



scratch pad

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Ditmar (Dick Jenssen): *The Everlasting Journey*.

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The ends of music

by Julian Warner

Speaking as someone who worked for a radio station and got very bored with mainstream music, I started collecting music which — to me — represented some of the possible extremes to which it could go. Although part of the thrill of collecting music that other people didn't like was the sense of 'otherness' that it imparted (a bit like being a science fiction fan, really), I did actually enjoy what I was buying.

What might have once frightened the horses or annoyed the neighbours is now passé. The music I find most annoying or frightening is simply the wrong music at the wrong time.

There is a chance that the music going whump-whump-whump from inside of some young hoon's car may actually be something that I like, but distorted and modified by the distance between the speakers in the car and my ears in the bedroom at 3.00 a.m., I am less than impressed.

There is a remote chance that if I could get drunk enough at a wedding reception I could be pressured into dancing to the 'Birdie Dance' or to sing along to 'Chirpy Chirpy Cheep Cheep' by Middle of the Road but usually they give me the absolute shits. Time and Place.

For the record, my personal catalogue of extremes runs a bit like this:

Noise

It could be argued that all of the music at the noisier end of the spectrum simply tends more or less toward white noise — in the same way that all food tastes like chicken, more or less. Early rock and roll was described as 'just noise' by older folks and now it is a paragon of respectability. The shaping and manicuring of sheer abrasive noise has been largely perfected by performers (mostly Japanese for some odd reason) such as Merzbow and Masonna. Many other practitioners exist.

However, you can download free software synthesisers from the net which will produce glitchy grainy noise indefinitely should you wish.

Silence

People have already released entire CDs of pure digital

silence. Or you can just put a blank CD in your player. There is a recent phenomenon known as 'lowercase sound', where the performers produce 'music' which is very, very quiet and which features very few sound events.

This goes quite a long way beyond what is now known as ambient music. lowercase is possibly sub-ambient. It could be the 'emperor's new clothes' of music or it could be the next (little) big thing. There is a cross-over between fans of lowercase sound and fans of quiet environmental recordings — whether *au naturelle* or processed in some way. Australian Alan Lamb has made recordings of telegraph wires in WA, which are sort of natural but eerie.

One of the main exponents of lowercase is Bernhard Guenter, whose '*un peu de neige salie*' really could be the digitalised sound of falling dirty snow.

Speed

Every grungy young black-t-shirted teenager seems to go through a speed-obsessed phase where he or she wants to listen to fast punk or fast heavy metal or fast techno or some combination thereof. There are obvious human limitations to how fast anyone can play, and once you crank up the machines too fast, the sound just becomes a blur (cf. 'Noise' above).

Punk got about as fast as it could in the late seventies and the later retreads now seem to stick to mid tempo. (In retrospect, I was surprised to realise just how slow the Sex Pistols songs were.) Heavy Metal probably peaked for speed in the eighties and tried to expand elsewhere by going in for increasingly guttural vocals as 'Death Metal'.

Guitar solos which go too fast end up sounding noodly and become boring very quickly (cf. Yngwie Malmsteen).

Gabba or Gabber is reckoned to be the fastest style of techno at more than 200 beats per minute. Most of it just sounds silly but the Dutch seem to enjoy it.

At the other end of the scale, you can play slowly. Bands like the Swans and Flipper and the Melvins — and even Australia's own Lubricated Goat — all played grindingly slowly but they all pale in comparison to John Cage's piece for organ which has sort of started in a monastery in

Germany, even if no actual note will be heard for some months!

Ineptitude

Any fool can play or sing badly but very few can become famous for it. There are of course those who start famous and then display beaucoup d'ineptitude afterwards like our old friends Shatner and Nimoy and other 'golden-throated' celebrities. If you really must court ineptitude, then I suggest that you stick to the tried and true exemplars like The Shaggs, Wild Man Fischer, The Legendary Stardust Cowboy, The Portsmouth Sinfonia, Slippery Jim and the Ratettes, The Scratch Orchestra, Divine, Pussy Galore (and um, better stop now — I know too many of these).

Slickness/niceness

I can't find a really good term for but it's where the vocal harmonies are just too sickly sweet or where the notes are too perfect or too regular. The antithesis of 'soul', it's the music which is played in a technically perfect manner but which has nothing to grip you. A lot of today's computerised production-line pop falls into this category but there is a lot of blues and jazz which is equally soulless. I can occasionally be intrigued by the process whereby such 'perfection' is achieved but the music is basically unsatisfying.

Discord

You can refer to Howard Goodall's *Big Bangs* for an account of why 'foreign' music sounds grating to Western ears. It only takes a few off-key or microtonal notes to get most teeth grinding. Unfortunately, as Western music exerts its inexorable cultural imperialism, those 'off' notes are disappearing. Try comparing the soundtracks to old and recent Cantonese films if you want to hear Western culture in action. There is a whole world of music to listen to out there if you can wrest yourself away from equal temperament and twelve-note scales.

Gamelan: just get into the kitchen and rattle them pots and pans!

Space fidelity

By which I mean the extremes of stereo or 'surround sound' imaging whereby you are meant to be able to pinpoint where the third violinist is sitting to the nearest millimetre. There is a peculiar species of individual who, having been amazed by the sound of an aeroplane flying from one speaker to the other on 'Back in the USSR' (or some similar experience) will assiduously only buy music which has been designed specifically for spatial accuracy — if not for listening pleasure. Such persons will possess holophonic or binaural recordings and point out the wondrous technicalities therein. Shame about the music. If you really want to be startled by the sound of people apparently educating each other in the art of horizontal folk-dancing right next

to you on the sofa, I can recommend a CD entitled *Cyborgasm*. Otherwise, I wouldn't.

