

PORT ESSINGTON FOR STRINGS

BY

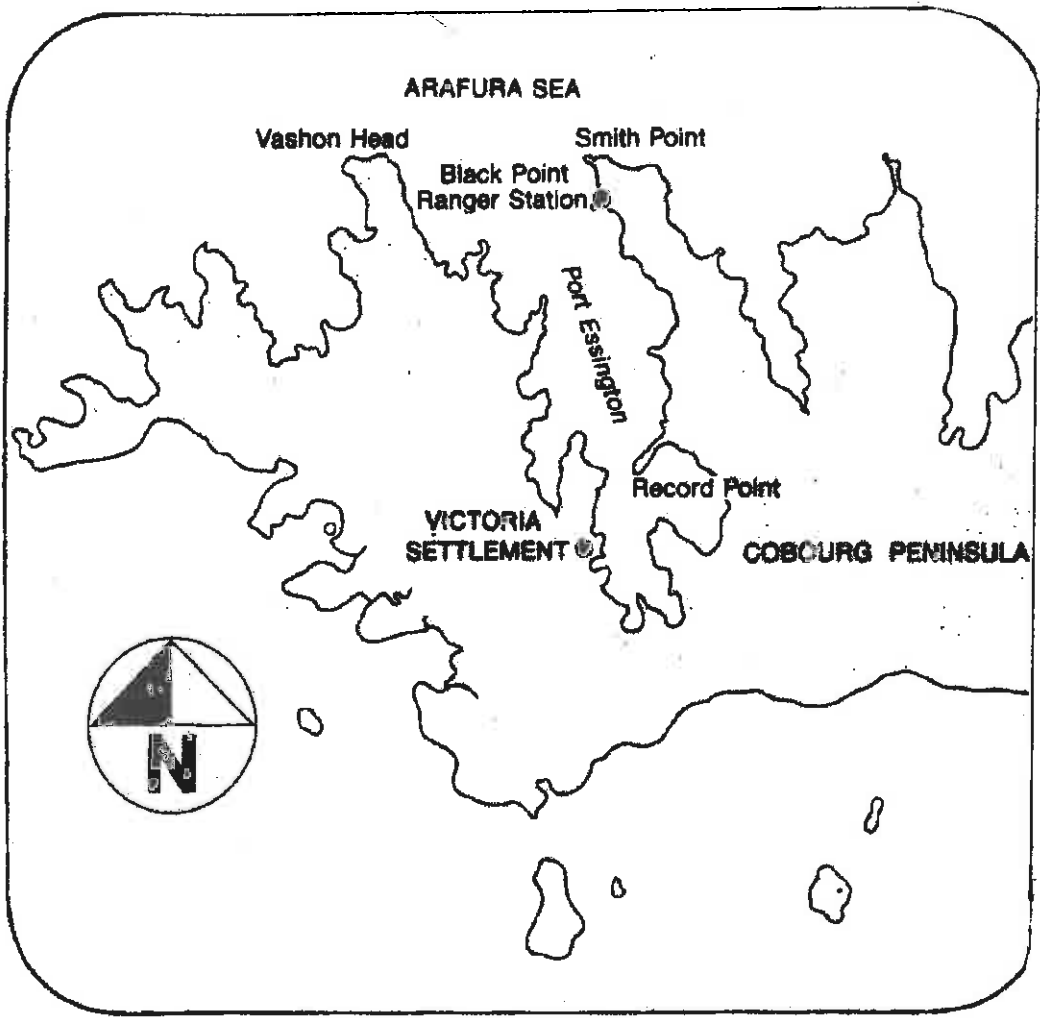
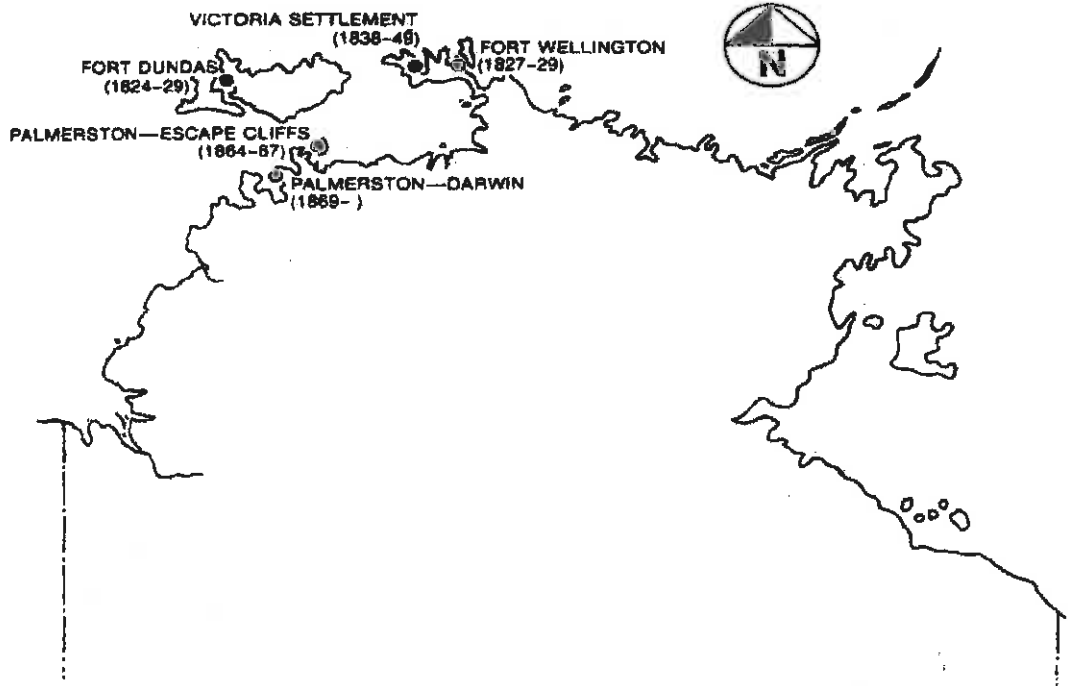
PETER SCULTHORPE

