

Geoffrey Allen

*Music for
Woodwinds*

Michael Waye flute
Allan Meyer clarinet
Katherine Walpole bassoon
David Wickham piano



Music for Woodwinds by Geoffrey Allen (b.1927)

	Sonata for bassoon and piano (1964), Opus 9 ^+	14:56
1	I. <i>Allegro ma non troppo</i>	5:26
2	II. <i>Lento – Allegro scherzando – Andante alla marcia – Tempo I</i>	6:12
3	III. <i>Allegro con spirito</i>	3:17
	Outback sketches, for clarinet and piano (2004-5), Opus 58 *+	18:50
4	I. <i>Aubade: Moderato</i>	6:43
5	II. <i>Desert Noon: Adagio — Molto adagio</i>	6:10
6	III. <i>Bush Sundown: Andante</i>	5:56
7	Pastorale, for bassoon and piano (1998), Opus 34 no.1 ^+	2:23
	Sonatina for bassoon and piano (1998), Opus 34 no.2 ^+	10:09
8	I. <i>Moderato ma con affrettato</i>	3:12
9	II. <i>Adagietto</i>	2:50
10	III. <i>Allegro – Appena moderato</i>	4:05
	Fantasy Trio for flute, clarinet and piano (2007), Opus 70 #*+	20:56
11	I. <i>Poco andante</i>	5:55
12	II. <i>Allegro giocoso – Andante</i>	3:06
13	III. <i>Andante di sogno</i>	5:51
14	IV. <i>Allegro moderato – Alla marcia – Tempo I – Poco andante</i>	6:03
	Total duration:	67:14

* **Allan Meyer, clarinet**

Michael Waye, flute,

^ **Katherine Walpole bassoon**

+ **David Wickham, piano**

The woodwind works of Geoffrey Allen

Geoffrey Allen was born in the UK in 1927. He studied chemistry and geography at Oxford between 1945 and 1951, and his first acknowledged compositions date from this time. Since then he has held a number of positions in Australian libraries, latterly at the University of Western Australia, the WA Institute of Technology and Curtin University.

Allen has spent much of his career championing Australian music, editing, publishing and facilitating recordings to that worthy end. Since the late 1980s he has experienced a resurgence of creative drive. His body of work is approaching opus 100, and includes seventeen piano sonatas, soon to be recorded by Murray McLachlan, many shorter piano pieces and numerous works for woodwinds, together with songs and a few works for strings. He acknowledges the major influences on his style as those of early and mid-20th century British and French composers.

In his instrumental music Allen favours Delius's principle of ongoing rhapsodic development, instinctively applied. Motives and entire passages are often repeated, but frequently transposed by a semitone or tone, a habit which Allen says may be derived from Milhaud. The tonality is evasive and constantly shifting, resisting classification into a key for the most part.

When Allen lived in Sydney (from 1952 to 1961) he got to know John Cran, Principal Bassoon of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, and, at about the time that Allen was to move to Perth Crann suggested Allen consider writing something for bassoon and two clarinets. He thought about it, and even wrote a few bars, but nothing eventuated. However, in 1964, by which time Allen was well settled in Perth, he wrote the *Sonata*. It remained unperformed until June 1967, when a concert in the ABC's Perth studio celebrated new Western Australian chamber music. The soloist was Brian Pope (Principal Bassoon of the West Australian Symphony Orchestra), accompanied by Verdon Williams, who later went to Hobart as conductor of the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra. Allen recalls that the performance was well-received, but sadly, after that the score went into a drawer until it was brought out for this recording.

The earliest work in this collection by thirty-five years, the *Sonata* is written in an energetic, edgy language, recalling the sting of Prokofiev and the springy rhythmical drive of Hindemith, as players past and present have remarked. The piano part is the most athletic in this collection, and the composer has commented upon the contrast that he now perceives between his music from the 1960s and that of the 1980s onwards, finding the earlier works more “aggressive”.

