

Introduction

Peggy Glanville-Hicks (1912–1990) is an Australian composer whose full significance has only recently been appreciated. Born in Melbourne, Australia, she transcended the gendered expectations of her upbringing and went on to become a fine composer and a highly influential figure in the vibrant musical life of New York after the Second World War. This book traces the development of Glanville-Hicks's music in the context of the biographical and social circumstances that shaped it.

The account of the music is chronological and begins with Glanville-Hicks's early works. These pieces embraced the English pastoral style which dominated both British music in the earlier decades of the twentieth century and the musical life of Melbourne during Glanville-Hicks's formative years. Following her early compositional training in Melbourne, Glanville-Hicks moved to England in 1932 to study with Ralph Vaughan Williams at the Royal College of Music, thereby reinforcing the English pastoral orientation of her early musical style. The broadening of her musical horizons began with study with Egon Wellesz in Vienna in 1936 and Nadia Boulanger in Paris in 1937, and continued after her emigration to the United States in 1941. There she encountered a wealth of musical ideas which led to a profound re-evaluation of her musical language. She first aligned herself with the American neoclassicists, writing a number of works in a wholly committed neoclassical idiom, most notably the *Concertino da Camera* (1946). It was to be a short-lived neoclassical phase, however. In the late 1940s she joined a small group of American composers who were using non-Western musics as their inspirational well-spring, including Colin McPhee, Alan Hovhaness, Lou Harrison and Paul Bowles. These composers and the ideas they espoused led Glanville-Hicks to develop the 'melody-rhythm' concept of her later works – a musical structure which focused on the two elements of non-Western music: melody and rhythm. This new approach appeared abruptly in the 1951 Sonata for Piano and Percussion and was subsequently applied to the late operas, beginning with *The Transposed Heads* in 1953. Her melody-rhythm style was refined over the ensuing years with a considerable thinning of texture and a decreasing reliance on harmony. Contrary to her assertions, however, harmony continued to be a notable ingredient in the musical language of the late operas *Nausicaa* (1959–60) and *Sappho* (1963). In the late 1950s Glanville-Hicks retreated to Greece to write 'the big works', in particular the operas that lay at the heart of her creative output, but this was not to be. Her compositional career ended in 1967, following surgery the previous year for a life-threatening brain tumour. Against all medical expectations she went on to live for a further 24 years, returning to Australia in 1975 amidst

a dawning recognition that one of the country's most significant composers had returned. She died in Sydney in 1990.

Glanville-Hicks's career as a composer is impressive by any measure. She produced over 70 finely crafted works, in the process defying not only the usual obstacles faced by all composers but also those additional hurdles and prejudices encountered by female composers. Her talents also extended beyond composition. She forged an illustrious career as a music journalist and arts administrator in New York in the 1940s and 1950s, working tirelessly to promote new music and the careers of young composers. This work undoubtedly played a major role in shaping the development of her own musical language, giving her much opportunity to reflect upon the various schools of thought and to arrive at her own solution to the dilemmas of form, structure and direction that had beset Western art music in the twentieth century. Through all this, Glanville-Hicks waged a constant battle against poverty and gender discrimination, living a life of extraordinary highs and lows as she dealt with the vicissitudes of a challenging professional and personal life. The story of her life has been told in the biographies. This book is the untold story of the music of Peggy Glanville-Hicks.

Approach

Like any scholarly account, this book must of necessity impose boundaries around its subject. The central focus will therefore be on the development of Glanville-Hicks's musical language – that is, on such elements as form, structure, texture, melodic content, harmony, tonality, rhythm, and the incursion of non-Western musical elements. At the same time, the musical language will be contextualized within the biographical circumstances and musical influences that helped to define it.

The book will also be selective in terms of the works included for discussion, it being clearly beyond the scope of the study to provide a detailed analysis of all of Glanville-Hicks's compositions. The availability of scores has been a further factor in the selection of works. Differing levels of analysis will be offered throughout the book, with the most significant works being examined in some detail. 'Significant' is defined as embodying a notable or new compositional direction, and/or as being amongst Glanville-Hicks's more popular and most frequently performed pieces. Entire chapters will be devoted to the two operas which stand as pillars in her compositional output: *The Transposed Heads* (1953) and *Nausicaa* (1959–60).

