineties we have become more accustomed to the idea that the work of Australian composers often embodies many musical identities, because of the arrival of a generation of composers, now in their thirties and forties, whose work, while thoroughly Australian in outlook, is less likely than the previous generation to accord precedence in the determination of identity to such straightforward factors as citizenship of a particular nation state or inhabitation of a particular landscape, and is equally influenced by a plethora of compositional practices derived from their contacts with the European new music festivals, the many sub-cultures of American musical life or the popular musics of six continents (amongst other possibilities). This phenomenon of multiple identity has sometimes been seen as analogous with, or perhaps an example of, the simultaneous development in other spheres of life of both globalisation and regionalisation (as for example within the European Union, in political and economic life). In the post-modern era, indeed, one might even say multiple identity has become the dominant paradigm in musical composition, in Australia as elsewhere, although the older tradition which tended to define Australian identity in terms of Australian landscape and something of an 'Asia/Pacific v Europe' polemic – a tradition promulgated for so many years by Peter Sculthorpe and others – has continued to find adherents.

A particularly interesting resource with respect to the 'jazzman' side of this multiple identity is in the National Film and Sound Archive in Canberra: the videocassette *The Melbourne Jazz Days, 1938 - 1950* by Banks' son Simon. A large part of this video is given over to interviews in 1985 with musicians who had played jazz with the young Don Banks in the forties, before he went to London to study, and these musicians all speak with great respect of his capabilities and originality as a jazz pianist and arranger.

Though there has not yet been a book devoted solely to Don Banks and his music, there have been a number of academic theses; several are in progress at various universities around the country as I write.

I should also mention two other forthcoming publications in which I have attempted to document the many identities of Don Banks more fully – a Guide to the NLA collection, *Don Banks on Music* – an anthology of the composer's own writings, transcribed talks and interviews about music (many of them edited from the manuscripts and published for the first time) – and a monograph: *Meeting Place: the Music of Don Banks*.

Finally, a personal impression – one which remained unchanged from my first meeting with him in 1968 through a friendship of twelve years until his (by contemporary standards) quite early death at the age of 56: that of a slightly-built, quietly-spoken and unassuming person – very self-critical, but always ready to give credit where credit was due, whether to colleagues, students or other composers, and never given to carping or polemic. This flexible capacity to 'give credit where credit was due' was perhaps a key personality trait: one which enabled him to see, without ideological prejudice, possibilities in many different fields of musical composition – fields which espouse very different, even conflicting, ideas as to what constitutes musical value. Although, to be sure, this is a subjective personal impression of mine, it is not contradicted by the more objective, precise and complete answer

to the question which the documentary evidence, especially the NLA collection, provides.

I joined the staff of the Sydney Conservatorium of Music in mid-1980, expecting to spend some time as Don Banks' colleague, although it was apparent that he was already very ill. In fact, he died only a few weeks later, on September 5th of that year, and I became his successor as Head of Composition instead of his colleague. He was a few weeks short of his 57th birthday when he died, and his composing during those final years in Australia had been considerably affected by his battle with cancer. In other circumstances, one might have expected that much of his best work was still to come.

Don Banks: List of Works

Title	Instrumentation	Date
Trio	flute, violin and cello	1948
Fantasia	string orchestra	1949
Sonatina	piano	1949
Divertimento	flute and string trio	1951
Duo	violin and cello	1951
Five North Country Folk Songs	soprano and piano	1953
Four Pieces	orchestra	1953
Sonata	violin and piano	1953
Five North Country Folk Songs	soprano and string orchestra	1954
Psalm 70	mezzo-soprano and orchestra	1954
Three North Country Folk Songs	soprano and piano	1955
Three Studies	cello and piano	1955
I'm easy	vln, double bass, trombone, guitar, pf, drums	1956
Pezzo Drammatico	piano	1956
Episode	small orchestra	1958
Sonata da camera	8 instruments	1961
Elizabethan Miniatures	flute, lute, viola da gamba and strings	1962
Horn Trio	horn, violin, piano	1962
Equation 1	12 players	1963
Form	tape	1964
Three Episodes	flute and piano	1964
Concerto for Horn and Orchestra	horn and orchestra	1965
Divisions	orchestra	1965
Assemblies	orchestra	1966
Settings from Roget	voice and jazz quartet	1966
Sequence	solo cello	1967
Concerto for Violin and Orchestra	violin and orchestra	1968
Prologue, Night Piece and Blues for Two	clarinet and piano	1968
Tirade mezzo	soprano and ensemble	1968
Dramatic Music for Young Orchestra	orchestra	1969
Equation 2	12 instrumentalists	1969
Findings Keepings	chorus (+ optional bass guitar and drum kit)	1969

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Intersections	electronic sounds and orchestra	1969
Aria from Limbo	mezzo-soprano, ensemble, 2-channel tape	1972
Fanfare and National Anthem	orchestra	1970
Meeting Place	chamber ensemble, jazz group, synthesizer	1970
Commentary	piano and tape	1971
Four Pieces	string quartet	1971
Limbo	3 singers, 8 instruments, 2-channel tape	1971
Music for Wind Band	wind band	1971
Nexus	orchestra and jazz quintet	1971
Three Short Songs	jazz singer and jazz quintet	1971
Aria from Limbo	mezzo-soprano, ensemble, 2-channel tape	1972
Equation 3	ensemble, jazz quartet and electronics	1972
Shadows of Space	4-channel tape	1972
Synchronos '72	tape	1972
Walkabout	children's voices and instruments	1972
Take Eight	jazz quartet and string quartet	1973
Prospects	orchestra	1974
Carillon	2-channel tape	1975
String Quartet	string quartet	1975
4 / 5 / 7	tape (graphic score for student performers)	1976
Benedictus	male chorus, jazz quartet, electronics	1976
Trio	bass clarinet, elec pf, Moog synthesizer	1976
4 x 2 x 1	clarinettist and tape	1977
Magician's Castle	tape	1977
One for Murray	solo clarinet	1977
Trilogy	orchestra	1977
An Australian Entertainment	male voices	1979

In addition to these works of 'absolute' music, the following feature films have scores which were wholly or partly composed by Don Banks:

Murder at Site 3 (Eternal Films Ltd, 1958)
 The Price of Silence (Eternal Films Ltd, 1959)
 The Treasure of San Teresa (Associated British Picture Corporation, 1959)
 Jackpot (Eternal Films Ltd, 1960)
 The Third Alibi (Eternal Films Ltd, 1961)
 Captain Clegg (Hammer/ Universal International, 1961)
 Petticoat Pirates (ABPC, 1963)
 The Evil of Frankenstein (Hammer/ Universal International, 1963)
 Crooks in Cloisters (ABPC, 1963)

The Punch and Judy Man (ABPC, 1963)
Nightmare (Hammer Film Productions Ltd, 1963)
Hysteria (Hammer Film Productions Ltd/MGM, 1964)
The Brigand of Kandahar (Hammer Film Productions Ltd, 1964)
Rasputin, the Mad Monk (Hammer Film Productions Ltd, 1965)
The Reptile (Hammer Film Productions Ltd, 1966)
The House at the End of the World (Alta Vista Film Productions Ltd, 1966)
The Mummy's Shroud (Hammer Film Productions Ltd, 1966)
The Frozen Dead (Hammer Film Productions Ltd, 1967)
The Torture Garden (Hammer Film Productions Ltd, 1970)

This list does not include the many documentary, animated and television films for which Banks wrote the music. For information on these films please consult *Graham Hair: A Guide to the Don Banks Collection* in the National Library of Australia (Canberra: Manuscripts Division, National Library of Australia), ISBN 0 642 10711 4.

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PEART, Donald (1967)

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Don Banks: A Chronological Sketch

Compositions and events are listed chronologically, except that the title of each composition written within a particular year is given immediately under the heading for that year in cases where the score is not precisely dated. In the case of events whose precise date has not (yet) been ascertained, estimated dates have been given, accompanied by a parenthesised question mark.

1923

October 25th: born in Melbourne.

Parents both born in Australia

Father: Donald Waldemar Banks, band and jazz musician -- played all the saxophones (sop, alto, tenor, bari, bass), percussion, piano, trombone

Mother: Elsie Banks, nee Carlson)

Sister: Norma

Paternal grandparents born in Scotland

Maternal grandparents:

Grandfather Oscar Carlson, born Ujsted, Sweden [seaman]

Grandmother Elisabeth Carlson, born in Ireland

Home address: 89 Nelson Road, South Melbourne, SC5

1928

Began piano lessons [with George McWhinney ?]

First school: Cambridge College, Albert Park, Melbourne

1929

Began to participate in piano competitions in Victoria (Ballarat, Bendigo etc)

1930

1931

1932

Attended Albert Park State School (?)

About this time, played intermission music with Donald Weekes, violin (who later played with the London Philharmonia Orchestra) during an appearance by his father's band at Government House

1933

Attended Albert Park State School (?)

1934

Attended Albert Park State School (?)

About this time, after a few years' piano playing, gave up [= gave up formal tuition, but kept playing ?], due to lack of interest in practising.

1935

Attended Middle Park Central School

1936

Attended Middle Park Central School

1937

Attended Melbourne Boys' High School

About this time, renewed contact with music by learning to play jazz piano.

1938

Attended Melbourne Boys' High School

Participated in MBHS Jazz Appreciation Society [organised by Max/Ray Margison].

Played jazz as a highschool boy with fellow students Paul Longhurst (drums) and Rick Atkins (reeds). [some references also mention Ray Marginson (drums) and Keith Atkins (reeds)]

1939

Attended Melbourne Boys' High School

Performed jazz with Graeme Bell (piano), Roger Bell (trumpet) and others during an insurance company picnic function on the paddle steamer Weroona, sailing Melbourne - Sorrento

[Date?] Participated in jazz concert at Unity Hall, Melbourne. Billed as 'Don Banks, the sixteen-year-old boogie woogie wonder'

1940

Went to work for Hetherington, Ffoulkes and Austin (solicitors), Melbourne; later for Denman and Robertson (also solicitors)

1941

Continued to play jazz piano, eg at St Leonard's Cafe, St Kilda (with Charlie Blott)

August 9th: Participated at a History of Jazz Concert, with Graeme Bell and his Jazz Gang, at The Stage Door, 276 Flinders Street, Melbourne. Billed as 'Don Banks the 17-year-old wonder'.

October 28th: Contemporary Art Society Concert, "Hot Jazz", by Graeme Bell and his Jazz Gang. Don Banks was soloist ("Boogie Woogie Piano solo"). Review: Melbourne Truth 1/11/41

December 19th: beginning of war service with the CMF (Citizens Military Forces). Allocated first to Signal Corps, then to the Army Medical Corps. Eventually moved to the AMC base administration in Melbourne.

1942

Continued war service and playing jazz

1943

Continued war service and playing jazz

Played jazz at the Rainbow Room, Melbourne, with Roger Bell (trumpet), Don ('Pixie') Roberts, Lin Challen and Laurie Howells (drums)

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Played jazz with The Mosters: Splinter Reeves (tenor), Dilly Weston (?), Alan Nash (tpt), Lin Challen (bass), Don Banks (pf).

Began playing jazz with the BBC Trio (DB, Charlie Blott and Lin Challen)

September: visit of the Artie Shaw Band (to entertain the American troops in Australia). DB recorded jazz with Australian jazzman Roger Bell (trumpet) and with Max Kaminsky, trumpeter of the Artie Shaw Band 19/9/1943

1944

Continued war service and playing jazz

March 16th: recorded jazz (incl Sweet Georgia Brown) with The Aldous Huxley Trio (private recording)

1945

Continued war service and playing jazz

Wrote scores for the Glenn Gilmour Band

About this time, played jazz in the band at Sammy Lee's Stork Club (Black Rock, outer Melbourne suburbs). Personnel: Craig Crawford (leader, tenor), Ralph Pommer (deputy leader, alto), Kevin Gobert (ten, vocals), Ivan Haskall (cl, alto, bari), Ken Brentnall (tpt), Bill "Buffalo" Coady (drums), Ken Lester (bass), Don Banks (pf), Betty Lester (vocals).

October: P&A Parade concert. Don Banks with the Dolf ("Splinter") Reeves Quintet: Splinter Reeves (tenor), Charlie Blott (drums), Alf Baker (guitar), Linton Challen (bass), Don Banks (pf). Cf Listener In report.