Minimalism

As opposed to the other stuff previously mentioned, minimalism is a conceit (or a laziness?) of composition, rather than a specific sonic feature. It possibly/probably has its roots in the serialist classical composers and the mathematical composers who wrote pieces according to strict formulae which might sacrifice musicality to further the aims of rigidity.

Minimalism goes that step further in following very simple formulae such as constant repetition of small phrases or very gradual incremental changes in an otherwise static piece.

An absolute of minimalism would be to hold a single note for the entire length of a performance. Of course, any idiot with an organ or electronic keyboard can do this (but try it with a piano!).

When I first read about minimalist composers, I approached the subject with trepidation — fearing (as most do) that boredom would set in very quickly when I was exposed to the actual music. The biggest surprise I got from the minimalists was the sheer 'musicality' of what they do.

I would think that the two most commonly-known minimalist pieces would be Philip Glass's *Einstein on the Beach* and Terry Riley's *In C*. Film buffs would also be familiar with the work of Michael Nyman, which is less minimal than some but which follows the major precepts.

Early electronic works by groups such as Tangerine Dream can be considered as minimalist for their use of long slow sweeps of synthesiser sound that changes or develops at a glacial rate.

After talking about 'any idiot', pianist, organist and composer Charlemagne Palestine has recorded a work where he wedges down a few keys on an organ and makes tiny changes by altering the stops on the organ. There is a sort of 'micro-music' that happens inside the general swirl of organ drone and which keeps the interest.

There has also been renewed interest in the use of drones in 'world' music — using bagpipes, dulcimers etc. — or in electric/electronic music — using guitars or synths etc. The sounds vary (just!) but the compositional theory is still minimalist.

I would recommend Steve Reich as the best producer of textbook minimalist compositions. The 'tradition' has continued from the sort of recording tape experiments that Reich performed on through to the large slew of minimalist techno performers. Two of the more celebrated recent exponents of this are Pan(a)sonic and Ryoji Ikeda.

— **Julian Warner**, email exchange on Eidolist, 21–22 November 2001

Reply from *brg*

I reprinted Julian's email comments because (a) I knew already that his tastes in music, as shown by the CDs he buys, are very different from mine; and (b) these emails are the first time he's written about what interests him in music. He provides a catalogue of types of music that I usually avoid. However, Julian occasionally buys the same CDs as I do,

especially in the classical field.

Only at the end of his short essay does Julian mention 'musicality'. Musicality is what I look for. It's that absolute excellence of composition or performance that carries the music beyond and above ordinary 'noise'. It's the anti-mundane in music I look for: the impulse towards absolute

beauty, passion and perfection of performance, however you want to define those qualities.

Most of the types of music Julian mentions are, to me, not music. Worse, to me they are deliberately second-rate claims to be music. Music is the one art form in which a commentator can prove that one piece or performance is better than another, so the deliberately second rate should be easy to avoid.

But . . . George Turner could never understand why I liked any music other than classical music. (George once said that he didn't like any classical music written after 1900, but that might just have been George taking a rise out of his listeners, John Bangsund and me.) If I had been able to think of an instant answer to George, I might have said that each type of music fits within its own genre, and each has its own standards of excellence. When I switch from classical to pop to jazz to country to folk music, I switch criteria sets, in the same way I switch computer programs to run Ventura or Quark or Word or PhotoPaint.

The difficulty I have with Julian's listed categories is that they have few musical qualities. Punk and grunge music embody the worship of the utterly stupid; ambient, the worship of the switched-off mind; and minimalism, the worship of the repetitious. Noise is the opposite of music.

But what has this to do with actually enjoying particular

pieces of music? Music can be a pure art form, but do I actually listen for pure values? I confess that I do not. When I examine my motives for listening to particular pieces of music, I find that I value them because of the circumstances in which I first heard them, the emotions they aroused in me then and still arouse, the stories that pieces tell, and the visions they inspire in my mind while listening. You can't base criticism on these personal factors, yet they are the criteria I use when choosing what to listen to.

Since Julian values each of his CDs and LPs with the fervour that I value each of mine, I don't begrudge him any of them, even if I can't enjoy many of them. Julian doesn't like sweetness in music, whereas I have a sweet tooth a mile long. Sweet and ecstatic is better than mundane and dull. To judge from the Classical Top 100 discussed below, most Australian classical music listeners agree with me.

Classical music derives its value not merely from its harmonious qualities, but also from its complex, polyphonic, revolutionary qualities. Beethoven's Symphony No. 7 was as revolutionary when it was first played in 1812 as were any early Rolling Stones songs were in 1965. The difference is that, given a great performance, the Seventh Symphony still sounds defiant. Perhaps the Rolling Stones' early singles won't be so challenging in 2102.

The piece of music I could not live without: The ABC Classic 100

The whisper is that the popularity of classical music is slipping beneath the waves of indifference, drowned by 'crossover' music and the fact that most classical CD buyers already own copies of their favourite versions of their favourite pieces.

In 2001, ABC-FM decided to join 'em in order to beat 'em — establish a classical music Hot 100. ABC-FM listeners and *24 Hours* readers (*24 Hours* is the magazine published

by ABC-FM for its listeners) were asked to submit one item that fitted the description 'The piece of music I could not live without', plus a few words to support the choice.

