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AN ANALYSIS OF 'THE LOST ART OF LETTER WRITING' BY BRETT DEAN

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of requirements for the degree of Master of Music (Music Performance)

Sydney Conservatorium of Music
University of Sydney
2010
I declare that the research presented here is my own original work and has not been submitted to any other institution for the award of a degree.

Signed: .................................................................

Date: 24/10/2010
Abstract

Brett Dean composed the violin concerto *The Lost Art of Letter Writing* in 2006 and was awarded the prestigious Grawemeyer Award for Music Composition in 2009. This thesis will look at the many aspects that contributed to the composition of this work, such as Dean's performance experience with the Berlin Philharmonic, a comparison with earlier works by Dean, his use of quotation, and his inspirations.

The Grawemeyer Award has been celebrating the achievement and innovation of composers since 1984 and offers an extensive sum of money along with prestige and recognition. This thesis will examine the regulations of the Grawemeyer Award, any characteristics of previous Grawemeyer winners, and the effect that this award has had on Brett Dean's life. It will also discuss whether or not 'The Lost Art of Letter Writing' fits into a particular stereotype of previous awardees.

Apart from the Grawemeyer Award, Dean's violin concerto has received mixed reviews. By examining newspaper articles and reviews of performances of the work, this thesis will assess the overall reception of the violin concerto, and measure how it compares to the response to some of his other works.

A large portion of this thesis will consist of an in depth analysis of the work. This will be introduced with a broad overview of the work, giving the overall structure of the work, and followed by an analysis of each movement's form, motivic use, similarities to other works by Dean, and relationship between the instruments, especially between the violin and the orchestra. The aim is to give a deeper understanding of a complex new work, and contextualise the work among other works by Dean and his contemporaries.
Acknowledgements

I would sincerely like to thank Richard Toop, Kathleen Nelson, and the staff at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music for their help and useful advice throughout the process of writing this thesis.
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Introduction

Brett Dean is quickly becoming one of Australia’s most renowned composers. Raised in Brisbane, retiree of the viola section of the Berlin Philharmonic, and a relatively late discoverer of his love of composition, Brett Dean has become just as successful with this latest line of work as he is with his playing. In 2009 Brett Dean was awarded the prestigious Grawemeyer Award for Music Composition, which offers a large monetary prize to accompany the prestige one gains from winning it. The piece that he was awarded this for is named *The Lost Art of Letter Writing*, a violin concerto inspired by the move in today’s society away from the written word, and by the obsession with computers and the internet. This thesis will examine many of Dean’s works, with particular attention to, and analysis of *The Lost Art of Letter Writing*.

The source of inspiration is a key element in Dean’s works. Recurring inspirations for Dean’s works include improvisational music, visual arts, the landscape and international political affairs. Frequently Dean chooses an extra-musical foundation to base his piece on and gives his work a title which acts as a springboard for musical inspiration. These influences, and the extent of the effect that they may have had on Dean’s output, will be examined during this thesis.

There has been a varied response to Dean’s music, both in Australia and abroad. Most critics praise Dean for his creativity and musicality; however, there are also some criticisms, as documented later in this thesis. This thesis will include a broad representation of the criticisms and praise that Dean has received for his works over the years. It will look at any common faults identified in his music, and also point out the consistently praised elements of his work.

The Grawemeyer Award is one of the most prestigious awards one can hope to receive for musical composition. Although it has such a highly regarded reputation, relatively few people know many details about the award and its value. This thesis will briefly discuss various aspects of the awards, including previous winners, and any evident trends that may occur in the list of recipients. Dean’s reaction to winning the Grawemeyer award will also be reviewed, based on video interviews and newspaper articles.

As noted above, Dean has chosen to base this concerto on a topic that he felt very strongly about, namely the lack of handwritten communication in today’s society. Dean used this concept, and articulated it through four excerpts from nineteenth century letters, as a basis for his violin concerto. Although not programmatic in the technical sense of the
word, elements of the letters have influenced the sound of the work, and this will be examined in the analysis section of this thesis. After a brief overview of the structure, the thesis will delve into a more comprehensive analysis of the work, with emphasis on form and structure, relationship between the orchestra and the solo violin, and a comparison of styles, both with the work itself, and with other works by Dean. This thesis will discuss and analyse this work in depth, and help to uncover the composer’s inspirations and ideals.
Chapter One – Brett Dean: His Life and Works

Brett Dean – Biography

Brett Dean was born in Brisbane, Australia, in 1961. He studied violin, viola, and composition at the Queensland Conservatorium music, and graduated in 1982 with a Conservatorium medal for the highest achieving student of the year.\(^1\) Dean was Principal Viola for four seasons of the Queensland and Australian Youth Orchestras, and also performed many solo concerts throughout Australasia. In 1984 he travelled to Germany with an Australia Council Grant and commenced studies with the renowned violist Wolfram Christ, who was the principal violist of the Berlin Philharmonic. After a year of casual work with the Berlin Philharmonic he commenced a position with the orchestra in 1985, where he worked until 2000. During his time with the Berlin Philharmonic Dean was privileged enough to play under the legendary conductor, Herbert von Karajan, during his final years in the position of Principal Conductor, as well as many other notable conductors, and now considers himself a close friend of Sir Simon Rattle, the orchestra’s current conductor. While living in Europe, Dean appeared at many major festivals such as Aldeburgh, Bath, Berlin, Frankfurt, Salzburg and Vienna’s ‘Wien Modern’ series.\(^2\) He received outstanding commendation for his 1995 solo performance of Hindemith’s Viola d’Amore Concerto with the Berlin Philharmonic under Claudio Abbado in 1995, and went on to record the work for CPO. In 2000 Dean decided to further his compositional career, quit his position in the Berlin Philharmonic, and continue to work as a freelance artist in Australia. He has since spent the majority of his time in Australia, although he still spends a large amount of time travelling.

Dean first started composing in 1988, initially focusing on experimental film and radio projects, as well as improvisational performance.\(^3\) He is mostly self-taught in composition, and the early part of his career was spent in partnership with performance artist and filmmaker Simon Hunt, with whom he explored experimental and improvisatory


It was not until 1995 that Dean started to consider himself a 'professional' composer, and this realisation was a result of a comment made by another Australian composer, Richard Mills, after he had seen the premiere performance of Dean's clarinet concerto *Ariel's Music*. Mills said "You've got to realise you're a composer now". Dean realised then that he needed to take the plunge and make composing a full-time profession, rather than just an activity he did in between other musical activities. Dean says "It was confirmation for me. I was not a young composer, but I was a new composer." Since then he has established himself as one of Australia's finest composers and all-round musicians and has had his works performed in major venues such as Wigmore Hall, Queen Elizabeth Hall, the Lyon Opera, the Leipzig Gewandhaus and the Berlin Philharmonic. Much of his music has also been recorded in Australia, Sweden (by BIS), and for the Belgian label Sub-Rosa as part of the composer-performer duo 'Frame-Cut-Frame'. Dean has written many commissioned compositions for the Festival of Sydney, English pianist Imogen Cooper, the Queensland Symphony Orchestra, the Australian Chamber Orchestra, and the twelve cellos of the Berlin Philharmonic. The works that have helped him to achieve international status include *Ariel's Music* (1995), a clarinet concerto which won an award from the UNESCO International Rostrum of Composers, the piano quintet *Voices of Angels* (1996) and *Twelve Angry Men* (1996) for 12 cellos. *Twelve Angry Men* is a symphonic poem that attempts to reproduce the relationship of the two main characters in the Sidney Lumet film of the same name. Perhaps the most famous and widely-performed work of Dean's is *Carlo* (1997) for strings, sampler, and tape. It is a piece inspired by the music of Carlo Gesualdo (1561 -

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6 ibid.


8 ibid.


1613), the celebrated Italian composer, lutenist and nobleman of the late Renaissance period. In 2001 Dean won the Paul Lowin Song Cycle Prize for *Winter Songs*, and became the Artist in Residence with the Melbourne Symphony and Composer in Residence at the Cheltenham Festival. In 2004 Dean’s work *Moments of Bliss* was premiered by the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, a predecessor of his more recent opera *Bliss*. *Moments of Bliss* was awarded ‘Best Composition’ at the 2005 Australian Classical Music Awards. In April 2005 Dean performed the premiere of his *Viola Concerto* in London with the BBC Symphony, and since then, has performed it with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Sydney Symphony, Hamburg Philharmonic, Netherlands Philharmonic and Orchestre National de Lyon.

Dean has continued his link with Germany by premiering and performing many of his recent works there. These include a world premiere by the Berlin Philharmonic of his orchestral work *Komarov’s Fall* in March 2006, and conducting the chamber music work *Recollections* at the Kraftwerk Festival in Heimbach. His works are also well represented in his home country of Australia with an all-contemporary program performance with the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra in 2006, and a performance of his work *Short Stories* with the West Australian Symphony Orchestra.

Dean’s music was a feature in the 2007/08 season with the SWR Symphonie Orchester Stuttgart. More recently he has also had works performed in the Lucerne Festival, by the Berlin Philharmonic and Rundfunkchor, the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, and composed a carol for the choir of King’s College Cambridge. His opera *Bliss*, based on Peter Carey’s novel of the same name, for Opera Australia, was premiered at the Sydney Opera House in March 2010. For a full list of Dean’s compositional output, refer to Appendix I on page 52.

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13 ibid.

14 ibid.

15 ibid.
Brett Dean's Sound and Style

As a composer, Brett Dean cannot easily be 'labelled' as belonging to any particular style or genre of composition. He does not strive to achieve an 'Australian' sound in particular, however often composes with techniques and sounds that identify his Australian background. He also incorporates some aspects of his experiences from Germany and his work with the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra into his compositions, especially texturally. Unlike other Australian composers such as Peter Sculthorpe (1929-), or Ross Edwards (1943-), whose music is generally instantly recognisable, Brett Dean's sound is more obscure and its traits are more indistinct.

Dean describes his own style of composition as follows:

traditionalist: I like voices to sing, I like long lines and melodic motivic materials, which have the capacity to include really important DNA information about a piece. It does help the understanding of a piece for an audience who is confronting it for the first time without making it necessarily "easy" I don't believe in doing all this stuff and then saying: 'Well here you are; see what you can make of that!' I want rather to invite listeners into the world of each piece. I try not to use extended techniques unless I feel it is really necessary. I find that much Sixties music (or Sixties-sounding music) was based on trying out the techniques, and this was often it's whole raison d'être. Which is fine – a friend described it as 'interrogating the instrument' – but it's not my world. There's no point getting into a little bit of that; I've also been interested in woodwind multiphonics. I guess that has been influenced by the sampling and layering on the material in the electronic –based pieces; you can also create this weird atmosphere just with instruments. I don't want to do it just for the sake of it. I want to understand how the sounds are made, and why I am using them that particular way.¹⁶

Another feature that has become characteristic of many of Dean's works is the use of a descriptive or emotive title for each piece. Dean's use of such titles is part of his constant endeavour to help find new inspiration for his compositions. He says "They give me a point of reference, a starting point. You must have an idea of what you're trying to

say. Obviously, the process turns to motifs, chords, and technical issues, but you have to start from somewhere.”