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***Music in Context***

*Topic 10. Contemporary Australian Music*

*Notes by Virginia Lakeman*



**Port Essington for Strings:- Form at a glance.**

	Movement 1 Prologue: The Bush	Movement 2
Trio representing the Settlers		<p>The Marines, wives and children arrive and set up an English Village</p> <p>Aboriginal theme varied to sound like a Handel March</p> <p>[4] 4/8 march of 12 bars.</p> <p>Melodic structure: Statement/Answer, state/ans', state'/ans, cadence fig, state'/ans', different cadence fig.</p> <p>[5] Var. 1 Theme hidden in Vln I semiquavers. Vln II has the rhythm of the hidden melody. Cello has original bass and accomp. notes.</p> <p>[6] Var. 2 Vln I Triplet semiquavers hide the theme. Vln II supports theme. Cello as for [5]</p> <p>[7] 6/8 Var. 3 Tenderly – Waltz like sound. Vln II melody. VlnI obbligato</p> <p>[8] Cadenza – Cello G7/9</p> <p>[9] Repeat of theme</p>
String Orchestra representing the Bush	<p>The Bush before the settlement</p> <p>Tonal centre: A (minor) ( A for Australia)</p> <p>Sculthorpe's style</p> <p>Melody derived from the Aboriginal melody <i>Djille</i> - transcribed by Prof Elkin.</p> <p>Bars 1 – 10: 3 bars of 4/8 1 bar of 1/8 repeated, followed by a 2 bar extension.</p> <p>[1] bars 1 – 10 repeated soft (p) with cello arpeggio accompaniment. Then 2 bars of syncopated chords.</p> <p>Harmony - two major 7<sup>th</sup>'s a 3<sup>rd</sup> apart – Chords not really changing.</p> <p>Texture represents the bush, busy in the foreground Violin I, middle distance not so busy Violin II and Viola, country side unchanging to the horizon Cello and Double Basses sparse part with dissonance – Dim 5<sup>th</sup>.</p> <p>[2] repeat of [1] loud (f)</p> <p>[3] Coda introducing the semitone motive which is passed from highest to lowest.</p> <p>Birds – 'harmonic' on string between bridge and tail.</p> <p>Double Basses end on E the 5<sup>th</sup> of A and the 3<sup>rd</sup> of C</p>	<p>[4] Double Basses – tonic Pedal of C</p> <p>Vla – min 9<sup>th</sup></p> <p>[5] silent</p> <p>[6] representing the bush – breeze, birds, insects. Very soft (pp)</p> <p>[7] some new sounds from the bush still pp</p> <p>[8] cellos and double basses sustain a dim 5<sup>th</sup> or tritone</p> <p>[9] Bush sounds include min 9<sup>th</sup></p> <p>C pedal changed to Db – C a major 7<sup>th</sup> pedal</p> <p>Ends with a Bartók pizzicato. String slapping the fingerboard.</p>

Movement 3 Phantasy: Unrest		Movement 4 Nocturnal: Estrangement	
Trio	Silent	Movt. 2 version of the Theme in the style of Mendelssohn. E maj. Typical of a Nocturne [12] 2 bar introduction, 12 bar melody [13] repeat first 6 bars of 12 bar melody [14] repeat of second 6 bars of 12 bar melody [15] sub. pp (suddenly very soft) – trio overtaken Coda 4 bars BbA.... Ends on an EA chord – the tonics of both keys	
Orchestra	[10] The Bush sounds – Timed cells – any very high note, playing between the tail piece and bridge, random harmonics from open strings, brushing the bow up and down the strings for a whispering sound, descending glissandos from any high note [11] as above with the first few notes of the Prologue head from the Double Basses	[12] Double basses work with the Trio until [14] [13] Vln II and Vla chords similar to opening movt. 1 Vln I obbligato using appoggiaturas. [14] A (minor) against the E major – Bitonal and bi metric 4/8 against the trio's 4/4. Repeat of opening movt. 1 ppp with a gradual cresc. [15] syncopated chords and shortened coda from [3] [16] repeat opening double basses tremolo [17] repeat [1] sub p. [18] repeat [2] ff [19] fff demisemiquaver clusters, dying to nothing. 9/16 metre – fragment of theme. Double basses 2 bar phrase played twice	
Trio	Movement 5 Arietta: Farewell A major [20] 4 bar intro. Featuring cello dominant pedal. Vln II leaps of min 7ths and maj 2nds. Theme 10 bars – variation of Movt. 2 version in style of Elgar. Cello arpeggiated chords. A, D <sup>6</sup> , E7, D, A, D <sup>6</sup> , B etc. [21] repeat of [20] [22] Coda – Tonic pedal and min 7 <sup>th</sup> sighs. Last note A.	Movement 6 Epilogue: The Bush Silent	
Orchestra	A major [20] double basses have tonic pedal, A under the 10 bar theme [21] playing with the Trio Vln II of orchestra plays min 7 <sup>th</sup> and maj 2 <sup>nd</sup> sighs. Vla plays a counter melody in the 2 <sup>nd</sup> half [22] Coda only Vln II sighs. Last note A.	Tonal centre: A Varying time signatures: 3 bars of 12/8, one of 6/8, one 12/8, one 6/8. [23] Aboriginal melody as transcribed by Prof Elkin. Ostinato accompaniment. Tonic pedal [24] repeat [23] cellos and double basses added similar to Prologue with Dim and Aug 5 <sup>th</sup> [25] repeat [23] Vln II has a duplet counter melody End:- chord FAED sounding unfinished.	

**Peter Sculthorpe**  
The Music

**Port Essington For Strings**

- Two planes -
  - The Orchestra for the Bush
  - The trio - Vln I & II & cello - for the settlers/the marines and their families.
- Significance of keys
  - A - key centre for Australia
  - C for the earth
  - E for mankind.
- Variation form
  - A double set? of variations.
    - **Movt 6 Epilogue : The Bush**, has the original version of Djille an Aboriginal theme transcribed by Prof Elkin and frequently used by Sculthorpe. Orchestra only.
      - A typical Aboriginal theme that begins each phrase on a high note within the range of the tune and then descends to end on the lowest pitch. It has changing time signatures. Notated as 12/8 and 6/8.
      - Tonal centre of A.
    - **Movt 1 Prologue : The Bush**, has a 'Sculthorpe' version of the theme with a tonal centre of A. Orchestra only.
      - Harmony **Harshness of the bush. Climate, unfamiliar, unpredictable, dangers.....**
        - First chord - two major 7ths, minor 3rds apart.
        - Use of aug 4<sup>th</sup>/ dim 5<sup>th</sup> in low strings.
        - Harmony not really changing - certainly no changes that sound as Tonic/Dominant harmonic changes. **Bush goes on and on - Australia is vast.**
      - Melody **Unusual landscape yet at the same time quite vast and monotonous.**
        - The Aboriginal theme in Sculthorpe's style. Using the pitches as they are in the borrowed theme.
        - Two 4 bar phrases and a two bar extension.
      - Rhythm **Unfamiliar.**
        - Changing time signatures 4/8 for 3 bars then one bar of 1/8. Repeated twice.
        - Syncopation due to ties and accents.
      - Speed:- Marked 'ferociously'. **Harsh and unforgiving.**
      - Structure
        - Repetition used. **Monotonous and vast.**
        - Opening 6 bar section played 3 times. Altered each time by:- the addition of a cello ostinato (mainly open string arpeggio), and change of dynamics (sub p then sempre f). A 2 bar syncopated chordal extension prior to final repeat and prior to coda.
        - Coda uses falling semitone figure 3 times. First two from Vln I then Vla of Bb to A, last from Cello F to E. (Ends on 5<sup>th</sup> of A tonal centre, and 3<sup>rd</sup> of C major to join Movt 2.)
      - Some unusual string techniques. **Birds, insects and bush sounds.**
      - Texture **Busy foreground, fairly unchanging middle distance for vast areas, sparse and unchanging horizon.**
        - Sculthorpe is deliberately painting the bush in sound.
          - Busy foreground:- Vlns.
          - Middle distance:- Vla's
          - Horizon with little variation:- Low strings.
    - **Movt 2 Theme and Variations : The Settlement**, a European style version of the theme in C major. Trio with orchestra. **Settlers are naïve. Dressed inappropriately, building houses of timber (termites) thatched roofs (not equal to tropical rains), and small windows (climate too hot), growing the wrong foods (didn't know enough about the tropics) etc.**
      - The whole movement is in Theme and variation form.