The results are in. The Top 100 was published in the December 2001 issue of *24 Hours*. Each day from 12 December to mid January, the items were played on ABC-FM, 100 to 1, as part of regular programs.

Here's *24 Hours*'s introduction to the list:

And the winner is . . .

by Matthew Westwood

There is a joke among record retailers about the placement of CDs on their shelves. Composers are arranged from A to M, then Mozart, then N to Z. Such is the popularity of this prolific and much-loved composer.

One of Mozart's most endearing works — the Clarinet Concerto in A, K 622 — has topped the poll in the ABC Classic 100, which invited Australian music-lovers to name the piece of music they could not live without. In second place was *The Lark Ascending* by Vaughan Williams, followed by four Beethoven works — the *Choral* symphony, the *Emperor* piano concerto, the Violin Concerto and the *Pastoral* symphony.

For Marian Arnold, who presents 'Listener Requests' on ABC Classic FM, the results are a fairly accurate reflection of Australia's musical tastes. 'The list holds no real surprises for me: everything on it I've been asked for on "Listener Requests",' she says.

But how do we explain this love for the Clarinet Concerto over other equally exquisite pieces of music? In their responses, many readers said the concerto was associated with happy memories, especially the beautiful Adagio movement. Some identified great humanity in the work, and marvelled at Mozart's handling of the solo instrument. Others wrote of having played it themselves.

Seen in the context of other pieces in the ABC Classic 100, the Clarinet Concerto offers some fascinating insights into our musical tastes. There is a high proportion of concerto-style works, such as Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue* for piano and orchestra, the *Concierto de Aranjuez* for guitar by Rodrigo, and the surprise inclusion of the Scherzo from Litolf's Concerto Symphonique No. 4, for piano and orchestra. David Mold, the manager of Wesley Classics and Classical Mail Order Warehouse in Perth, says concertos tend to be popular because they provide an 'immediate focus' for the reader. 'There is something people can grasp — the interplay between instrument and orchestra,' he says.

Respondents also showed a preference for exquisite slow movements, memorable melodies and traditional tonality. 'It's tum-do-tum music,' says Peter Wright, who works in the classical music department of Grace Bros' Sydney city store. 'It's centred on the key and it returns to the key all the time, so you're in a comfort zone.'

Felix Hayman, who selects music for 'Breakfast' on ABC Classic FM, also notes a feeling of comfort and familiarity about the pieces chosen. But he says the ABC Classic 100 is

far from predictable. 'In its own terms, it's not unadventurous, because it covers a wide range of composers.'

Notable omissions, however, are Berlioz, Brahms and Liszt. There are no Australian composers, although Ross Edwards's *Dawn Mantras* just missed out. Early music before Bach and Handel, and chamber works, are under-represented. And 'modern' compositions are absent save for *The Rite of Spring* (1913) and *Tristan and Isolde* (1865).

Closer analysis reveals a strong preference for the 'Big Three' composers — Beethoven, Mozart and Bach. While Mozart scored the most votes for the Clarinet Concerto, Beethoven was the most popular composer overall, picking up 11.5 per cent of the total votes received, followed by Mozart (9.3 per cent) and Bach (9.1 per cent).

'There's no favourite medieval, Renaissance or serialist music, very little un-Romantic twentieth-century music and nothing hard-hitting by composers such as Shostakovich,' Marian Arnold concludes. 'So it seems the music we can't live without has to be classically beautiful, passionate or romantic!'

The ABC Classic 100

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|--|--|
| 1 Clarinet Concerto in A, K 622
W. A. Mozart | 20 Cello Suites
Bach |
| 2 <i>The Lark Ascending</i>
Ralph Vaughan Williams | 21 <i>Concierto de Aranjuez</i>
Joaquin Rodrigo |
| 3 Symphony No. 9 in D minor (<i>Choral</i>)
Ludwig van Beethoven | 22 Brandenburg Concertos
Bach |
| 4 Piano Concerto No. 5 in E flat (<i>Emperor</i>)
Beethoven | 23 Canon in D
Johann Pachelbel |
| 5 Violin Concerto in D major, op. 61
Beethoven | 24 Variations on an Original Theme (<i>Enigma</i>), Op. 36
Edward Elgar |
| 6 Symphony No. 6 in F (<i>Pastoral</i>)
Beethoven | 25 <i>Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis</i>
Ralph Vaughan Williams |
| 7 'In the Depths of the Temple' from <i>The Pearl Fishers</i>
Georges Bizet | 26 Piano Concerto No. 23 in A, K 488
Mozart |
| 8 <i>Messiah</i>
George Frederic Handel | 27 Piano Sonata No. 14 in C sharp minor (<i>Moonlight</i>)
Beethoven |
| 9 <i>Miserere</i>
Gregorio Allegri | 28 String Quintet in C
Schubert |
| 10 <i>Four Last Songs</i>
Richard Strauss | 29 Mass in B Minor
Bach |
| 11 'Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring' from Cantata No. 147
Johann Sebastian Bach | 30 Intermezzo from <i>Cavaleria rusticana</i>
Pietro Mascagni |
| 12 <i>St Matthew Passion</i>
J. S. Bach | 31 Piano Concerto No. 21 in C, K 467
Mozart |
| 13 Piano Concerto No. 2 in C minor
Sergei Rcahmaninov | 32 Requiem, K 626
Mozart |
| 14 Violin Concerto No. 1 in G major
Max Bruch | 33 <i>La bohème</i>
Giacomo Puccini |
| 15 Requiem
Gabriel Fauré | 34 Air on the G String, from Suite No. 3 in D
Bach |
| 16 <i>The Four Seasons</i>
Antonio Vivaldi | 35 Double Violin Concerto in D minor, BWV 1043
Bach |
| 17 Nocturne in E flat
Franz Schubert | 36 <i>Adagio for Strings</i>
Samuel Barber |
| 18 Piano Quintet in A (<i>The Trout</i>)
Schubert | 37 'Chorus of the Hebrew Slaves' from <i>Nabucco</i>
Giuseppe Verdi |
| 19 Cello Concerto in E minor
Edward Elgar | 38 <i>Madama Butterfly</i>
Puccini |