1946

Continued war service and playing jazz

May 12th: P&A Parade concert. Don Banks with the Reeves Rhythm Ensemble: 'Splinter' Reeves (tenor), Charlie Blott (drums), Alf Baker (guitar), Linton Challen (bass), Don Banks (pf). Cf Listener In report.

August 8th: conclusion of war service with the CMF

1947

Commenced studies for the Diploma of the Melbourne University Conservatorium under the ex-servicemen's scheme.

[Exact date ?] Recorded jazz (incl Tea for Two) with Splinter and his Chips (private recording)

[Exact date ?] Mid-1947: recorded jazz (incl I'm in the mood for love) with The Don Banks Group (private recording).

July 23rd: recorded jazz (incl Wholly Cats) with Russ Jones and the Happy Chaps (private recording)

August 24th: Don Banks with Bob Limb's All-Star Septette. New Theatre, Flinders Street, Melbourne. Reported in Tempo 10/12 (Sept 1947).

[Exact date ?] Late-1947: recorded jazz (incl Lady Be Good) with The Bobby Limb Orchestra (private recording).

1948

Continued studies for the Diploma of the Melbourne University Conservatorium
Work composed: Trio for flute, violin and cello, Piano Sonata in C sharp minor

About July: formed the Donny Banks Bopptet.

Players who performed with it 1947-1950 included:

- Charlie Blott (drums)
- Ken Lester (bass)
- John Foster (bass) [according to Bisset]
- Eddie Oxley (alto sax, clarinet)
- Orm Stewart (trombone)
- Joe Washington (guitar) [according to Bisset]
- Bruce Clarke (guitar)
- Alf Baker (guitar) (?) [see discography]
- Ken Brentnall (trumpet)
- Don Banks (piano)
- Don ('Pixie') McFarlane (bass)
- Betty Parker (vocals)

July 25th: participated (with the Donny Banks Bopptet) in a Modern Music Society Concert, New Theatre, Flinders Street, Melbourne. Personnel: Don Banks (pf), Errol Buddle (ten), Eddie Oxley (alto), Ken Brentnall (tpt), Joe Washington (g), Lin Challen (bass), Charlie Blott (drums), Laurel Quinzel (vocals).

Repertoire included: Undecided, I'm in the mood for Love

Reported in Tempo 11/11 (August 1948), p10

[Date ?] recorded jazz (incl Pennies from Heaven and Maternity) with Blott's Boppers (private recording).

September 2nd: recorded jazz (incl Symphony Sid and Talk of the Town) with Errol Buddle and his Sextet on the first Australian jazz recording (Jazzart, numbers 1 and 2).

Tuesday, November 30th: Participated in Jazz Parade, a concert including both (trad) jazz and bop, at the Collingwood Town Hall, Melbourne.

Items presented by the Donny Banks Bopptet:

- Schon Rosmarin (Kreisler, arr Ken Brentnall)
- Louise (arr Don Banks)
- Lady be Bop (Ken Brentnall)
- I'm in the mood for Love (Fields/McHugh arr Don Banks)
- Sportsman's Hop (arr Joe Washington)
- Peace of Mind (Vivien Lum)
- Cherokee (Ray Noble, arr Don Banks)
- How High the Moon (arr Don Banks)

1949

Completed studies for the Diploma of the Melbourne University Conservatorium, graduating with first class honours

Work composed: Fantasia for String Orchestra

[Date: ?] Premiere, Sonata in C sharp minor. Concert of the Society for New Music, Melbourne. Played by the composer. This was the only ('serious') work by Banks to receive a (public) performance prior to the composer's departure to study in Europe.

August 10th: Exhibition Building concert by (amongst others ?) Rex Stewart and the Splinter Reeves Splintette. Included arrangements by Don Banks.

1950

January 16th: recorded jazz (incl I've got my love to keep me warm and Can't help lovin' dat man) with The Don Banks Orchestra (The Donny Banks Boptet) (Jazzart, numbers 48 and 49)

[January 1950 ? or late 1949 ?] Broadcast (radio station 3AR): Alan Saunders' Thursday Night Swing Club. Last appearance of the Don Banks Boptet. Personnel: Don Banks (pf), Eddie Oxley (alto), Bruce Clarke (guitar), Ken Brentnall (tpt), Don ("Pixie") McFarlane (bass), Charlie Blott (drums).

February: Left Australia for further study in England, in the company of fellow students Ian Pearce and Ivan Sutherland, on the liner Strathaird

Address in London: 28 Pembridge Gardens, Notting Hill Gate, London, W2

March [approx]: Began private studies in composition in London with Matyas Seiber (continued to the summer of 1952). While studying with Seiber, supported himself by playing at seaside hotels and by working in the office of the London Contemporary School of Music (secretary to Edward Clark).

1951

Shared a house in London with Roger Bell and Ian Pearce

Work composed: Russian Folk Song for piano

May: completed Duo for violin and cello (1950-1)

June 17th: Premiere, Duo. British Council, London. John Glickman (violin) and Christopher Bunting (cello).

August 22nd: Duo. Australian Music Festival concert, Elder Conservatorium, Adelaide

December: completed Divertimento for flute, violin and cello.

1952

Founded and organised the Australian Musical Association in London

Awarded the Edwin Evans Prize (for Duo for violin and cello)

Awarded Italian Government Scholarship for study in Florence with Dallapiccola.

February 26th: Duo for violin and cello. London Contemporary Music Centre concert at the RBA Galleries, London. Emmanuel Hurwitz (violin) and Vivien Josephs (cello).

February 29th: Premiere, Divertimento for flute and string trio. London Contemporary Music Centre (British Section of the ISCM) at the Institute of Contemporary Arts, 17-18 Dover Street, London, W1. Douglas Whittaker (flute) with the Robert Cooper Trio, ie Robert Cooper (violin), Gwyne Edwards (viola) and Denis Vigay (cello).

Graham Hair: *Don Banks, Australian Composer: Six Sketches*

May 29th: The Cherry Tree Australian Musical Association "First Recital", Australia House, London. Ailsa Green (soprano) and Douglas Gamley (piano).

June 23rd: Duo for violin and cello. 1952 ISCM festival (Salzburg)

July 10th: Australian Musical Association "Second Recital", Australia House, London.

[Date ?] Australian Musical Association "Third Recital", Australia House, London.

[Date ?] Australian Musical Association "Fourth Recital", Australia House, London.