Often the title is drawn from artworks by his wife, the artist Heather Betts, examples being *Beggars and Angels* (1999), *Tracks and Traces* (2002) and *Between Moments* (2003). Indeed, Dean often compares his method of composing to that of a painter beginning an artwork; a layering of different sounds as opposed to colours.

My style of composing is not really different from the way she (his wife, Heather) layers things and starts by putting some ‘subliminal’ colours and then builds the canvas on top of that, with figures often creeping through from previous layers of the painting.

Dean’s works can also be motivated by a strong political opinion, or a controversial topic. Many of his pieces are based on the world’s current affairs or environmental issues, such as the *Pastoral Symphony*, which is a representation of the ‘destruction of a life-support system’ through Australia’s forest clearance; *Eclipse* for string quartet, on the topic of the ‘boat people’ immigrants in Australia; and *Ceremonial* for orchestra, which is a personal protest against war and terrorism. These three instances will now be considered in a little more detail. Dean describes his inspiration for the *Pastoral Symphony* as follows;

It came from going back to Australia having this naïve rosy picture from the time I left, when ‘all was still well’. This was not the case at all: Queensland has one of the highest land clearance rates in the world, up there with the Amazon, with bulldozers clearing away the lot. Of course it’s not necessary, even if you want to build a house, and this cost-

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orientated, irresponsible way of doing it, when they get rid of everything
and then put up these Lego block houses, is really quite disturbing.22

Musically, Dean represents his feelings on this matter by gradually shifting the
sounds of the piece, from the opening lush bird calls, to a much more electronic and
machine-like sound. He represents the oppressive sounds of excavation and construction
by using complex sound effects and sound clusters. For the birdsong Dean has not
attempted to re-create the natural sounds with instruments, preferring to use the real thing
and include live recordings of a variety of Australian birds. Dean states;

The danger in doing bird song with instruments is, of course, that you can
end up sounding like Messiaen because he did it so consummately and so
completely. Actually what I've done (in Pastoral Symphony) is use real
bird song; there is nothing like hearing a real Australian magpie or a pied
butcher bird, the real songsters of the world.23

In summary, Dean says ‘This piece, then, is about glorious birdsong, the threat
that it faces, the loss, and the soulless noise that we're left with when they're all gone.’24

_Eclipse_ for String Quartet also has a strong political tie as it was written by Dean in
response to the political and social consequences of the Tampa crisis that took place in the
Indian Ocean in August 2001. This crisis transpired when hundreds of refugees were found
in a life-threatening situation after their boat was damaged in the hazardous ocean between
Indonesia and Australia. They were found by Captain Arne Rinnan of the Norwegian
freighter ‘The Tampa’, whose humanitarian attitude saved hundreds of lives, but Australian
authorities refused to back down on their strict guidelines on illegal immigrants and ‘defied
the United Nations and openly lied about the character and behaviour of those on board.’25
To Brett Dean it seemed that the boat people were ‘increasingly demonised as undesirable
illegals and queue-jumpers’ and that the ‘enormity of their own struggles and fates was


24 B. Dean, ‘Pastoral Symphony’, *Boosey and Hawkes*, http://www.boosey.com/cr/music/Brett-Dean-
Pastoral-Symphony/3968 (accessed 14 January 2010).

entirely eclipsed by the power games of a bigger political agenda’.26 Dean makes a thought-provoking point on the choices made by the government in this crisis in his programme note for *Eclipse*.

The irony of a government turning their backs on the safety and claims of refugee status of people escaping these two countries’ (Afghanistan and Iraq) repressive regimes in August 2001, yet within the space of two years citing the violence, human rights abuses, and terrorist threat of these said regimes to justify being party to coalition invasions to instigate regime change in both countries seems almost to be the product of a bizarre and cynical fiction.27

Although strongly influenced by politics, Dean does not believe he can change world politics through music. He still wishes to be appreciated mainly for the musical material he writes, even though the political themes can be identified in his music, as in the self-proclaimed ‘brooding, troubled and at times aggressive features’ of his work *Eclipse*.

*Ceremonial* is another example of a political influence in Dean’s works. This work was originally conceived as a direct response to the Bali bombings that took place in October 2002. Dean replicated the sounds of the traditional Balinese ceremonies of mourning with tuned percussion, particularly gongs. However, this work began to encapsulate more than just the terror of Bali when the terror in Iraq heightened in early 2003, again, directly influencing Dean’s writing. Dean was walking down a street in his suburb of Melbourne during March 2003, the time of the worsening of Iraqi terror, and was amazed by the number of open churches welcoming in people of all backgrounds and religions to pray for those in need. Dean says that he felt ‘unusually compelled to join them’ in prayer, and was touched by the ‘community’ of the experience.28 Dean completed the final pages of this work as the first bombs fell on Baghdad, and likens this piece to the symbolism of the church, as a ‘space for thought and prayer’, represented by the calm and reflective character of the work.29

26 ibid.
27 ibid.
29 ibid.
Responses to Dean’s Music – Reception of Works

In the last five years Brett Dean’s name and works have become more recognised and grown in popularity due to increasingly regular performances in Australia and Europe. In 2007 Dean’s music was featured in a ‘Dean only’ Festival at the Royal Northern College of Music, including a performance of his Viola Concerto with himself as soloist, *Twelve Angry Men*, and his string quartet *Eclipse*.

Writer and violist Carlos Maria Solare describes Dean’s music as ‘strongly theatrical’ with some ‘purely abstract or sonic elements’ and incorporating many electronic components, influenced by his earlier work in studios. Carlos says ‘he has often strived to achieve a sort of ‘electronic’ music by acoustic means in order to broaden his palette of colours and emotional possibilities.’

Barbara Hebdon, a critic for the ‘Courier Mail’, portrays Dean’s work *Beggars and Angels* as ‘... an exciting soundscape that has a breadth of conception and a unified sense of structure that places Dean at the forefront of 21st century musical creativity.’ It is often Dean’s sense of structure that places him in high regard amidst a sometimes chaotic scene of twentieth and twenty-first century composers. His works are frequently structured in a way fairly typical of composers such as Beethoven, Brahms or even Haydn, with clear cut tempo changes and an expectation of what will be happening along the way. For example, his string quartet *Eclipse* is set up as a single movement, but divided very audibly into three clear sections. The first section is extremely soft, with *pizzicato* strings; the second section is wild and frantic and is subtitled ‘Presto Nervoso’ and includes markings such as ‘brutal aggressive’; the third section is marked ‘Epilogue. Slow and spacious’ and is characterised by a very still and quiet atmosphere.

Dean’s apparent fascination with musical history is also strongly prominent in his compositions. In an interview with Andrew Ford, Dean states opinions on modern music which are somewhat surprising for a composer of today. Unlike many modern composers

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who are intent on creating completely original works, to the point of rebelling against the
traditions of great Masters such as Brahms and Beethoven, Dean often refers to classical
structures and techniques, especially in his management of motivic material. Dean is not
afraid to use quotations from music of the past, and feels that writing music today is still
part of the past, as well as stretching boundaries for the future. Ford affirms this further by
stating that when he listens to Dean's music he can hear that Dean has had such vast
experiences with Bruckner, Mahler, Brahms and Beethoven during his time in the Berlin
Philharmonic that it comes through unintentionally in his style of writing. 33

In contrast to these more favourable accounts of Dean's compositional skills is a
review by Ivan Hewitt, a music critic for the UK 'Daily Telegraph', on Dean's Viola
Concerto (2004). He begins his article by discussing what he believes to be Dean's greatest
attributes, generously praising his 'inventive ear' and his display of the broad capabilities
of the viola as an instrument, before descending quickly into a fairly ruthless assassination
of Dean as a composer. Hewitt states;

What Dean can't do is fashion the kind of musical material that allows for
a genuine developing argument. That was a massive drawback in the long
middle movement, which wanted to be an energetic onrush but just felt
pointlessly busy. I was left feeling that all the tricksy stuff was a fig-leaf
over a lack of real creative personality. 34

However, negative opinions are relatively rare in articles assessing Dean's works.
Meurig Bowen, musical director of the Cheltenham Music Festival and author of the cover
notes for Beggars and Angels, talks of the 'brooding intensity' that is often evident in
Dean's music, remnants of his time in a city like Berlin. 35 It seems that often the sound that
Dean creates is not an intentional 'quote' from his European or Australian experience, but
rather a direct, personal approach to composition that has come unintentionally from his
life experiences. Bowen also discusses the genesis of some of Dean's characteristic
qualities, harking right back to the piece that Dean considers his 'coming-of-age' piece,

33 ibid.

34 I. Hewett, 'From Lyric Nostalgia to Bewitching Innovation', telegraph.co.uk,
http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/music/classicalmusic/3640637/From-lyric-nostalgia-to-bewitching-
innovation.html (accessed 11 November 2009).

35 M. Bowen, 'Beggars and Angels', (CD Cover notes – ABC Classics),
Ariel's Music. She lists these attributes as 'string writing of great personality and effect', 'a strong ability to evoke atmosphere, to draw the listener in'; a compelling sense of drama, of ebb and flow; and, in the very gradual build-up of texture and gathering of ideas along the way, a discernible sense that—in a rather old-fashioned, 19th-century way perhaps—Dean is handling his motivic material with great skill and control. Indeed, when one plays a string piece by Dean, one could sense with no prior knowledge that Dean is a string player, due to idiomatic aspects, however technically challenging.
Chapter Two – The Grawemeyer Award and Brett Dean’s Award-Winning Work

Grawemeyer Award

As noted above, Brett Dean was awarded the Grawemeyer Award for Musical Composition in 2009, and is the first Australian to win this prestigious award, selected in this instance from 145 entries. The Grawemeyer Award was established in 1984 by the University of Louisville and, along with musical composition, is also awarded to outstanding contributions in the fields of political science, psychology, education and religion. It is considered one of the most esteemed awards for composition in the world, and is certainly one of the highest paid awards for music composition, bringing in just over $115,000AUD. The only other award that eclipses this prize money is the Ernst von Siemens Musikpreis, which pays its recipients 200,000 euros. Both have been nicknamed ‘The Nobel Prize of Music Composition’ in various articles, however in reality this is probably more true of the Siemens Musikpreis as it honours the lifetime contribution of a composer, musicologist or performer, whereas the Grawemeyer is awarded for a specific work. The recognition that this award brings places Brett Dean in company with the greatest composers of the 20th and 21st centuries, said Nick Bailey, ANAM’s (Australian National Academy of Music) Artistic Manager. This award certainly places Brett Dean amongst some of the most prominent composers of the 20th and 21st century, including John Adams, Pierre Boulez, Witold Lutoslawski, György Ligeti, Krzysztof Penderecki, Tan Dun and Thomas Adès. For a complete list of previous winners of the Grawemeyer Award, refer to Appendix 2 on page 61. More recently the German composer York Hölker was awarded the Grawemeyer award for 2010, for his composition titled Sphären (Spheres). Notably, this piece was also inspired by literature, and has the sense of nostalgia