- 39 'Meditation' from *Thaïs*
Jules Massenet
- 40 Symphony No. 3 in E flat (*Eroica*)
Beethoven
- 41 'And to Music'
Schubert
- 42 Symphony No. 5 in C minor
Beethoven
- 43 Symphony No. 5 in C sharp minor
Gustav Mahler
- 44 Requiem
Verdi
- 45 Symphony No. 3 in C minor (*Organ*)
Camille Saint-Saëns
- 46 'Che farò senza Euridice' from *Orpheus and Euridice*
Christophe Gluck
- 47 'Liebestod' from *Tristan and Isolde*
Richard Wagner
- 48 Serenade No. 13 in G (*A Little Night Music*)
Mozart
- 49 *The Planets*
Gustav Holst
- 50 'The Swan' from *Carnival of the Animals*
Saint-Saëns
- 51 *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini*
Rachmaninov
- 52 Symphony No. 9 in E minor (*From the New World*)
Antonin Dvorák
- 53 'Ombra mai fù' from *Xerxes*
Handel
- 54 *The Magic Flute*
Mozart
- 55 'Song to the Moon' from *Rusalka*
Dvorák
- 56 *Goldberg Variations*
Bach
- 57 *Ave verum corpus*
Mozart
- 58 *Romeo and Juliet*
Serge Prokofiev
- 59 *Pomp and Circumstance* March No. 1 in D
Elgar
- 60 *My Country*
Bedrich Smetana
- 61 *Festive Overture: 1812*
Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky
- 62 Symphony No. 2 in C minor (*Resurrection*)
Mahler
- 63 Cantata No. 78 (*Jesu, der du meine Seele*)
Bach
- 64 Scherzo from Concerto symphonique No. 4
in D minor
Henry Charles Litolff
- 65 *Sea Pictures*
Elgar
- 66 *Ave Maria*
Giulio Caccini
- 67 *The Marriage of Figaro*
Mozart
- 68 Piano Concerto in A minor
Edvard Grieg
- 69 Piano Trio No. 7 in B flat (*Archduke*)
Beethoven
- 70 *Christmas Oratorio*
- 71 Piano Concerto No. 1 in E minor
Frédéric Chopin
- 72 Chaconne from Violin Partita No. 2 in D minor
Bach
- 73 *Rhapsody in Blue*
George Gershwin
- 74 Piano Concerto No. 1 in B flat minor
Tchaikovsky
- 75 *La traviata*
Verdi
- 76 Symphony No. 8 in E flat major
Mahler
- 77 Impromptu No. 3 in G flat
Schubert
- 78 'O mio babbino caro' from *Gianni Schicchi*
Puccini
- 79 Toccato and Fugue in D minor
Bach
- 80 Symphony No. 7 in A
Beethoven
- 81 *Boléro*
Maurice Ravel
- 82 *Gymnopédies*
Erik Satie
- 83 *Carmina Burana*
Carl Orff
- 84 Clarinet Quintet in A
Mozart
- 85 'O soave sia il vento' from *Così fan tutte*
Mozart
- 86 Piano Sonata No. 8 in C minor (*Pathétique*)
Beethoven
- 87 Piano Concerto No. 4 in G
Beethoven
- 88 *The Well-tempered Clavier*
Bach
- 89 Violin Concerto in E minor
Mendelssohn
- 90 *Finlandia*
Jean Sibelius
- 91 Violin Concerto in D
Tchaikovsky
- 92 'When I am laid in earth' (Dido's lament) from *Dido
and Aeneas*
Henry Purcell
- 93 *Clair de lune*
Claude Debussy
- 94 Adagio in G minor for organ and strings
Tommaso Albinoni
- 95 *Zadok the Priest*
Handel
- 96 Piano Concerto No. 20 in D minor
Mozart
- 97 *The Rite of Spring*
Igor Stravinsky
- 98 'Morning' from *Peer Gynt* suite
Grieg
- 99 *Spartacus*
Aram Khachaturian
- 100 *Cantique de Jean Racine*
Fauré

Several pieces I could probably live with

The ABC Classical 100 list is so peculiar that it raises the possibility that other people listen to classical music in a way this is quite different from mine. Why, for instance, would one pick out only the Chaconne movement from Bach's Partita No. 2 and not list the whole piece? If one were enough of an opera buff to identify the Chorus of Hebrew Slaves from *Nabucco*, why not list the whole opera? (As Mahler buffs have done for Symphony No. 5, although most people only listen to the Adagietto movement.)

Perhaps many people listen to classical music in the way that I listen to 1960s pop music — not for the intrinsic musical qualities, but because a great hit from my youth reminds me of when I first heard it, the period when it was played regularly, and all the other music that was being played at the time: pieces of classical music as little emotion triggers, endlessly replaying in the mind.