August: attended Seminar in American Studies at the Schloss Leopold, Salzburg, taking a course in twelve-tone theory with Milton Babbitt

October 3rd: Australian Musical Association 'Inaugural Concert', Cinema Hall, Australia House, London.

November: completed Sonata for Violin and Piano

November (until May 1953): studies in Florence with Luigi Dallapiccola.

1953

Works completed: Psalm 70, Four Pieces for Orchestra, 5 North Country Folk Songs (version 1 with piano accompaniment).

February 15th: Premiere, Violin Sonata.

April 23rd: Violin Sonata. Australian Musical Association concert, Australia House, London. Maria Lidka (violin) and Margaret Kitchin (piano).

May(?): completion (in Florence) of Four Pieces for Orchestra

August 5th: marriage to Valerie Frances Miller

Thursday, November 19th: Premiere, Five North Country Folk Songs Australian Musical Association concert, Australia House, London. Sophie Wyss (soprano) and Douglas Gamley (piano).

1954

January 28th: Divertimento Australian Musical Association concert, Australia House, Strand, London. Peter Andry (flute), John Glickman (vln), Harold Harriott (viola) and Ursula Hess (cello).

February 20th: completed Three Studies for Cello and Piano

March 10th: Premiere, Three Studies Royal Festival Hall, London. Nelson Cooke (cello) and Colin Kingsley (piano).

[Date ?] Violin Sonata. 1954 ISCM Festival (Haifa, Israel), where the work received the City of Haifa Prize for chamber music

Graham Hair: *Don Banks, Australian Composer: Six Sketches*

June 1st: Premiere, Four Pieces for Orchestra. BBC Third Programme, Maida Vale Studios, London. London Philharmonic Orchestra, cond Sir Adrian Boult.

July 20th: Four Pieces for Orchestra. ABC Sydney Youth Subscription Concert. Sydney Symphony Orchestra, cond Sir Eugene Goossens

September 15th: Premiere, Five North Country Songs (version 2 for soprano and string orchestra). Wigmore Hall, London. Sophie Wyss (soprano) and The Concert Artists String Orchestra, cond Arthur Denington.

October 10th: Five North Country Songs (version 1 for soprano and piano). SPNM concert, London.

1955

Work composed: Three North Country Folk Songs

[Date: ?] Premiere, Three North Country Folk Songs BBC Home Service Recital. Alisa Gamley (soprano) and Douglas Gamley (piano).

1956

Works composed: Pezzo Drammatico, I'm easy.

June: attended Composer's Seminar in Gravesano, Switzerland, at the villa of Hermann Scherchen. Seminar (led by Luigi Nono) on the orchestral variations of Schoenberg and Webern, and on electronic music.

[Date: ?] Premiere, Pezzo Drammatico. Berne, Switzerland. Margaret Kitchin, (piano).

1957

Living at 44 Princes Gardens, West Acton, London W3

Documentary Film: Alpine Roundabout

May 5th: birth of first child, Kaaren Banks (Mrs Sutcliffe)

1958

Work composed: Episode for Chamber Orchestra

Feature Film: Murder at Site 3

Documentary Film: Your Petrol Today

TV series: The Flying Doctor

1959

Feature Films: The Price of Silence, The Treasure of San Teresa

Documentary Film: Professor's Paradise

Awarded the medal of the Arnold Bax Society for contributions to music in the Commonwealth.

June 12th: Three Studies, 1959 (33rd) ISCM Festival (Rome). Programme also included Two Sonnets (Babbitt).

1960

Feature Film: Jackpot

Documentary Films: Kerosine, I am a passenger, Michali of Skiathos, May Wedding, Alpine Artists

Moved to 16 Box Ridge Avenue, Purley, Surrey

Untimely death of Matyas Seiber, Banks' former teacher.

1961

Works composed: Sonata da Camera (written in memory of Matyas Seiber).

Feature Film: The Third Alibi, Captain Clegg

Documentary Film: The Transistor Story, Freedom to Die, Postman's Holiday, The Cattle Carters, Belgian Assignment

March 16th: birth of second child, Phillipa Banks (Mrs Saraceno)

July 6th: Premiere, Sonata da Camera Cheltenham Festival. Cheltenham Festival Virtuoso Ensemble: Patrick Halling (vln), Gwynne Edwards (vla), Willem de Mont (vc), Edward Walker (fl), Sidney Fell (cl), ? (bass clarinet), Stephen Whittaker (perc), Susan Bradshaw (pf), cond John Carewe.

August: completed Elizabethan Miniatures

1962

Works composed: Horn Trio

Documentary Films: The Commonwealth Story, Midnight Sun

TV series: Dimension of Fear, Silent Evidence

TV Plays: Comedy Playhouse (4 episodes)

August 31st: Premiere, Horn Trio. Edinburgh Festival. Barry Tuckwell (horn), Brenton Langbein (violin) and Maureen Jones (piano).

[Date: ?]: Premiere, Elizabethan Miniatures. Sinfonia of London, cond Douglas Gamley.

1963

Works composed: Equation I

Feature Films: Petticoat Pirates, The Evil of Frankenstein, Crooks in Cloisters, The Punch and Judy Man, Nightmare

Documentary Films: The Diamond People, With General Cargo

1964

Works composed: Three Episodes for Flute and Piano

Feature Films: Hysteria, The Brigand of Kandahar

Documentary Films: Britain Today

14th November: Completion of Form X: a graphic score for from 2 to ten players. For the ensemble of the Centre de Musique, Paris, conducted by Keith Humble.

August 7th: birth of third child, Simon Alexander Banks

1965

Elected to Council and Executive Committee of the SPNM (London)
Works composed: Divisions for orchestra, Concerto for Horn and Orchestra
Feature Film: Rasputin, the Mad Monk
Documentary Film: The Prince in the Heather

July 12th: Premiere, Divisions. Cheltenham Festival. City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, cond Sir Adrain Boult.

October 25th: Premiere, Three Episodes for Flute and Piano. Wigmore Hall, London. Douglas Whittaker (flute) and Don Banks (piano).

November 9th: Premiere, Equation I. Le Centre de Musique, American Center, Paris. Soloists of the Centre de Musique, cond Keith Humble.

December 3rd: Premiere, Assemblies. University of Melbourne Conservatorium of Music. Conservatorium Symphony Orchestra, cond Keith Humble.

