

# **The Winston Churchill Memorial Trust of Australia**

**Report by Tristram Williams**

**2008 Dame Roma Mitchell Churchill Fellow**

**The 21st Century Trumpet: An investigation into 21st Century Trumpet Techniques.**

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Signed

Dated

Tristram Williams

28/4/09

**Index**

Introduction	3
Executive Summary	4
Programme- people and organizations visited	5
Main Body- fellowship description and lessons learnt	6
Conclusions	9
Recommendations and Dissemination	10

## **Introduction**

My Churchill Fellowship consisted of meetings and lessons with the world's finest 'new' trumpeters, discussions and workshops with other contemporary musicians and

composers, attending some of the world's most interesting music schools, and seeing as many concerts as possible.

As the only trumpeter, to my knowledge, specializing in new classical music in Australia, it is very difficult for me to have conversations about the specific technical challenges and technical developments in recent composition for the trumpet. I intended my Fellowship to allow me this: organizing meetings with teachers and players at the front of the field internationally. As it turns out, this was but one benefit of my Fellowship. I also learnt a great deal about music education in a more general sense by observing at various music schools. As interesting to me as the content of the lessons and classes I observed were the various pedagogical approaches of the teachers.

The concerts I have seen and the conversations I have had deeply impacted my own concert presentations. I return with an energy and excitement I have not experienced for some years, and a strong desire to implement my new ideas in my teaching and playing.

I am extremely grateful to the Churchill Trust, and Dame Roma Mitchell, who generously sponsored my fellowship. I also extend thanks to all those I met on the way who made my experience such a rich one.

## **Executive Summary**

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*Highlights of the places you went and the people you met who were particularly valuable in providing information*

Los Angeles: Ed Carroll, Coordinator, Brass Program, California Institute of the Arts.

New York City: Peter Evans, Mark Gould, Musicians.

Manchester: Liza Lim, Composer.

Cologne: Markus Stockhausen, Marco Blaauw, Musicians.

*The major lessons and conclusions learnt, and how you propose to disseminate and implement them in Australia.*

Major lessons:

- New directions in my own artistic practice: towards a more unified concert presentation.
- Music education should give greater emphasis towards the artistic growth of the student, allowing the student to find her or his own way, by offering the student as many different directions as possible.
- Music schools in Australia need considerably better funding if they wish to 'compete' with the Elite music schools of the world.
- Artistic growth is dependent on continued exposure to other artists: Arts practitioners (myself included!) should consider going to concerts, galleries, theatre, etc. a cause of their own growth, to be attended to with vigor.

This information will be disseminated via my own activities as a musician and teacher. Verbally in conversations with other musicians, and students, and in written form through my Master of Architecture dissertation at RMIT University, and in Journals and Online publications. The information will be implemented through my performances and teaching.

## **Programme**

January 7- January 13: Los Angeles, California. Visited Ed Carroll and California Institute of the Arts.

January 14- January 27: New York City. Visited Mark Gould and Ray Mase at the Manhattan School of Music and the Juilliard School. Also met with trumpeters Peter Evans, Nate Wooley and Gareth Flowers.

January 28- February 3: London and Manchester. Visited Composer Liza Lim, and John Miller at the Royal Northern Academy of Music, Manchester.

February 4- February 10: Berlin. Attended the Conference 'Audio Poverty'. Met with Conductor Manuel Nawri.

February 11- February 28: Cologne. Studied with trumpeter Marco Blaauw for four intensive 'trumpet days', focusing on the music of Stockhausen, advanced trumpet technique and some other major modern works. Studied with trumpeter Markus Stockhausen on the music of his father, principally the work *Pietà*. Observed the rehearsal period of the Group MusikFabrik for a concert at WDR Cologne. Met with many young musicians whose professional focus is on the music of our time.

February 28- March 4: Paris. Participated in the class of Antoine Cure, trumpet with the world's leading New Music Ensemble, Ensemble Intercontemporain, at the Paris Conservatoire.