- The theme is presented as a simple march in the style of Handel. *Very British marines and their families.*
- The melody has been made to sound European.
  - Statement (mostly repeated C's) - answer 1. (2 bars each)
  - Repeat of statement - answer that rises in a European manner to a climax. (2 bars each)
  - Statement up a 3<sup>rd</sup> - answer 1. Short cadence figure
  - Statement up a 3<sup>rd</sup> - answer 2. Short cadence figure.
  - Double bass - orchestra - plays a tonic pedal throughout the theme.
  - Min 9<sup>th</sup> interjections from orchestra violas. *Problems with sandflies, mosquitoes, poor diet due to poor gardening, issues with cattle - poisoned, lost, dying from thirst etc. News from home took months - at least 6 months, so the settlers felt cut off.*
- The harmony has been made to sound European. *Settlers out of step with the bush.*
  - Simple triad chords mainly. C, Dm G and G7.
- The texture is simple:- accompanied melody.
- Variation 1 hides the melody in the Vln I line of semiquavers that has octave leaps. Accompaniment from the cello is derived from the march accomp. *Setting up a little bit of England. The variations show progress in establishing the settlement.*
- Variation 2 melody also hidden in the Vln I line, this time semiquaver triplets. Soft sounds of the bush is heard using unusual string techniques. Harmonics, tremolos between harmonics, artificial harmonics, playing between the bridge and tail piece, bowing up and down the strings rather than across. All of these parts are written in timed cells.
- Variation 3 is in 6/8 and sounds a little like a waltz. This time Vln I plays an obbligato to the theme.
- Cello Cadenza :- G7b9 Orchestral cellos and double basses sustain Ab and D a Dim 5<sup>th</sup> apart. *Early sadness, such as the death of a wife and child. Mosquito carried malaria causing illness - a drain on the settlement as tasks are left undone.*
- Variation 4 is really a repeat of the theme with the addition of birds, mostly any high note from Vlns. And maj 7<sup>th</sup>, min 9<sup>th</sup> interjections from the orchestra. Double basses rise to a Db against the C from the cellos - min 7<sup>th</sup>. *In the background the birds and other bush sounds such as gentle breezes are heard.*
- Two 'Bartok pizz' end the movement.
- **Movt 3 Phantasy : Unrest**, uses only a fragment of the theme played by the double basses. *The nature of the Bush. Here it is not too threatening. In fact it is rather beautiful and interesting. Heaps of bird life. Just a little sinister hint of the ferocious melody from the Prologue.*
  - Orchestra only
  - Timed cells
  - Unusual string techniques (Some of these were used in the final variation of Movt. 2)
    - Any very high note
    - A 'harmonic' between the bridge and tail piece
    - Upward or downward glissando from any very high note.
    - Light rubbing of all of the strings along the strings instead of across. This makes a whispering sound.
    - Artificial harmonics - harmonics produced on a stopped string.
    - Wide quarter tone vibrato
  - *Like a view of birds in flight*
- **Movt 4 Nocturnal : Estrangement**, begins with a variation on the theme as developed in movement 2 this time in the style of Mendelssohn, then has much of movement 1 repeated. *The settlement has become more established. Buildings are complete, stores are in good supply, life is more sophisticated and settlers are not just 'surviving'. Early difficulties have been overcome.*
  - Fig 12.
    - Trio in E major.

- Melody in cello.
- Vln and Vla have moving quaver chords. Vla uses double stopping.
- Rhythm uses 'hemiola' 2 against 3. (Triplet quavers against quavers.)
- Double bass sounds the occasional note in harmony with the trio.
- Chords more sophisticated than movt 2. E, F#m7, D# half diminished, C#m.
- **Fig 13**
  - Repeat fig 12.
  - Orchestra uses some of Prologue opening chord ideas.
  - Vln I from Orch plays an ostinato that features appoggiaturas on the strong beats.
- **Fig 14** *The Cyclone. 8 die. The ship is upturned in the harbour. The small boats are lost. Stores are ruined. The gardens and many homes are destroyed. Timbers for new buildings are lost. Government house is moved a metre. The pier is destroyed. The store house lost its door.*
  - Bitonal - E maj & A tonal centre
  - Bimetric - 4/4 trio with 4/8 orchestra.
  - Prologue material played ppp with cresc. poco a poco.
  - Fig 15 includes a shortened version Movt 1's coda.
- **Fig 16**
  - The settlers have virtually given up.
  - Repeat of the Prologue ff with the addition of an F - A tremolo from the double basses.
  - Fig 17 sub p as at opening, fig 18 ff.
  - A further 2 bar syncopated and accented chords to end the repeat.
- **Fig 19**
  - Coda includes rapid demi semi quaver figures (a low tone cluster effect) fff and dying away. (*The wind.*)
  - Fragments of the Prologue melody - played twice by the double basses.
- **Movt. 4 Arietta : Farewell**, the settlers version of the theme is further varied in the style of E. Elgar. A major (closest trio key to that of the Orchestra.) *Life in the settlement has progressed again. Even though the news sent to England was bad in relation to the cyclone, the settlers recovered quickly and prior to the orders to leave being received had largely restored the colony buildings etc. That the Bush (Orchestra) and the Settlers (Trio) play together and in the tonic major key can be seen to indicate that the settlers have finally learnt the ways of the bush. They are not so naïve. Now they are working with the Bush.*
  - Vln I takes the theme.
    - Shortened to 10 bars.
    - Includes written out ornaments (turns)
    - Cello takes semiquaver triplets.
    - Vln II takes a counter line in places. *The Bush, possibly the Aboriginals are sad to see the Settlers leave. Certainly some of the settlers are sad to leave their home of 11 years.*
    - Double bass sounds a sustained A pedal.
    - Harmony uses:- A, D#dim, E7, D, B.
  - On second sounding the orchestra joins in and plays the same roles with the addition of the orchestral Vln I min 7<sup>th</sup> sighs.
  - Coda based on the min 2<sup>nd</sup>, maj 2<sup>nd</sup> and min 7<sup>th</sup> sighs/appoggiatura figure from movement 1.
- **Movt 6 Epilogue : The Bush** The theme in its original form played by the Vln I's throughout. *The Bush and Aboriginals, who know and work with the bush, have been changed a little by the settlers.*
  - **Fig 23.** First sounding uses
    - ostinato accompaniment,
    - Tonic A pedal note throughout,
    - harmonics between the bridge and tail piece.
    - None of the dissonant chords/notes from the opening prologue.
    - Changing time signatures. Three bars of 12/8 one each of 6/8. 12/8 & 6/8.