40 ibid.
due to its slightly backward-looking musical influences, and an inspiration that was drawn from the four elements from Greek philosophy; air, water, fire and earth.41

Interestingly, a common trait of many previous Grawemeyer award winning works is the concerto genre. In the last sixteen years nine of the sixteen Grawemeyer awards have been given for a concerto, and eight of these are string concertos. The process of selection for the award is long and complex. For the first round, a panel of judges from the University of Louisville School of Music selects a group of semi-finalists from the submissions. The second round involves three judges of international stature with strong interests and knowledge in contemporary music; normally a composer, a conductor and a critic. From this panel, a maximum of nine finalists will proceed to the next round. These judges never meet each other or discuss their choices, and the next round of judges are not even informed of the choices made until they have made their own decisions. The final round consists of seven judges in a lay panel. They are presented with anonymous recordings and programme notes of the finalists, and given two weeks to listen to them and come up with a ranking for the works. The lay panel is made up of a very diverse group, with various occupations, education and training in music, and may not even be professional musicians, though they are all regular concert-goers with a particular interest in new music. The panel must consist of an odd number in case of the need for a tiebreaker and at least one judge must not come from Louisville. The most recent director of the award, Marc Satterwhite, does not re-use a judge for at least five years in the second round of adjudication.42


42 M. Satterwhite, email message to the author, 15 February 2010, ‘Grawemeyer Award’.
Brett Dean’s reaction to winning the Grawemeyer Award

Though known not only as a performer, but as a respected composer, Brett Dean’s reaction to winning the Grawemeyer Award was typically humble. His words were;

The writing of music is a solitary process, and one spends a lot of time immersed in one’s own internal sound world. A prize is an acknowledgement that one’s work is not only being heard, but appreciated in the big, wide world outside of one’s own studio. But I can think of no prize which represents a more significant acknowledgement of this kind than the Grawemeyer Award. To read the names of the awards’ previous winners, and to know that my own work will stand alongside the work of these legendary musicians that I admire so greatly, is a humbling and moving experience.

After winning the Grawemeyer, Dean flew to Louisville to receive the award in person. Whilst he was there, Dean made a video statement at the University of Louisville, which can now be found on YouTube. Dean speaks about the process of writing the work and says that ‘inspiration is the key’ but that it is also ‘a fickle friend’, and that it ‘can lead you to a situation where you’re writing and writing and writing, or it can be more elusive’. Dean also mentions the potential difficulties of writing a commissioned work, saying that the deadline can become either a ‘saving grace’ or ‘incredibly frustrating’. Evidently in this case the pressure of a deadline produced a work that will bring more well-deserved recognition for Dean. He describes the Grawemeyer award as ‘the big one’ and says that ‘to be sitting here in Louisville is one of those moments that any composer dreams about’.

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45 ibid.

46 ibid.

47 ibid.
Reception of the Work

Generally, the reviews of *The Lost Art of Letter Writing* have been favourable. Dean is often praised for his high quality writing for violin and orchestra and his imaginative themes. Of course, the strongest piece of positive affirmation of the work has been the Grawemeyer award itself. There are, however, many articles and critiques that provide a broad spectrum of opinion on *The Lost Art of Letter Writing*.

Marc Satterwhite, director of the Grawemeyer Award and professor at the University of Louisiana made these statements about the work. “It’s a wonderful solo vehicle that also contains terrific writing for orchestra” and “The piece combines the brilliant surface one might expect from a Romantic era violin concerto with enormous emotional range and depth”. 48

In sharp contrast, Jeremy Eichler, writer for the Boston Globe, gave a scathing review on the work on November 3rd, 2007. Even when merely describing each movement briefly, Eichler’s tone is frankly patronising and seems to belittle Dean’s use of the 19th century violin concerto as an influence.

The piece is in many ways an unapologetic throwback to the 19th century violin concerto, with a long high-flown first movement, full of rhapsodic pleading in the violin’s upper registers, a meditative slow movement, a brief and breezy third movement, and a standard virtuoso dash to the finish.49

Later in the critique Eichler is less restrained in his criticism, disapproving of the length of the piece and the musical material, which he believes does not have enough substance to carry the work for its full duration. He does, however, comment on the ‘highly imaginative’ orchestration, an attribute of Dean’s that is often praised by critics and probably comes from his years in the Berlin Philharmonic.

Dean’s writing suggests a fine ear for melody and a string player’s gift for dreaming up virtuoso solo violin lines, but even Zimmerman’s

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impassioned and technically brilliant performance could not give the work much spice colour or punch. The orchestration was at times highly imaginative but the ensemble's overall sound seemed purposefully recessed. A lot might be solved with a good pruning, as the piece currently lacks the musical material to sustain its 35 minutes of length.\textsuperscript{50}

Interestingly, Eichler also criticises Dean's concept of the four movements representing the four excerpts from the letters that are printed at the opening of each movement. He supports his argument that this idea is 'thin' by stating that even the Boston Symphony Orchestra did not feel that it was necessary to print the excerpts in the program so that the audience could read them. The end of the article is a harshly critical summation of his thoughts on the work,

That said, the epistolary conceit also comes off as pretty thin. The BSO (Boston Symphony Orchestra) did not even bother printing Dean's chosen excerpts from the four letters.

Not all premieres can be knockouts, but it's worth stating the perhaps obvious point that between Dean's "Lost Art" and, say, Charles Wuorinen's Eighth Symphony (premiered last season), there is a stylistic gap large enough to drive an orchestra through. One hopes BSO listeners over the course of the seasons will be given enough opportunities to explore the highly worthy middle ground between these two poles.\textsuperscript{51}

Chip Michael, an American music critic, began his review of the work as follows:

Previously, I reviewed the Scottish Premiere of Dean's \textit{Pastoral Symphony} and didn't give it very high marks. I have not heard other works from Mr Dean, so don't feel qualified to comment on his style.

\textsuperscript{50} ibid.

\textsuperscript{51} ibid.
Michael’s non-committal judgements of The Lost Art of Letter Writing and the Pastoral Symphony are difficult to decipher. It is evident that Dean’s music does not strike a chord with him, since he did not even rate Pastoral Symphony highly enough to listen to other comparable works of Dean’s.

As with the Pastoral Symphony, there is liberal use of sliding (glissandi) between notes for the strings. The solo violin does a fair amount of double stopped glissandi in the brief segment available on the internet. While I find the technique interesting, it seems bit overdone for me, returning to the styles of lannis Xenakis. The entire excerpt had that sort of influence.

The glissandi technique that Michael mentions is a significant aspect of much of Dean’s work, but one has the impression that perhaps Michael has only listened to the small excerpts available on the internet, since he seemingly assumes, based on Dean’s previous career with the Berlin Philharmonic, that the string writing must be ‘organic’, even though it is technically difficult. He concludes:

Since Brett Dean is an accomplished viola player, performing with the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra for 15 years, his string writing must certainly be exceptional, extremely technical and yet organic for the instrument. I could not hear the letter it was referring to, nor the entire work, it’s really hard to judge the piece as a whole. For what it’s worth, the judges obviously felt the piece has merit and so congratulations to Brett Dean for this award.52

Unlike the majority of other reviewers of this work, Michael cannot hear the role of the violin as the letter writer. This is in direct contrast with the following review by Ramon Alenjandro Martinez Mendoza, an artist, who rates Dean’s programmatic skills quite highly.

It is not too often that one finds a composer capable of creating music from written letters or one who is able to so successfully convey through music the sensibility expressed in these words. However, Australia has a virtuoso composer and violinist called Brett Dean who has used his talent to do just this. He has created a beautiful composition in four movements

using references about four important characters of the 19th century. And to make it more intense the sounds are produced by the Orchestra of the Australian National Academic of Music and the young Australia awarded violinist Kristian Winther.53

Mendoza also notes the reaction of the entire audience at the conclusion of the performance, reporting ‘The Director Brett Dean and the violinist Kristian Winther are warmly applauded to the point of having to leave and return to the stage four times. They received well deserved praise.’54 A similar reaction was noted by Eamonn Kelly from The Australian; ‘A full house, standing ovation, and deafening applause acknowledged performer, composer and institution’.55 The ‘institution’ mentioned by Kelly is the Australian National Academy of Music, where Brett Dean was, until very recently, the Artistic Director. Dean also receives high praise for his position as a role model to young Australian musicians as one can see from the comments made by Nick Bailey, ANAM’s Artistic Manager; ‘Brett is the perfect role model for young musicians. He is an artist whose music is passionately engaged with the community, and powerfully illuminates contemporary lived experience.’56

In Dean’s case, the prestige and recognition he received from the award gave him an extra boost of political influence in the situation of the National Academy of Music, Melbourne, which had been threatened with closure due to withdrawal of government funding. The English Cultural Commentator Norman Lebrecht was strongly supportive of Dean’s refusal to back down on the matter of the importance of ANAM to young Australian musicians saying ‘Dean, 47, had given up playing viola in Simon Rattle’s Berlin Philharmonic to help raise the next generation of Australian musicians in so-called ‘centre of excellence’. But now a new Labor government, suspicious of elitism, abolished ANAM by order of the arts minister, Peter Garrett, a retired rock singer, for a puny saving of less

54 Ibid.
that US$2 million. On the piece that won Dean the Grawemeyer Lebrecht says 'it looks like turning into a very effective piece of political lobbying. Is the austere government of Kevin Rudd going to sack a man who has just put Australia onto the avant-garde map? Stand by for a smart u-turn.' After an explosion of outrage and protests from students and celebrities, such as Geoffrey Rush, writer Peter Carey, and musicians Richard Tognetti and Simon Rattle, Peter Garrett agreed that ANAM could continue its program for musicians. Interestingly, this announcement was made exactly one week after the Grawemeyer award was announced on December 1st, 2008. Nick Bailey says 'His (Dean’s) vigorous public stand over the past five weeks against the Commonwealth Government’s unceremonious closure of ANAM has provided a powerful example to musicians everywhere – but most vitally to our talented young students – as to how an artistic life should be lived in Australia in the first decades.'

Inspiration for the Work *The Lost Art of Letter Writing*

As with many of his works, Dean has looked for an external source of stimulation to assist in the creation of his violin concerto. In this case his main inspiration came from observing the different aspects of his own daughter’s education, and observing how contrasting the subject matter was to that of his own education. Dean pays particular attention to the large quantity of electronic stimuli in his daughter’s education, and notes, with a slight hint of nostalgia, the seemingly endangered art of letter writing and handwriting. Dean points out in his notes on the work that ‘a recent article in an Australian newspaper points out that the proportion of personal letters amongst the total number of sent articles handled by the national postal authority, Australia Post, has declined from 50% in 1960 to 13% nowadays. Sure, we stay in touch arguably more than ever, via telephone, email and messaging, but that too has undoubtedly changed the nature of


58 ibid.


communicating." In an interview with the Australian composer Andrew Ford, Dean explains that his inspiration for the title of his violin concerto came from - aspects of conversations over a period of some years at our dinner table with my wife Heather and our two girls, talking about aspects of their education first and foremost, and the differences between the groundings of their education in Germany before we moved back to Australia, and the education and aspects of it that they've had in Australia, going through the latter part of primary school and the whole of secondary school. And one of the things we've talked about is a much greater reliance in Australia on IT (information/technology), and what the pros and cons of that are on them as students. Not us being the judgmental parents saying "It was better in our day", but them expressing their gratitude for their early education in Germany, where the old three R's, and in particular, a sense of grammatical foundation, of handwriting as an extension of one's thought process, as being fundamental to why they have a good grasp of two languages and a great sense of grammatical foundation, that they saw around them wasn't really being drilled in that old-fashioned way, let's say. A lack of dictation; to learn how the language is put together by listening to someone who has a mastery of the language and then writing it down. By comparison, a lot of the things here (in Australia) have been of a very creative nature, but without clear, explicit instruction and direction, and perhaps not with the sufficient tools behind it to then embark upon some creative writing project...Often relating somehow to popular culture.