1966

Vice-Chairman, SPNM

Works composed: Settings from Roget, Assemblies

Feature Films: The Reptile, The House at the End of the World, The Mummy's Shroud

Documentary Films: Island Boy, The Small Propellor

February 27th: Premiere, Concerto for Horn and Orchestra. Royal Festival Hall, London. Barry Tuckwell (horn), London Symphony Orchestra, cond Colin Davis.

March 18th: Horn Concerto. Centennial Hall, Adelaide. Adelaide Festival of Arts Concert. Barry Tuckwell, horn, with the London Symphony Orchestra, cond Colin Davis

September 16th: Premiere, Three Settings from Roget. Castle Dynevor, Wales. Cleo Laine (voice) and the John Dankworth Quartet.

1967

Chairman, SPNM

Organiser and Joint Director, SPNM Composers' Seminar

Works composed: Sequence for Solo Cello

Feature Films: The Frozen Dead

Documentary Films: Abu Dhabi

November 30th: Premiere, Sequence for Solo Cello. Newport, UK. Concert of the 66 Group, Cardiff. George Isaac (cello).

1968

Organiser and Joint Director, SPNM Composers' Seminar

Works composed: Tirade, Concerto for Violin and Orchestra, Prelude Nightpiece and Blues for Two

February 16th: Premiere, Tirade. Le Centre de Musique, American Center, Paris. Josephine Nendingck (mezzo-so-

prano), with soloists of the Centre de Musique, cond Keith Humble.

March 8th: Settings from Roget. Camden Festival, London.

March 10th: Three Episodes. Wigmore Hall, London.

August 12th: Premiere, Concerto for Violin and Orchestra. Royal Albert Hall, London. Wolfgang Marschner (violin), BBC Philharmonic Orchestra, cond Norman del Mar.

November 21st: Horn Trio. Purcell Room, London.

1969

Became Music Director, Department of Adult Studies, Goldsmith's College, University of London (position held until 1971)

Organiser and Joint Director, SPNM Composers' Seminar

Works composed: Equation II, Findings Keepings, Dramatic Music, Intersections

TV series: A Boy at War

April 20th: Premiere, Equation II. Tenth Bromsgrove Festival Concert. The John Patrick Jazz Ensemble and the John Bradbury String Trio, with Ann Griffiths (harp) and Ronald Stevenson (piano). First performance of complete version of Equation, comprising Equation I and Equation II.

May 10th: Premiere, Dramatic Music for Young Orchestra. Farnham Festival, Surrey.

November 18th: First broadcast, Equation 1 and 2. The John Patrick Orchestra, cond John Patrick

December 19th: Tirade, (Settings from Roget ?). Redcliffe Concert, Purcell Room, London: 'Jazz from other angles'. Programme also included Matyas Seiber's Two Jazzolets.

1970

Returned to Australia for the first time for 20 years for the First National Young Composers' Seminar, Perth, 25/2/70 - 6/3/70.

Works composed: Fanfare and National Anthem for Orchestra, Meeting Place

Feature Film: The Torture Garden

January 24th: Premiere, Intersections The Fairfield Halls, Croydon, London. London Philharmonic Orchestra, cond Arthur Davison.

February 21st: Intersections. ABC Melbourne Promenade Concert. Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, cond John Hopkins

February 26th: Sonata da Camera. Festival of Perth Concert. Members of the WA Symphony Orchestra, cond Thomas Mayers

March 3rd: ?. Festival of Perth Concert. WA Symphony Orchestra, cond John Hopkins

March 5th: Intersections. Assemblies. Festival of Perth Concert.

Graham Hair: *Don Banks, Australian Composer: Six Sketches*

April 13th: Premiere, Fanfare and National Anthem. Captain Cook Memorial Concert. Royal Festival Hall, London. LSO Chorus with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, cond Charles Mackerras

June 5th: Sequence. Park Lane Group concert, London.

June 15th: Premiere, Meeting Place. Queen Elisabeth Hall, London. London Sinfonietta, cond David Atherton.

September 26th: Meeting Place. London Sinfonietta Concert, QEH, London. London Sinfonietta.

October 9th: ABC talk (interview with John Amis): My music

November: Organiser and Joint Director, SPNM Composers' Seminar

November 26th: BBC3 talk: Electronic Instruments

1971

Works composed: Music for Wind Band, Nexus, Commentary, Three Short Songs, Limbo, Four Pieces for String Quartet

March 17th: Talk to RMA: Third-Stream Music

February 27th: Dramatic Music. RPO.

March 20th: Intersections. Goldsmith's College, London..

April 8th: Premiere, Nexus. Staatstheater, Kassel, Germany, John Dankworth Quintet, with the Orchestra of the Staatstheater, Kassel, cond Gerd Albrecht.

April 21st: Premiere, Commentary. English Bach Festival Concert. Holywell Music Room, Oxford. Paul Crossley (piano).

May 13th: Premiere, Music for Wind Band. Farnham Festival Surrey, UK. Wind Band of Farnborough School, cond Peter Mound.

July 9th: Premiere, Three Short Songs. Cheltenham Festival. Cleo Laine (voice) and the John Dankworth Quintet.

July: Organiser and Joint Director, SPNM Composers' Seminar

August 8th: BBC3 talk: Jazz in our musical world

? Premiere, Four Pieces for String Quartet Cardiff Festival Concert. [The Wharton Quartet ?]

1972

Fellowship in the Creative Arts, Australian National University, Canberra.

Address: 16 Liversidge Street, Acton, ACT 2601.

Took up permanent residence in Australia.

Works composed: Walkabout, Equation III, Shadows of Space, Aria from Limbo

February 15 - 23: Director, Second National Young Composers' Seminar, University of Western Australia, Perth (?)

February ? Four Pieces for String Quartet Festival of Perth Concert. Oriel Quartet.

February 29th: Findings, Keepings Festival of Perth Concert, Adelaide Singers, with instrumental ensemble.

March 13th: Premiere, Limbo. Adelaide Festival of Arts concert.

May 5th: Commentary NSW State Conservatorium. David Miller, piano

July 7th: Violin Concerto. Leonard Dommett, violin, with the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, cond Fritz Rieger

September 26th: Synchronos 72, an audio/visual show. Melville Hall, Australian National University. Synchronos 72 had 9 performances altogether, in Canberra and Sydney. The programme included premieres as below:

Premiere, Aria from Limbo. Lois Bogg, soprano, with a chamber ensemble of the Canberra School of Music.