- **Fig 24** *Some of the earlier Bush sounds heard first in the prologue are reappearing indicating that the Bush is taking over the remains of the settlement. (Remember that the settlers burnt the buildings and made the canon and other military remains useless prior to leaving.)*
  - Melody repeated exactly.
  - Addition of Aug 5<sup>th</sup>, Dim 5<sup>th</sup> from opening prologue - cellos and double basses.
- **Fig 25**
  - Final repeat.
  - Addition of Vln II obbligato.
  - Final chord FAED - sounding unfinished. *The bush will go on long after the short 11 year stay of the settlers. (11 years is not much in the time scale of the bush.)*

***Some further points:-***

- **Reasons for the settlement**
  - Military post to ensure the British claim to Australia
  - To act as a Victualling port.
  - As a safe haven for shipwreck victims.
  - For trade
  - To combat pirates in the region
- **Reasons for the abandonment of the settlement**
  - No civilians meant nothing to trade
  - The settlement was not really self-sufficient, (Gardening wasn't a strong point of the marines.) so when others required feeding supplies were stretched to the limit.
  - Most shipping problems occurred about 700 kms away in the Torres Straight.
  - The marines were ineffective against pirates.
  - The settlement was expensive to run.
  - Britain won the war with China and gained Hong Kong a port in a much better place, and one that did open up trading opportunities.
  - A shift in political thinking meant that the Admiralty didn't see the need for the expense of a settlement if trading cost could be born by the merchants alone.
  - The French and Dutch were not interested in colonising Australia.



## **Port Essington for strings by Peter Sculthorpe – the settlements story in music.**

Peter Sculthorpe was asked to compose music for a documentary on the settlement at Victoria on Port Essington. Later he reworked the idea for the Australian Chamber Orchestra as a work for strings only.

Sculthorpe knew much of the details of the settlement, of its establishment, the hardships faced, and its short life of eleven years. He knew too, of the seeming endlessness of the Australian bush, of its harsh and unforgiving nature, and of the naivety of the British who tried to transplant their culture to make a 'little England' at Victoria. Sculthorpe set about painting the story in sound.

He began by choosing his forces. The bush was to be represented by the string orchestra playing music that clearly is in Sculthorpe's own 'style'. The settlers were to be represented by a string trio of two violins and one cello. Here Sculthorpe is making a statement that would be understood by those, familiar with early Australian chamber music history. There was no viola player for the first Australian chamber music concert in Sydney. Deciding to work on two planes so that the conflict between the settlers and the bush could be represented in music was a most effective choice.

Two more effective choices were made, I believe, in Sculthorpe's planning stage. Firstly the choice made to base the entire work on the Aboriginal melody which was transcribed by Prof. Elkin, secondly the choice of formal structure, where all six movements have a role to play in the telling of the story. I will discuss the details of this later. Before beginning I believe that Sculthorpe made the choices of keys for each movement. Sculthorpe's use of the key of A (min & maj) to represent Australia, C for the Earth and E for mankind, is really for the musically literate only, a clever thought, but not effective in telling the story excepting to those who 'know' the code.

As mentioned, the orchestra sections show Sculthorpe's mature style as a composer. The opening Prologue, *The Bush*, begins with a highly syncopated, through the use of ties and accents, variation of the Aboriginal theme. Its sound is harsh and busy like a close view of the conditions in the bush around Port Essington, of plants, ants, pebbles etc. The accompanying chord from the Violin II's and Violas, which is two major 7ths a minor 3<sup>rd</sup> apart, adds effectively to the harshness of the sound, and represent the middle distance. This chord does not really change, a bit like the Australian landscape. Sculthorpe merely adds notes a 3<sup>rd</sup> away to keep interest. The cellos and basses add to the harshness of the sound through the use of dissonant intervals of Aug 4ths & Dim 5ths quite sparsely. Perhaps these represent the few features to be found on an otherwise 'endless' landscape. The phrases are of an irregular length, suggesting that the bush is unpredictable. Sculthorpe deliberately uses three bars of 4/8 followed by one of 1/8. The endless nature of the bush is represented by the repetition of the same 4 bar phrase, its repeat and the two bar extension or bridge, a total of three times within the movement. Finally Sculthorpe includes in this movement and then exclusively in Movement 3, the unusual string techniques that he is so fond of. These represent the sounds of the bush, the insects, birds and the breezes. The arrangement of these in 'cells', which are to be repeated randomly within a time period denoted in seconds, really gives the effect of the Australian bush.

The trio's is in heavy contrast to that of the bush and borrows heavily from English composers or those related to England in some way. There are influences from Handel in the early stages (Movt. 2, *The Settlement*), with a simple march in C major suggesting the 'Military' nature of the arrival of the settlers. Then as the settlement is established the progress is given by Sculthorpe through variations on the same theme as Movt.2 influenced firstly by Mendelssohn in Movt. 4 then Elgar in Movt. 5. One can almost see the cleared land, buildings, and culture developing along with the progress of the settlement. This borrowing of styles is a most effective way for Sculthorpe to represent the settlers. Through each Sculthorpe suggests a type of English drawing room music. The sort of evening entertainment that the settlers might have enjoyed at a ball perhaps can be heard in the 6/8 variation in movt. 2. What Sculthorpe

seems to be saying to a large extent in all three movements is that the British are being 'terribly British' in culture and deed and somewhat naïve. Largely they are ignoring the conditions of the Bush. They build British houses that require constant repair, hinted at with the interjections of Minor 9ths from the orchestral violas, wearing hot British uniforms and maintaining the discipline of British soldiers. Schulthorpe shows this through a very typical European style melodic variation with its strong tonic and dominant harmony, statement (antecedent) and answer (consequent) structure, use of repetition, climaxes towards the ends of phrases, and obvious cadential figures. That they have some trouble with insects, mosquitos, and the conditions of the bush in general can be heard with the addition in the orchestra parts of Sculthorpe's unusual string techniques. Without any imagination required on the part of the listener, the bush sounds can be unmistakably heard.