These discussions and differences between educational cultures sparked Brett Dean's imagination and led him to sift through letters from the nineteenth century and base his concerto around this notion of old-fashioned communication. Although Dean still insists that this work is not a 'polemic' about education and principles, it is evident that this was one of the strongest influences for his work. It is interesting to note the difference between the education that Dean's daughters received in Germany compared to their later education in Australia, and the fact that they see the benefits they have over other students.


who have been educated only in Australia. Dean’s ideas on education raise interesting issues about modern education and the importance of the written word. Although dictation and handwriting are now considered less important in the modern education curriculum, being replaced with subjects such as computer skills, Dean raises a valid argument that the absence of these ‘old-fashioned’ skills denies children of the skills to develop the creative side of their education.

It is clear that Dean’s time in Germany had a great impact on his philosophies regarding education, but his time in the Berlin Philharmonic also influenced his style of composition. This becomes evident in the more in-depth analysis of the work later in this thesis.
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Chapter Three – The Lost Art of Letter Writing: Analytical Overview

The Lost Art of Letter Writing – A Brief Overview

As mentioned above, the violin concerto The Lost Art of Letter Writing is a 38 minute work in four movements that was co-commissioned by the Cologne Philharmonic and the Stockholm Philharmonic. The instrumentation is as follows; 3 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets in B flat, 2 bassoons, 4 horns in F, 2 trumpets in C, trombone, bass trombone, tuba, timpani, percussion, celeste, upright piano, prepared grand piano, harp, solo violin and strings. The inclusion of two pianos is an interesting choice of instrumentation and is notable due to the different timbres between the prepared grand piano and the upright piano. Prepared piano was developed by the American composer John Cage, and involves placing objects between the strings of the piano to alter volume, pitch and tone colour. The concerto was first premiered in 2007 in Cologne, with Dean himself conducting the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra of Amsterdam, and Frank Peter Zimmerman, whom the work is dedicated to, on violin. Zimmerman was born in Duisburg, Germany, in 1965 and has premiered many other recently composed violin concertos, including violin concerto no. 3 Juggler in Paradise by the American composer Augusta Read Thomas with the Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France and Andrey Boreyko in Paris in 2009, and the violin concerto en sourdine by Matthias Pintscher with the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra and Peter Eötvös in 2003.

The first movement, titled Hamburg, 1854 refers to Clara Schumann and Johannes Brahms’ secret romance with particular reference to the love phrase from a letter to Clara Schumann by Johannes Brahms.

Would to God that I were allowed this day of writing this letter to you with my own lips that I am dying of love for you.

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The second, named *The Hague, 1882*, relates to an extract from a letter written by
Vincent Van-Gogh, to his friend the painter Anthon van Rappard, detailing his struggle
with life, but also discussing the constant and comforting presence of nature in his life.

My intercourse with artists has stopped completely...All
kinds of eccentric and bad things are thought and said about
me, which makes me feel somewhat forlorn now and then, but
on the other hand it concentrates my attention on the things
that never change – that is to say, the eternal beauty of
nature.\(^\text{66}\)

The third movement is called *Vienna, 1886* and is based on a letter written by Hugo
Wolf to a close friend Josef Strasser detailing his life of suffering.

It grieves me, but I know for certain; that it is my lot to hurt
all those who love me, and whom I love.\(^\text{67}\)

The fourth and final movement is titled *Jerilderie, 1879* and is centred on the
famous manifesto published by the Australian bush ranger, Ned Kelly, which stated his
innocence. This is a short extract from the statement.

I do not wish to give the order full force without giving timely
warning, but I am a widow’s son outlawed, and my orders
must be obeyed.\(^\text{68}\)

Analysis and Relationship to Previous Works

Traditionally the violin concerto is structured in three movements, a moderate to
fast-paced first movement, a slow second movement, and a fast third movement. Dean,
however, has followed some of his more contemporary predecessors, such as Stravinsky
and Shostakovich, and written a four movement concerto. The relationship between the
movements in *The Lost Art of Letter Writing* is unique in that the first, second, and third

\(^{66}\) ibid.
\(^{67}\) ibid.
\(^{68}\) ibid.
movements are all closely linked, whereas the fourth movement stands alone because it is
the only fast movement in the concerto. The first, second and third movements are
comparable in tempi, all reasonably slow-paced, and also in their treatment of melodic
motifs, which will be examined in more detail later in the analysis. Each of the first three
movements features an original motif that is developed throughout the movement. It is
interesting to note that, perhaps by coincidence, the relationship between the lengths of the
movements is the same as Brahms’ Fourth Symphony, with the first movement being the
longest, and the third the shortest, acting as a kind of intermezzo. The third movement of
Brahms’ Fourth Symphony also serves as an intermezzo in 2/4, as opposed to the more
common Minuet and Trio form of a third movement. The first and fourth movements in
Dean’s work certainly feature as the main substance of this concerto, with the second and
third movements echoing the first movement somewhat, in their close tempo relationship
and their similar relationship between the soloist and the orchestra.

The treatment of the solo violin part, and its relationship with the orchestra varies only
slightly during the concerto. In general, the solo violin is very independent, playing the role of the
letter-writer throughout the concerto, and conversing rarely with the different instruments of the
orchestra. On occasion however, the orchestra explores the original violin motif and joins together in
a very rare tutti segment, or else a particular instrument will mimic the violin and provide a
countermelody. In the third movement there is an increase in conversation between the orchestra and
violin part, but it still remains brief. Orchestral tutti only rarely occur within this concerto, in
contrast to the majority of violin concertos. In general, the different sections of a violin concerto are
punctuated by orchestral tutti, such as in Prokofiev’s 2nd violin concerto, or Bartók’s 2nd violin
concerto, however Dean’s violin concerto does not feature the orchestral tutti highly, with only two
clear sections of orchestral tutti in the entire first movement. In general, the role of the orchestra is
more textural and atmospheric than melodic. It features a large amount of trill-like textures of
repeatedly oscillating demi-semi-quavers in ostinato figures. In the first and second movements of
the concerto the major tutti occur directly after a short, cadenza-like passage from the violin. This is
in keeping with many major violin concertos, although the cadenzas in Dean’s concerto are
somewhat lacking in material substance and development of motivic ideas. They serve more as a
bridging passage, with a virtuosic, scale based on an arpeggio, leading to the tutti.

Technically, the violin part is extremely difficult and particularly virtuosic. One of the most
evident characteristics of the concerto is the exceptionally high range of the solo part, which spends
the majority of its time up past fifth position on the E string in all movements, although the third
movement does occasionally offer some respite from the highest positions. This high register does
solve many of the technical issues that composers face when writing a violin concerto in regards to balance issues. Few other violin concertos have such a consistently high violin part. Karol Szymanowski's violin concerti both feature particularly high violin solo parts, but still do not maintain such consistently high registers as Dean's violin concerto. Without amplification other techniques are also employed to ensure that the violin can be heard over the symphony orchestra at all times, such as different dynamic markings between the violin and the orchestra.

Stylistically, the solo violin part is fairly homogenous in the first three movements of the concerto, with a consistently high range, and similar techniques used throughout. A change of style occurs for the final movement, a moto perpetuo, where there is an almost relentless use of spiccato semiquavers. In the premiere recording of the work with Frank Peter Zimmerman there is also a clear tendency towards the use of portamento between notes. Many of these slides are not included in the score and are a stylistic addition that raises some interesting points. Although one might conclude that this is Zimmerman's contribution to the style due to his inclination towards portamento in his other concerto recordings such as the First Prokofiev Concerto, or the Brahms Violin Concerto, Dean worked closely with Zimmerman on this work and clearly approved of his interpretation. Dean also marks in several glissandi, one of the characteristics of many of his works.

Dean's use of extended technique for the solo violin part is surprisingly limited. Harmonics, both natural and artificial, are employed occasionally, as is sul ponticello. These will be specifically identified within the individual movement analysis. It is interesting that Dean has chosen to use such basic and limited extended techniques in his violin part, and relies mainly on motivic development and virtuosity to create contrast in the concerto.

Quotation

Quotation is a feature of many of Dean's pieces, including Carlo and Testament, and he has included many quotations in the first movement of this concerto. As the first movement is based on a letter from Brahms to Clara Schumann, Dean has used quotations from Brahms' Fourth Symphony, and a passage from a more obscure piano piece by Brahms: the 'Variations on a Theme of Schumann'. It is interesting to compare the different ways in which he uses the quotations, some burst out from the music at climactic moments, and some are hidden amongst the texture of Dean's own writing. This will be examined in more detail in the individual analysis of each movement. Dean's use of quotation has often resulted in his
music being labelled as ‘postmodernist’. Dean makes a statement about this label in the recently published book ‘Sounding Postmodernism’ by David Bennett. He says;

In some circles, particularly in Europe, postmodernism tends to carry clearly critical, even cynical connotations. The mere fact that I have used references to, and quotations from, older pieces of music in a few of my own compositions has elicited the dismissive response on more than one occasion: ‘Oh, but that’s so postmodern’. Personally, I couldn’t care less what it is. My use of quotation and collage in this way is a personal reference point within the context of my own musical upbringing; it marks the fact that I went through what was, for me, a vital and formative time in the very conservative atmosphere of a great German Traditionsorchester, the Berlin Philharmonic, which has coloured much of my musical thought in all sorts of ways, both pro and contra.69

The opinions from Dean in this statement also help to prove why it is so hard to pinpoint Dean’s style. Although he uses the quotation device quite regularly in his works, he does not always use the quote with the same function in mind, as seen by his comment ‘Personally, I couldn’t care less what it is’ in the quote above.70

69 D. Bennett, ‘Sounding Postmodernism’, Australian Music Centre (Sydney 2008), 180.
70 ibid.
Chapter Four – Detailed Analysis of Each Movement

I. Hamburg, 1854

Formal Structure and Use of Motif

As mentioned above, the first and last movement of this concerto serve as the two focal points of this work. Formally, the first movement is reminiscent of sonata form and is very heavily based on motivic variations. Apart from the obvious Brahms quotations, which will be discussed later, there are four motifs, each with different original roles, which can be identified in the first movement. For the purpose of this analysis I will title them Motif 1, Motif 2, Motif 3 and Motif 4. The first two bars plus upbeat of the solo violin is the first main motif and is repeated throughout the first movement in many forms and with different instrumental combinations (see Musical Example 1). In the first twenty bars alone this motif is repeated five times by the solo violin, each time in the same key and followed by increasingly complex interludes.

