

Music, the Forgotten Language: Cook's bagpipes and the Maori Papageno

ROBIN MACONIE

In 1859 two eager young Maori travelled with Hochstetter to Austria. They became fluent in German and received training at the Imperial Printing Works in Vienna. At the end of their stay they were presented to Franz Joseph and delivered a message of such intense gratitude that the old Emperor's face reddened with emotion. They returned to New Zealand with the gift of a printing press to publish books and pamphlets in the Maori language for the Maori people. Within a year the press was closed down by the governing authorities.

I am a New Zealand born musician and composer. I live in Dannevirke. I have no formal attachment to any university. My reason for being here is that in 1964, after a year of postgraduate study in Paris with the composer Olivier Messiaen, the award of a DAAD stipend enabled me to study contemporary and electronic music for a year in Cologne with a number of leading composers and interpreters, among them Bernd-Alois Zimmermann, Herbert Eimert, Karlheinz Stockhausen, Henri Pousseur, and pianist Aloys Kontarsky.

New Zealand takes pride in sending young people away for further study, and is embarrassed at its inability to do anything with them on their return. According to tradition, the chosen one—Katherine Mansfield, Frances Hodgkins—is sent away to die; so to return alive and intact is interpreted as a sign of rejection by the gods, moral imperfection, or cowardice on the field of battle.¹ Musicians go abroad to improve their skills and reconnect with old world European traditions of interpretation and performance practice. Alfred Hill travelled to Leipzig in 1887 as a promising young violinist and returned as a mature composer to be welcomed by the Maori community, rejected by his own people, and eventually forced into exile as a penance for having studied in Germany rather than the motherland.

Among New Zealand intellectuals of European descent, social identity remains a prevailing obsession, and freedom from contamination a defining cultural trait. Addressing the New Zealand Institute in 1900, Thomas Hocken fiercely repudiated the legacy of pioneer ethnologist Thomas Kendall on the ignorant ground of betraying his Christian morals.² Douglas Lilburn disdained the achievements and cultural relevance of fellow composer

Alfred Hill, his elder and manifest superior.³ In a witty academic address delivered as late as 1970, J. C. Beaglehole pillories the science of Cook and Banks as inadequate, pours scorn on the amateur philological endeavours of Banks and the early missionaries, and expresses a jovial and lofty disdain at Cook's lack of education, on account of the Captain's uneven spelling and absence of literary style.⁴ The educated colonial mindset is well captured by Allen Curnow in the poem *Landfall in Unknown Seas*:

Simply by sailing in a new direction

You could enlarge the world.

Lines of a stunning and tragic vacuousness, the words of a disembarking passenger who has no idea how he got here.

Studying music, or art or drama, involves acquiring a sense of past traditions, repertoire, and performance skills. To study with a living composer, on the other hand, especially a composer as controversial as Stockhausen, is to embark on an inquiry into the nature of genius, and the very foundations of musical language.

My professional life has been devoted to studying and advocating the avant-garde music of Stockhausen and his European and American contemporaries. It has been a rare privilege to observe, defend, and interact critically with so magisterial a figure in music history from so close a perspective during the greater part of his working life. I authored a BBC television documentary on Stockhausen produced in 1980 and have written four books on the composer between 1976 and 2005. Against all reason, the books remain references of first resort on the composer in the English language. When Stockhausen died in December 2007, the call went out from New York and London to Dannevirke, New Zealand.⁵

Behind Stockhausen's public image as an unreconstructed modernist there hides a romantic spirit firmly attached to the tradition of Goethe and educationist Friedrich Froebel. The common ground linking serial music in the 1950s with Enlightenment era science is *philology*, the study of human nature and temperament through examination of the conventions of speech and word formation. Virtually identical philosophies of language connect Stockhausen's electronic composition *Gesang der Jünglinge* of 1956 with the mechanical speech inventions demonstrated by the Hungarian Wolfgang von Kempelen to a delighted Viennese court in the lifetime of Mozart.⁶ In Stockhausen's opera *Samstag aus LICHT* are further didactic allusions to theories of J. S. Bach's contemporary Andreas

