

THE VIOLIN WORKS OF DOUGLAS LILBURN

by

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ABSTRACT

Douglas Lilburn (b. 1915) is considered New Zealand's foremost composer. He has written in a wide variety of genres ranging from symphonic music to chamber music to electronic works. He has received numerous awards and honors and is recognized for his important role as an advocate for composition in New Zealand.

This paper, which was presented in the form of a lecture-recital, is concerned with the six major works for violin, with particular emphasis on the later works: the Sonata for Violin and Piano (1950), the *Salutes to Seven Poets* (1952), and the Duos for Two Violins (1954). While the sonata and the duos are performed frequently, the *Salutes to Seven Poets* have not been published and have, to date, received only a few performances. This work, a series of eight short movements which attempt to give "a generalized impression of the work and personality" of seven New Zealand poets, was performed in the lecture-recital. The work deserves programming as a fine example of New Zealand composition.

This study begins with background and biographical information and, after a brief survey of the early violin works, focuses on the musical language and structure of the three later compositions. Sources used for this paper include musical scores (including copies of unpublished manuscripts obtained by permission of the composer), sound recordings, published biographical information, the transcript of an interview and two theses.

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Douglas Lilburn was born in 1915, into a New Zealand society with a very limited view of music. The role of music was, by and large, entertainment rather than sophisticated art. The most common forms were those popular in the mother country, Britain: in particular, brass bands, choral music, and the domestic piano. During Lilburn's childhood recorded music began to become available, and attitudes slowly started to change. New Zealand music was still largely dominated by Britain, however, and anyone who wanted to study past a certain point was forced overseas, usually, as in the case of Lilburn, to London.

Until Lilburn returned from England in 1940 there had been no real tradition of composing in New Zealand. The artistic community of poets and painters in Christchurch, with which he felt much in common, was beginning to break its cultural ties with Britain. In music, however, there was no precedent as in the other fields, and Lilburn had to begin his own tradition of New Zealand composition.¹

In his search for a personal musical language Lilburn looked to many sources. Certainly much of his early music owes something to other composers, especially Vaughan Williams and Sibelius, but the work of his contemporaries in other New Zealand arts was very influential. In

¹ For a more detailed discussion of the musical scene in New Zealand at this time see the Preamble to Philip T. Norman's *The Beginnings and Development of a New Zealand Music: the Life and Work (1940-65) of Douglas Lilburn* (Ph.D. Thesis. University of Canterbury, 1983), 26-32.

particular Lilburn had a close association with a number of poets throughout his composing career, and many of his works involve New Zealand poetry in some way. The other major influence on Lilburn was the New Zealand landscape which surrounded him and from which he drew inspiration. In his 1969 lecture entitled *A Search for a Language*, he quotes the New Zealand artist Toss Woolaston: "International influences may give our work manner, environment should give it character."² Lilburn's ability to meld these many elements successfully into a cohesive language of his own has resulted in a wide-ranging and influential output, thought by many to exhibit a national identity. He has long been considered New Zealand's foremost composer.

Douglas Lilburn was born on 2 November 1915 at "Drysdale," the family station near Hunterville, in the North Island of New Zealand.³ After attending local primary schools he was sent to board at Waitaki Boys' High School at Oamaru, in the South Island, from 1930-1933. For a 14-year-old intellectual from a somewhat sheltered background, the highly-disciplined atmosphere of the school must have come as quite a shock. During his first week he was caned for using a piano out of hours!

² Douglas Lilburn, *A Search for a Language* (Wellington: Alexander Turnbull Library, 1985), 12.

³ Biographical information is taken mainly from John M. Thomson's *Biographical Dictionary of New Zealand Composers* (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 1990) and *The Oxford History of New Zealand Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991).

However, while there he took piano lessons and became interested in composing.

In 1934 he enrolled at Canterbury University College in Christchurch, the largest of the South Island cities, where he studied history, journalism, and music. His musical training was overseen by Dr. J. C. Bradshaw, whose strict instruction in harmony, counterpoint and orchestration was perhaps less inspiring for the young composer than the outlook of a group of poets and artists who were living in Christchurch at that time. In 1936 Lilburn entered his tone poem *Forest*, the first of his works inspired by the New Zealand landscape, in a competition sponsored by Percy Grainger. It won the first prize of £25, and its first performance by the Wellington Symphony Orchestra in May 1936 received encouraging reviews.