## **Main Body**

The Fellowship was an extraordinary, transformative, inspirational, enriching and invigorating time for me. I return feeling charged with creative energy: with ideas for my own creative work, new ways to physically extend my own playing, inspired in my work as a teacher to pass on some of these new concepts, and determined to push my work into the areas I have glimpsed on my trip. I met or re-acquainted myself with many fascinating colleagues, whose work is similar to mine, yet we rarely can share or discuss. I heard many extraordinary performances that changed my concept of what a musical experience can be and can do. I was able to perform a concert program a number of times in different venues, giving me an opportunity to put into practice the lessons I was learning. I return feeling profoundly enriched by the experience and very excited about the future, and what I may be able to contribute to Australian musical life.

My Fellowship journey began in Los Angeles. I had previously met Ed Carroll at a conference in 2006, and was very impressed by his commitment to new music in his teaching and practice, and his attitude to music as creative work in general. He had told me about the extraordinary environment at California Institute of the Arts- a music school where collaboration, creation, experimentation and the students' unique artistic personas are the most important elements, far ahead of dogma and conservatism. Ed invited me to give several classes and a recital at CalArts and I was very pleased to be able to spend some time there and experience the unique CalArts atmosphere. Indeed it is a school where creativity reigns. Rather than box the students into a certain career path, the students are encouraged to try to find their own ways. Thus, music students are offered classes in filmmaking, and dance, and improvisation, even tuvan throat singing (!). The students there were the most knowledgeable, curious, engaged music students I have ever encountered. I felt (feel) inspired to somehow bring elements of this type of music education to Australia: an education which is much more holistic and concerned with artistic growth, and not just 'chops'.

I also gave a two-hour recital at CalArts at the school's Roy O Disney Hall. It was a great privilege to play there- a beautiful hall with wonderful lighting and sound. This concert was the beginning of one particular story of my Fellowship- the development of my own concert presentation.

Another wonderful outcome from the CalArts visit was, through a discussion with Ed, we were able to commission a new work from prominent Australian Composer, Liza Lim, to be premiered by me in Sydney in 2010. Ed is the chair of a commissioning committee that happened to be looking for a composer and performer at the time I was visiting.

My two weeks in New York City were perhaps the most artistically invigorating period in my life. I made a deal with myself to try to go to a concert every day I was in New York, which I nearly managed (12 gigs). I haven't felt such a hunger for music since my student days, and I'm happy to say I've brought most of that back to Australia with me. Not everything I saw was great, but I still learnt from that. But some of it was exceptional, and several of these shows were amongst the most important I've seen in my life. Particularly important was seeing the trumpeter Peter Evans in concert three times, in three different contexts. Peter is simply the most extraordinary player I've ever heard, and as another trumpeter the opportunity to watch and listen to him was revelatory. He was doing things in the horn I had not thought possible, and now I know are. I heard him in a small jazz band, in a brass trio and in duo with another trumpeter, all completely different contexts and angles on what he does. All three blew my mind and opened a world of possibilities to me.

Another concert that, unexpectedly, blew my mind, was seeing the hip-hop artist Mos Def, playing at the Jazz Club the Blue Note with a quartet. This show amazed me. Not only was Mos an Extraordinary musical artist, but also the way his show was paced and structured was a revelation. Every movement, every throwaway line between songs, the entrance to the stage, everything, was part of this incredibly considered, musical performance. The breadth of the show shocked me- from low humor, to profound seriousness, from spirituality to politics (it was the week after the inauguration of Barack Obama) all with incredible style and confidence. It has deeply influenced my own ideas about performance and the possibility of performance in a way that few, if any, gigs ever have before.

I played my recital program twice in New York City- at the Manhattan School of Music, and the Juilliard School. It was great to get to play this program repeatedly. The program consisted entirely of modern works that are extremely challenging for both me, and the audience! Playing the same program repeatedly (a total of five times, in slightly different forms, on the Fellowship) gave me a fantastic opportunity to think about my presentation- how I could make the music more comprehensible for my audience, how I could pace it best for my own playing.