The analyses will be framed by Glanville-Hicks's commentaries on her music, which began with the 1946 *Concertino da Camera* and continued through to the late works. These commentaries provide a useful starting point for understanding her musical language, and the frequently encountered contradictions between intention and realization highlight the challenges that Glanville-Hicks had set herself in her later works. Glanville-Hicks is essentially a neo-tonal composer – in other words, she follows the practice of many twentieth-century composers in avoiding the major/minor system of keys and functional harmony, instead establishing a single

pitch as a tonal centre. Formal analysis and established methods of tonal analysis will therefore be used throughout the book. In the analysis of *Nausicaa* in Chapter 8, set theory will also be used in the interest of textual economy.

Sources

A wide range of primary and secondary source material has been drawn upon in the writing of this book. Glanville-Hicks's writings and reflections have been a valuable source of information – her newspaper reviews, journal articles about music and composition (both her own music and that of other composers), and the liner notes that accompany recordings of her music. Writings about Glanville-Hicks and various film and tape interviews, the latter made after her return to Australia, have been a further useful resource. The most significant of these is Deborah Hayes's bio-bibliography,¹ which provides a comprehensive listing of compositions by Glanville-Hicks as well as a meticulous itemization of writings by and about her, a discography (now a little dated – Hayes's book was published in 1990), and a list of archival resources. James Murdoch's biography² has also been a useful reference. The four Glanville-Hicks archival collections held in Australia have been an invaluable source of primary source material. The most extensive of these collections, housed in the State Library of Victoria and in the Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, contain a large amount of correspondence as well as newspaper clippings, scores, photographs, opera librettos, brochures and publicity material. Collections in the National Library of Australia and the Australian Music Centre have provided further significant information. Several archival collections in the United States have also yielded useful data. A substantial amount of material relating to Glanville-Hicks is located within the Composers' Forum Papers in the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts; further useful material is held in the Virgil Thomson Papers at Yale University and the Oliver Daniel Collection at the Library of Congress.³ Extensive archival research has supplemented formal analysis of the scores, manifesting throughout the book and providing important insights into Glanville-Hicks's process of composition as well as the contexts in which she worked.

¹ Deborah Hayes, *Peggy Glanville-Hicks: A Bio-Bibliography* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1990).

² James Murdoch, *Peggy Glanville-Hicks: A Transposed Life* (New York: Pendragon Press, 2002).

³ This enumeration includes only collections that I have drawn upon in this book. For further archival holdings see the listing in Hayes, *Bio-Bibliography*.

Works Written by Glanville-Hicks

The number of works attributed to Glanville-Hicks varies according to the methodology employed by the various chroniclers. This situation has been confused by four factors. The first relates to the status of works which Glanville-Hicks considered to be ‘in progress’ at the end of her life. Both Hayes and Murdoch list three works in this category: the opera *Beckett*; a piece for Indonesian frog-puppet band called *Froggyana*; and a piece on a biblical text. There appear to be no preliminary sketches of these pieces and it would seem that they never progressed beyond the conceptual stage. The opera *Carlos among the Candles* (1962) falls into a similar category,⁴ as well as two further works listed by Murdoch: an opera entitled *Akhmaton* (1959) (comprising only a libretto), and an orchestral piece called *Wild Bells* (1965). With no evidence of scores or sketches, it would appear that these works, too, did not proceed past the planning phase. The second obfuscating factor is the question of whether to count the ballets and their orchestral versions as separate works (for example, the ballet *Saul and the Witch of Endor* and its orchestral version, *Drama for Orchestra*). Both Hayes and Murdoch opt for dual citations, although Hayes lists the ballet *Jeptha’s Daughter*⁵ (1964⁶) together with its orchestral version, *Tragic Celebration*, only as one work. Discrepancies in the actual works cited are a third source of confusion. Wendy Beckett’s biography of Glanville-Hicks, for example, lists five works which are listed neither in Hayes’s bio-bibliography nor in Murdoch’s biography;⁷ and Murdoch gives individual citations to a number of early works (written ‘by 1932’) that Hayes groups together under the single heading ‘Songs and Instrumental Pieces’ (also dated ‘by 1932’). Moreover, two works have been located since the publication of Hayes’s bio-bibliography: the *Meditation for Orchestra* (1964), which was deposited in the Mitchell Library after Glanville-Hicks’s death; and *Obeisance to a Lucite Spectrum* (1949), a piece written as a tribute to John Cage on the occasion of his

⁴ Murdoch, p. 301, refers to the work as a ‘proposed opera’, noting that there is no evidence of the existence of a score, although rights for the libretto were negotiated with the estate of Wallace Stevens.