Premiere, Shadows of Space. Electronic work..

Premiere, Equation 3. Don Burrows Quartet with a chamber ensemble of the Canberra School of Music, conducted by the composer.

1973

Appointed Head of Composition and Electronic Music at the Canberra School of Music

Appointed first chairman of the Music Board, Australia Council.

Work composed: Take Eight

February 13th: Nexus. ABC Sydney Proms Concert. Don Burrows Quartet and Judy Bailey (pf) with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, cond John Hopkins

February 15 - 23: Director, Fourth National Young Composers' Seminar, University of Western Australia, Perth

February 15th Dramatic Music. Festival of Perth Concert. WA Symphony Orchestra, cond ?

March 17th: Tirade (first Australian performance), Limbo and Meeting-Place. Don Banks Music-theatre evening, University of New South Wales.

June 2nd: Dramatic Music. ABC Canberra Series.

[Exact date ?]: Four Pieces, Limbo (British premiere), Tirade, Sequence, Equations 1 and 2. Park Lane Group, London. Don Banks 50th birthday concert.

September 24th - 28th: Participated in the Third National Young Composers' Seminar, Melville Hall, Australian

National University, Canberra

October 25th: Don Banks 50th Birthday Concert. ABC Radio Broadcast.

November 1st: Premiere, *Take Eight*. Sydney Opera House. Carl Pini String Quartet and the Don Burrows Quartet. Programme also contained *Four Pieces for String Quartet*.

1974

Returned to Australia (Canberra) to live. Address: 21 Harcourt Street, Weetangera, ACT 2614

Work composed: *Prospects*

April 3rd: *Equation I and II*. Adelaide Promenade Concert. Adelaide Town Hall.

July 27th: Premiere, *Prospects*. Sydney Symphony Orchestra, cond Willem Otterloo.

June 19th: *Four Pieces for String Quartet*. Music Department, Sydney University.

December 9th: completed *Carillon*, a theme for FM radio, commissioned by the ABC to celebrate the opening of ABC-FM radio.

1975

August 8th: completed *String Quartet*

October 17th: Premiere, *String Quartet*. Seymour Centre, Sydney. Austral Quartet.

1976

Works composed: *4 / 5 / 7*, *Trio for Bass Clarinet, Electric Piano and Synthesier*, *Benedictus*

April 1st: *Sequence*. University House, Canberra.

June 26, ANU Convocation Evening with Don Banks and Rodney Hall (poet-novelist).

[Date ?] Premiere, *Carillon* (electronic music). Opening of ABC-FM Radio.

September ?: Premiere, *Benedictus*. Canberra School of Music concert. David Kain Quartet with students of the Canberra School of Music, dir Don Banks

1977

Works composed: *Trilogy*, *One for Murray*, *4 x 2 x 1*, *Magician's Castle*

April 18th: *Meet the Composer*, ABC Odeon Theatre Hobart: performances of several works by DB

April 21st: Premiere, *Trilogy*. Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra, cond Vanco Cavdarski.

November 16th: *Four Pieces for String Quartet*. Royal Northern College of Music, Manchester.

1978

Graham Hair: *Don Banks, Australian Composer: Six Sketches*

Appointed Head, School of Composition, New South Wales State Conservatorium of Music, Sydney. Moved to 24 Waiwera Street, McMahons Point, North Sydney, NSW 2060.

March ?: Premiere, 4 x 2 x 1. Adelaide Town Hall. Adelaide Festival Concert. Murray Khouri, clarinet (composer as tape operator).

May 20th: Equation 3, Four Pieces for String Quartet. New South Wales State Conservatorium of Music, Sydney.

1979

Work composed: An Australian Entertainment

April 18th: Premiere, An Australian Entertainment. Perth Concert Hall. The King's Singers.

1980

June 14th: awarded the Order of Australia

Addendum

[Year ?] March 12th: Episode for Small Orchestra. Adelaide Festival Concert. ? (cond David Bishop ?).

March 3rd, 1982 Awarded DMus (honoris causa), posthumously, by the University of Melbourne

Don Banks's Duo For Violin And Cello: A Note

When Don Banks began his compositional studies in London under Maytas Seiber in early 1950, one of the principal topics was analysis of the Inventions of J S Bach. Seiber had his pupil make diagrammatic summaries of the musical processes of all the two-part and three-part inventions, and then compose some original inventions of his own, some in the style of Bach and others in a 'free' style of Banks' own, which, at this time involved a highly chromatic – somewhat Bartokian – form of extended tonality. The first movement of the Duo began life as a 'free' two-part invention of this kind, but the version which appears in the work as published here was only the last of quite a number of complete and incomplete drafts.

Although the counterpoint is highly chromatic, the key-signature, cadential patterns and thematic incipits of the first movement indicate an unambiguous tonality of F minor, with digressions to its close relatives. The violin begins alone with a strikingly distinctive theme – containing several different figures within it – in the first 6 bars, and this theme is then taken up in imitation by the cello in 7-13, against which the violin plays a contrasting counter-subject. Further statements of this theme in the dominant (violin, 21), the subdominant (cello, 35) and lastly back in the tonic (violin, 49) – played always against its counter-subject (cello 21, violin 35, cello 49) – follow. Between the statements of the theme and its counter-subject come three episodes (13-20, 27-34 and 41-8), each built rigorously upon figures extracted from the theme and its counter-subject.

The second movement is the longest and most varied. It contains 6 principal sections: Allegretto, Giocoso, Agitato, Lento espressivo, Risoluto and A Primo Tempo (this last a varied recapitulation of the first Allegretto). It's essentially a series of scherzando sections enclosing a central slow section.

Like the first movement, the second begins with a theme (violin) and a counter-subject (cello), but these two elements are heard simultaneously right from the start this time. At bar 11, violin and cello swap theme and counter-subject – to provide an 'answer' at the dominant – and then continue in contrapuntal dialogue, as in the first movement.

Later scherzando sections are not quite so comprehensively contrapuntal as the first movement. For example, the Giocoso is characterised by a series of (decorated) 'pedal-tones' accompanying a skittish scherzando, and the Risoluto introduces a violin theme accompanied by cello pizzicati triads and a passage where the two instruments are in octaves.