The second movement is a balance of sombre gravity and tenderness. The measured tread of the accompaniment and the dark, low tessitura of the opening set up the former, recalling Holst’s repeated use of a dirge that haunted him. The tenderness emerges from the contours of the bassoon melody, occasional piano interludes, and a switch from common to triple meter. This metrical tension also animates a short-lived, quicksilver scherzo episode, before the march takes over again. The march reappears only briefly in conventional martial tempo, its irony and prickly sonority recalls Hindemith’s use of this form, slowing to a final iteration of the sombre opening, now sounding wiser and more resigned.

The compact third movement also maintains quirky vitality through frequent meter changes, and the listener’s impression is of a steely determination and a clear sense of direction. Constant change in the surface detail is kept within controlled bounds, and one’s visual analogue is of hurtling through a kaleidoscopic tube.

The *Pastorale* and *Sonatina* for bassoon comprise Allen’s Op. 34, of 1998. They were written in response to a call from the Fellowship of Australian Composers for work for a CD suitable for final year high school or first year tertiary music students. The third movement of the *Sonatina* was selected and recorded on the subsequently-produced disc.

The meter and rhythm, and the melodic shapes, all belong to the English pastoral style, but are given new vigour and variety by the continuous flexibility of the harmony. In the first movement of the *Sonatina* and in the *Pastorale*, the harmony results from the free play of loose counterpoint, in which all scales are constantly altered, giving rise to

moods from melting to biting asperity. The effect upon the listener is a pleasing suspension of structured time in favour of buoyant, free-flowing music.

Ever alert to the lessons of the past, Allen borrows the pulse and simple texture (though not the melody) of the beautiful cantilena that opens the second movement of Ravel's G major *Piano Concerto* for his own *Sonatina* second movement, but here too changes of meter and texture occur frequently.

This free development is continued with the perky motif that opens the third movement, undergoing melodic and rhythmical transformation including a cadenza. Allen himself notes echoes of Poulenc, a connection that was unconscious at the time of composition. This echo persists into a wistful lyrical coda, where all the kinetic energy is finally dissipated.

The cover of the score of the 2010 *Outback Sketches*, for clarinet and piano, bears a striking watercolour by Elisabeth Durack, "Stone the Crows", all ochres and blacks. It forms a part of the composer's own collection. However, the opening movement, "Aubade", sounds much softer than the harsh red centre of Australia despite the occasional acerbic twist in harmony. Its French pastoral title (meaning a morning love song, particularly of parting) adds to this impression, a reminder that the outback has its own delicate beauty in the early morning, especially in the wildflower season. Lyrical and richly-coloured, the music thereafter sets the clarinet and piano melodies in constant imitative conversation, never coming together.

The second movement, "Desert Noon" is much more in the shadowless mood of Durack's painting, but is also reminiscent of Messiaen in colour. Appropriately dry and spare, the mood is only softened with occasional consoling, cooling harmonies. Another hint of Messiaen is in the use of figures like bird-calls in both instruments, that also seem to transform into analogies of fierce, blinding light.

"Bush Sundown" concludes the passage of the day. This is music of the bush as seen by painters such as Arthur Streeton and the Heidelberg School, affectionately portrayed, impressionistic and still.

The *Fantasy Trio* for flute, clarinet and piano, dates from 2007, and shares techniques with the *Outback Sketches*. In the first movement, shapes and harmonies derived from the improvisatory opening are used to create melodic accompanying figures. The pulse is blurred by contrasts of groups of three against groups of four, and frequent ties across bar-lines. Allen employs rich, poly-tonal harmony in this music of controlled passion, though the texture is always kept transparent, allowing the wind instruments space to soar. The musical current flows quickly despite several fermata marking changes of section. With these hallmarks, this movement is perhaps the clearest illustration of the long after-effects of Allen's youthful enthusiasm for Delius. It ends with a return to the rhapsodic improvisatory music with which it opened.

The second movement is a sprightly scherzo, in English pastoral vein, with occasional nods to the kind of muscular writing of Stravinsky's "The Soldier's Tale". The harmony is often teasingly close to clear keys but always resists definition. There is a lovely variety of texture and of range for the virtuosic wind soloists.