Werckmeister on the morality of artificial equal temperament, and physiognomist Johann Kaspar Lavater on distortions of the face as indicators of moral character.⁷

Act II of Stockhausen's opera *Donnerstag aus LICHT* is a trumpet concerto titled *Michaels Reise um die Welt*. The character Michael embodies the active, visionary spirit of Germany in a mixture of personality traits associated with St Michael (the English St George) and Der Deutsche Michel, the German version of Mr Punch. I began to wonder if the musical travels of Michael might be a coded reference to a real George: Georg Forster, who travelled with Captain Cook and published a popular account of his experiences under the title *Reise um die Welt mit Kapitän Cook* in 1778.⁸

The role played by music in shaping 18th-century European protocols of encounter with Pacific peoples is a closed book to many New Zealand scholars and historians. Lost for words to account for Thomas Kendall's inquiries into Maori language and custom, Keith Sinclair excused himself by writing a poem, "Memorial to a Missionary". A foolish poem, composed by an indifferent poet, but of sufficient interest to be gathered into the company of Allen Curnow's *Penguin Book of New Zealand Verse*, published in 1960.⁹ It would fall to Sinclair's youthful protegee, historian Judith Binney, to deliver the official coup de grace on Kendall in a PhD thesis published under the uncompromising rubric *The Legacy of Guilt* and still available in bookshops.¹⁰

Maintaining good relations with native populations was always essential to ensure the success of so expensive a scientific mission as Cook and Banks's voyage to the Pacific to observe the Transit of Venus. In years prior to the first voyage, members and associates of the Royal Society undertook a number of studies aimed at assisting the European travellers to establish diplomatic relations with the noble inhabitants of a great southern continent. Drawing on universal features of human nature, speech, and emotional temperament, these studies were designed to enable visitors to assess, from the tone, rhythm, cadence, and melody of alien speech, whether a speaker was of a naturally warlike or peaceable disposition, and his present state of mind.¹¹

Studies were undertaken by Erasmus Darwin into the fundamental particles of speech; by James Burnet, Lord Monboddo, into the tone structures and redundancies of natural speech; and by Joshua Steele into the emotional cues of rhetorical speech and how to record them in

a form of music notation.¹² Working from his London lodgings Benjamin Franklin designed new letter forms and simplified spelling protocols to create a scientific, or at least, a culturally neutral alphabet for the uniform transcription of unknown dialects. In 1764 the eight year-old Mozart, visiting London with his father Leopold, was examined by Daines Barrington for the Royal Society. The young prodigy was required to improvise passages representing archetypal emotional states in the style and language of Italian opera.¹³ Transcribed by Leopold and published as *The London Sketchbook*, these were designed to serve as emotional templates in assessing the vocal behaviour of alien species of humanity.¹⁴

The celebrated episode of Cook having his piper perform for his Tahitian hosts is trivially interpreted as good-humoured play.¹⁵ The reality is perhaps more complicated. There are close similarities of idiom connecting Scots melody forms directly with those of Pacific island and Maori traditional song. Oral traditions recognize the same fundamental virtues of physical endurance, breath control, and respect for cultural memory, leading an observer to wonder if Cook may have come to his decision on Royal Society advice. For the Captain, whose own father was Scottish working class, and for his English crew, a performance of pipe music could be taken as a gesture of solidarity with the defeated nationalists of 1745, sending a message that the Scots were closer kin to their Pacific brethren, more worthy of friendship, and by nature and temperament more humane than the English.

The same Daines Barrington who interviewed Mozart also recommended the appointment of Johann Reinhold and Georg Forster as scientific observers on Cook's second voyage. Both were musically educated. During the voyage Georg paid careful attention to native music and dance, recording samples in music notation. His full-blooded account in German of witnessing a *haka* performed on deck of the *Resolution* is composed in a kind of blank verse evoking the rhythm and tone of the actual event.¹⁶

At the end of the voyage, after disagreements with their English paymasters, Georg returned to a Europe in mounting turmoil to become an unofficial roving ambassador for social change. His subsequent career as a correspondent and advocate of revolution brought Forster popular recognition and introductions to leading composers, patrons, and influential public figures across Europe as far afield as St Petersburg. In 1785 he was inducted into the same Masonic Lodge in Vienna as Mozart, "Zur Wohltätigkeit".¹⁷ Forster and Mozart were of one mind concerning major issues of social reform and tolerance toward alien cultures.