I met some fascinating people in New York. It was terrific to be able to hang out with Peter Evans and some of his friends in the New York free Improv Scene. I was great too, to meet the students at MSM and Juilliard, especially to get an idea of the differences between these schools and CalArts. Perhaps the most fascinating meeting though was with the trumpeter Mark Gould. Mark teaches at MSM and Juilliard, and was once an orchestral trumpeter (like me) who has quit in order to focus on his own creative projects (like me). Mark came to my recitals and we had some very interesting discussions about art, and music, which became an important email dialogue, about which I'll say more later.

After New York City I traveled to London. Unfortunately my planned meeting with the composer Richard Barrett fell through, so I was lucky to be able to go to Manchester and visit the composer Liza Lim. Liza and I discussed the newly commissioned work and made some experiments. I was also able to work with her on a piece of hers I had already been playing on this trip. It's always wonderful to have the composer's insight into her own work.

I also visited the Royal Northern College of Music and played my recital there. The students were very receptive- probably due to the fine work of their Head of Brass, John Miller. I spent some time with John and was charmed by his humility and generosity, despite being something of a legend in the brass world.

Back in London I saw one of the concert highlights of my trip, the Pacifica Quartet playing the complete Elliott Carter String Quartets at Wigmore Hall. This is an extraordinary musical feat, which I dare say; concert programmers in Australia will probably never have the guts to approach. Carter is renowned as a *difficult* composer, and I was expecting the concert to be if rewarding, also exhausting. It wasn't. I found myself on the edge of my seat the entire four hours, transfixed by the unbelievable playing of this music. A friend of mine commented that it was a rare and precious opportunity to see if this composer is a great composer or merely an important one. Unequivocally, I can say, Carter is great.

From London I traveled to Berlin. Unfortunately my planned meetings with Bill Forman had fallen through, and I was very lucky to read in Wire magazine, while in New York, of a conference/Festival called Audio Poverty. Audio Poverty was held in Berlin's Haus der Kultur der Welt, and was three days of concerts, lectures, panel discussions and hanging out with other people interested in new and innovative music, including the conductor Manuel Nawri. I saw some memorable gigs there- most notably the American singer Josephine Foster, singing Schubert Lieder with a Flamenco Guitarist in an inimitable and very beautiful style, a performance of Stockhausen's Goldstaub, which requires that the performers fast for four days immediately before taking the stage, and a performance by the American composer Alvin Curran. Curran deeply impressed me. He also took part in a panel discussion that he totally dominated with his incisive and perceptive commentary. Curran has been a part of the Avant Garde since the early sixties,

and I greatly respect the single-mindedness with which he has pursued his artistic goals, despite many obstacles.

From Berlin I went to Cologne. I first participated in a little 'trumpet-week' held by the Dutch virtuoso, Marco Blaauw. This was a very rewarding time- hanging out with Marco and several other German players, discussing technique, playing duets, trios and quartets, performing solos for one another. I got a great deal from Marco- he has a unique approach to trumpet technique. Like me, he specializes in the most difficult modern repertoire and has spent a lot of time working out how he can play with less and less effort. He had some ideas that were new to me, and he enriched my playing.

Also very nice was the exploration of new repertoire. Much of the pieces we working on together was new to me and Marco brought special insight as most of the composers he had worked with directly, including Kagel, Stockhausen and Mundry. It was also lovely to meet some other players during this time.

I was also able to travel to Markus Stockhausen's house outside of Cologne for some lessons on the music of his father. I had specially prepared several works for this occasion. We worked primarily on his father's late masterpiece, *Pietá*. This was an unforgettable, immeasurably rich experience. The work was written in close consultation with his father, and to be able to get Markus' insight, let alone the anecdotes (!) about the piece was incredible. The lessons with Markus on *Pietá* taught me so much more than just about that piece. Markus is an extraordinary musician. It was a privilege to work with him.