In 1937 Lilburn moved to England to continue his education at the Royal College of Music in London, studying composition, mainly with Ralph Vaughan Williams, as well as piano and conducting. Lilburn was strongly influenced by the older composer, and the two developed a lifelong friendship. London provided many new experiences for Lilburn-- he was surrounded by experienced and highly-trained students and was able to hear performances by some of the world's finest musicians. He worked hard during his time in England and won several prizes at the Royal College of Music, including the Hubert Parry Prize for Composition,

the Cobbett Prize for String Quartet writing, the Foli Scholarship, and the Ernest Farrar Prize.

On his return to New Zealand in 1940, Lilburn found that he had won three of the four music prizes in the Centennial celebrations and was nationally recognized. After working for nine months on his sister's farm in Taihape, he briefly guest conducted the NBS String Orchestra. He then moved back to Christchurch, where he remained until 1947.

These years in Christchurch proved fruitful for Lilburn as a composer. He also took students, did some conducting and broadcasting, and wrote criticism for the *Press* in 1943-44. He was part of a rich cultural scene, surrounded by poets, writers, and painters such as Denis Glover, Allen Curnow, Rita Angus, and Ngaio Marsh. His work at this time with the English violinist Maurice Clare resulted in his first three major works for violin and piano: Sonata in E flat (1943), Sonata in C (1943), and *Allegro Concertante* (1944, revised 1945).

In 1947 he was composer-in-residence at the first Cambridge Music School, where he worked with many destined to become the leading figures of the next generation of New Zealand musicians. It was here also that he gave his important talk, *A Search for Tradition*, in which he discussed the possibility of developing a New Zealand musical style.

In March 1947 Lilburn moved to the capital city, Wellington, as a part-time tutor at Victoria University. Here again he enjoyed a close

association with local poets. The move coincided with the first concerts of the newly-formed National Orchestra based in Wellington. During the next few years he produced Symphony No. 1 (1949) and Symphony No. 2 (1951). The second symphony can be seen as the culmination of this period which reflects the influence of Vaughan Williams and Sibelius. He also studied the music of Hindemith, Bartók, Copland, Stravinsky and the Second Viennese School, as a way of building his technique. It is from the end of his first period that his last three major compositions for violin date: the Sonata for Violin and Piano (1950), *Salutes to Seven Poets* (1952), and Duos for Two Violins (1954). His second period covers most of the remainder of his pre-electronic works. An overseas trip to the United States, England, and Europe in 1955-56 helped to encourage a more abstract style of composition. This is evident in Symphony No. 3 (1961), his last work in a traditional European style.

In 1963 Lilburn was promoted to Associate Professor and after another overseas trip, this time to Toronto, London, and Darmstadt, began experiments with electronic music. This exploration eventually led to his establishment of an Electronic Music Studio at Victoria University in 1966. The following year the first facsimile scores of New Zealand compositions were published by the Wai-te-ata Press Music Editions at Victoria University, a press established by Lilburn.

Two years later he was awarded an Honorary Doctorate from Otago University, where he presented his Open Lecture, *A Search for a Language*, in which he discusses the changes in the music and musical environment of New Zealand over the past quarter of a century. In 1970 Lilburn was promoted to Professor with a Personal Chair in Music and appointed Director of the Electronic Music Studio. In 1978, the Composers Association of New Zealand (CANZ) presented him with its Citation for Services to New Zealand Music, and in 1980 he retired from Victoria University as Professor Emeritus. Since his retirement he has worked closely with the Archive of New Zealand Music, which he was largely responsible for establishing in 1974. He was awarded the Order of New Zealand for Services to New Zealand in 1988. Douglas Lilburn's importance in the New Zealand music scene has not only been as a composer, but also as an advocate for the rights and recognition of all New Zealand composers.

Lilburn wrote six large-scale works for violin as well as a number of smaller pieces. These smaller works, written in the 1940s and 50s, include three *Canzonettas* for violin and viola, incidental music to *Hamlet* for three violins, and eight sketches using serial techniques for various small combinations of string instruments (written at Tanglewood in 1955 while studying with Roger Sessions). In addition there are the better-known *Three Songs for Baritone and Viola*, from 1958. There are also several

chamber works involving the violin, including numerous works for string orchestra, a string quartet in E minor and other works for string quartet, and a string trio.

The six large-scale works for violin can be divided into two groups: the first group includes the Sonata in E flat and the Sonata in C, both from 1943, and the *Allegro Concertante* written in 1944 and revised in 1945; the second group includes the Sonata for Violin and Piano (1950), the *Salutes to Seven Poets* (1952), and the six Duos for Two Violins (1954). The first three works were written during Lilburn's time in Christchurch and are generally more traditional in form than his later violin works. It is interesting to note that all his solo and chamber music from this period is for strings, surely due in part to the presence of several fine string players in the area at the time.