Musical Example 1 'Motif 1' – Hamburg, 1854 – Solo Violin

The second motif occurs in bar 39 and is also melodic in nature. Similarly to the first motif, it is developed throughout the first movement, both in the solo violin and throughout the instruments of the orchestra. The original presentation of the motif is nine quavers long, commencing on the first beat of the bar, however it is displaced with each repeat so that on its second appearance it begins on the final quaver of the bar (see Musical Example 2).
The third and fourth motifs are both ostinato figures that, in their first appearances, serve as textural, accompaniment figures. Motif 3 appears in the second violin and viola part (see Musical Example 3) and is in fact one of Dean’s direct Brahms quotations (from 105th bar of the 2nd movement of Brahms’ Symphony No. 4 in e minor, op. 98). Motif 4 appears in the first and second violins, and is a slight variation on Motif 3, with more rhythmic drive due to the increase in dynamic and the addition of a quaver to break up the rhythm (see Musical Example 4). It is interesting that these motifs later become the main ideas that Dean builds on during the Development section of the first movement, emphasising Dean’s strong interest in the textural elements of composition.

Musical Example 3 ‘Motif 3’ — Hamburg, 1854 — 2nd violins, violas

Musical Example 4 ‘Motif 4’ — Hamburg, 1854 — 1st and 2nd violins
The second subject is an adaptation of the original motifs, and has a much more boisterous, rhythmic feeling. The texture of the second subject is also quite different to the first subject, with no demisemiquaver layer, and a fairly sparse string section accompaniment. An answering call is heard in the first and second horns, and this is the first time that an orchestral part has a featured melody (see musical example 5).

Musical Example 5  ‘Answering Call’ – Hamburg, 1854 - solo violin and horns  56-59

The Development, beginning bar 136, is an interesting adaptation as Dean has primarily developed the accompaniment line from the Exposition, Motif 3 and Motif 4. As mentioned above, Dean has a particular interest in the textural aspects of musical composition, which he believes comes from his experience as a viola player. The solo violin opens the development with an imitation of Motif 3, demisemiquaver passages which are passed throughout the string section. A solo cello accompanies with descending demi-semiquaver fifths marked *flautando, quasi gliss,* and *pppp.* This is to become a feature of the development section and is always moving in a descending motion (see musical example 6). A very similar use of extremely soft, *quasi gliss.* passages based on descending fifths is also used in Dean’s string quartet ‘Eclipse’, although in this quartet the figure is not only used as a descending motif but also in contrary motion within the ensemble (see Musical Example 7).

Musical Example 6  *Hamburg, 1854 – solo cello*  136-137
The Development can be characterised by its hectic, manic mood and the reappearance of Motif 1 in bar 212 depicts this suitably with its $f f f$ marking, the inclusion of accents, and the frenzied $f f$ interludes of demi-semiquaver passages. Suddenly after all this craziness the music seems to die away and we are brought back to a $p i a n i s s i m o$ Motif 1 with the flutes and clarinets. For the first time in the movement Dean has offered a type of resolution to this somewhat questioning motif by giving the solo violin an answering phrase in artificial harmonics (see Musical Example 8)
Disturbing this sense of calm is an underlying demi-semiquaver rumbling variation on Motif 3 in the prepared grand piano. A muted trumpet gives the last rendition of Motif 2 and the movement finishes with a six bar coda.

Quotation

The first movement of Dean's Violin Concerto is the only movement in which Dean has employed the technique of quoting other composers' works. As noted above, Dean has paid homage to Brahms' works by directly quoting from Brahms' Symphony No. 4 in e minor, and Variations on a Theme of Schumann. Interestingly it is not always the melodic elements from Brahms' works that he has borrowed from, but also sometimes the textural aspects. In his recent interview with Andrew Ford, Dean says that texture is the aspect of music that interests him the most, and that his use of Brahms' textural excerpt reminds him of his days in the Berlin Philharmonic. Dean stated;

It was always the texture that fascinated me, being on the inside of that machine. Very much on the inside as the violas have this kind of moodily broken chord; so this diminished chord sort of shimmering with the very fast repeated timpani noise, which, in itself was a very unusual use of the timpani in its time, which either would do big single hits or sort of roll, and to sort of employ a pulse like that was unusual. It sort of hangs in the air, this moment, and so I always thought what would it be like to take this moment and expand on it in a twenty-first century way.  

Dean has cited the viola part with an asterisk and footnote explaining the quote from the Brahms, but has again used this motive in the second violin section, which also has 32nd note oscillations based around a diminished triad (see Musical Example 9)

Musical Example 9  

Hamburg, 1854 – 2nd Violin and Viola

Apart from this quotation at the opening, Dean has only cited one other use of quotation with a footnote, although there are another three sections that seem to have clear Brahms qualities to them. The second acknowledged quotation occurs in the prepared grand piano part at bar 227, just before the recapitulation. Dean has only changed the original score from Brahms' Variation No. 13 from *Variations upon a Theme of Schumann* slightly by doubling the note value (semiquaver original to demisemiquaver in the Dean). He has transposed the original down an octave, and even kept the same form of the original by repeating the first four bars, although with the new note values this means hearing the original four bars repeated four times instead of only twice (see musical example 10 and 11 for comparison).

Musical Example 10 *Variations on a Theme of Schumann* - Brahms 1-4

Musical Example 11 *Hamburg, 1854* – prepared grand piano 227-230

Dean has in fact quoted the first thirteen bars of the original variation with little change apart from his use of the ¾ time signature at the end of his quotation. After this
citation, the upright develops the idea further, but does not directly quote from the original Brahms score.

One can instantly recognise other 'Brahms' moments within the work, even without the help of a score. One in particular practically explodes through Dean’s own music in bar 112, near the end of the Exposition (see musical example 12 and 13 for comparison).

Musical Example 12  *Hamburg, 1854 – strings*  112-114

Musical Example 13  *Brahms Fourth Symphony, 2nd mvmt – strings*  97-101
Andrew Ford describes his reaction to this moment in the interview with Dean; ‘That moment where the Brahms bursts out as though it can’t be contained any longer is incredibly emotional for me listening to it.’ Just as quickly as it burst through, it melts away again, and we are pulled back into the more complex harmonies of the twenty-first century yet again. There are other moments in this movement where Brahms’ music creates a strong contrast to Dean’s own music in the first movement. Although Dean has not footnoted these passages as he has with the first two mentioned, they are clearly taken from Brahms’ Fourth Symphony, as seen in the comparative musical examples below.

The first example here features slightly different instrumentation between the two composers, however the similarities are very apparent. The same excerpt appears twice in the Dean, once in the exposition, and once in the coda. Dean has also used the same accompaniment in the string section (see musical example 14 and 15 for comparison).

Musical Example 14  
*Hamburg, 1854 – clarinets and strings*  
*Coda 261-263*

Musical Example 15  
*Brahms Fourth Symphony, 2nd mvt.*  
*106 – 110*

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Examples 16 and 17, below, differ in small ways. The excerpt from the Dean is a lot more manic, coming from a faster section of the first movement, whereas the Brahms comes from the slow movement. However, there is an unmistakeable reference to Brahms in the Dean; the first and second violins have the same melody, the violas are playing the same double stop triplets, and the excerpt ends with the same cadence, which seems to bring both pieces to a sudden halt. It even appears in the same key so it seems surprising that Dean has not footnoted this quote as he did with the others.

Musical Example 16  
**Hamburg, 1854 – strings**  

Musical Example 17  
**Brahms Fourth Symphony, 2nd mvt. – strings**
Roles of the Violin and Orchestra

As already noted, overall the role of the violin does not shift much between movements. It is clearly the featured instrument of the concerto, as one would expect, however the violin also represents the author of the letter, and Dean has attempted to depict this through the mood and style of writing. As seen in the reviews above, this has been deemed successful by most reviewers, although there are mentions that the role of the violin in the individual letters is not made clear. Dean himself claims that the title, and the use of the letters, only served as a starting point to the concerto, and it is not always his intention to make his inspirations clear through the music itself.

The solo violin does not begin until the upbeat to bar six where it takes the role of letter writer. It is marked piano, dolce, plaintive, wistful and is the only instrument with a legato melody at this time. Dean has made an effort to depict Brahms’ personality in this movement by recognising Brahms’ somewhat guarded personality, and the fact that this letter was quite restrained. In fact, it has never been proven that Brahms and Clara Schumann’s affair was consummated, and many commentators suggest that their love was in fact unrequited. Dean has endeavoured to portray this longing, especially through the yearning sounds of the solo violin. Overall there is a lack of rhythmic pulse in this opening, giving the solo part a sense of rubato and the accompaniment, a type of underlying shimmering. The orchestral tuttis are particularly rare in this concerto and really only occur three times during the whole first movement, with two of these being quotes from Brahms. Similarly, Dean does not make complex use of the sections of the orchestra in that he has not created countermelodies, and there is only rarely a particular group within the orchestra that projects through the texture.
II. The Hague, 1882

Formal Structure

The form of the second movement is much less complex than the first and last movements, despite being of comparable length. It consists of an introduction (1 – 11), Section A (12 – 41), Section B (42 – 73), Section C (74 – 95), the return of Section B (96 – 105), and then a short coda (106 – end). The introduction is marked broad, and spacious, and is played by tuned gongs, and con sordino strings holding tied semibreves marked with a fermata. Section A features one of the recurring melodies of the movement, which is based around B and A sharp (see musical example 18).

Musical Example 18

The Hague, 1882 solo violin

The accompaniment here consists mainly of drawn out chords in the percussion and string section, although in bar 17 to 22 the flute and piccolo play a pianissimo countermelody. Section A also includes a double stop section in the solo violin part marked still, pensive, though flowing somewhat. The grouping and pitch of these double stops gives a timeless atmosphere to the section, not only due to the changing metre, from 6/4 to 4/4, then 3/2 and 7/4, but also because the high point of the double stops does not always occur on the downbeat of the bar. The texture is thickened here with the addition of the flutes and clarinets holding sustained notes marked ethereal. Section A is concluded with another statement of the opening violin melody which becomes more agitated and grows in dynamic until the downbeat of the B section, which introduces a new theme in the solo violin.

Section B is a lot more agitated and frenzied than A, especially in the accompaniment. The melody presented by the violin is based around descending, rocking triplets. Most notable is the accompaniment in the prepared grand piano and celeste, which are both playing consistent sequences of arpeggios, the celeste in demi-semiquaver quintuplets, and the prepared grand piano in straight demi-semiquavers. Throughout the
entire Section B there is constant demi-semiquaver action in at least one section of the orchestra. Another feature of Section B is the orchestral tutti, which is one of the most powerful sections in the entire work and definitely the climax of this movement. It is based on the opening violin melody of section A and features the entire horn section, plus the first violins in unison for three bars (see musical example 19).