Although the counterpoint in this movement is highly and freely chromatic, the key-signature suggests C minor, and there are decisive cadences on C at various points, including the beginning and end of the Agitato, the beginning and end of the Lento espressivo, and the beginning and end of the final section (A Primo Tempo).

The third movement is a lively finale, cast in a simple 'ABA' design, characterised by driving 'motoric' rhythms in the outer 'A' sections and a contrasting cantabile theme in the 'B' section.

Whereas the first movement is wholly contrapuntal, and the second movement predominantly so, the finale has one instrument accompany the other most of the time (with repeated dyads in the 'outer' sections, and a 'walking bass' in the central cantabile section). The exception is in the latter part of the middle section where the 'cantabile' theme and its 'walking-bass' accompaniment move progressively into contrapuntal dialogue and the tessitura rises gradually into the high range of both instruments to achieve a climax, just before the return of the 'A' idea.

The tonality of the last movement is even more ambiguous than that of the second, but with various passing suggestions of F minor and C minor (references to the tonalities of the first two movements, perhaps), but it moves to cadences on G at the end of both the 'outer' sections of the movement, thus outlining a scheme of 'progressive' tonality (progressing by fifths: F minor --> C minor --> G minor) over the course of the whole work.

Don Banks's Episode for Small Orchestra: A Note

Don Banks' *Episode for Small Orchestra* is a bagatelle, but nevertheless an elegant and beautifully-crafted one. It came into being as a result of the composer's attendance at a short composers' course, held at the residence of the celebrated conductor Hermann Scherchen in Gravesano, Switzerland in the summer of 1956. One of the features of this course was the opportunity for the young composers present to try their hand in the electronic studio which Scherchen had installed in situ. However, more significant in respect of *Episode for Small Orchestra* was the fact that the principal guest lecturer was the Italian composer Luigi Nono, who gave a series of lengthy analytical lectures about two sets of *Orchestral Variations*: Schoenberg's op 31 and Webern's op 30. After the course, all those who had been there sent in scores to Scherchen composed in response to what they had learned. Banks' piece was this short twelve-tone piece, scored for the same small orchestral forces as the Webern op 30, but based on the series of the Schoenberg op 31.

Don Banks's I'm Easy, for Jazz Ensemble: A Note

Don Banks' *I'm Easy* was composed in 1956 for a recording session by the ensemble led by Australian jazz violinist Don Harper, who was, like Don Banks, also resident in London at that time. *I'm easy* was recorded in London on November 13th, 1956 and issued as a 10-inch 45rpm disk on the Nixa label (Nixa NJE 1034) under the title *Introducing the Don Harper Quintet*. The disk contains performances of three other numbers: *I may be wrong*, *Just Rockin'* (Don's tune) and *My Grandfather's Clock*. Banks also provided fully-orchestrated 'head' sections for the first two of these. *I may be wrong* is a version of the old 1929 'standard', while *Just Rockin'* (Don's tune) is probably a (Don) Banks 'head' based on a (Don) Harper tune. The third, a version of the old Victorian parlour tune, is entirely improvised. The disk overall is of variable quality, the elegant and witty *I'm Easy* being far superior to the rest.

The other four performers who accompanied Don Harper's violin on the recording were George Chisholm (trombone), Ken Jones (piano), Bobby Kevin (drums) and Sammy Stokes (bass). Banks' score actually provides a sixth part (for guitar), which is omitted from the recording. Perhaps the projected guitarist fell ill, or Banks allowed for future 'live' performances by the 'Don Harper Sextet.'

By now it is well-known that Banks was himself one of Australia's foremost jazzmen in the early years of his career. Certainly he has usually been considered the foremost bebop pianist in Melbourne during the late forties. At that time bebop was a newish idiom even in the United States, so it is clear that, in the Australian context, Banks' thinking was as innovative in jazz as it was later to be in chamber and symphonic work. In later works, such as *Equation I and II*, Banks was to fuse the bebop and 'classical' idioms together in the style then known as 'third-stream', and in the film *Hysteria* he provided 45 minutes of big-band music in a more 'advanced' (chromatic and dissonant) idiom. *I'm Easy* is, however, from a different world: a bagatelle, whose character approaches that of 'light' music. It harks back to the 'swing' era, and shows little trace of the composer's bebop background and innovative musical personality. It is, nevertheless a delightful and elegant 'soufflé'.

Don Banks's One for Murray: A Note

Don Banks' *One for Murray* is a 'late' work, if indeed anything by Banks can be so-described, given that he died at what, for the last quarter of the twentieth century, was a comparatively early age (56). It is a bagatelle, about three minutes long, for solo clarinet in B flat, and the manuscript bears the inscription '7/8 April, 1977'.

The dedicatee was Banks' colleague and friend, Murray Khouri, hence the title. Khouri was on the staff of the Canberra School of Music during the seventies, when Banks was Head of Composition there, and later, with Banks and others, instigated the short-lived Australia Contemporary Music Ensemble, which gave a series of recitals at the 1978 Adelaide festival, conducted by Keith Humble. During this recital series, Khouri gave the première of another, much longer, clarinet work by Banks: 4 x 2 x 1, for clarinet doubling bass clarinet with electro-acoustic sound. There are many correspondences in character and material between 4 x 2 x 1 and *One for Murray*. In fact *One for Murray* could be described as an 'offshoot' of the larger work.

The piece is essentially a 'written-out cadenza', moving freely around the whole register of the instrument, from sinuous passages in the lower 'chalumeau' to strident ones in the extreme top. Like much of Banks' later music, it makes extensive use of four-note chords (arpeggiated in this instance, of course) consisting of triads (major, minor, augmented or diminished) tucked inside a major seventh, eg E, G#, C, D# or C, D#, F#, B etc.

Don Banks's Sonatina for Piano: A Note

Don Banks' *Sonatina* was completed in November 1948. At various times in later life the composer referred to it as the only work of his which had been performed in Melbourne before his departure for advanced study in London, though material now housed in the Banks Archive in the National Library of Australia shows that he composed quite a few other pieces around about this time, and of course he had created a good deal of jazz (in the then rather new 'bebop' style) as pianist and composer with various groups around Melbourne, including his own band, the Donny Banks Bop-tet.