The Sonata in E flat was first performed by Vivian Dixon, violin, and Anthea Harley Slack, piano, in Christchurch on 3 April 1943. The work is in three movements. The first is an expansive "Allegro" in sonata form. The second is a very chromatic slower movement, and third is an episodic movement entitled "Rondo."

Lilburn's Sonata in C was written for violinist Maurice Clare and pianist Noel Newson, who gave the first performance of the work in Wellington in 1943. The sonata was later extensively reworked, with a change in movement order and a new last movement. The revised

sonata is in four movements. First is a clear and melodic sonata form. Next is a fairly brief Scherzo and then an Andante. The last movement is an energetic Allegro.

The *Allegro Concertante* is a one-movement virtuosic piece for violin and piano. It was written in November 1944 for Maurice Clare, violin, and Frederick Page, piano. Following the first performance it was revised considerably. The work is less conventional in form than the two early sonatas and exploits several techniques not found in the composer's earlier violin works. It employs a rhythmically asymmetrical ostinato-like idea in the piano which recurs later in the work. There is a cadenza for violin. Several idiomatic techniques are used in the violin part, such as *glissandos* (including a difficult passage of *tremolando glissando* in thirds), a wide range of double-stops, double trills, and natural and artificial harmonics. Although the violin in this piece has the dominant role, the piano in fact presents much of the most important material.

While these three early works certainly have their merits, it is the later works written in Wellington in the early fifties that I will focus on here. In them Lilburn explores some less traditional forms which are generally more concise. Perhaps more immediately obvious is his increased and expanded use of rhythmic complexity and greater range of harmonic techniques. Many aspects of his early style, however, remain recognizable, including the use of certain favorite rhythmic gestures, but it

is really an increase in his repertoire of expressive devices that has occurred rather than an actual change in his means of expression.

The Sonata for Violin and Piano of 1950 is probably the most frequently performed New Zealand sonata for this combination of instruments. It was written for two well-known and active musicians, the English violinist Ruth Pearl, and pianist Frederick Page, the Professor of Music at Victoria University, who gave the premiere together in Wellington in 1951. It was published by Price Milburn in 1973. The instruments are treated as equal partners with long soaring melodies in the violin balanced with Lilburn's new harmonic richness in the piano.

The work is in one movement consisting of five sections arranged in an arch form--slow, fast, slow, fast, slow--with many cyclic elements giving a strong sense of unity. In particular the opening chorale played in the piano (example 1, mm 1-8) reappears in the final section, providing a very clear sense of return. This feeling is heightened by the fact that the violin's obbligato line that accompanies the restatement of the chorale is also taken from material that appears in the first section (example 2, mm 44-49). The combination of these elements is an example of the way in which Lilburn achieves a unified form (example 3, mm 325-334).

Ex. 1. Sonata (1950), mm 1-8

Molto moderato ♩ = c. 66

p *mf* *mp*

Ex. 2. Sonata (1950), mm 44-49

dim. *p* *p*

48 49

Ex. 3. Sonata (1950), mm 325-334

Tempo I, Tranquillamente $\text{♩} = \text{c. } 63-66$

The musical score is presented in three systems. The first system (mm 325-326) shows the beginning of the piece with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The second system (mm 327-330) continues the piece with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The third system (mm 331-334) continues the piece with a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic. The score features a distinctive rhythmic motif consisting of a double or triple-dotted note followed by a 32nd or 64th note upbeat moving to the next beat.

One should note in all of these examples a distinctive rhythmic gesture consisting of a double or triple-dotted note followed by a 32nd or 64th note upbeat moving to the next beat. This figure, which appears first in the chorale, is the principal rhythmic motive of the work and is found in four of the five sections. Motivic development rather than the development of whole phrases is one of the most important features of Lilburn's compositional approach here and occurs far more frequently

than in the earlier violin works. On the other hand Lilburn builds some very long melodies in the violin part, and in fact this sonata contains some of the longest lines in any of his violin works.

The *Salutes to Seven Poets* was composed in 1952 as incidental music for a poetry reading at the University of Auckland. The poets saluted were Rex Fairburn, Keith Sinclair, Allen Curnow, Michael Joseph, James Barker, Kendrick Smithyman, and Ronald Mason. Violinist Antonia Braidwood and pianist Donald Bowick played the premiere. Lilburn received no commission and paid most of his own expenses. As he was not told exactly which poems were to be read, Lilburn attempted to give a "generalized impression of the work and personality of each poet, as an introduction to his reading."⁴ The result was eight short movements, one for each poet, and a brief Epilogue. Due to the limited opportunities for publication at the time, the music was put away in a drawer until thirty-six years later, when it was recovered by violinist Dean Major, who recorded it with pianist Rae de Lisle for Radio New Zealand. It remains unpublished.