Musical Example 19  

The Hague, 1882 - horns and first violins  54–56

The trumpets then expand on this melody, joined by the clarinets and oboes, until the climactic moment at bar 65, where the cymbals crash and the dynamic begins to diminish gradually towards the next section. From the chaos of the demi-semiquavers, and the long, held trills in the winds and percussion, emerges the very ordered and comforting sound of an arpeggio from the solo violin, introducing the calmer Section C.

Section C is very similar to Section A in mood and atmosphere, but takes a little from the melodies of Section B as well as the opening melody of Section A, along with some new melodic material. At the opening of Section C the flute and clarinet play a countermelody against the solo violin, whilst the harp creates an ethereal mood with the arpeggio-based semiquavers. The celeste imitates sections of the violin melody, but also features a rhythm that sounds like it belongs more to the fourth movement than the second due to its repetitive semiquaver patterns and use of syncopation (see Musical Example 20).

Musical Example 20  

The Hague, 1882 – celeste and harp  80–83
From bar 96, which is the return of Section B, the triplet melody is reintroduced, this time with quite a contrasting mood, marked 'slow and spacious, with delicate intimacy' as opposed to the marking 'emphatic, pleadingly' of the original presentation.

The coda consists of six bars that build gradually, layer upon layer, on the simple major sixth interval presented by the second cor anglais and two viola solos (see musical example 21). The solo violin entry is marked with the word 'luminous'.

Musical Example 21  *The Hague, 1882* flutes, cor anglais, vln, vla

Programmatic Elements of *The Hague, 1882*

Compared to all the other movements of this concerto, this movement seems to provide the most programmatic elements, and adheres closely to the original letter as the source of inspiration for the music itself. The letter excerpt that Dean has chosen to include in the score is bittersweet. Van Gogh writes 'all kinds of eccentric and bad things are thought and said about me, which makes me feel somewhat forlorn now and then, but on the other hand it concentrates my attention on the things that never change – that is to say, the eternal beauty of nature'. This desired mood is achieved through the use of many different descriptive markings on the score, such as *flautando, con sordino, sul tasto* and *ethereal*. More than that though Dean has added a few less common effects to create the type of internal angst that Van Gogh seems to have been feeling at the time he wrote this.

73 B. Dean 'The Lost Art of Letter Writing', *Boosey and Hawkes* (score).
letter. In some ways he has done this by including instruments that are not commonly used, such as the Rainmaker, which is featured for four bars and gives the dreary effect of a wet, winter’s day. On more occasions it is not the choice of instrument, but the way in which the instrument is used that creates the mood. In bar 21 and 22, for example, the bass clarinets hold a pianissimo, multiphonic chord which sounds very sinister due to its otherworldly timbre. Above this, in the piccolo part, they are instructed to ‘bend off note, like a sigh’. This is used a few times during the movement, sometimes with a slightly different marking such as ‘slow gliss, like a sigh’ at bar 84 in the second violins. This creates an almost human aspect to the sound of the instruments and adds to the programmatic value in the movement.

Another method that Dean has employed occurs in the middle section of the movement, at bar 54. Starting with the violas, then second violins, then first violins followed by the cellos, the string section plays short, repetitive groups of demi-semiquavers with uncoordinated accents between each section (see musical example 22).

Musical Example 22  

This motif is marked ‘ff, aggressive, molto agitato’ and due to its rhythmically random quality, it gives the effect of chaos in nature. This could either be seen to represent Van Gogh’s declining mental state, or perhaps the beauty and rawness of nature, as discussed in the letter excerpt.
III. \textit{Vienna, 1886}

Formal Structure

\textit{Vienna, 1886} is the shortest of the four movements and the simplest in form. At just under four minutes in length, it functions as an intermezzo amongst three longer movements.\textsuperscript{74} There are no clear sections that exist within the movement apart from an introduction, coda, and main body. Unlike the other three movements which have quite static, atmospheric introductions, the introduction of \textit{Vienna, 1886} contains melodic material played by the flutes, piccolo and clarinets. This melody is repeated in the second half of the movement. The violin part has a \textit{rubato} feel to it, and is quite drawn out in many places. Double stops are also a common feature in the solo violin. There are no points of \textit{climax} until the last four bars of the movement where the solo violin hits a high D at \textit{fortissimo, non diminuendo} and holds this for the entire four bars. This climactic ending is heightened by the fact that the solo violin has finally reached the higher register, a register that is more familiar to the other movements of the concerto.

Instrumental Relationships

Instrumentally, the harp and the prepared grand piano are featured highly, with the harp playing almost the whole movement without rest and doubling the opening flute melody. Although the violin part is still very soloistic, it is accompanied by a denser accompaniment than the other movements, with comparatively more orchestral tutti, especially considering its short length. This is also highlighted by the much lower register for the solo violin, meaning that the part is not as strongly projected and sits within the texture of the orchestra more audibly. In fact, the solo violin does not even venture to the E string until bar 28. Dean has instructed his wish for the opening 27 bars to be played in a higher position on the lower strings, giving it a darker sound overall.

One of the features of the movement are the markings in string section. There is only one bar in the entire movement where the strings are not instructed to play with a technique that changes the tone colour of their instruments. In the rest of the movement there is a large amount of \textit{pizzicato, col legno tratto, col legno battuto, sul ponticello, molto}

flautando, sul tasto, and artificial harmonics. This enhances the eeriness and depressive nature of Hugo Wolf’s letter.

Programmatic Elements

This movement is based on a letter that Hugo Wolf wrote to his friend Josef Strasser with the depressing subject of the pain that Wolf believes he brings to all those who he loves. Overall this movement is a lot slower and the violin part is more wistful and reflective than the other movements, which represents the tone of the letter.

One Venezuelan artist, Ramon Alejandro Martinez Mendoza, has written an article on the programmatic elements in the concerto and says of the third movement; ‘Existential problems unresolved are capable of making one rave and Hugo Wolf was full of this happenstance.’75 The abovementioned use of timbre changing markings such as col legno, sul ponticello, and pizzicato help to create this depressive state as it takes away the lush, rich sound that is usually associated with a string section, and replaces it with a harsher, unfamiliar sounds associated with these techniques.

IV. Jerilderie, 1879

Form and Motivic Treatment

The fourth movement of this concerto serves as the only fast movement, with a moto perpetuo mood forged by almost constant semiquaver use throughout the whole movement. Overall, the form is based around the classic Rondo form, where the principal theme is alternated between one or more themes. In this case the recurring theme, which for the purposes of this thesis we will title section A, is presented by the solo violin from bar one and in fact consists of three smaller motifs (see musical example 23, 24 and 25).

Musical Example 23  Motif 1 - Jerilderie, 1879

Musical Example 24  Motif 2 - Jerilderie, 1879

Musical Example 25  Motif 3 - Jerilderie, 1879

These three motifs can be identified as one section representing the A section as they are so closely related and are often linked and presented as a combined theme (see musical example 26 and 27).
Section B is characterised by a legato melody in the time signature of 5/8, accompanied by a contrasting string section playing rhythmic pizzicato marked secco, and echoed by the flutes playing the legato melody, one tone lower and one bar later. Dean has specified the groupings of 5/8 that he desires by writing either (2+3) or (3+2) above the score. The A section that follows between bar 86 and 188, consists of the three short motifs listed above, but also features a lot more activity in the orchestra than any other movement. There are a couple of distinguishing features of Section C, as it highlights some of the more unusual string techniques. The section begins with finger replacement shifts on one note in the solo violin, which gives each note a ‘timbre change’ effect, as specified in the score (see musical example 28).
The violinist must play the note with the 2nd finger, then 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 3rd and so on, which also gives a slight bending of the pitch due to the almost impossible technical feat of covering the shift noise in between the notes. One can assume that Dean knew this and intended for this to happen. A direction is also given for this section to play 'with an unexpected and somewhat eerie sweetness'. Another distinguishable feature of Section C is Dean's use of artificial harmonics, which will be discussed further, during the comparison between Dean's string quartet Eclipse and the violin concerto. Section C ends with a fairly robust, rhythmic orchestral tutti, with descending piccolo and flute scale passages, followed by a quiet, restless bridging passage, before bursting back to Section A in bar 322. A Coda section of twelve bars ends the movement with the whole orchestra.

Comparison of Eclipse String Quartet and Jerilderie

When listening to Dean's works one begins to recognise certain characteristics that he employs across a few of his works. The middle section of 'Eclipse' for String Quartet, which serves as a fast second movement, has many similarities to the fourth movement of the violin concerto. It is interesting to look at the different ways in which Dean has incorporated his ideas into both works in different ways. The tempo marking of the middle section even bears a resemblance in its wording to the fourth movement of the violin concerto; 'Fast, flighty, shadowy' for the violin concerto compared to 'Unlikely flight. Presto nervoso' for the string quartet.

The first shared material occurs in bar 29 of the fourth movement of the concerto and bar 267 of 'Eclipse'. This excerpt is also Motif 2 from the above analysis of Jerilderie, 1879 and is rhythmically almost identical to the Eclipse first violin part, as well as being very similar in pitch. Certainly the boisterous, quirky mood of the motif is identical in each example (see musical example 29 and 30 for a comparison).
The legato melody of Section B in *Jerilderie, 1879* is another concept that was used by Dean in *Eclipse*. Both examples of these melodies are in irregular time signatures, giving the melody a slightly stilted, unnatural flow; *Jerilderie, 1879* in 5/8, and *Eclipse* switching between 6/16, 5/16, and 7/16. Both melodies have a rhythmic accompaniment that allows the legato melody to project and stand out from the texture.

Dean's use of triplets is a common feature in both works also, particularly in the lilting rhythmic pattern of quaver then semiquaver. A remarkably similar comparison exists between bar 161-162 of the solo violin in *Jerilderie, 1879* and the first violin part of *Eclipse* in bars 106 – 107 (see musical example 31 and 32 for a comparison).

Artificial harmonics are also used by Dean in both the works, although a lot more extensively in *Eclipse* than *Jerilderie, 1879*. In some cases the use, especially the rhythm, is extremely alike. For example, this is a comparison of the solo violin part during Section C, and the viola and cello part near the beginning of the second movement of *Eclipse* (see musical example 33 and 34).
Musical Example 33  
*Jerilderie, 1879 - solo violin*

Around this same section in both works more rhythmic comparisons can be made between the first violin part of *Jerilderie, 1879,* and all the instruments of *Eclipse* (see musical example 35 and 36). The use of triplets as a *moto perpetuo,* or *Presto* section seems to be a common theme in both works, and can possibly be identified as one of Dean's traits.

Musical Example 34  
*Eclipse - viola and cello*

Musical Example 35  
*Jerilderie, 1879 - 1st violins*
Style and Programmatic Elements

The overall style of the final movement of 'The Lost Art of Letter Writing' is clearly the most contrasting movement stylistically. It is a restless and fast-paced moto perpetuo, in comparison to the slower, less rhythmically driven first, second, and third movement. It is interesting to note that the inspiration for the first three movements is European, compared to the Australian, Ned Kelly influence of 'Jerilderie' and this is evident in the style of the composition. In the aforementioned article, Mendoza writes 'The audience feels as if somebody is escaping. A prisoner is being hunted. Who is this person? He is Ned Kelly, the heroic Australian bushranger.' The idea that somebody is being chased is evident in the moto perpetuo style of the piece, however there are more programmatic elements to this movement. Even the directions throughout the movement seem to represent aspects of Australian lifestyle and wildlife, such as 'stark, tense' in bar 256, and 'raw' in bar 213. Secco, meaning 'dry', is also used as an instruction on multiple occasions and this seems to be a particularly good descriptor of the Australian landscape, as opposed to the lush, Romantic melodies used earlier in the work to represent the European landscape. Towards the end of the movement the build up towards the more climactic moments suggest the inevitable capture and death of Ned Kelly.

