

Fading Blue Skies (Pale Blue Skies) Programme Notes

Sparkled water, clear (pale) blue skies

During the early to mid 1930s Sydney, Australia enjoyed relative peace, as portrayed by our beautiful Sydney Harbour. Some were fortunate to live close by the harbour waters and many a young man paddled on them in canoes, reveling in the peace and quiet they offered as well the sheer beauty.

Canoe bobs in Sirius Cove,

Those familiar with canoeing will be familiar at how the vessel handles the light wavelets by a bobbing motion. Sirius Cove offered sheltered conditions for these craft.

Fine melodic music in a happy home.

One young man came from an intensely musical home where it was both a source of pleasure and income. The music, always pleasing to one's ear, as were the surrounds in which it was made.

New Music at the Sydney Conservatorium.

The young man attended the NSW Conservatorium of Music (now The Sydney Conservatorium of Music) where he experienced music being broadened by the beginnings of a movement that was against the Tonalism that he was exposed to at home

And yet the World was troubled.

As the 1930s progressed the globe was plagued by dissatisfaction with some of the political systems as well as countries seeking revenge for past deeds and a growing class divide that was commenced during WWI. This was particularly so in Europe and in the relations between China and Japan.

Young men thought War. Blue skies faded.

Many young men began to think that once more war would plague the World, and adopted an attitude that it was better fought on any soil except their homeland, and they began to train for this possible event.

Love's Fragility (Distant Love) Programme Notes

Although men armed; for some young men home approval was important.

Many young men going to war were leaving their home for the first time, so those with strong ties thereto kept them in place that they might have some strong base to relate to in a system (the armed services) that is designed to break all the values they once held dear.

Life was a struggle for normality. Even that was now distant. Love was distant.

Defence personnel during wartime were retrained to focus on the essential tasks before them leaving no space for 'normality' and because of the uncertainty of the lives before them deep love became a joy now relinquished.

Young women came yet distant they remained.

Young Australians fought away from home in the main. Because of this many, but not all, relationships were brief so often built on a love that was fragile and distant.

Sea Letters Programme Notes

There was hesitance in the joy of early Thirty-Nine.

Despite a strained atmosphere of 'life as normal' during early '39 there was a general feeling that events in Europe were more than just one off incidents and a number of young Australians joined the Militia in the pretext that once more their Country would be calling them in a time of need. One young man whose training had been directed towards music, but indeed was not taking that form because of parental domination had just completed his leaving certificate, tried office work which was not to his liking, and so found himself attached to the Militia Signal Section in Brookvale, relatively close to his Mosman home.

Mid 1939 unrest in Europe spread worldwide.

During that year HMAS Canberra, that had been carrying war stores since September of 1938 had had her seasonal cruising programme interrupted with large scale Navel exercises during April 1939, then whilst on her Winter Cruise of that year was called back to Sydney to have all inflammable stores removed and more war stores taken on board. The young man had persuaded his parents to allow him to join the RAN and by December 1939 he began training at HMAS *Cerberus*.

Joy turned to sorrow at the words; “War, total war”.

Upon the German invasion of Poland during September 1939, contrary to Britain’s request to do otherwise, war was declared by Britain and therefore this included Australia, once again.

Sea, sea! Water, water! Hot oppressive weather, tepid nights. Skies rich blue. Moons as big as mountains.

Basic training behind him the now young sailor found himself in HMAS *Canberra*, firstly escorting troop convoys then later hunting the German raider *Admiral Scheer* in the Indian Ocean so aptly described in one of his numerous letters to his parents.

Two Years later Savo

Canberra was made part of Task Force 62.2 (also known as Operation Watchtower) a giant armada of Allied naval vessels and transports required to capture an airport being built by the enemy on Guadalcanal, which, if it failed would enable enemy air access to Northern Australia. It was the first Allied amphibious force created and because of its hasty formation was doomed to failure.

“Warning strange ship entering harbour”! Action Stations!

During the second night of the landings which, to this moment enjoyed limited yet harassed success, *Canberra* was first in a line of ships, close to Savo Island, protecting the transports when a squadron of enemy ships slipped through the destroyer sentries supposedly guarding that line and attacked her. The call to action was too late and twenty-four large calibre shells hit *Canberra* within a two-minute period setting her ablaze and totally disabling her.

Death came by shellfire.

The young sailor was killed whilst at his action station near the bridge by the first salvo to strike the ship. Subsequent shells hit her engines next rendering her unable to return fire, because of lack of the electricity that they generated as well as fight the fires that had started throughout the vessel.

They sound the Last Post for those now gone. So all may remember.