The forms of the eight movements are all rather traditional; three are through-composed, two are in an Introduction and Allegro format (in both cases the Allegro is in a simple ternary form), and the remaining

⁴ Douglas Lilburn, Transcript of Radio New Zealand broadcast of *Salute to Seven Poets* in 1989 (Alexander Turnbull Library, MS Papers 4276, Folder 1), 1.

movements are based on two or three short ideas. The overall impression is a group of contrasting but well-balanced pieces.

In some movements cohesion is achieved by combining elements of previous sections in the final section, as in the third movement where a distinctive chord containing a tritone is taken from the opening and presented alongside a passage of parallel harmonies from the second section. In addition, melodic ideas from both sections are juxtaposed near the conclusion.

There is little relationship between the movements because they are each intended to portray a different poet. However, the work as a whole is given some sense of unity in the final "Epilogue," which recalls the introduction to the first movement by quoting the opening motive (example 4, mm 1-8), in the same key and slightly revised form, in the final measures of the work (example 5, mm 17-23). In addition, there is a reference to this idea in the principal motive of the seventh movement (example 6, mm 1-4).

Ex. 4. *Salutes to Seven Poets, I*, mm 1-8

Largamente *1st ed.*

p *mf* *mp*

mf *mp*

Ex. 5. *Salutes to Seven Poets, VIII*, mm 17-23

mp *cresc.*

mp *cresc.*

L */ 32*

Ex. 6. *Salutes to Seven Poets*, VII, mm 1-4



The Duos for Two Violins, composed in Wellington, were dedicated to Ruth Pearl and Jean McCartney, who gave the first performance on 3 September 1954 at Victoria University. They were published in a facsimile version of the original manuscript by Wai-te-ata Press in 1985. The role of the two instruments is equal with only one exception in the fourth duo where the second violin plays various accompanying figures and is muted throughout. Otherwise the instruments share the same material and register, with the parts crossing frequently.

Like the *Salutes to Seven Poets*, there is no real overall structure; each of the six movements is self-sufficient. On the other hand the consistency of the composer's language gives a sense of unity among the movements, with many common gestures and ideas appearing throughout. The last duo also returns to the opening movement's tonal center of B. The duos utilize fairly traditional structures, with four of

them in some kind of ternary form and the others using various compositional techniques such as canon and motivic development.

Although Lilburn approaches the violin primarily as a melody instrument, he also makes great use of many of its other qualities. An evolution in his writing for the instrument can be seen throughout his violin works. In his earlier works he often exploits the extreme high register of the violin, but later this occurs only occasionally. There are only a couple of very high passages in the Sonata (1950) and the *Salutes to Seven Poets*, and none in the duos--in fact neither part in the duos ever ventures above a'''.

In the early works there are several instances of perhaps unnecessarily difficult double-stops (for example the first main gesture from the scherzo of Sonata in C, and certain passages in the *Allegro Concertante*), but the quality of chord writing in the later works, particularly in the duos, is excellent. Aside from a couple of passages in the Sonata in E flat and the *Allegro Concertante*, the use of thirds and sixths is usually for harmonic color rather than virtuosic effect. Lilburn is particularly fond of the interval of a perfect fifth on the violin and uses it to create very effective sonorities, especially in the Duos. It should be noted that, although his use of fifths and octaves often results initially from his harmonic language, which employs numerous bare, open-sounding sonorities, he also seems to be particularly interested in the

timbre of these intervals when played on the violin. Other unusual examples of double-stop technique used for purely timbral reasons are the unison passages that appear in the *Allegro Concertante* and a similar one in the *Salutes to Seven Poets*.

Extended passages in octaves appear in several of the violin works, although later they tend to be confined to a more comfortable register than in some earlier cases. Throughout the works lyrical octave passages are often used to heighten intensity in dramatic situations, or to create fuller and richer colors, especially when they appear in the middle range of the instrument. Octaves are also used very effectively to add weight and drive to many of the rhythmic passages.