⁵ ‘Jeptha’ is also spelled ‘Jephtha’ and ‘Jephthah’. The spelling in Glanville-Hicks’s score, ‘Jeptha’, will be used in this book.

⁶ *Tragic Celebration* is dated 1964 at the end of Glanville-Hicks’s handwritten score. This date must be taken as definitive and the datings in other accounts as incorrect. Glanville-Hicks’s 1964 diary (Papers of Peggy Glanville-Hicks, National Library of Australia, MS 9083/3/5) provides clear evidence that *Jeptha’s Daughter* (the ballet version) was also written in 1964 (between March and July).

⁷ Wendy Beckett, *Peggy Glanville-Hicks* (Pymble, NSW: Angus & Robertson, 1992), pp. 11, 28, 44. The specific works cited are *A Prelude to an Infant Protégé* (from the early Melbourne period); Preludes for Piano, Violin Fantasy and *First Trio for Pandeon* (from the Royal College period); and a Suite for String Orchestra and Oboe (from her period of study in Paris).

37th birthday.⁸ Finally, the matter has been further confused by the citation of several early works whose scores have not been located, and which appear to have been destroyed by the composer (for example, the 1939 *Sonatina for Piano*).⁹

This book offers a revised list of compositions.¹⁰ On the basis of Hayes's enumeration together with the available evidence, it is estimated that Glanville-Hicks wrote 76 works. A 'work' is defined as a composition which has been completed, and for whose existence there is some evidence. The three works which Hayes and Murdoch cite as 'in progress' have therefore not been included; *Carlos Among the Candles*, *Akhnaton* and *Wild Bells* have also been excluded because they do not appear to have progressed beyond the conceptual stage. The five additional pieces cited by Beckett have been left out because no evidence has been found to substantiate their existence. For methodological consistency, individual citations have been given to the eight early works which Murdoch lists (Hayes includes these works under the single heading of 'Songs and Instrumental Pieces, written by 1932'); the ballets and their orchestral versions are also listed separately. Works that have come to light since the publication of Hayes's bibliography have been included, as well as the early works cited in both Hayes and Murdoch whose manuscripts have not been located and which Glanville-Hicks appears to have withdrawn. The dating of works in this book draws largely upon Hayes; any differences stem from the date of completion which Glanville-Hicks included at the end of her scores, the composer's dates having been taken as definitive.¹¹ An extensive search has located the scores of 53 works,¹² which are available either for purchase, as rental scores or in manuscript form in archival collections, principally in the State Libraries of New South Wales and Victoria.

⁸ This work has recently been unearthed by the Australian researcher Suzanne Robinson, who has written an article about the piece, entitled 'Homage to a "Non-Harmonic Genius": Glanville-Hicks on Cage', *Musicology Australia*, 29 (2007): 1–22.

⁹ Beckett, *Peggy Glanville-Hicks*, p. 11: 'Peggy later destroyed a large number of the early musical scores from this period, embarrassed by their naivety.' See also Margaret Hetherington, 'Peggy Glanville-Hicks: "I'm Not in the Least Bit Interested in Yesterday"', *24 Hours*, 12/11 (1987): 6. The Choral Suite is, according to Hetherington, 'almost the only work from this period which she has preserved' (that is, the period of study 1936–38). See also Edward Cole, liner notes for *Sinfonia da Pacifica* and *Three Gymnopédies*, MGM Records E3336 (USA, 1956). Cole writes of the early works: 'Except for a handful which found publication, [they] are now withdrawn.'

¹⁰ The list of works is set out on pp. 263–71.

¹¹ It appears that these scores were not available to Hayes at the time of her research.

¹² No distinction is made here between full and vocal scores, and in some cases both are available; furthermore, no distinction is made between scores which are available for purchase or hire and those that are housed in archival collections.