Conclusion

The life of Brett Dean has been one of diversity and great achievement and this can be reflected, in one way, by his vast output of successful works. Today he can arguably be considered one of Australia’s most successful composers, especially in the international composition scene. This is displayed by the array of awards and praise that he has received both in his home country, and around the world. At the forefront of these awards is the University of Louisville’s Grawemeyer Award, which he was awarded for his complex and technically brilliant violin concerto, *The Lost Art of Letter Writing* in 2009. Not only did this award offer Dean prestige and fame, but it also gave him a monetary award that he could use to save his Australian National Academy of Music from being eliminated, a type of institution that is really too rare in Australia.

Nobody seems to like labelling Brett Dean’s sound, and this seems to be because he doesn’t particularly like labelling himself either. Unlike other Australian composers such as Peter Sculthorpe, whose seagull effect has become almost a trademark, and Ross Edwards’ use of chant-like dances, Dean does not have a signature sound. His diverse sources of inspiration allow his music to transform dramatically from piece to piece. Although Dean claims that he does not wish to change the world with his political inspirations, the variation of influences and the stories that are attached to his works creates an entertaining and thought-provoking sideline to each work.

*The Lost Art of Letter Writing* has received much acclaim since it was written in 2006. Apart from the recognition offered by the Grawemeyer Award, there has evidently been praise from critics both in Australia and around the world, as seen in the newspaper articles and reviews included in the thesis. The topic that the title stems from strikes a chord with many people, who agree with Dean in his regret that the human race is gradually moving away from the written word, and more towards the less creative form of technology-based writing. In more cases however, the critics did not praise the programmatic concept of the piece, but the compositional creativity and the complex, but still accessible, writing for the different orchestral instruments.
Through the analysis of this concerto, this thesis provides a deeper insight into an award-winning work by an Australian composer whose works have only really surfaced in the last fifteen years. The thesis also gives the reader a better understanding as to how the piece is structured, not only as individual movements, but also within the four movement framework. More than this, it examines how *The Lost Art of Letter Writing* fits into the context of the entire body of Dean's compositional output. Although the piece is based on an extra-musical subject, like many of Dean's works, it retains its individuality through its medium, the violin concerto, and its unique programmatic inspiration.
Appendix 1

Brett Dean’s Works

ORCHESTRAL

Beggar’s and Angels full orchestra (1999), (26 mins.)

Scoring


Scoring for Full Orchestra

2(II=picc).afl(=picc).2.heckelphone(or corA ad lib).1.bcl.dbcl.3.dbn-4.4.3.1-timp.perc(3):I=3roto-toms/crot/TD/SD/t.bells/marimba/xyl/cyms; II=7tuned gongs/2tam-t(med,lg)/chin.cym/4susp.cym/SD; III=4tom-t/lg BD/2susp.cym/chin.cym/SD/vib/steel drums-harp-strings

Scoring for reduced orchestra

2(II=picc).afl(=picc).2.corA(=heckelphone ad lib).1.bcl.dbcl.2.dbn-4.4.3.1-timp.perc(3):I=3roto-toms/crot/TD/SD/t.bells/marimba/xyl/cyms; II=7tuned gongs/2tam-t(med,lg)/chin.cym/4susp.cym/SD; III=4tom-t/lg BD/2susp.cym/chin.cym/SD/vib/steel drums-harp-strings

Three Memorials for orchestra i. Dispersal, ii. Ceremonial, iii.Komarov’s Fall

(2001/03/06), (20 mins)

**Dispersal** first part of the orchestral triptych *Three Memorials* (2001), (5 mins)

Scoring

3(I,II,III=picc).3(II=corA).3(II,III=bcl).3(III=dbn)-4.3.picc.tpt.3.1-
timp(=whip/tamb).perc(3):I=xyl/vib/glsp/2tgl/lg BD; II=marimba/crot/brake dr/tamb/piece of corrugated iron; III=SD/4susp.cym/sizzle cym/2TD(or low tom-t)/2bongos/pedal 

BD/tam-t/t.bells-harp-pft-harmonium-strings

**Between Moments** for full orchestra (2003), (6 mins)

Scoring

2(II=picc).1.corA.0.0-3.1.3.0-perc(3):l=vib/sm tam-t(or gong)/sm susp.cym/glsp;

II=cym/lg tam-t/lg susp.cym/glsp; III=BD/med susp.cym/field dr/glsp-harp-pft-strings

**Ceremonial** second part of the orchestral triptych *Three Memorials* (2003), (8 mins)

Scoring


II=vib/crot(2octaves)/gongspiel/tuned gongs(F2,G2)/seed-rattle; III=marimba/bass 

marimba/tam-t/2chin.cym/3susp.cym(lg to med/sm); IV=marimba/lg chin.tom-t/2tom-
t(med,high)/2bongos(high)/2tgl(sm)/3Peking opera cym(sus)/harp-cel.pft-

strings(min.14.12.10.8.6; 2nd vln desks 3-6 also play perc:sm bells/sleigh bells/house keys/sm containers of stones/toy bells etc.)

**Moments of Bliss** for orchestra and electronics (2004), (25 mins)

Scoring

4(IV=picc).3(III=corA).4(II=Ebcl,III=bcl,IV=dbcl).3(II=whirly tube,III=dbn)-4.3.3.1-
timp.perc(4):l=vib/SD/sizzle cym/tgl/3gongs/7cowbells; II=lg tam-t/5tom-
t/3bongos/5susp.cym(incl.1sizzle cym)/whip/marimba(shared with IV)/glass 

chimes/tamb/tuned gong/whirly tube; III=sm tam-t/xyl/glsp/SD/lion's roar/4t.bells/tuned 

gong; IV=BD/marimba/full drum kit/glsp/2tgl/1crot/tuned gong-2harp-elec.git-
pft(=cel).MIDI kbd(using Ableton LIVE via Mac computer)-strings(16.14.12.10.8; principal 
1st vln=elec.vln; 2vln/vla/vlc=whirly tube; 1 female 2nd vln="Wheel of Fortune"; all 
vlc/db require a medium soft timpani stick)
Komarov's Fall third part of the orchestral triptych Three Memorials (2006), (7 mins)
Scoring
2.2picc.3.cor.A.2.Ebcl.bcl.2.dbn-6.3.2.btrbn.1-timp(=whip).perc(5):l=marimba/BD/alu-foil;
II=xyl/glsp/5wdbl/3tom-t/crot(2octaves)/alu-foil; III=glsp/1crot/susp.cym/hi-hat/SD/sand
paper; IV=vib/tam-t/alu-foil; V=tuned gongs/SD/med chin.cym/thundersheet/alu-foil-
2harp-cel-strings

Parteitag for orchestral groups and video (2004/05), (11 mins)
Scoring
GROUP 1:1.1.1.bcl.1-2.0.picc tpt.2.1-perc(2):vib/glsp/crot(2octaves)/med tam-t/very sm
susp.cym//4tom-t/SD/pedal BD/5susp.cym(1crash,1ride,1med chin.cym,1lg Peking opera
cym,1sizzle.cym); GROUP II:1.1.0.Ebcl.dbcl.0.dbn-2.0.picc tpt.1.btrbn.1-
perc(2):glsp/5tuned gongs(D1,E-flat1,G-flat1,B-flat1,E-
flat2)/SD/pedalBD/4susp.cym(1crash,1ride,1lg chin.cym,1med Peking opera cym)/lg tam-
t/rain maker//1small susp.cym/steel drums(2pans, chromatic from E2 to
C#4)/crot(2octaves); GROUP III:4antiphonal tpt(placed singularly, separately and
antiphonally, equidistant from the other groups); GROUP IV:timp.perc(1):glsp/4tom-
t/SD/BD/pedal BD/4susp.cym(1crash,1ride,1sm chin.cym,1sm Peking Opera cym)/sm tam-
t-MIDI kbd(4loudspeakers)-strings(min.14.12.10.8.6); oboists and members of the string
section also play 4 plastic whirly tubes and 6 empty wine glasses of differing sizes (with
thin tgl beaters)

Testament for orchestra (2008), (14 mins)

CONCERTO

Ariel's Music solo clarinet and orchestra (1995), (25 mins)
Scoring
3(II,III=picc).2.0.3(III=dbn)-4.2.2.1-timp.perc(3):l=4susp.cym/4tom-t/4wdbl/tabor(or lg
SD)/2tgl(sm,lg)/ratchet; II=4tom-t/t.bells/BD/SD/tam-t/glsp/whip/susp.cym;
III=4susp.cym/crot/tamb/5tom-t-harp-pft(=cel)-strings(min.12.10.8.6.5)
**Viola Concerto** (2004), (27 mins)

Scoring

3(I,III=picc,II=picc,afl).2(II=corA).2(II=bcl).2(II=dbn)-3.2.2.1-timp.perc(3):I=vib/5tom-t/SD/vibraslap/2tgl/sandpaper; II=xyl/sm tam-t/3chin.cym/5susp.cym/BD/tamb/5tuned gongs/3crot; III=marimba/crot(2octaves)/wdbl/tpl.bl/chin.cym/rg tam-t/cowbell/whip-harp-cel-pft-strings(12.10.8.6.5)

*The Lost Art of Letter Writing* for violin and orchestra (2006), (38 mins)

Scoring

3(I,III=picc,II=afl).2(I,II=corA).2(II=bcl).bcl.2(I=dbn)-4.2.ttrbn.btrbn.1-timp(=sm bells,toy bells etc).perc(4):I=marimba/steel dr/3susp.cym/med water gong/sm bells/toy bells etc; II=marimba/steel dr/3susp.Chin cym/sm tam-t/2tgl/rain maker/TD(or lg tom-t)/sm bells/toy bells etc; III=vib/glsp/3susp.cym/sizzle cym/tam-t/4tuned gongs/water gong(med-sm)/sm bells/toy bells etc; IV=glsp/crot(2octaves)/tamb/1tuned gong/sm water gong/BD/pedal DB/4tom-t/SD/hi-hat/t.bells/sm bells/toy bells etc-harp-pft(prepared)-upright pft(=cel)-strings(14.12.10.8.6)

*The Siduri Dances* for solo flute and string orchestra (2007), (10 mins)

*Songs of Joy* for baritone and orchestra, music text by Amanda Holden (2008), (20 mins)