Certain techniques appear only in earlier works, such as the use of artificial harmonics (Sonatas in C and E flat), *tremolo* (briefly in the *Allegro Concertante*), *glissando* (Sonatas in C and E flat, and the *Allegro Concertante*), double trills (*Allegro Concertante*), and various special bow strokes such as up-bow *staccato* (Sonatas in C and E flat), and *ricochet* (Sonata in C). Lilburn's use of idiomatic techniques seems less experimental in the later works, and although an occasional new technique appears, such as *sul ponticello* in the Sonata (1950), he seems to have largely decided which effects he prefers and how to use them convincingly.

Lilburn uses other interesting effects. In the "Ballad" movement of *Salutes to Seven Poets*, strummed pizzicato chords echoing rolled chords in the piano are perhaps reminiscent of a folk guitar. His use of certain coloristic devices is often very imaginative, such as the indication to play on specific strings to emphasize the phrases of the chromatic violin line in the middle section of the Sonata (1950). Although he has used this technique before (for example in the *Allegro Concertante*), this is one of the most effective examples. Interestingly, the only instance of the use of a mute in any of these works occurs, as already mentioned, in the second violin part of the fourth Duo.

Just as Lilburn views the violin primarily as a melody instrument, his treatment of the piano in these works is largely harmonic. It is the range of techniques he uses for presenting the harmony that is sometimes more interesting than the harmonies themselves. Throughout his works for violin and piano certain figurations appear, such as arpeggiated runs that outline a particular chord or progression. In the first section of the Sonata (1950) there is a passage of this kind in the piano that outlines the B-flat Lydian mode (mm 23-32). Then, in a following section there is an extended pandiatonic area with descending arpeggiated figures throughout (mm 61-70). This sort of writing in the piano is usually accompanimental, with melodic material in the violin.

Another common treatment of harmony in the piano is rhythmic, often occurring in faster sections. Again this is usually accompanimental, often with a lyrical melodic line in the violin supported by the piano both harmonically and rhythmically. The gesture is often syncopated or accented in some way, especially in areas where the harmony is static, a common feature of much of Lilburn's music. Of course, other more traditional accompanimental figures appear too, for instance in the opening measures of the Sonata in E flat, where the tonic chord is outlined in regular sixteenth notes below the lyrical violin part. Sometimes a motive will appear only in the piano part and may be treated almost as an ostinato, as at the beginning of *Salutes to Seven Poets* (example 4). This also occurs at the opening of *Allegro Concertante*. A similar role is sometimes played by the piano in the presentation of chorale-like material, as at the beginning of the Sonata (1950) (example 1) and in the slow movement of the Sonata in C.

Although there is little change in Lilburn's idiomatic use of the piano from the early works to the later ones, some techniques only appear in the earlier works. Long trills are featured throughout the Sonata in E flat, and also occur to a lesser extent in the *Allegro Concertante* and the Sonata in C. His use of trills in the later works is far more economical. Another interesting technique appearing in the *Allegro Concertante* is the

glissando. A particularly unusual case is the pentatonic *glissando* on the black keys that occurs in the third movement of the Sonata in E flat (m 18).

Although the works for violin and piano show perhaps more of a tendency towards simple homophonic textures, Lilburn does use a range of contrapuntal techniques, especially in areas of heightened musical tension. He is fond of imitation between voices, and this is often the basis for extended polyphonic passages. In fact, most of the third duo is canonic, although the bitonal relationship of the voices is less traditional.

Imitation is often used to help build intensity, sometimes in combination with increased harmonic tension, as in the following example from the climax of the second movement of *Salutes to Seven Poets* (example 7, mm 13-17).

Ex. 7. *Salutes to Seven Poets*, II, mm 13-17



Lilburn's harmonic language is diverse. It is perhaps in his use of harmony, more than any other musical element, that he is most eclectic. An evolution in Lilburn's harmonic vocabulary can be clearly heard in his

works for violin. The language of the *Sonata* (1950), for example, is more complex, with a wider range of harmonic color, than that of the earlier sonatas. And he uses new resources in both the *Salutes to Seven Poets* and the *Duos*. However, certain characteristics are evident in the harmonies of many of his works. Lilburn's basic harmonic language is diatonic and modal, with a tendency toward bare, open-sounding sonorities.

If we look again at the opening measures of both the *Sonata* (1950) (example 1) and *Salutes to Seven Poets* (example 4), we are able to see some typical characteristics of Lilburn's harmony. Both excerpts are strictly diatonic and modal, and both are almost static in harmony. In the first example we see a modal passage (B Aeolian) with a largely tertian harmonization. This is also a very common trait in the music of Lilburn's teacher, Vaughan Williams. Both composers frequently accompany a modal melody with traditional triadic harmonies. The octaves in the left hand of the piano give Lilburn's familiar bare harmonic effect. In the example from *Salutes to Seven Poets* an even more open sonority results from the quartal writing. In this case a tonal center around A is obvious, but the exact mode remains unclear. The avoidance of both the third and sixth scale degrees results in a pentatonic outline. This practice of initially revealing only the outline of the mode and then gradually expanding it is also very common, especially in the later works for violin.