The third movement is marked *andante di sogno*, the andante of a dream. Modal-sounding harmonies predominate, another recollection of Delius perhaps. After the opening the soloists rarely work together; the wind instruments set in conversation or in dreamy isolation. The effect is of rapt contemplation of a moment, changing only very gradually.

The final movement is built on traditional rhythmical patterning and simpler harmony, but always filled with the music of changing light and colour, again akin to Streton's pictures. Its surprises are contained in the frequent change of meter. An arresting march enters and becomes a recurring counter-balance to lyrical fantasies. The march never stays fixed in figuration or tempo, and finally its speed is so radically stretched that it dissolves back into the rhapsodic texture. The last page recalls the opening of the first movement, a reminder of the fantasy inspiration behind the work.

A note on the bassoon repertoire

The bassoon takes its pride of place in the orchestra and also cuts a very fine solo instrument under the pen of talented composers. Of course, this evolution commenced in the court of the Sun King in Versailles as shawms morphed into bassoons and oboes. There are many sonatas by illustrious composers such as Boismortier, Corrette, and Vivaldi. This handsome addition to the repertoire is mainly due to the practice of writing sonatas for melody or bass instruments. The aforementioned works were shared therefore amongst viola da gamba, cello and bassoon; in the high baroque, both Fasch and Telemann however wrote specifically for bassoon.

It was during the classical period that the bassoon became a solo instrument in its own right. Concerti were written by Mozart, of which only one survives (fire, flood or the common practice of plagiarism?), as well as a sonata specifically for bassoon with cello accompaniment. Other concerti, solo chamber works and sonatas were composed by Weber, Devienne, Hummel, and Johann Christian Bach. As we continue through the epochs, the instrument had some highlights in the nineteenth century with Saint-Saëns and Elgar; however the greatest contributors were perhaps from the twentieth century French school (Poulenc, Bozza, Dutilleux, Françaix, Bitsch and Tansman). This is by far a comprehensive list, but it is worth mentioning other twentieth century contributors: Denisov and Gubaidulina (Russia), Jacob and Arnold (Britain) and Hindemith (Germany). Most recently, solo bassoon repertoire has been penned in Europe by Phillipe Hersant, Olga Neuwirth, Otmar Nussio, Heinz Holliger, Luciano Berio, Salvatore Sciarrino and Georg Friederich Haas. In addition to the generous contribution by Geoffrey Allen in Australia, his local contemporaries include Liza Lim, George Dreyfus, Colin Brumby, James Ledger, Graham Powning, Miriam Hyde, Graham Powning, Larry Sitsky and Elena Kats- Chernin. A special mention must be made of the Australian bassoonist Lorelei Downing of Klangforum Wien for whose spectacular artistry much Australian repertoire has been written.

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Allan Meyer



Michael Wayne



Katherine Walpole



David Wickham



The musicians

Allan Meyer has been Section Principal Clarinet with the West Australian Symphony Orchestra since 1990. His distinguished career has seen him perform throughout Australia as well as in Massachusetts, USA. He has been guest Principal Clarinet with the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra and the Springfield Symphony Orchestra (USA).

Allan was born in Perth and studied with WASO's former Principal Clarinet, Jack Harrison. He graduated from the Conservatorium of Music at the University of WA with a Master of Music and completed post-graduate studies in London with John McCaw, Antony Pay and Jack Brymer.

After seven years with the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra, Allan returned to Perth as Principal Clarinet. In 1997 and 1999, Allan performed and taught at the University of Massachusetts (Amherst) in the USA. He performed in the Musicorda, Mohawk Trail and Williamstown Chamber Music Festivals. In Perth Allan teaches at the UWA Conservatorium of Music and the WA Academy of Performing Arts.

Allan has appeared as soloist with WASO on many occasions and has premiered works by Australian composers James Ledger, Iain Grandage, Richard Mills and Andrew Schultz. He has also performed with the Escher String Quartet. In 2016 he performed the Mozart *Concerto*, a work he has performed many times with WASO, as part of a regional tour conducted by his former student Christopher Dragon who is now Resident Conductor of the Colorado Symphony and Music Director of the Wyoming Symphony Orchestra.