Also during my time in Cologne I was able to observe the rehearsal period for the group MusikFabrik, of which Marco Blaauw is a member. This was a lot of fun, and not only gave me some insight into how a group of this caliber runs, but also allowed me to meet the musicians of MusikFabrik. Needless to say, fun times were had, with lots of listening sessions, good food and wine.

From Cologne, I traveled to Paris, my last stop. Whilst in Berlin I had made contact with the Parisien Trumpeter, Antoine Curé, who plays with Pierre Boulez's famous, *Ensemble Intercontemporain*. Monsieur Curé was a very hospitable fellow, and he allowed me to hang around his class at the Paris Conservatoire, where I also performed a shortened version of my recital program. It was fascinating to watch him teach- his methods were unlike any I had seen before. He taught his eight students all at once for an eight-hour lesson, once a week. All the students would play some technical work together, and then play etudes for one another then prepared pieces. In this way the students seemed to benefit from hearing the others, and seeing their teacher working with there colleagues. It is a method I have since adapted a little in my teaching at Melbourne University.

## Conclusions

As I said earlier, my Fellowship experience was an extraordinary, transformative time for me. It impacted on me in ways I had not anticipated. The dialogue I have had with Mark Gould, that I alluded to earlier, has had a profound impact on my own practice. Mark has pushed me and questioned my work in a way that has helped propel it forward. With

Mark's influence, I am trying to draw on several disparate artistic influences, and am working towards the kind of artistic totality I experienced at some of the concerts I saw.

...I have been thinking about many musical issues since your visit a few weeks ago. I told you something like, 'your playing is better than the music you play'. That statement is not very precise. I didn't mean to cast aspersions on the pieces you played. I think they are good pieces, certainly on a different level of musical thought from the standard trumpet fare. But I was trying to make a point. You have taken trumpet playing to a new level of development, technically, musically and intellectually. It is now incumbent on you to make the musical world aware of this.

....

I had a trumpet class a couple of days ago at Juilliard and gave a brief history of 'classical' solo trumpet playing (Andre-various brass quintets, ensembles-tom stevens-hardenburger era etc...) It was not a rigorous us scholarly presentation but an ad hoc over view. I also talked about the trumpet player who changed the perception of the trumpet more than any other, Louis Armstrong. I threw out the question, "what was it about Armstrong, his playing and sound, that immediately drew EVERYONE in, seduced ALL listeners from the most skilled musician to he man on the street". Their answers were not particularly enlightening but the question I think is worthy of careful consideration. Armstrong's sound had everything in it: power, pathos, pain, humor, sweetness, sex. It was above all seductive, an extension of his singing voice and profound and utterly unique rhythmic sense. He changed music. There was before LA and after LA. The trumpet was off and running as a mainstay of popular culture right up until the advent of the electric guitar in the mid 50's.

Which brings me back to you. You have an unusually complete knowledge of jazz for someone who doesn't play jazz. You are very much into current avant garde hip-hop and rock. Why aren't you incorporating these elements in your art? And incorporating them on YOUR terms as elements to highlight your unbelievable trumpet playing. Why indulge a cranky old genius who listens to a recording from 15 years previous and checks a fucking stop watch??

My letter is a plea to you that you become more of a seducer. (you can be a seducer without being a whore but I rather like whores too. classical music cries out f or cheapness these days). I think art is at least 80% trick and seduction. Make a concert that even the idiots at ITG can get without compromising the music at all....

Mark's description of the artist as seducer seems very close to what I experienced in Mos Def's concert at the Blue Note, and I think is related to the 'total-ness' of the show and presentation. My work now has this as a clear goal. I have already given several recitals since returning and am working at incorporating these new ideas into my concerts. This is also now feeding a Masters degree I have undertaken at RMIT University, whose title (currently!) is: *The Recital Re-imagined: an Investigation and Extension of the Traditional Concert Recital*.