Lilburn sometimes makes a major feature of a harmonic resource, as in a series of dissonant chords in the piano part that appear several times in the Sonata (1950). They first occur following the opening chorale, and serve as an introduction to the violin line. The return of the chords in the slow middle section (example 8, mm 150-158), as well as helping to unify the work as a whole, also set the mood (Lilburn described these chords as “icicles”).⁵

Ex. 8. Sonata (1950), mm 150-158

Tempo primo, largamente ♩ = c. 60

150 8 *pp*

8

156 *cresc.*

⁵ The composer gave this description to pianist Margaret Nielsen, who made the first recording of the work with Ruth Pearl.

The chords in the right hand consist of a major triad with an added half step below the third. This kind of dissonance resulting from a minor second is a common feature in Lilburn's later violin works. In this example the chords descend by fixed intervallic succession within a single octatonic collection until measure 156, where they then ascend, again by fixed intervallic succession, this time using all the notes of a chromatic scale. (N.B. the C natural in measure 152 is a misprint. It should be a C sharp.⁶)

Two favorite techniques are employed here. First is the use of a distinctive scale, in this case the octatonic collection (a symmetrical scale consisting of alternating whole and half steps). Lilburn makes use of this particular resource several times in the sonata, perhaps most remarkably in the fourth section, where the violin plays long running passages above a syncopated piano accompaniment. The violin line only occasionally departs from the octatonic collection, and then only briefly. In addition to the octatonic collection and a wide variety of modes, Lilburn sometimes uses other scalar resources in his violin works. The whole-tone scale, for example, is used briefly for its effect in a short ascending passage in the second Duo. In the third Duo Lilburn uses what is for him an even more unusual harmonic practice. Most of the movement is bitonal, with the

⁶ This is the opinion of the author. The octatonic collection used here does not include a C sharp. If this passage is compared with the earlier statement at measure 21 it can be seen that the C sharp is then included in the key signature.

two lines a half step apart for much of the time, until finally agreeing on a unison A at the final cadence.

The second important feature of example 8 is the technique of planing (the parallel movement of a chord or a group of notes). Lilburn also uses this device frequently in the *Salutes to Seven Poets*. Another impressionistic influence can be seen in the Sonata (1950). Several extended passages in the second section are pandiatonic (that is, diatonic but without a clear tonal center). In this case the passages give a sense of having less focus and direction, and act as a foil to the more rhythmic and articulated sections that surround them.

A sonority that occurs repeatedly in the later violin works of Lilburn is the dissonance of the tritone. This interval is particularly important in the *Salutes to Seven Poets*, where it is used often, either as a means for increasing tension, or as a feature, as at the beginning of the third movement, where it appears in the piano part as a kind of introductory motive (example 9, mm 1-5).

Ex. 9. *Salutes to Seven Poets*, III, mm 1-5

Largo. e mesto $\text{♩} = 44$

An important aspect of Lilburn's harmonic language is his treatment of major cadence points. Certain types of cadences appear often. The planing cadence is one of these, and is used particularly effectively at the conclusion of the Sonata (1950) (example 10), where the chords are adjusted tonally, resulting in cross relations and ambiguous chord qualities. This sense of uncertainty is heightened by the lowered seventh in the violin part leading to the tonic with a Picardy third in the piano.

Ex. 10. Sonata (1950), mm 353-358

Another example of an harmonically ambiguous cadence can be seen at the conclusion of the second movement of *Salutes to Seven Poets* (example 11). Here the final E major chord is approached from the enharmonically spelled submediant chord that contains both a raised and a lowered third (F natural and F flat spelled as E natural).

Ex. 11. *Salutes to Seven Poets*, II, mm 24-28

A particularly characteristic feature of many of Lilburn's cadences is the melodic movement from scale degree 5 to 4 to 1, which often translates into the chord progression V to IV to I. In example 12 we see the final cadences of the second and sixth Duos, which share many similarities. First, the descending lines both include this scale degree

movement. In the second example a clear chord progression from V to IV to I can be seen. Another feature of these cadences is the bare final sonority of the perfect fifth, which, as we have already seen, is a favorite of Lilburn's.