Did any of the respondents read the question? A piece of music they *could not live without*? In other words, a desert island disc, a piece of music to which they might be condemned to listen over and over. To me, that would be hell. To the respondents, this seems to be a criterion of excellence.

What's my definition of a piece I couldn't live without? A piece I could never get to know. If I had to live with it and nothing else, I want a piece of music that is so dense that it can never be understood, and so profound that it reveals new patterns each time I listen to it. There are few such pieces, and my own candidates are not listed in the Classical Top 100. They include:

- **Beethoven's Sonatas No. 31 and 32.** When they are played well, the music in these pieces lies between the notes. Masters of the meaningful pause, such as Barenboim, make these pieces into the greatest instrumental pieces of them all. I couldn't live without them, because I could live with them. They never become familiar or comfortable, but they always give pleasure.
- **Mahler's Symphony No. 7**, whose inner three movements form a meditative, secretive underbrush of a forest that can only barely be glimpsed, let alone known. This is not my favourite Mahler symphony (that honour goes to Bravanel's version of the Third), but it is would be a good friend on that mythical desert island, equipped miraculously with hi fi sound equipment and an electricity supply.
- **Beethoven's Missa Solemnis**, although I would insist on the 1961 Klemperer version. Performed well, which rarely happens, the *Missa Solemnis* is the most ambitious piece of music ever written. Unfortunately, it is almost unplayable and unsingable. Performers of the *Missa Solemnis* must enter heart-attack and voice-breakdown territory to do the job well. If the *Missa Solemnis* were only an exercise in musical gymnastics, however, it would not be *essential*. Its most athletic movements, such as the Credo, also contains its most complex music. Listen to the fireworks and you miss the musical thought; listen to the musical thought and you suddenly realise you're missing out on the excitement. In a great version, they explode together.
- **Schubert's String Quintet in C** (No. 28 on the ABC list) is one my essential pieces, but the even more ravishing

String Quartet No. 14 (*Death and the Maiden*) is not even in the Top 100! Shame, Australia, shame. These two pieces, the greatest achievements in chamber music, are not only ravishing in the 'classically beautiful' sense mentioned by Marion Arnold, but so complex and mysterious that they can be listened to over and over, always revealing new qualities.

- **Ralph Vaughan Williams' *The Lark Ascending*** is essential. I agree with the voters here. But so is RVW's *Partita for Double String Orchestra*, which few people know. The great performance is the 1954 recording by Adrian Boult and the London Symphony Orchestra (was on BelArt; might now be on Decca Ovation).

The Classical 100 contains some pieces that I would put on my 'essentials' list. However, they are not in the Top 10. Some of them are so far down the list as to make me wonder whether every ABC-FM listener now switches off if a piece lasts more than five minutes. Mozart's *The Magic Flute* at No. 54! This is not only the greatest opera, but is so packed with unmissable music that I would not have argued if it had come in at No. 1. I love the Clarinet Concerto as much as anybody does, but it's hardly unmissable. (Or is it? Don't try to take it away from me.)

The main weakness of the Top 100 is that it doesn't ask listeners to name their favourite performances. When they name the Mozart Clarinet Concerto at No. 1, is everybody else also thinking of the version by Jack Brimer with Thomas Beecham and the LSO? Or are they fans of the Benny Goodman version, as is Anne Warren, winner of the *24 Hours* write-in competition (December 2001, p. 38): 'When I heard Benny Goodman playing this, I was inspired to do the same. I bought a clarinet, and practise daily to learn this piece.' The Bizet aria, 'In the Depths of the Temple' (No. 7), has been made famous by Jussi Bjorling and Robert Merrill. Other versions are anaemic by comparison. The hit version of Allegri's *Miserere* is by the young Roy Goodman and King's College Choir, made famous in Australia by one man: John Cargher when he began playing it in the 1960s on his long-running 'Singers of Renown' radio program. Elisabeth Schwartzkopf and George Szell put Strauss's *Four Last Songs* at No. 10, but why then could not Karajan and Schwartzkopf, in the 1954 version, ensure Strauss's *Der Rosenkavalier* a place in the Top 10? We will never know the answers to such questions.

My own Classical Top 10 (week ending 6 January 2002)

- 1 **Beethoven: Piano Sonatas Nos. 31 (Op. 110) and 32 (Op. 111)**
Daniel Barenboim (EMI), but any recording by Alfred Brendel would do, as would the Schnabel and Richard Willem versions.
- 2 **Beethoven: Missa Solemnis, Op. 123**
Otto Klemperer (cond.)/New Philharmonia Orchestra/Philharmonia Chorus (EMI). Most other versions are reverential and dull, but the Bernstein 1960s version stands up well. Also John Eliot Gardiner's, of course.