The Prologue set the scene of the harsh tropical environment. The Settlement's Theme and Variations announced the arrival of the marines, and their diligence in making Victoria home. *Phantasy Unrest* shows the listener that the bush has a power and mystique all of its own, though at this stage still fairly subdued. A force that the British continued to largely ignore, and failed to adapt to. A small fragment of the bush theme is heard in this movement from the cellos, but mostly what Sculthorpe writes are sounds that suggest birds, insects, the rustle of leaves and the heat by asking for sounds such as random high notes, harmonics produced by lightly sliding the left hand up and down the strings, bowing down the strings instead of across, playing behind the bridge, fingered tremolos and the repetition of small cells for specific timed durations. The random sounds paint a natural picture of the bush.

The fourth movement, Nocturnal Estrangement begins with a more sophisticated variation of the settler's theme. It is clear from the harmonic language used, now with diminished chords and chords to the seventh, as well as an accompaniment that features double stopping from the two accompanying instruments (Violin I & II), and the lyrical lines of the cello that Sculthorpe is representing a settlement that has achieved much. Land has been cleared and building erected, so that a little piece of 'England' is taking shape in the north of Australia. However at fig 14 the peace is gently interrupted with the return of the theme from the Prologue. At this point the music is bimetric (4/4 and 4/8) and bitonal (E maj and A min). At first the bush theme is quite soft, but there is a gradual crescendo until the sound of the trio is overtaken. The trio players give up. Sculthorpe is representing that fateful cyclone that claimed 8 lives, upturned the ship in the harbour, washed the peer out to sea along with the small boats, ruined most of the stores and wreaked havoc on the buildings. Almost nothing was left standing. The settlers were dispirited, and sent home communications that things were going poorly. Sculthorpe captures this traumatic moment in the life of the settlement with all of its fury. Even the wind can be heard in the closing section where accented demisemiquaver figures are repeated randomly.


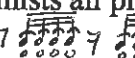
The move into Movement 5 Arietta: Farewell is via a sad bridge based on the 'appoggiatura' figure derived from the Prologue theme, and used previously. The 'Elgar' like settler's variation that follows is mixed with sadness and regret as the settlers leave their home of 11 years. Like movement 4, it too shows that progress has been made, for the settlement had recovered from the devastation of the cyclone, and was beginning to do well when the orders came to abandon. Sculthorpe represents this by having the orchestra play along with the trio. Agreement and understanding was possible. The settlers were beginning to understand the bush. That the bush seems sad to see them leave can be heard from the violin sighs of mainly descending 7ths in the only counter line heard.


Finally the bush is alone and gradually returning to its former state. The harmonies of the opening of this section show marked similarities with the settler's music. It is not until later in the movement that some of the accidentals found in the bass and cello parts of the Prologue return to again give a dissonant accompaniment. Sculthorpe ends the work with an unfinished chord using the notes FAED, suggesting that the bush will go on long after man's brief interference. That this movement uses the originally transcribed aboriginal melody is Sculthorpe's way of reminding the listener that the aboriginals are able to live in harmony with the bush.


**'Give a detailed description of the unusual string techniques found in the work Port Essington. Include the notation symbols used for each technique, and describe the effect of the sounds when heard in a performance of the work.'**


The work 'Port Essington for Strings', written by the Australian composer, Peter Sculthorpe tells the story in sound of the settlement of Victoria on Port Essington, and the surrounding bush. To do this he uses quite normal string techniques mainly to represent the settlers, and several unusual string techniques to represent the bush with its varied flora and fauna.


The unusual string techniques are not heard until the end of the opening movement, in which the Bush announces its Prologue, except in the occasional unusual interval eg. maj 7<sup>th</sup>, used in double stopping, but are first heard in the coda to this section just prior to the settlers' arrival and then as background to the settling in period heard against the variations of the second movement.



The first sound to be heard that is produced in an unusual manner is that of all of the second violinists playing between the tailpiece and the bridge. The marking , listed and explained at the front of the score, suggests a 'harmonic' played between the tail piece and the bridge. Whilst bowing this section of a string does produce a tone similar to a harmonic, to call it a 'harmonic' is a little misleading. The tone is not a rich one as some of this segment of string is wrapped with cotton. The pitch is high, and varies from instrument to instrument. With several violinists all playing this section of their 'A' string a high pitched tone cluster is produced. The rhythm of  suggests the twittering of birds.

The first entry of the bush, represented by the orchestra players as opposed to the string trio that represents the settlers, introduces the notion of 'cells'. These are short musical figures that are to be played and repeated. The parts are marked *liberamente* which means freely. Each player is expected to play the figure for the allotted time as they please, but preferably without playing in time with others. The marking  indicates a tremolo, or shake, between two harmonics. Whilst playing harmonics is quite common in string playing, a tremolo between two harmonics is more unusual.

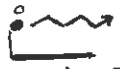
The marking  indicates the use of artificial harmonics on stopped strings. This technique is not a particularly unusual one for strings. The notes produced are relatively high and of quite a pure tone, much like the piping sound of some bird calls.

With  Sculthorpe asks violins to softly (*p*) rub all of their open (or unstopped) string up and down the finger board, rather than across in the usual manner. A bow can only effectively touch two strings at once, and not the four as indicated, so the pitch from one instrument would be constantly changing, but the resulting pitch would be a chord of the four notes. The whispering sound would give the background bush noises of insects or the breeze.


Replacing the note head with a triangle , Sculthorpe indicates that the players should choose any very high note. This will produce a high pitched tone cluster which will seem to shimmer, much like hot air seems to shimmer. The sound also more realistically represents birds who never sing at the same pitch as each other.

A variation of the 'any very high note' symbol adds a line and arrow to indicate an upward or downward glissando or slide of pitch. This is executed by the player's left hand moving up or down the finger board whilst depressing the string and bowing. This is a very bird like call.  

The marking *senza misura* indicates that the fragments within the cell are to be played without strict rhythm or measure, this randomises the sound giving a result that is close to the random sounds of nature.

Sculthorpe continues to introduce further new techniques with  which indicates the playing of free and continuous glissandos on the upper natural harmonics. Here the player's left hand is

only lightly touching the string, and not depressing it to the finger board. As each node, place of no vibration for a particular harmonic, is passed the resultant harmonic is briefly produced. The harmonics will not occur in pitch order, either ascending or descending by this method. The resultant pitches from one instrument will dart randomly. Collectively the sound will probably sound like the quiet (it is marked *pp*) background hum of the bush.