The idea that the characters of Papageno and Papagena in Mozart's opera *The Magic Flute* are modelled on contemporary images and accounts of Maori as archetypes of primeval humanity, dressed in feathers, with feathers in their hair, is received in New Zealand musical circles with dismay and disbelief. It cannot be true. How could we have missed it? For sure, Beethoven was inspired to fashion his own child of the revolution image and musical rhetoric after contemporary accounts of primordial humanity. Citations of Forster's books and translations are written in Beethoven's notebooks, and gestures evoking the *haka* and confrontational style of Maori rhetoric are conveyed with violent and spectacular clarity in works such as the "Coriolan" Overture and the Fourth Piano Concerto.

If contacts are real in historical terms, we are entitled to go looking for evidence of the impact of Forster's New Zealand experiences on the art and music of Enlightenment Europe. That idealized perceptions of Pacific culture and fundamental human nature influenced the poetry of Wordsworth and Coleridge and the public images of Byron and Beethoven is universally accepted. That the Pacific visions captured by Cook's artists Sydney Parkinson and William Hodges helped to change the face of European romantic art is a radical concept argued by Hamish Keith in *The Big Picture*.¹⁸ That the existential philosophies of Coleridge and Kendall are agonisingly refracted in the text paintings of McCahon and John Caselberg is one of many subtexts of Peter Simpson's thesis in *Answering Hark*.¹⁹ Two hundred years after Cook, Banks, and Forster, only now are a few discarded relics among us beginning to register just how profoundly early encounters with New Zealand and its people impacted on the aesthetic and political sensibilities of revolutionary Europe, and learning from that, how important it is to maintain that two-way traffic in ideas. We still have some way to go. In Wellington in 2007 Donald Maurice initiated a major festival of the music of Alfred Hill, some of which had not been heard for a hundred years. The music was wonderful. The New Zealand Symphony Orchestra did not participate.

E N D

28 January – 4 February 2010

Notes

1. "Exile is a fate inflicted upon people and self-exile a way of avoiding some pending misfortune. It is hardly an apt word for people who went overseas and stayed there of their own free will. That is not a matter of exile but of

- expatriation.” W. H. Oliver, reviewing *Dance of the Peacocks* by James McNeish, in *New Zealand Books* Vol. 13 No. 4 (October 2003).
2. “[He] fell from his high estate, and in 1820 was consequently dismissed from the mission. He behaved treacherously to the [Church Missionary Society], was guilty of trading with the natives in guns and powder and sinned against morality.” Dr T[homas] M. Hocken, F. L. S., “Some Account of the Beginnings of Literature in New Zealand: Part I., the Maori Section”. *Trans. Proc. New Zealand Institute* Vol. 33 (1900) Art. LIX, 472.
 3. “It is sad for me that he took his training from the mandarins of Leipzig. . . . Patently, he was in no sense the musical ancestor that once I’d been seeking.” Douglas Lilburn, in J. M. Thomson, *A Distant Music: The Life and Times of Alfred Hill 1870–1960*. Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1980, ix–x.
 4. “Cook . . . was not a natural-born writer. He did not take to words as he took to the sea or to mathematics. Unlike the desert philosopher, he could understand the way of a ship in the sea, but the graceful footsteps or the measured roll of English prose I cannot imagine him scrutinizing; and if he had done so, I cannot imagine much comprehension on his part. . . . When he departed from the Postgate school at Great Ayton he could form his letters, spell in a rough and ready fashion—perhaps no worse than a majority of his betters at Eton and Harrow—and knew as much about punctuation and grammar, probably, as a twentieth-century undergraduate.” Of the first voyage’s scientific aims Beaglehole writes “We find all sorts of people struck by words and making lists, and—on the lunatic fringe—proving something about the ancient Irish or the Lost Ten tribes and the Eskimos or the Tahitians. And in the Pacific, to take a single instance, we have Banks in the *Endeavour* much struck, and puzzled, by likenesses between Malagasy and Malayan and the Polynesian tongues, and speculating wildly for a moment about the ‘Egyptian Learning’.” J[ohn] C. Beaglehole, *Cook the Writer*. The Sixth George Arnold Wood Memorial Lecture. Sydney: Sydney University Press, 1970.
 5. Robin Maconie, “End of Days: The Passion of Karlheinz Stockhausen.” *Artforum* XLVI, No. 7 (March 2008), 304–11.
 6. Robin Maconie, *Other Planets: The Music of Karlheinz Stockhausen*. Lanham MD and Oxford: The Scarecrow Press, 2005, 166–72. See also Bernd Pompino-Marschall, “Wolfgang von Kempelen et. al. – Remarks on the history of articulatory-acoustic modelling.” *ZAS Papers in Linguistics* 40