The Fellowship has had a deep impact on my work as a teacher too. Visiting this variety of Music Institutions and seeing a range of teaching methods and ideologies has given me some fresh ideas and confirmed some of the approaches I was already using. I was most impressed by CalArts- its a school who appears to value a students individual creativity and artistic identity first- but all the schools had strong positives. The New York Schools had a rigor in their approach I admired. Paris and Manchester a strong sense of collegiality that encouraged students to bounce and react off one another, and not only their teacher.

In a broader sense, I learnt on this Fellowship of the importance of respecting myself as a *creative* artist, and as such, the importance of feeding this creativity with as much energy and stimulus as possible. The great luxury of being able to travel and see great concerts and meet other musicians was so invigorating too me. Since returning to Australia I have endeavored to continue this: going to lots of concerts, talking with others doing similar work. Before the Fellowship I see now I was in something of a funk- so focused on my own work I rarely absorbed the work of others. I understand now that I need this fuel to keep my own mind buzzing.

## Recommendations

### *Improvements in my own work:*

There are several ways that, on reflection, I can now improve and develop my own practice and teaching. In terms of my concert presentation, I have learnt from the fellowship to approach this with a much broader mind- considering a performance as not merely a series of works, but a totality in which all parts are essential and inter-related. I am currently developing methods for coming closer to this goal: the incorporation of electronic soundscape pieces between musical works to alter the psychological space and prevent the audience from applauding and dissipating dramatic tension, various theatrical devices to better define the physical space, and thinking of the concert presentation as a specific social ritual to be designed, not merely a series of boxes filled. An analogy would be a visual art curator who considers the gallery space, the walls, the lighting, the spacing between works, and not merely the particular selection of canvases.

In terms of my teaching (privately, and at the University of Melbourne) I feel inspired to work with several of the teaching approaches I encountered. I think it is very important that musical education is arts education, and not merely some kind of athletic discipline. My teaching will incorporate more improvisation, more composition, more inter-disciplinary exploration and more encouragement that students find their own modes of expression. I was also impressed by the collegial approach of some classes, and as such I will by teaching more in groups, and encouraging my students to work more with one another in lessons and the practice room.

### *Improvements that could be made in Australia:*

Of course, improvements in the Arts are entirely subjective. Many would say they have not improved since Bach, or Van Gogh, or Charlie Parker or Picasso. I can make some suggestions though, particularly in the field of Music Higher Education, based on observations made on my Fellowship.

First amongst these would be that Government fund Music Higher Education at a much higher level! Of the five music institutions I visited, all had much more modern facilities, much better services available to the students, such as accompanists in all lessons, and it seemed, a far broader curriculum available to the students. Of course, the Universities I visited are all renowned as centres of Excellence, however if Australia wishes to compete on an international level in the arts, it must be prepared to make a much greater investment in arts education.

Secondly, I think the manner in which music is taught at tertiary level can be expanded to deal more with a student's individuality and creativity, and less with the dogma of jumping through various hoops of technique or repertoire. Most music schools I

have seen have a very strong emphasis on orchestral training, or more specifically orchestral audition training. This is no doubt very useful for some students; however, many will not go on to an orchestral career. I was very impressed by the broader focus I encountered at CalArts. Particularly for students who are unsure of what they might do, or who are planning to be teachers, encouraging their artistic sensibilities must be paramount. Allowing them to see a future with as many possibilities as possible on their graduation is good for their own sense of purpose and well being, as well as for the community.

Finally, as I found the Fellowship such an invigorating experience for my own art- I recommend that arts organizations make it easier for other practitioners to have similar experiences. I was very fortunate to be able to travel during the summer recess of my academic position. I was also given special leave. In my previous job, working for an Australian symphony orchestra, I encountered a lot of resistance from management to my requests to have time off to travel during the concert season. Asking to have time off for study, either informal or formal, and concert activity should be encouraged not discouraged. Perhaps if some kind of sabbatical leave arrangement could be found within these organizations, they will find their musicians returned with fresh ideas and vigor. This has certainly been my experience, and I believe it would be of great benefit to any concert-giving organization to encourage their players to continue to learn and develop throughout their careers.