Sculthorpe asked for quarter tone vibrato from any high note with the sign . This is not an unusual technique for strings excepting in the width of the vibrato. Usually string players vary the pitch by rocking the finger stopping the string back and forth in order to give a sustained note life and drive. A wide vibrato from any high note gives a tone cluster, which shimmers, again representing the insects and the heat of the North Australian bush.

The use of the 'Bartok Pizzicato' gives a harsh ending to the movement that focuses on the settlers. It is produced by plucking the string firmly at 90 degrees to the fingerboard so that the string strikes the wood. The resultant sound is loud and harsh and resonates through the bodies of the double basses much like the breaking of dead twigs, or the falling of branches from gum trees is a sudden sound that resonates harshly through the bush.



The third movement, where the bush is heard alone, uses all of these unusual techniques that have been introduced in the opening two movements to great effect. Instead of the cells being aligned with the pitched parts of the trio which is now not heard, Sculthorpe marks the beginnings of each new cell with the vertical dashed line as previously, but marked with the passing of seconds (16" - means repeat until 16 seconds have passed.).

In using all of these unusual ways of playing string instruments which give sounds that are more like 'sound effects' than structured music, Peter Sculthorpe has found ways to represent the Australian Bush with its flora and fauna and breezes. And to be true to nature he has asked players to forget their strong tendency to play in time with their neighbours and with the conductor. So effective are Sculthorpe's instructions and their execution by the players that one could be forgiven for thinking, on first hearing, that the sounds of the bush have been recorded and incorporated into the piece via a tape player.

## **Peter Spillett the author of *Forsaken Settlement***

Peter Spillett was born in London. He migrated to Australia in 1950. Since 1951 he has lived in the Northern Territory. In 1972, the year *Forsaken Settlement* was published, Peter Spillett was working in the Arts and Cultural Affairs Branch of the State Department of Community Development. He has a passion for history, particularly of the Northern Territory. He has been the President of the Historical Society of the Northern Territory, and in this capacity led a party to locate and plot the site of Fort Wellington, the 2<sup>nd</sup> British settlement of 1827 – 29. He was awarded a Winston Churchill Memorial Fellowship to study documents relating to the British settlements of Fort Dundas and Fort Wellington (Northern Territory), to be found in England, Holland and France.

The text of the *Forsaken Settlement* is indeed very scholarly. He has found primary sources for much of what is presented in his historical account on Port Essington. Forty Books, twelve magazines or periodicals and more than twenty letters, papers, diaries, ships logs or musters have been listed in the bibliography. That Peter Spillett has checked the facts carefully can be seen from the large number of footnotes at the end of each chapter.

The photos included to illustrate the text and show early life in the settlement are reproductions of paintings and sketches that were made by visiting artists. These are to be found in various museums, record offices, libraries and galleries, mainly in England, France and Australia.

## **Forsaken Settlement Summary**

**Victoria settlement, established in Port Essington, was a military base. It was settled to:-**

### **Secure the British claim over Australia.**

Colonies were already established in Australia. The main centre at this stage was around Sydney. The North, discovered by the Dutch, was unoccupied. Stationed at Victoria was an armed garrison, who built a fort from which to fire cannon. A war ship was also stationed there to protect the settlement. Britain hoped to secure its claim over the whole of Australia by establishing settlements in strategic places around the coast.

By the time Port Essington was abandoned it was obvious that neither the Dutch nor the French, the other two major world powers at the time, were interested in claiming the North of Australia.

### **Provide a station where sailing ships could take on water and food supplies. (A victualling port.)**

For the settlement to function in this capacity agriculture needed to be well established. The settlement had problems growing its own food, and was constantly in need of fresh supplies from other ports.

Only 78 ships in total visited Port Essington in its 11 years of settlement, many of these made the trip to bring supplies to the settlement, rather than to take on supplies from the settlement's store.

Port Essington was a little out of the way. Not only was the pier 17 miles from the harbour opening, but the North of Australia was also off the main shipping routes. Port Essington was useful to a few sailing ships, however with the introduction of steam ships the need for such stations was diminished.

### **Trade.**

The settlement was hardly self-sufficient and had little to trade. At no stage in its short history were civilians permitted to immigrate to Victoria and take up land ownership. Port Essington was not like the settlement in NSW, which by this time had grain and wool to trade, largely thanks to the efforts of its free settlers.

### **Be a refuge for shipwreck survivors.**

Unfortunately the most dangerous waters (Torres Strait) were more than 600 miles away. 600 miles is a long way to row, but some managed the distance. The trading routes in regular use did not come close to the settlement.

## **Adverse Conditions**

### **Weather.**

The North of Australia is in the tropics. Days are hot all year round from 20 – 36 C.

Long dry season where it was hard to keep plants and animals alive is roughly from June to November.

The Wet season, where cyclones, very heavy rain and high humidity are experienced, is from December to May. The Wet brings ideal conditions for the breeding of mosquitoes, which carried malaria.

The settlers had come from England where a hot June day is about 26 C, and winters are so cold that lakes freeze.

### **Position of the settlement**

What was ideal as a port was not the best place for human habitation. The Aborigines did not generally live on the harbour side of the peninsula, but rather on the seaward side for good reason. The mosquitoes were not so active in the presence of a sea breeze. McArthur recognised this and sent those who had been ill to convalesce by the sea, or on board a ship sailing north. Better gardening and grazing land was further inland.

### **Gardening & Farming**

Effective gardening was difficult because no one in the settlement had first hand experience of farming in the tropics.

Some plants grew well, but did not fruit.

Some plants needed much more water during the dry season than could be supplied.

Efforts to bring back tropical plants and seeds from neighbouring islands were made, resulting in some successes with bananas, pineapples, cotton, yams and other suitable plants.

Strong winds associated with the wet seasons flattened crops before they were ready for harvest on some occasions.

The chief botanist was not really a gardener. His job was to collect specimens for the Kew Gardens in London. He did not think that growing pumpkins should be his job.

Labor was in short supply. When the garrison was ill with malaria, the gardens were ignored.

Animals were difficult to keep, with no specific pastures, and no fencing.

Allowing them to roam freely meant that many died from eating poisonous plants, or could not be found.

No refrigeration meant that any large animal slaughtered for meat had to be cooked and eaten within a day.

### **Buildings**

Much building material was brought prefabricated from Sydney.

Buildings had stone walls, fairly small windows, thatched roofs, & various timbers. This housing was not well suited to the tropics.

The black smith had to make nails when the supply from Sydney was delayed.

Lime was made from shell and coral grit. This was used to make mortar.

The thatch was not good at keeping out the rain during the wet season.

The timbers were eaten by termites etc which are in abundance in the North of Australia.

The buildings needed constant repairs, which were neglected during the periods of great illness with the fever.