Ex. 12a. Duos for Two Violins, II, Final Cadence



Ex. 12b. Duos for Two Violins, VI, Final Cadence



These cadences are also related in another important respect, that of rhythm. Both use a rhythmic cell consisting of one long and two short notes; in the first it is an eighth note followed by two sixteenth notes, and in the second it is the opposite, two sixteenths followed by an eighth note.

While these are not particularly unusual rhythmic patterns in themselves, they appear so frequently and prominently in Lilburn's music that they become a defining feature of it. In fact it is often hard to make a distinction between the cells as important unifying material, versus an inherent part of Lilburn's personal musical language. The rhythms appear throughout the Sonata (1950) and are distinctive elements in several important motives.

The first of these rhythmic cells, for example, is used as a feature of a passage which acts as a bridge between the third and fourth sections of the Sonata (1950), (example 13a, mm 193-95). It appears in canon between the two instruments in conjunction with another common rhythmic characteristic, the syncopation. It also bears a resemblance to an earlier double-stop figure in the first section (example 13b, mm 35-36), which uses the same rhythmic cell.

Ex. 13a. Sonata (1950), mm 193-195

The musical score for Example 13a consists of two staves: a violin staff (top) and a piano staff (bottom). The key signature is G minor (one flat) and the time signature is 3/4. The violin part begins with the instruction 'sul pont.' and a dynamic marking of 'mp'. The piano part begins with a dynamic marking of 'mp'. Both parts include the instruction 'cresc. e poco accel.'. The violin part has a fermata over the final measure. The piano part has a fermata over the final measure. The key signature has one flat (Bb) and the time signature is 3/4.

Ex. 13b. Sonata (1950), mm 35-36

Lilburn sometimes develops these cells, for instance by lengthening the long note and abbreviating the short notes, or by replacing the two short notes with a triplet, or some other modification. The cell is varied but still recognizable because of the context in which it is used. Other rhythmic gestures are also developed in this way. The “hiccup-like” gesture in the opening chorale (example 1), seems to be closely related to a grace note figure that appears throughout the first section of the sonata. This kind of “organic” development of ideas provides a natural unity to the music.

Lilburn’s treatment of rhythm and meter is often quite complex in his later works for violin. While the earlier works employ all sorts of lively and sometimes intricate rhythmic figures, they are usually metrically predictable. In the Sonata (1950) there is experimentation with displaced beats and even a short passage in 5/4 (mm 97-104), which is one of the earliest instances of an asymmetrical meter in his works for violin. In the opening section of the fifth movement of *Salutes to Seven Poets*,

Lilburn uses dual time signatures to allow a natural flow between duple meter (6/8) and triple meter (3/4). The groupings alternate every few measures. Related material is presented in the following section, first in 5/8 time and then in 6/8. Duo IV, on the other hand, has no time signature at all, and barlines are placed according to rhythmic groupings with the indication “light and rhythmic: mark the groups”. In some cases in his later violin works, Lilburn clarifies the note groupings by the use of beams.

Another method used by the composer to create metric ambiguity, especially in slower movements, involves the placement of various parts of a chord. In example 6, from the beginning of the seventh movement of *Salutes to Seven Poets*, the lowest note of the chord in the left hand of the piano is placed as an upbeat, with the rest of the chord on the following down beat. In addition the violin line begins on the weakest beat. Notice also in this example the dual time signatures, which allow for the duple grouping in the third measure.

Many of Lilburn’s typical rhythmic gestures occur as part of his melodies. In fact Lilburn believes that melody is shaped by rhythm.⁷ Indeed it is often the rhythmic aspect of Lilburn’s melodies, rather than the pitch, that is the most defining feature. For Lilburn, melody is usually

⁷ John M. Thomson, “Introduction” to Douglas Lilburn, *A Search for Tradition* (Wellington: Alexander Turnbull Library, 1984), 3.

the most significant musical element, especially in his works for violin, and it is in his melodies that his personal style is most apparent.

Lilburn uses various rhythmic devices to create interest in his melodies. Accents are prevalent and often appear on naturally weak beats. They are sometimes used in combination with syncopations, also a common feature of his violin music, especially the later works. The rhythmic pattern, eighth note--quarter note--eighth note, for example, appears in the melodies of both the fast sections of the Sonata (1950), often with an accent on the quarter note, as in example 14 (mm 218-226).