Possibly Banks felt that this *Sonatina* was his first work of any substantial achievement, even though it's essentially a piece of juvenilia. Certainly it shows a more highly-developed sense of craftsmanship than anything he had written up until that time, though there is very little evidence at all of the distinctive stylistic features which were to characterise his mature work. Once he reached London and began studies with Matyas Seiber, these features began gradually to emerge, though there are one or two works (eg the Violin Sonata) which represent something of a throwback to this 'Melbourne style' of his youth.

The influences which make their presence felt here really come from the kind of style which was favoured by the most compositionally-accomplished of his teachers at the Melbourne University Conservatorium of Music (where he studied between 1947 and 1949), namely Dorian Le Gallienne. This style was derived from the English 'pastoral' style, flavoured with a dash of neo-classicism (showing the influence of composers such as Hindemith, Stravinsky, perhaps even Poulenc).

Themes featuring solid metrical rhythms (eg the pattern of the first bar of the *Con Spirito* first movement) often recurring many times (as here) with a frequent use of ostinati in accompanying voices (as here), and the fugal writing of the slow movement are characteristic features of the style. It was a widely-favoured style in post-colonial Australia, right up until the 1960s when the influence of younger European and American composers began to be felt more widely.

In Banks' case, the decisive influence in the development of his mature style was the encounter, mediated by Seiber in London, with Schoenberg and the so-called 'Second Vienna School', along with certain other 'post-Schoenbergian' figures, such as Roberto Gerhard, Milton Babbitt and Luigi Dallapiccola.

In 1948, however, this was all in Banks' future. The *Sonatina* for Piano is a work of quite traditional caste, in three movements, in C sharp minor. The first movement is in sonata form, with a vigorous *Con Spirito* first theme in the tonic and a contrasting, more lyrical *Andante* at half the tempo of the first, in E major, which are both recapitulated in C sharp minor after an intervening development section. The second movement (*Largo con Espressione*) begins with a fugato in A major, which proceeds more or less according to expectation for the first 14 bars and the entry of the first two voices (characterised essentially by crotchet movement), whereupon the third voice enters with the theme in (essentially) dotted crotchet movement, thus setting up an interplay 3/4 metre against 6/8 (hemiola rhythm). The movement overall follows a conventional ternary design, in which the contrapuntal outer sections are contrasted with an entirely homophonic (Quasi Chorale) middle section. The third movement is a rondo of sorts, in which the main *Risoluto* theme, a passage of two-part counterpoint with each of the parts doubled in octaves, occurs three times, and is contrasted with a *scherzando* theme and a lyrical theme marked *lamenteudue*, which both appear twice. The *risoluto* theme appears with the top and the bottom parts reversed the third time around.

Don Banks's Psalm 70: A Note

Don Banks' *Psalm 70* was written some time between October 1952 and May 1953, the period which the composer spent studying with Luigi Dallapiccola in Florence. During the previous summer he had attended the Institute of American Studies in Salzburg and studied with Milton Babbitt, following two and a half years in London, studying with Matyas Seiber. Thus *Psalm 70* dates from the end of a long period of study, but nevertheless it sounds in no way like a 'student' work.

The other work which Banks composed during this period, *Four Pieces for Orchestra*, was played soon thereafter by Sir Adrian Boult and the London Philharmonic Orchestra, and over the years has been repeated quite a few times by various Australian orchestras. *Psalm 70*, on the other hand, though no less interesting and accomplished than the *Four Pieces for Orchestra*, has seldom – indeed, so far as I know at the date of writing (December 2001), never – been performed, a fate which it has shared with Banks' *Episode for Small Orchestra*, written a little later, also as part of an period of intensive study (with Hermann Scherchen and Luigi Nono in Switzerland in 1956).

Nevertheless, both *Psalm 70* and *Episode* are both finely-crafted – indeed honed and finished – products. The reason for their neglect is probably that they are both very short (about 3 minutes in each case), hard to programme (scored for unusual combinations), and eschew flashy display of any kind. Their rather lofty, 'aristocratic' tone is somewhat exceptional for Banks.

Moreover, unlike Dallapiccola, Banks was, of course, primarily a composer of instrumental music. *Psalm 70* is one of only a handful of vocal works. Indeed, it is easy to see the influence of Dallapiccola in the actual choice of the text itself. Dallapiccola's preference for texts from the great repositories of classics (ancient Greek poetry, the Bible etc), and the elevated, rather patrician approach to them which he favoured, could hardly be more different from Banks' usual approach to words, when he used them, which was decidedly more vernacular, down-to-earth. The only vocal work in which Banks chose a text from such a 'traditional' source as the Book of Psalms is *Psalm 70*. It is thus an exceptional work in Banks' output in several respects.

Like *Episode*, *Psalm 70* is a twelve-tone piece, but it has other, perhaps more immediately striking features: for example, the close attention paid to the way in which the constantly changing mixture of colours in the orchestral accompaniment helps to illuminate the vocal line. In several later interviews, Banks said that his time in Florence was particularly notable for his increased confidence in dealing with instrumentation and orchestration, and both *Psalm 70* and the *Four Pieces for Orchestra* bear out this assertion. Nevertheless, it is surely not fanciful to attribute the decided advance which can be observed in these two works in Banks' compositional powers generally (not just the orchestration) to Dallapiccola's influence.

Don Banks's String Quartet: A Note

The String Quartet is in one continuous movement, although it falls into two easily identifiable sections. The first, an Allegro, links with an Adagio, which is mainly played by muted strings.

All the material springs from a twelve-tone series with combinatorial properties. This is to say that various transpositions of the series result in a 'reshuffling' of the groupings of two semitones, which only divide into two areas of transposition. Some use is made in the opening part of the work of the interval being allied to specific durations – but in the main it is a free-flowing work and should ideally be listened to as such.

The opening Allegro has a deal of rhythmic vitality, which is really only interrupted by a solo cadenza-type passage for the first violin before a pizzicato section leads to a recapitulation of the opening and a slowing down of the rhythmic activity as a link to the Adagio.

This starts with a whispered fragment of a motive by the muted cello, which combines with a measured statement of the main intervallic groups and contrasts with a melodic phrase in four-part harmony of a wistful character. There is an outburst of activity towards the end, which gives way to the quiet measured statement from the opening. The work then finishes with the short fragment from the cello dying away to nothing.