- 3 **Haydn: *The Seasons*, Hob. XXI:3**
Herbert von Karajan (cond.)/Berlin Philharmonic /Choir of the German Opera of Berlin (EMI).
- 4 **Schubert: *String Quintet*, D 956**
Lots of great versions to choose from; my CD is by the Fitzwilliam String Quartet plus Christopher von Kampen (Decca).
- 5 **Schubert: *String Quartet No. 14*, D 810 (*Death and the Maiden*)**
Again, lots of great versions around. The best in my CD collection is by the Hagen Quartet (DG).
- 6 **Schubert: *Piano Quintet in A major*, D 667 (*The Trout*)**
My real favourite version is an old, well-worn LP that was a favourite of my father's — the Fine Arts Quartet (World Record Club; no longer available). Great CD versions overflow the shelves; compare versions before buying.
- 7 **Mozart: *The Magic Flute***
There are many great versions of this greatest of all operas, but none that is perfect. Karajan's 1954 version

- (EMI) has a special extra quality, but you could try the 1980s Karajan version, or either one of the Bohm versions, or Colin Davis's, or Haitink's, or Solti's. Or buy them all, as Elaine and I tend to do.
- 8 **Richard Strauss: *Four Last Songs***
Elisabeth Schwarzkopf (soprano)/George Szell (cond.)/Radio Symphony Orchestra of Berlin (EMI).
- 9 **Beethoven: *Symphony No. 7***
Lots of great versions, especially Beecham's and Harnoncourt's, but Karajan's 1962 version, with the Berlin Philharmonic (DG), beats them all. For \$30 at JB Hi Fi, you can buy the whole set of Karajan's 1962 Beethoven symphonies in a boxed set. *That* would be my desert island disc.
- 10 **Mahler: *Symphony No. 3***
Maurice Abravanel (cond.)/Utah Symphony Orchestra (Vanguard).

That's the list until I change it, which could be next week. I write these lists to be disagreed with, not agreed with.

Letters of comment

BOB SMITH
37 St Johns Road, Bradbury NSW 2560

I am beginning to believe that Somerset Place existed in some form of time warp, if those who should know can't pin down the dates when the Club moved there. If *2001: A Space Odyssey* began almost exactly thirty years ago, I couldn't have been where I said I was, because in May 1968 I had arrived at my new posting in Townsville. (Now, *that* was a ghastly train experience: three days in ancient trains from Seymour to Townsville, because the cheapskate military wouldn't fly me . . .) I know that the Melbourne SF Club had a clubroom in 1956, because I came down to Melbourne on army business, and somebody — Bob McCubbin? — showed me around, but I couldn't swear to any hydraulic lift then. (Not long back from Japan then, I also visited the Brisbane SF group.) So, the question is: what year was it, and what film was Lee excited about?

Sad to hear about Ron Smith. I knew him in his early days in Australia, and of course *Inside* was already a legend by then. Lyn met him at Syncon I and liked him, and Baxter and I had visited his place at Bundeena.

A reminder of another nice guy leapt out of the pages of a book recently. I was leafing through John Ryan's *Panel by Panel* and out fell a letter from him dated October 1969, introducing himself and inviting Lyn and me to join 'Mason, Johnson, Clarke, Darling, Brosnan and Ryan' at the Syncon meeting. 'You also get a chance to meet my wife, by way of a bonus . . . and you may even get a chance to renew acquaintance with Kevin Dillon!' Foyster was on his way up to stay with the Ryans for Syncon I, and John Ryan was Best Man at our wedding in December 1971. I have the original 'Syncon '70' logo sitting on a shelf above my computer, drawn by Stan Pitt, I believe. (Baxter and I visited Stan quite often, too.)

Mervyn Barrett had a number of pads in Melbourne in the early sixties. Foyster and I visited him at one place, and were mildly surprised to see *Dianetics* on the shelf. I have a photo

taken at a Mervyn Barrett shindig in 1962 at another place. It shows me, Mervyn, Foyster, Chris Bennie and a female whose name I've forgotten; and Mervyn, Foyster and I had returned from a jazz concert to another of his pads when there was a knock at the door, and Sarah Vaughan and her escort walked into the room. And so it goes. A mystery was our Mervyn.

These Ditmar graphics in **brg** 22 really grab my sense of wonder, and the back cover is quite awesome. Yes, indeed: happy 30th to ANZAPA, and how time doth flit by. And you are celebrating your thirtieth year in fandom? Lyn and I send our sympathies to Elaine.

Your history and problems with Norstrilia Press made interesting reading, and just filled in another portion of the fannish frame in the mid 1970s that I seemed to miss. At that time,



From the photo file of Merv and Helena Binns comes the same picture mentioned by Bob Smith in his letter: (back, from left) Mervyn Barrett, John Foyster and Chris Bennie; and (front) Bob Smith and Mme Unknown (my guess is Margaret Duce, today known to us as Helena Binns).

Lyn and I went through the pedigree cat and show charade, and you could say we were well and truly bitten. We were fascinated by the high-grade white spotting that produces well-patched tortoiseshell and white, and attempted to breed for it, plus good head type and eye colour. We did end up with a couple of Grand Champions and even a Best in Show at the Royal Easter Show, but it all became a bit too stressful. (My cattery prefix was 'Honmatsu' ('Ten Pines') and Lyn's was 'Witchways'.) Show cats, of course, are trained to be incredibly well behaved. Our current (and last!) four are all in the region of 13–15 years old and spoilt rotten.

There was a documentary on Martin Gardner a few years ago — on SBS, I think — and I remember muttering then that it was a pity he hadn't updated *Fads and Fallacies*. Our edition is the Dover 1957 edition, which includes the 'Bridey Murphy' mania and other matters. An interesting (almost) companion volume from Dover back then was *Hoaxes* by Curtis D. MacDougall. *Fads and Fallacies* may be considered funny, but many individuals associated with science fiction would rather not be reminded of how gullible they were back then.

Another aspect of fads and fallacies is pointed out in G. S. Graber's book *History of the SS* (Robert Hale, 1978): 'The health food shops are becoming more and more popular, and the interest in — and practice of — the occult so favoured by Heinrich Himmler has not known such a boom since the Middle Ages. The flight from Science is in full swing. We do not advocate the practice of genocide, but more and more the findings of today's quasi scientists and diagnosticians of our ills are resembling the random thoughts of Himmler in his diaries.'