The Last Post is sounded so that we who hear may pause, remember, reflect, and indeed possibly commune with the spirits of those now dead. The young sailor and 73 others are now entombed in the proud cruiser that once they called home, as she rests upright on the floor of Iron Bottom Sound just off Savo Island.

The Savo attack continued.

Flushed with success the squadron continued and further away surprised and sank three other US heavy cruisers USS *Quincy*, *Astoria* and *Vincennes*. The loss of men from these ships was far more substantial than that of *Canberra*.

They sound Taps for the US Sailors killed.

Taps is used for the same purposes as the Last Post.

The enemy squadron steamed on. Four Allied heavy cruisers now sunk

The enemy had inflicted a humiliating defeat upon the Allies in particular the US Navy. Indeed it was the first such defeat ever for them whilst their ships were at sea, so much so that word of the result was not released to the American public for a long period of time. The men returning home were forbidden to speak of the action and the wounded were sent to hospitals in remote locations to perpetuate the secrecy. This First Battle of Savo Island has been named "The Battle of the Five Sitting Ducks". Although not mentioned earlier the US heavy cruiser USS *Chicago* who was astern of *Canberra* at the time had her bows severely damaged by a Long Lance Torpedo and required extensive repairs.

Early one morning in August 42 His spirit sought his father who saw the lad and he then knew. He knew.

The night of 9th August 1942 the young sailor's father was awakened by a gust of wind blowing the curtains open and there at the window was his eldest son holding his head. The boy went to his father rather than distressing his mother. Deep down the father knew that his son was yet another victim of war.

When we meet them the Last Post sounds, Taps sounds. And we all commune until we all part, when called. Then go our separate ways.

These two distinct bugle calls are used to summon those lost in war to come to those present to invoke the memories of days now gone. The United States use Taps and in Australia the Last Post is used, the calls are evocative and designed for us on earth to be silent and focused on the sacrifices that have been made by those killed in war and the families they leave behind.

Dedicated to my brother, Russell

Pale Blue Skies

for Flute Quartet and Piano with optional narration

Brennan Keats

A Capriccio ♩ = 100

Flute 1 *mf*

Flute 2 *mf*

Alto Flute *mf*

Bass Flute *mf*

Piano

4

RH LH

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Love's Fragility

for Flute Quartet with optional narration

Brennan Keats

Teneramente, sempre legato e rubato ♩=132

Flute 1

Flute 2

Alto Flute

Bass Flute

The first system of music consists of four staves. Flute 1 starts with a piano (*p*) dynamic and a half note. Flute 2, Alto Flute, and Bass Flute enter in the second measure with piano (*p*) dynamics. Flute 1 and Bass Flute have a crescendo to mezzo-piano (*mp*) by the end of the first measure. Flute 2 and Alto Flute also have a crescendo to *mp*. The second measure continues with *mp* dynamics. The third measure features a piano (*p*) dynamic for Flute 2, Alto Flute, and Bass Flute, while Flute 1 remains at *mp*. The fourth measure features a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic for Flute 1, Flute 2, and Bass Flute, while Alto Flute remains at *p*.

For some young men home approval remained important.

4

The second system of music consists of four staves. It begins with a measure rest marked with the number 4. Flute 1, Flute 2, and Bass Flute play piano (*p*) dynamics, while Alto Flute plays mezzo-piano (*mp*). The music concludes with a 4/4 time signature change.

Sea Letters

For Flute Quartet with optional Narration

Brennan Keats

Sognando ♩ = 80

Musical score for Flute Quartet, measures 1-3. The score is in 6/8 time and D major. It features four staves: Flute 1, Flute 2, Alto Flute, and Bass Flute. All parts begin with a forte (*f*) dynamic. The music consists of flowing eighth-note patterns with various slurs and accents.

Musical score for Flute Quartet, measures 4-7. The score continues from the previous system. Dynamics include mezzo-forte (*mf*). The music maintains the eighth-note rhythmic texture with some melodic variation.

8 There was hesi-tan-cy in the joy of ear-ly Thir ty Nine.

Musical score for Flute Quartet with optional narration, measures 8-11. The score includes lyrics and the instruction *sempre colla voce* for all parts. Dynamics include forte (*f*). The music continues with eighth-note patterns, some with slurs.

In Memory of my son, Russell, Late R.A.N.

Over the Quiet Waters

Herbert J Brandon

Horace Keats

1 **Lento espressivo**

Voice

Ov - er the qui - et

Piano

p

4

wa - ters, a song — comes through the night

7

While the wea - ry earth is sleep - ing And the stars — are