Michael Waye has held the position of Principal Piccolo with the West Australian Symphony Orchestra since leaving the Canberra School of Music in 1987. Michael studied with renowned Australian flautists Linda Vogt and Vernon Hill, winning the prestigious Australian National Flute Solo and Orchestral competitions and later graduating from the University of Western Australia where he now lectures in flute.

As a soloist, recitalist and chamber musician, Michael has worked with many outstanding artists and ensembles including the Camerata of Western Australia, pianists Graeme Gilling and Jennifer Fox-Russell, the WASO 20th Century Ensemble, the Nova Ensemble and with soprano Mary-Attracta Connolly and renowned harpist Jane Geeson in the Romance Ensemble. Michael has also appeared as a soloist with violinist John Harding and harpsichordist Neal Peres Da Costa with the WASO Chamber Orchestra and as guest artist in recital with English flautist Paul Edmund Davies.

Michael has been seconded to play as Principal Flute and Piccolo with several other orchestras including a memorable series of concerts with the Odessa Philharmonic, and with Neil Armfield and Pietari Inkenin in the acclaimed Opera Australia production of Wagner's *Der Ring des Nibelungen*.

Katherine Walpole is a bassoonist who grew up in Perth, graduating from the Western Australia Academy of Performing Arts. She completed post-graduate study on modern bassoon at the Hochschule für Musik, Karlsruhe under Professor Günter Pfitzenmaier, and baroque and classical bassoon at the Conservatorium van Amsterdam with Donna Agrell.

Katherine has performed with ensembles such as the Sydney Opera House Orchestra, the Baden Baden Philharmonie, La Petite Bande, Ensemble Zefiro, Australian Brandenburg Orchestra and the European Union Baroque Orchestra under directors Sigiswald Kuijken, Phillipe Herreweghe, Alfredo Bernadini and Lars Ulrik Mortensen. She has taught at the Amsterdam Conservatorium of Music and Koninklijke Conservatorium in The Hague. Currently she lectures in Historical Performance Practice at WAAPA, is on staff at UWA as a bassoon teacher and performs as a freelancer on baroque, classical and modern bassoons.

Katherine plays a bassoon made pre-1927 by Gustav Mollenhauer, in Kassal. The factory was destroyed during World War II and all records lost, but this bassoon is stamped "Cassal", the pre 1927 spelling of the city's name.

David Wickham is one of Australia's pre-eminent accompanists. He was a lecturer at the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts, principal coach for West Australian Opera, and a member of the music staff of the Australian Opera Studio, where he was music director for many productions. "David Wickham led from the front with a superb display of musicianship, playing the orchestral reduction with extraordinary flair and directing at the same time." Opera Opera described him as "one of the finest exponents of keyboard skill when dealing with orchestral transcriptions".

He has broadcast numerous recitals for ABC Classic FM and BBC Radio 3. The West Australian described David as "a musician whose fingers knew no fears, and who could shape even the subtlest nuances of the vocal line." As a freelance repetiteur David worked for English National Opera, Welsh National Opera and Scottish Opera, also spending nine seasons with Garsington Opera. He has also worked on many productions for West Australian Opera.

David conducted *Mikado* for West Australian Opera, and for WAAPA he has conducted *Albert Herring*, *Little Women*, *Dialogues of the Carmelites*, *English Eccentrics*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Candide*.

His Perth-based song recital series *SwanSongs* has received critical acclaim, showcasing artists such as Gregory Yurisich, Lisa Gasteen, Cheryl Barker, Emma Matthews and Sara Macliver.

Tracks 4-6, 11-14 were recorded in the Western Australian Academy of Performing Art Auditorium in August 2015. Piano: Fazioli grand.

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Tracks 1-3, 7-10 were recorded at Crank Recording, 385 Newcastle Street, Perth, W.A.

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