(2005), 145–59.

7. Robin Maconie, “Facing the Music: Stockhausen’s Wizard of Oz.” *Tempo* Vol. 64 No. 25 (2010), 2–7.
8. Georg Forster, *A Voyage round the World in His Britannic Majesty’s sloop, Resolution, commanded by Capt. James Cook, during the years 1772, 3, 4, and 5*. 2v. London: 1777; German edition (tr. Forster) 2v. Berlin: Haude u. Spener, 1778–1780.
9. “Did he fall through pride of spirit, through arrogance/ Or through humility, not scorning the prayers / Of savages and their intricate pantheon?” Keith Sinclair, “Memorial to a Missionary”. In Allen Curnow ed., *The Penguin Book of New Zealand Verse*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1960, 261.
10. Judith Binney, *The Legacy of Guilt: A Life of Thomas Kendall*. Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1968; n.e. Wellington: Bridget Williams Books, 2005.
11. Contemporary practices of character and temperament analysis applied to Maori are detailed by Samuel Marsden’s companion John Lydiard Nicholas throughout the latter’s *Narrative of a Voyage to New Zealand* (1817), 2v. facsimile edition. Auckland: Wilson and Horton, n.d. (1970).
12. Joshua Steele, *Prosodia Rationalis* (1773). Facs. Repr. of 2.e. (London: 1779). Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 1971.
13. Daines Barrington, “Account of a Very Remarkable Young Musician. In a Letter from the Honourable Daines Barrington, F. R. S. To Mather Maty, M. D. Sec. R. S.” *Philosophical Transactions* Vol. 60 (1770), 54–64.
14. Wolfgang Amadé Mozart: *London Sketchbook – London Notebook* edited and completed by Hans-Udo Kreuels. Wellington: Artaria Editions, 2005 (AE309).
15. Vanessa Agnew, “A Scots Orpheus in the South Seas: Encounter Music on Cook’s Second Voyage.” *Journal for Maritime Research* (<http://www.jmr.nmm.ac.uk/server/show/conJmrarticle.9viewPage5>) (accessed 26 June 2007)
16. *Zum| Abschied | gaben | unsere | Gäste | uns einen | Hiva- oder | Kriegstanz zum | besten, der aus | Stampfen mit den | Füßsen, | drohenden | Schwenken der | Keulen und | Speere, | schrecklichen Ver- | zerrungen des Ge- | sichts, Aus-| streckungen der | Zunge und |wildem | Heulen be- | stand!* (http://gutenberg.spiegel.de?id=5&xid=701&kapitel=1#gb_found) (accessed 26 June 2007)
17. Noted in Hermann Abert, *W.A. Mozart* tr. Stewart Spencer ed. Cliff Eisen. Yale

MA: Yale University Press, 2007, 783–85.

18. Hamish Keith, *The Big Picture: A History of New Zealand Art from 1642*.

Auckland: Godwit (Random House), 2007.

19. Peter Simpson: *Answering Hark: McCahon/Caselberg, Painter/Poet*. Nelson: Craig Potton Publishing, 2001.