

Celebrating “Lilburn 100” at Massey University Library Wellington Campus

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Elizabeth Smith reports on the exhibition being held at Massey Library, Wellington Campus from October 27th to November 20th, 2015. It includes Robert Hoskins’ reflections on publishing Lilburn’s music.

Massey Library acknowledges the Lilburn centenary by holding an exhibition in Te Pikitanga, the library exhibition space, from October 27th to November 20th. Library staff Claire Harris and Paige Jarman – who are also Massey Creative Arts graduates – have created three posters for the occasion. One is a timeline of Lilburn’s life, and another showing the variety of facets to the legacy Lilburn left, providing ongoing support for New Zealand music and musicians. The third poster describes Massey University’s and Associate Professor Robert Hoskins’ involvement with the publication of Lilburn scores, which is reproduced below. A display of relevant library materials is also included.

The exhibition opened with a performance of Lilburn’s *Suite for Solo Viola* performed by Elyse Dalabakis from the New Zealand School of Music. The suite is in four movements and was composed by Lilburn in 1955 for viola player Jean McCartney but never performed. Jean took the only copy – the original manuscript – to Australia where it lay undiscovered for some time amongst her papers. Found years later it had its first public performance in 2005 by Jean’s grandson, James Munro.

Elyse Dalabakis performing in front of the third poster
(Photograph by Daniel Boobyer)



“Lilburn 100” book display
(Photograph by Claire Harris)



Massey University involvement in publishing Lilburn's music

In the early 1990s I was the sole music lecturer at Massey University: developing courses and providing concerts, but also wanting to profile the university in a special musical way. At that time there was very little happening in the field of music publishing in New Zealand, apart from Waiteata Music Press at Victoria University of Wellington under the enterprising Jack Body. It seemed to me a good idea to set up a small publishing enterprise to boost the publication of New Zealand music and I proceeded to consult with Jack and others.

I presented a case to the university and received start-up funding from the Research Committee chaired by Professor Glynnis Cropp. I began the venture with the publication of Douglas Lilburn's *Drysdale Overture* (1937) – composed essentially as a tribute to the landscape of Drysdale Station, a sheep farm in the upper Turakina Valley where Lilburn spent his childhood. Lilburn himself was enthusiastic about the establishment of Massey Music Editions and it was my privilege to work with him again during the publication of his orchestral tone poem *A Song of Islands* (1946), published two years later in 1996.

I occasionally visited Lilburn at his home in Thorndon, where I was warmly welcomed. We usually chatted over a cup of tea before getting down to business. Being fairly reclusive in his old age, I ensured that my visits were confined to an hour: something I think he appreciated. A rather pleasant relationship ensued, with occasional gifts and letters passing between us until the end of his life in 2001.

Soon after Douglas's death, Promethean Editions, New Zealand's newly established professional music publisher (the first since Price Milburn last published any music a decade or so before), combined with Trust Records to record and publish Lilburn's complete piano music. I was asked to help, which initially meant going through Lilburn's manuscripts at the Alexander Turnbull Library with pianist Dan Poynton. We were both astonished at how much piano music there was.

The project grew, and Massey University invested in it with the support of Pro-Vice-Chancellor

Professor Duncan Joiner. Massey music activities were much expanded, now incorporating the Wellington campus, which allowed the possibility of such initiatives to develop. The result was a Massey-Morrison Trust brand in music recording and a Massey-Promethean brand in music publication; indeed, Massey University and Promethean Editions brokered an agreement that resulted in the publication of a significant number of important scores by a variety of composers.

In regard to music by Lilburn, the work continues, and the eight-volume collected-piano-music series will soon be completed. This will be followed by two volumes of selected pieces aimed at encouraging students to play the repertory and a single bound library volume of the complete edition. Also currently in progress is a Centenary Edition of Lilburn's music, including the first computer set engraving-style of *Symphony No. 1* and the extended choral work *Prodigal Country*. All are scholarly editions based on primary sources.

Robert Hoskins

Associate Professor, Massey University

Series Editor: Lilburn Collected Piano Edition

Series Editor: Lilburn Centenary Edition

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