In addition to accents and syncopations, many other favorite techniques are employed here. The grace note in the right hand of the piano in measure 221 helps to emphasize the second beat, as does the *tenuto* marking. Both of these techniques are used frequently for emphasis, and Lilburn marks articulations carefully. Another aspect of articulation which can be observed in this example is the use of slurs in the violin counter-melody. Lilburn often makes interesting use of slurs, in this case adding to the rhythmic interest by slurring across the beats. Various uses of slurs can be observed in some of the previous examples (for instance example 2). Notice also the use of fifths in the left hand of the piano, and the long-short-short rhythm, both in the violin line and the left hand of the piano.

Ex. 14. Sonata (1950), mm 218-226

The musical score consists of three systems. The first system (measures 218-220) shows a melodic line in the right hand starting with a piano (*p*) dynamic, marked *subito*, and a piano accompaniment in the left hand marked *mp marcato*. The second system (measures 221-225) continues the melodic line, marked *cresc.* and *f*. The third system (measures 226-227) shows the final cadence with repeated notes in the right hand.

One very typical feature of this example is the repetition of notes.

This is one of the most common and distinctive traits of Lilburn's melodic language, and can be seen also in the works of other younger New Zealand composers. Repeated notes are used in various ways in his melodies.

They often appear at cadence points to highlight the final chord, sometimes anticipating it or re-emphasizing it. However, the repetition of notes is perhaps most important as an aspect of Lilburn's declamatory type of melody.

Many of Lilburn's melodies exhibit a kind of *parlando* quality, a speech-like character. In fact the word *parlando* is even used in the indications for the first movement of the Sonata in C. In addition to the repetition of notes, other elements also contribute to this speech-like manner, in particular a limited pitch range and the encircling of a limited number of notes.

The choice of scale or mode also contributes to the character of the melody. Some of Lilburn's favorite scales have already been mentioned. Sometimes a melody is based on only a small collection of pitches, as in the previous example. The main theme in the right hand of the piano uses only four different pitches--G, A, B, D. As noted earlier, Lilburn also often begins with only the outline of a mode or collection and then gradually reveals the remaining pitches.

Lilburn's melodies often include other typical characteristics. Many of them begin with a wide leap, frequently of an octave (as in example 7). A significant number of his melodies begin with an ascending line. And certain accompanimental melodic figures are common, such as series of broken thirds slurred in groups.

Although there is some evolution in the kind of melodies which appear in the early violin works as compared with the later ones, many of these differences are attributable largely to the expanded range of other musical elements, particularly harmony and rhythm. Certainly many of

the melodies which appear in the Sonata (1950), the *Salutes to Seven Poets*, and the Duos, are considerably longer than any in the earlier works. On the other hand, an increased interest in motivic development results in some much shorter fragments of material as well. Throughout his works for violin, however, certain idiosyncratic melodic gestures return again and again to place his personal stamp on the music.

The essence of Lilburn's musical language then, can often be seen most clearly in his melodies and particularly in the rhythmic aspects of his melodic lines. Although Lilburn is certainly eclectic in his use of harmony, certain features of his harmonies are easily recognizable as an important part of his personal compositional style, such as a bareness in many of the sonorities and a tendency for harmony to be used primarily to serve the melody, rather than for its own interest. While there is a noticeable development in his use of the various elements in his music for violin, these most basic qualities remain constant throughout.

Lilburn's works for violin are part of an overall output that is dominated by music for orchestra, string orchestra, various chamber groups, solo piano, and electronic music. His music was often partly inspired by the performers or performing forces available to him, and this was probably true in the case of most of his works for violin, especially the early ones.

In his definitive study of the composer, Philip Norman refers to a “restlessness” in Lilburn’s chamber music of the early 1950s, and suggests that this may be due to an interest in the new developments in music overseas.⁸ While certain developments may be noted in Lilburn’s compositional style throughout these works for violin, they all belong to his first period, the end of which Norman pinpoints as 1956, the year of his overseas study leave.

From an international perspective, Lilburn’s early violin works, that is the sonatas in E flat and C and the *Allegro Concertante*, were reasonably up-to-date. However the style of the later works, while in many ways more sophisticated than before, was largely outmoded in comparison with international trends, which is no surprise when one considers Lilburn’s geographical and artistic isolation.

Lilburn was New Zealand’s first major professional composer, and he paved the way for the following generations. His influence on New Zealand music has been enormous, both as a composer and an advocate. Many of his works are now heard frequently, such as the Sonata (1950) and the Duos for Two Violins, but other deserving works have, for various reasons, such as the lack of publication opportunities, been largely ignored. One such work is the *Salutes to Seven Poets*, which has to date received only two public performances. It is hoped that this excellent example of

⁸ Norman, 482.

Lilburn's music for violin and piano will soon gain the recognition it is due.

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