Most were flattened by the cyclone. (1840?)

Peter Sculthorpe had earlier been fascinated as a Tasmanian, by the English determination to transplant the building style of home without thought about its suitability to new weather conditions, or the new hemisphere. (Tasmanian houses were built facing south to catch the winter sun! Australia's winter sun slants in from the North.)

### **Clothing**

The arrival of the relief brought remarks from the old settlers. They commented on how hot they looked in their most inappropriate dress. The fully lined red woolen coats of the marines, and the many layers, possibly as many as five, worn by their women were not appropriate for the tropics. Peter Sculthorpe mentions that he found the dress of the settlers more suited to the climate of England. The adherence to the English ways was seen in many of the cultural things they clinged to, including their dress. Much of the cultural habits established in Australia were from Europe and remained unquestioned and inappropriate even in Sculthorpe's own upbringing. The picture of these overdressed English men and women in the tropical heat amused Peter Sculthorpe.

### **Distance**

- The distance from the settlement to England was great. News, Orders and mail could arrive 6 months after sending.
- Even short trips took several weeks.
- Communication was quite difficult.
- Going to Sydney meant leaving the settlement for extended periods. Often this meant taking the warship and leaving Victoria unguarded.

### **Isolation**

The settlers at Victoria were largely isolated from the world.

In 11 years only 78 ships, other than the war ship that was stationed there, visited.

The trepang (sea slug) fishermen in their Prahus (Macassar fishing vessels) were not counted as visitors, though there were times when they sought shelter and protection near the settlement with their large fleet of 30 or more vessels.

### **Shipping**

The settlement was established and maintained in the sailing ship era.

Charts of the coast of Australia and neighbouring waters were being surveyed during the time of the settlement.

Unknown waters are potentially dangerous as the *Orontes* discovered.

A beacon tower was built firstly in timber, then in stone to warn ships of the dangerous shallow water, and to guide them safely into the harbour.

At certain times of the year currents flow strongly south down the East coast of Australia towards Sydney, and the winds blow in the same direction. At this time of the year it was much quicker to sail to Port Essington & India etc. via Western Australia.

Sailors on voyages that are faced with unfavourable winds frequently became ill with scurvy, a disease caused by vitamin deficiency, due to the lack of fresh fruit and vegetables in the diet. A shipload of sailors suffering from scurvy arrived in Port Essington to seek fresh food.



Vermin were a problem on shipping. Cleaning the cockroaches out of the supply ship was a major undertaking. Scuttling a ship is a drastic measure.

### **Supplies**

Almost everything had to come by ship at the expense of the Admiralty. Though there is mention of some large ships (500 tons) these are small by today's standards.

At times the settlement was well supplied. More usually, supplies had to be very carefully managed, as on occasions it was a 6-month wait between supply ships.

Since the settlement was not self sufficient food needed to come from Sydney, neighbouring islands, Singapore or India. Large shiploads were transported great distances.

Animals died on the voyages. Food perished, or was eaten by roaches or vermin. Ships sank.

The storehouses at Victoria were damaged in the storms and wet seasons, rendering some of the provisions useless.

### **Illness**

Mostly the marines and their families were in good health, however the 'fever' caused many deaths. Quinine did help, but was not always available.

A doctor / surgeon and an assistant were assigned to the settlement, but not for all of the 11 years.

According to Peter Spillett's research into ships' logs and military documents, 149 people arrived at Port Essington, 43 died, 27 were invalided and so sent home, and 83 returned to England.

A flu epidemic broke out among the Aboriginals during one particularly cold dry season. Many died. It was obvious that the settlers had immunity to the flu virus that the Aboriginals had not developed.

### **Relations with the Aboriginals**

These were generally good, due in part to the wise leadership of McArthur and earlier of Barker when he had established good relationships during the second settlement at Fort Wellington.

McArthur punished aborigines who stole goods or food from the settlement.

McArthur was considered so fair by the Aboriginals that they brought some of their tribal problems to him.

A few were keen to learn, and began to learn English and to learn how to sail. Even Leichhardt, the overland explorer, could see the settlement's influence on the Aboriginals who pointed him towards Victoria, and accompanied him at some times.

The priest was quick to learn local languages and to understand tribal groupings. He mapped the tribal areas. He wanted to teach them English. He found this difficult and suggested to McArthur that if he could take the children away from their parents he would be more successful.

**So why was the settlement eventually abandoned? In Summary.**

The reasons for its existence were no longer sufficiently valid to justify the expense from the Admiralty's coffers.

British trading was secured through Singapore, India and China (Hong Kong was now leased.) These regions were much more civilised and self-sufficient than Port Essington.

Port Essington was out of the way.

There were no threats to the Australian colonies from any other world power, so securing the north against invasion was not necessary.

From the settlers point of view, life was harsh, difficult and quite isolated, yet many were sad to leave, particularly McArthur who had lived there away from his wife for 11 years. Their life style had been very basic. Much energy had been devoted to merely surviving, mostly in gardening and building or repairing.

That there were no free settlers or landowners meant that the order to abandon could be given without any complications. It also meant that the settlement never really had a chance to become self sufficient in the way other colonies like NSW had become where a large pool of labourers made progress easier. The decision not to allow such settlers had been taken quite deliberately, based on the reports that clearly showed that the settlement was not progressing as rapidly as hoped. The decision decreased the Admiralty's financial commitment, and allowed for withdrawal more easily at any moment.

## Peter Sculthorpe

- Born Launceston, Tas. 29-4-1929
- Studied piano & composition
- B.Mus from the University of Melbourne 1951, studying piano and double bass for his instrumental studies.
- Won the J.M. Steele Composition Prize 1946, and the University of Melbourne Examination Exhibition 1947.
- Gained international recognition from:
  - Performance of the Piano Sonatina at 1955 ISCM Festival (International Society of Contemporary Music.)
  - Performance of Ikanda I at the Lisbon Mozart Festival 1956.
  - His String Quartet No.5. earned a Composer's Competition award from the Royal Australian Trust Fund.
- 1956-6 Yale University at the Harkness Fellow. Here he came into direct contact with the music of the Balanese Gamelan, along with fellow Australians. This was taught by a Balanese master, but in a more Western and advanced way. (More efficient than learning in Bali.) Some of his compositions use elements of this music.
- Went to Wadham College, Oxford, England, in 1958 to study with Edmund Rubbra & Egon Wallasz (a former pupil of Schoenberg) on a Lizette Bentwich Travelling Scholarship.
- 1961 his father died, so he returned to Australia. This began a period where his main compositional theme was Threnody (sorrow, sadness).
- 1963 joined the Music Dept. Sydney University as Lecturer, then in 1969 as Reader. (Contact with Ethnomusicology.)
- 1968 Sun Music Ballet (a commissioned work) was performed by the Australian Ballet Company. Choreography by Sir Robert Helpmann.
- 1971-2 return to England as visiting professor of music at the University of Sussex.
- His awards include:
  - Encyclopaedia Britannica Award 1969
  - A share in the Ratcliffe Award 1969
  - OBE 1977
  - 1980 honorary degree of Doctor of Letters conferred by the University of Tasmania.
- Throughout Schulthorpe's career as a composer he has received many commissions for works. Some from unlikely sources, eg to open a National Farmers conference. Some of the significant commissions are:-
  - Sun Music IV – for the Australian Performing Rights Association.
  - Rites of Passage – for the Australian Opera Company for the opening of the Sydney Opera House.
  - String Quartet No. 6 – for Musica Viva.
  - Port Essington – for the Australian Chamber Orchestra.
  - A number of works for the Australian Bicentenary in 1988.
- Sculthorpe has reworked his own compositions extensively for various reasons, so a new work might be based on material from an earlier one. Frequently, the earlier work has been subsequently withdrawn by the composer.
- 1985 Sculthorpe wrote the score to the feature film 'Burke and Wills'.