Scoring

3.2.3.2-4.2.3.1-timp.perc(3)-harp-elec.git-strings

**CHORUS AND ORCHESTRA**

**Bell and Anti-Bell** chorus and orchestra (2001), (14 mins.)

Scoring


**Vexations and Devotions** for SATB choir children’s choir and large orchestra, Michael Leunig, Dorothy Porter, additional texts compiled by the composer (2005), (35 mins).
Scoring
2(II=afl).picc(=af1).2.cor A.2.bcl.dbcl.2.dbn-4.3.2.btrbn.1-timp(=1susp.chin.cym).perc(3):
l=vib/glsp/5t.bells/SD/hi-hat/BD/2tom-t/1susp.chin.cym/tam-t/wdbl;
ll=crot(2octaves)/gongspiel(1octave:C3-
C4)/BD/bongos/tamb/rainmaker/1susp.cym(sm)/flexatone; III=marimba/glsp/tom-
t/susp.cym/mark tree/whip/flexatone-2harp-pft(=cel)-MIDI kbd(+sound engineer)-
strings(16.14.12.10.8; min.14.12.10.8.7); 2bn also play mouth organs; members of the
choirs also play 6 tuned bells, 4 water gongs and 5 alu-foils

OPERA

Bliss opera in three acts (2004/6-07/09) (150 mins)
Scoring
Major roles: 3S,M,3T,2Bar,BBar; minor roles: 2S,T,Bar; dancers; chorus (up to 48 voices);
orchestra (mid-sized, between triple and double winds); On-stage: cl, vln, git, upright
piano; elec.vln; electronics (only in part of the piece)

CHAMBER ENSEMBLE

Wendezeit for five violas (1988), (5 mins)

Some birthday... for two violas and cello (1992), (14 mins)

Night Window for clarinet, viola and piano (1993), (22 mins)

Twelve Angry Men for twelve cellos (1996), (18 mins)

Voices of Angels for violin, viola, cello, double bass and piano (1996), (26 mins).

Night's Journey for four trombones (1997), (12 mins)
Carlo
Music for strings and sampler (1997), (21 mins)
Scoring
strings(8.0.3.3.1)-sampler (also: version for strings and live chorus)

Three Pieces for Eight Horns (1998), (14 mins)
Scoring
three- and four-part treble choir

Winter Songs for tenor and wind quintet, music text based on poems of e.e. cummings, (2000), (26 mins)
Scoring
fl(=picc,afl).ob(=corA).cl(=bcl).bn-hn

Etüdenfest for strings and piano (2000), (10 mins)
Scoring
pft-strings(9.0.3.3.1)

Pastoral Symphony for chamber orchestra (2000), (17 mins)
Scoring

Game Over for instrumental soloists, string orchestra and electronics (2000), (13 mins)
Scoring
c1(=bcl)-elec.gtr-perc(1):sus.cym/tom-t/chin.cym/2tam-t/SD/hi-hat/pedal BD-pft-elec.vln.vlc.db-strings(min.4.4.3.3.1)-multi track tape-CD player

Huntington Eulogy for cello and piano (2001), (15 mins).

Testament for twelve violas (2002), (14 mins)
Scoring
2(I,II=picc).2.2.2-2.2.0.0-timp(=lg susp.cym)-strings (All string players require an additional bow without any traces of rosin on the hairs.)

*Shadow Music* for chamber orchestra (2002), (21 mins).

Scoring
2(I,II=afl,II=picc).2(II=corA).2(I,II=bcl).2-2.2.btrbn.0-timp(=tamb/chin.cym/tpl.bl/BD).perc(1):vib/tom-t/tgl/wdbl/SD/talking dr/BD/susp.cym/chin.cym/tam-t/maracas/whip/glsp/crot-harp-strings(min.10.8.6.4.2; 3vlnI also play water gongs and susp.cym; 2vlnII also play bowed crot)

*Buy Now, Pay Later* Dean/Freedman, for voice and ensemble, music text by Tim Freedman (2002), (7 mins)

Scoring
perc(1):SD/2tom-t/3susp.cym/hi-hat/pedal BD/tam-t(or deep gong; much of perc part ad lib)-pft-strings(1 2nd vln plays 2t.bells)

*Die Fledermaus* Strauss/Dean, arrangement for octet (date unavailable), (8 mins).

Scoring
cl, bn, hn, 2 vln, vla, vc, db

*Eclipse* string quartet (2003), (20 mins)

*Water Music* for saxophone quartet and chamber orchestra (2004), (28 mins).

Scoring
soli ssax,asax,tsax,barsax; tpt-perc(4):I=tam-t/vib/timp/susp.cym(sm,lg)/glsp/SD/BD/tuned gong; II=tam-t/sizzle cym/sm susp.cym; III=crot/sm bells/med susp.cym/mark tree/med thundersheet; IV=crot/sm bells/lg susp.cym/lg thundersheet(all perc play water bowls in different sizes and water gongs)-pft(=MIDI keyboards)-strings

*Short Stories* Five interludes for string orchestra (2005), (12 mins)

*Prayer* for solo piano and speaking part, text by Michael Leunig (2005), (3 mins)
Recollections for ensemble (2006), (14 mins)
Scoring
0.0.1.0-1.0.0.0-perc(1):BD/Pedal BD/3tom-t/SD/tam-t/4susp.cym/vib/3tuned
gongs(Bflat,B,C1)-pft-strings(1.0.1.1.1)

Poems and Prayers for mezzo-soprano and piano, music text by Michael Leunig, (2006), (15 mins)

Sparge la morte for solo cello, vocal consort of five voices and tape, after Gesualdo’s madrigal, music text from Gesualdo’s madrigal of the same title, from his 4th book of madrigals (2006), (14 mins).

Wolf-Lieder for soprano and ensemble, music text by Emanuel Geibel, Hugo Wolf, Jana de Boniface, Charles Bukowski, Paul Heyse (2006), (22 mins)
Scoring
1.1.2.1/1.1.1.0/2 perc, hp, pno/ strings

Polysomnography for piano and wind quintet (2007), (17 mins)
Scoring
fl.ob.cl.bn-hn-pft

Dream Sequence music for ensemble (2008), (16 mins)
Scoring
1=vib/crot(2octaves)/BD/tgl(sm)/sandpaper/lg sheet of newspaper(susp);
II=marimba/SD/4tom-t/4susp.cym/sizzle cym/tam-t/rainmaker-harp-pft(=cel)-
strings(1.1.1.1.1)

SOLO INSTRUMENT

Intimate Decisions for solo viola (1996), (10 mins)
Hundreds and Thousands for five-track tape, musical text by Alistair Noon (1999), (39 mins)

Three Caprichos after Goya for solo guitar (2003/04), (5 mins)

Demons for solo flute (2004), (7 mins)

Equality for solo piano with speaking part, text by Michael Leunig, (2004), (3 mins)

CHORUS

Katz und Spatz for eight-part mixed chorus, text by Sophia von Wilcken, and excerpts from Adolf Hoffmeister’s libretto for Hans Krása’s opera "Brundibár" (1999/2002), (8 mins)

Tracks and Traces four songs for children’s choir, based on texts by indigenous Australians, music text by Ernie Dingo, Debby Barben, Grandfather Koori, Michael Leunig (2002), (9 mins)

Now Comes the Dawn for mixed chorus (2007), (3 mins)

Scoring
treble I/II, alto, tenor, bass; may also be performed by SSATB choir
APPENDIX 2  Previous Grawemeyer winners

2010 – York Köller

"Sphären"

2009 - Brett Dean

"The Lost Art of Letter Writing," a four-movement concerto for violin and orchestra by Australian composer Brett Dean, earned the 2009 University of Louisville Grawemeyer Award for Music Composition.

2008 - Peter Lieberson

"Neruda Songs"

2007 - Sebastian Currier

"Static"

2006 - György Kurtág

"Concertante Op. 42"

2005 - George Tsontakis

"Violin Concerto No. 2"

2004 - Unsuk Chin

"Concerto for Violin and Orchestra"

2003 - Kaija Saariaho

"L’amour de loin"

1992 - Krzysztof Penderecki

"Adagio for Large Orchestra"

1991 - John Corigliano

"Symphony No. 1"

1990 - Joan Tower

"Silver Ladders"

1989 - Chinary Ung

"Inner Voices"

1988 - No Competition

The Grawemeyer Award In Music Composition was not awarded for 1988.

1987 - Harrison Birtwistle

"The Mask of Orpheus"

1986 - Gyorgy Ligeti

"Etudes for Piano"

1985 - Witold Lutoslawski

"Symphony No. 3"
APPENDIX 3
Brett Dean’s Personal Programme Notes on the Work

‘Not only is letter writing becoming a lost art, but one could argue that handwriting itself is an endangered skill. Aspects of my daughters’ education, in particular its heavy reliance on electronic stimuli, have reinforced my view that we are genuinely losing touch with the tactile element of written communication. A recent article in an Australian newspaper points out that the proportion of personal letters amongst the total number of sent articles handled by the national postal authority, Australia Post, has declined from 50% in 1960 to 13% nowadays. Sure, we stay in touch arguably more than ever, via telephone, email and messaging, but that too has undoubtedly changed the nature of communicating.

These were then the initiating thoughts behind my Violin Concerto, ‘The Lost Art of Letter Writing’, co-commissioned by the Cologne Philharmonic and the Stockholm Philharmonic for the esteemed soloist Frank Peter Zimmermann, to whom the work is dedicated with my great admiration. Each movement is prefaced by an excerpt from a 19th Century letter of one kind or another, ranging from private love-letter to public manifesto. Each title refers to the place and year the letter was written. The violin plays the alternate roles of both an author and a recipient of letters, but perhaps more importantly, the solo part conjures something of the mood of each of the different letters.

The first movement “Hamburg, 1854” refers to one of classical music’s great secret romances, that between Johannes Brahms and Clara Schumann. The music itself relates to aspects of Brahms’s own works: the unsettled, 32nd note oscillation in the opening bars, for example, comes from a moment in the slow movement of his Fourth Symphony – an orchestral texture that has always particularly intrigued me. This forms an undulating background upon which the violinist enters the scene as letter writing protagonist, spinning an impassioned and involved missive to an unrequited love. Part of Brahms’ early “Variations on a Theme of Schumann” also weaves its way into the movement.

The second movement, “The Hague, 1882”, is a broad, prayer-like slow movement, and takes its cue from a line from a letter of Vincent van Gogh, reflecting upon the eternal beauty of nature as being a constant in his otherwise troubled and notoriously unstable life.
The third movement, "Vienna, 1886", is a brief intermezzo, a fleshing out of a movement from my recent song cycle entitled *Wolf-Lieder*. It is a setting of an excerpt from one of Hugo Wolf's letters to a close personal friend, again a frank outpouring from a life of affliction.

The final movement finds its inspiration in the famous "Jerilderie Letter" of the Australian bushranger, Ned Kelly. Kelly wrote this letter in the small rural town of Jerilderie in 1879 as a public manifesto in order to articulate his pleas of innocence and desire for justice for both his family and other poor Irish settlers in the North-East of Victoria in the days of colonial Australia. Here the music takes on the character of a desperate 'moto perpetuo', hurtling through passages of considerable virtuosity, but always reflecting the sense of impending catastrophe inherent in Kelly's famous document.  

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Scores