Ah, another *Carmina Burana* fan! Amazing how many I have discovered since returning from Gafialand. I have a slightly guilty conscience, which goes back some thirty-five years to when Lee Harding sent me the program for *Carmina Burana* at the Melbourne Town Hall, 5th March 1963, asked for it to be returned when I'd taken a copy . . . and I never did. As I wrote to Leigh Edmonds recently, we might have learnt Latin a lot more readily at school if we'd been allowed to sing the naughty bits from *Carmina Burana*.

(A bit of a break here. I am usually listening to ABC Classic FM while typing, and here's Margaret Throsby asking her guest what Dylan Thomas would have been liked if he'd been a teetotaller.)

Yes, we definitely raged when we were young — SF fans or not — and the important thing was we didn't have TV or the media cluttering up our otherwise slannish minds.

The idea of giving aggressive cats Ovarid is something Lyn and I might consider, to stop the two tortie and white sisters constantly bashing each other up. As kittens and during the first ten years of their lives, things were okay, but then . . . I dive into the likes of *How to Live with a Neurotic Cat* (Grafton, 1989) for answers, but to no avail.

Lyn and I chuckled at the reference to the 'Kevin Dillon zone'. Baxter and I would often wander into a Repin's coffee house in Sydney, spy Kevin, and wonder if we should approach or not. I haven't seen him since 1972, although I understand he still makes it to Futurian meetings.

Your reviews of old books tempts me to go sniffing the Book Exchange pb shelves for some of that Joanna Russ. For some inexplicable reason, I no longer have a copy of *The Eighth Stage of Fandom*. Where can I find the Wildside edition? Bob Bloch's talk with slides, entitled 'Monsters I Have Known', at the 1962 Chicon III was a classic.

And so, mercifully, I stagger out of *brg* 22 and the stimulat-

ing, heady atmosphere of the Gillespie prose and wonder how it got to three pages. I take some moments to gaze into the Ditmar back cover once again — a remarkable 3-D feeling, which I don't find on the front cover, and an urge to wonder where that ship has come from. When was Lord Dunsany's *The Hashish Man* published? I can't find it in any of my Dunsany references.)
(30 September 1998)

ROBERT MAPSON
33 Westfield Road, Kelmscott WA 6111

139 contenders for the 2001 CD lists! Oooh, luxury! Anyway, without further ado...

2001 Best Books

Richard Matheson: *I Am Legend* (1954)

The first five books listed here are all from the Millennium books SF Masterworks series which has been a boon to those of us catching up on books we didn't read at the time they were published. Unfortunately, it seems local bookstores are no longer stocking the series, since I see some very interesting stuff reviewed by you, but there's no sight of them here in the colonies. *Sigh*. I actually bought this book with some trepidation, since I only knew it previously through Charlton 'Ohmigod!' Heston and *The Omega Man*. The book is far superior (which I should have expected, I guess, given Hollywood's ability to dumb down everything). Vampirism is a disease (a similar idea treated very stylishly in the television series *Ultraviolet* which I don't think anyone else watched — the ABC certainly didn't promote it) which is ravaging the same 1950s cosy suburban landscape that Philip Dick subverted so often as well. The horror here comes from determining who is the monster and what is 'normal.'

Alfred Bester: *The Demolished Man* (1953)

Alfred Bester: *The Stars My Destination* (1956)

I've already gone on at some length about these two works in previous correspondence, so I won't repeat myself here. Bester wrote in a new-wave, cyberpunk, frenetic style which wouldn't be named as such for another three decades. These books are about style and pace, and antiheroes with no particular redeeming features. The influences of his work on comics and radio serials shines through in the best possible way.

Olaf Stapledon: *Last and First Men* (1930)

Olaf Stapledon: *Star Maker* (1937)

Again, I've written previously about these works, and they've also been discussed at length in your zines. Not so much novels as philosophical works of *jeu d'esprit*, Stapledon tells of the whole length of human history in the first book, and then relegates this to a passing mention in the timescale of the next! I suspect every SF work written since takes one of Stapledon's ideas from these books as its basis.

Arthur Conan Doyle: *The Complete Sherlock Holmes* (1887–1927)

Not the first fictional detective (Edgar Allan Poe's C. Auguste Dupin probably has the best title to that claim) but certainly the most famous. These are classic tales, many of the locked room type, but the denouements are less interesting than the intellectual, aloof, callous, cocaine-sniffing, violin-playing genius of the detective himself. And just what *did* he do during those long nights alone with Dr Watson?

Jorge Luis Borges: *Fictions* (1944)

Penguin books have published a number of volumes of Borges

Jean Sibelius: *Symphony 4, Pelleas and Melisande, Swanwhite, Tapiola, Dance of the Nymphs, Symphony 7* (Royal Philharmonic Orchestra/Sir Thomas Beecham, BBC Legends 2000, recorded 1955)

A double CD set of Beecham's concert for Sibelius's 90th birthday celebrations in 1955, with a selection of his works that is distinctively Beecham — not just the easy works here. The set also includes a fifteen-minute radio talk by Beecham concerning Sibelius, who he knew personally and whose music he championed (as well as discussing their mutual interest in cigars). The recording is mono, but the remastering is well done and you never notice.