## His Music and Musical Style

- Early influences came from the music of European composers such as Debussy, Ravel, Shostakovich and Prokofiev as well as atonal music.
- His early works for wind & percussion were influenced by Varese.
- A bassoon sonata, explored Schoneberg's 12 tone serial methods. (Peter Schulthorpe has withdrawn this and many other works written prior to his Oxford days.)
- Aleatoric (chance music) and improvised music have influenced his writing.
- By 1954 Schulthorpe had decided not to imitate European styles, and sought to develop an Australian voice.

### Some aspects of his style:

- Groups of clusters across several octaves.
- Three or four note phrases moving in narrow intervals.
- His 'sound picture' technique, seen in his use of quarter notes. (Half of a semitone – possible on string instruments.)
- Rhythms recalling Bartok & Sculthorpes' investigation into Tasmanian aboriginal lore.
- Search for new timbres & instrumental playing techniques. (see separate list.)
- Thematic traits eg. The use of accented falling minor 2nds and minor 3<sup>rd</sup> oscillations. These intervals are made wider by the addition of one or more octaves.
- After 1965 Sculthorpe added to his 'Australianism' by the inclusion of techniques found in the indigenous music of East Asia and the Pacific. (It was argued, by University music establishments and composers long before Paul Keating's prime ministership, that Australia should belong more to the Asia/Pacific region. Composers and other artists tried to move away from the influences of European music & other arts of the 17<sup>th</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup> centuries)
  - Japanese formal qualities, eg *haiku* (lines of 5, 7, 5 syllables)
  - Balinese gamelan gong sounds and scales, texture & rhythmic organisation.
- Out of Sculthorpe's experiments with *Musique concrete* and his enthusiasm for the young Polish composers' such as Penderecki, grew his compositions in tone colours.
- Aleatoric techniques such as the use of small 'cells' performed for a given time given in seconds, with the instruction that the performance is to be 'without measure', meaning without the rhythmic attention to beat or pulse.

## **Stylistic Features used in 'Port Essington' by Peter Sculthorpe**

### **Sound or Timbre**

- String Orchestra (imitating the sounds of the Australian Bush)
- String Trio (representing the English settlers and their culture.)
- Interesting string techniques (Many of these are used to imitate sounds from the Australian Bush.) ie. 'sound effects'
  - The playing of the string between the tailpiece and the bridge.
  - The playing of any very high note. (These would be different across the section, and thus would sound like a very high tone cluster.)
  - Rapid glissandos up or down from any very high note.
  - Whispering sounds created by rubbing the bow up and down the open strings.
  - Quarter-tone trills – really a form of wide vibrato.
  - Harmonics, real or artificial. (Real harmonics are those which occur naturally on the open string by lightly touching the string at suitable points. Artificial harmonics are those created on stopped strings by touching lightly above the stopped position.)
  - Free glissandos of the natural harmonics. These are created by lightly rubbing the string with the left hand, whilst bowing.
  - The Bartok pizzicato, where the double bass player is instructed to pluck the string at 90 degrees to the finger board so that it slaps the board.
  - Double stopping of 3rds, Tritones, major 7ths and minor 9ths.
  - Ostinato figures or cells repeated for particular times in Movement III, or as an accompaniment eg. the cello in movement I, fig. 1.
  - Use of the mute – Movement II.
  - Pizz – plucked, arco – bowed, Con Sord – with the mute, col legno bow with the wood, sul pont – bow near the bridge, sul tasto – bow near the fingerboard, tutti – all play, solo – one player, ord – ordinary pitch after playing harmonics.

### **Texture**

- Both homophonic and multi layered.

### **Harmony**

- Polytonal
- Use of Ostinato
- Pedal note eg. C in Movement II, or Pedal chord eg. the tritone under the cello cadenza of Movement II.
- Strong dissonance. Intervals like the tritone, Major 7<sup>th</sup> and Minor 9<sup>th</sup> used.
- String Trio in Movement II is Tonal, based on C major, using mainly primary triads, perfect and imperfect cadences.
- Non tonal harmonies of the 'Bush' noises.

### **Melody**

- Based on a traditional Aboriginal melody, collected by Prof. A.P. Elkin. The closest version to the original is found in the opening of the Epilogue.
- Variations of the theme and the cell figures of the bush.
- Repetition
- Extension
- The main theme uses a small range of notes.

- Moves mainly by steps of a tone or semitone.
- Syncopated
- Changing time signatures.
- Scalic decoration Fig. 7 movement II.
- Cello cadenza (movement II) is based on the dom 7<sup>th</sup> with a flattened 9<sup>th</sup>.
- No conventional melody used in Movement III 'Phantasy'.

### **Rhythm**

- Syncopation (particularly in the opening Prologue)
- Changing metre or time signature.
- Accents used.
- Cross rhythms.
- Independent rhythms within the string orchestra where the instruction to play without measure is given, along with a small cell that is to be repeated for a particular time, given in seconds.
- Free ostinato. Note the alignment of the beginnings in movement II.
- Diminution seen in successive accompaniments to the theme in Movement II. Semiquavers become semiquaver triplets.

### **Structures**

- Sectional, using 4 and 2 bar phrases in the Prologue, 12 bars in the Theme and Variations, timed sections in Phantasy (these are given in seconds)
- Theme and variation form is used on the large scale with variations on the Aboriginal theme featuring in all movements but 'Phantasy'.
- Theme and variation in a 19<sup>th</sup> century English drawing room style for movement II.
- The use of codas, bridges or in the case of movement II a cello cadenza to join movements together, making a continuous work.
- Free form used in Movement III, 'Phantasy'.