Sergei Prokofiev: *Peter and the Wolf* (BBC Philharmonic/Yan Pascal Tortelier, narrated by David Attenborough, BBC 2000) I've given up buying *Gramophone* (I believe I might have mentioned this in a previous letter) since the asking price just became too ridiculous, and now buy *BBC Music*, which comes with a multimedia CD (conventional performance and CD-ROM data as well) of complete work(s) rather than the bleeding snippets included on the *Gramophone's* CDs. This disc was one such. I've long considered buying a CD of this work but never really became enthused by any of the narrators, and now I'm glad I waited. Who else could be more appropriate for such a work than David Attenborough? This is actually a well performed recording, with Attenborough being suitably straight-faced (no annoying 'effects' that pall on relistening) as he tells of the antics of the animals. You feel like you're listening to a BBC nature documentary! Also included on the disc are Britten's *The Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra* (narrated by Tortelier) and Strauss (R.)'s *Till Eulenspiegel's lustige Streiche*.

The Goons:

Goon Show Classics, Volume 17 (BBC, 1999, recorded 1957–58) Four more remastered and complete episodes: *The Reason Why* (not one of those episodes interminably repeated on the ABC), *The Treasure in the Tower* (which does for time travel paradoxes far more than any of the famous SF works), *The Plasticine Man* and *The Silent Bugler*.

(22 February 2001)

ERIKA MARIA LACEY
70 Karri Avenue, Logan Central QLD 4114

I received both *SF Commentary 77* and *BRG 31* in the mail today. It was a welcome break away from painting the back garden gate.

You went through a year's mailing of both *Acnestis* and *ANZAPA* in two months? That's a fair bit of reading! I'm quite impressed.

I'll tackle what you said to me specifically first. Perhaps what you see as my ability to do many things is just my being wishywashy. I get very enthusiastic about something at first, but once that first flush of energy is gone, it goes on the backburner. Nothing I have ever done has not gone through that.

You asked if I would ever write up an account of travelling on *Pampero II*; I don't think that it's very likely. I don't tend to like to revisit what's happened in the past, but if you're interested I'll do my best.

My mother is Jesus Leonor Lacey, once a high school biology teacher in Peru. My father is Philip George Lacey, carpet layer. He's never written a book; apologies for the confusion. I meant to say that he was an avid reader when travelling, and I'd take the books he owned off into corners to read, regardless of what genre they were.

We set off travelling because my father decided he wanted to. I don't know the whole story, only that he bought *Pampero II* for about \$30,000 and then piled us all aboard her and promptly set off. All it takes for one to start a voyage like that is to get oneself a vessel. It's cheap living from then on, providing that there are no major disasters with the engine or anything similarly catastrophic.

I too have heard many Mac users say that they've not had troubles with their machines, but they crash at the drop of a hat. I've always managed to crash them just by looking at them.

StarOffice is a freeware Office substitute, and works quite well under Windows and Linux. The advantages for me is that it supports Microsoft Office documents and takes up a lot less hard drive space. So, it's not bloatware. I don't use it all *that* much — I would much rather use a text editor to write something than a word processor, because first, it consumes less RAM, and second, it can be read on any system, anywhere.

I manage to read a lot by going to the library and getting things that interest me. Then sit down and read until I finish. An average book will take me two and a half hours; doorstopper fantasies take me about four hours. I don't always read a book a day, but I try. One week might go by without me touching a book, then the next week I'll read three a day. I try to — at least, since I left ANZAPA — read about 30 books a month, and so far have been succeeding admirably.

Onto other stuff. You mentioned a few times that you don't like to stand around waiting for things to download — neither do I. That's why I leave my computer on overnight for things to download. Or during the day while I go off to read or do something else. This is also a contributor to why I spend so much time on the computer. I normally don't let myself stay online if I'm not downloading something, so I'm continuously getting *something*.

Laughing at your description of your cooking. I, too, have rather hazardous experiences with cooking. Somehow whenever I do something for *me* it comes out okay, and I eat it just fine. But if I try for the family it comes out all botched and they refuse to eat it. They generally make me eat the stuff for the next couple of days.

This house has an office with wall-to-ceiling bookshelves on two sides — the other two have a door and a window on them respectively. I love that my parents bought this house. All of those shelves are being used by yours truly, though this evening I packed up over 300 books in plastic bags to trundle down to charity sometime later this week. All romances I haven't looked at in years, since I went off the things.

Philip K. Dick's a writer I've had both a marvellous and a hard time reading. Some of his books I can read cover to cover and make perfect sense of, and yet others I'll read and come away with only the faintest hint of what happened in them. It reminds me that I have *Dr Bloodmoney* sitting in my personal library, which I have as yet not read. The other ones of his I own I have, and I believe I've read everything of his in the local library. At least — everything that wasn't borrowed out when I pass by the 'D' section.

The photograph of you in 1979 and now are so very different! No books! No CDs! Goodness. I ought to take a photo of my current library and then 20 years from now see what my book collection is like. Or my CD collection, which at the moment is sitting next to my computer and comprises of five store-bought CDs and four ones burnt for me by friends. I generally listen to stuff on the radio or mp3s.

(14 November 2001)

Thanks, Erika, for answering all the questions I raised about your autobiographical bits in your last contribution to

ANZAPA.

Erika gave the impression of being Superwoman — so good at music, writing, reading and all sorts of other things that she didn't have time for writing fanzines anymore. The real truth is that she's still finishing her degree. People like

me who have been enjoying Erika's fan writing and fanzines over the last few years are hoping like crazy that she finishes that degree Real Soon Now.

— **Bruce Gillespie, 19 January 2002**