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# THE WINSTON CHURCHILL MEMORIAL TRUST OF AUSTRALIA

## Report by - Brieley Cutting 2013 Churchill Fellow

The Peter Mitchell Churchill Fellowship to expand music, career and industry knowledge in specific ways to achieve excellence as a pianist and artistic director

**UK - Netherlands - USA**

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Signed:

Date:

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## 1. Introduction

### Summary

The six weeks of travel offered to me by The Winston Churchill Memorial Trust was to offer opportunities not available in my hometown or country and to research music related areas to which I am dedicated. These were as follows:

- the role/experiences/skills of the pianist as a chamber musician
- artistic directorship, which includes seeking information regarding the relevance and place of classical music in today's world, the marketing of classical music and its audience, the organisation and administration of classical concert series and classical music programming
- careers in the industry in the 21st century
- specific interpretational aspects of classical piano performance, such as historically informed practices and stylistically informed interpretation

With these aspects in mind, I planned and executed a programme that would include the visiting of cities famous for their learning and music, the attendance of concerts and events at various contrasting music and arts venues, and I set up many meetings with various colleagues and industry experts.

On completion of my Churchill Trust supported project, I had visited and explored five major world cities and one major academic town, I had met and talked in depth with over thirty individuals in the industry (fourteen being colleagues who worked professionally in the music industry and sixteen being experienced and renowned specialists in their fields), I had visited and explored five world renowned art galleries and museums, and I had attended concerts and events at over fourteen world famous venues, from old and venerated institutions to new and innovative spaces.

### Acknowledgements

I offer my most heartfelt thanks to the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust, Peter Mitchell (who sponsored my particular Fellowship) and to the people who conduct the running and distributing of the Fellowships. Thank you for offering me such a wonderful opportunity and for preparing and supporting me throughout this project.

I would also like to give special thanks to Roy Howat, Susan Tomes and Bart van Oort who, from the very beginning of my project, agreed to meet with me and have their names placed on the initial application form.

My gratitude also extends to Pedro in Amsterdam, who gave me such a lovely house to live in during my stay there (through Airbnb), and to everyone who gave me tours, arranged tickets, and shared their thoughts, contacts, time, dreams, experiences, advice, support, encouragement and favourite drinking spots with me throughout my travels.

## 2. Executive Summary

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**Occupation:** Founder, Artistic Director & Manager of the *DeClassified Music* concert series  
Classical Pianist & Piano Teacher

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**Project Description:** To expand my music, career and industry knowledge in specific ways so as to achieve excellence as a solo pianist, chamber musician, piano accompanist, piano teacher and artistic director and be prepared for the commencement of full professional life as a 'portfolio' musician

### Project Highlights:

- Discussing aspects of musical interpretation, the classical music industry and chamber music skills/ experiences with leading classical pianists and academics
- Meeting with and gathering information from key members of administration from leading classical music organisations
- Attending many varying performances in numerous historic and innovative venues
- Visiting and exploring cities and towns known as centres for learning and culture: London, Cambridge, Edinburgh, Amsterdam, The Hague and New York.
- Meeting with many talented and successful colleagues of varied backgrounds and situations to talk about the classical music industry, careers in music, concerts and audiences in the 21st century, education, the musical organisations and groups they are involved in, the cities they are based in, and their musical interests

### Main Conclusions Drawn From Research & How I Propose to Implement Them:

Upon arriving home after completion of my research, I felt buoyed by the assurance that classical music was not dying or becoming obsolete in the 21st century, this being demonstrated from my visits to the new facilities for classical music performance being built as recently as 2008 (such as London's *Kings Place* and Amsterdam's new *Conservatory* and *Muziekgebouw*), by audience sizes at the concerts I attended and from conversations I had with fellow musicians. I also discovered that world-wide many believe that small organisations (small ensembles and local concert series) are important and are possibly the way forward for the classical artform, especially considering the current economic state of the western world and the place that classical music holds within it. As a pianist based in Brisbane, I felt this meant that I must not only be armed with incredible practical skills and knowledge, but I must also be equipped to run an organisation, attract modern audiences of all ages, plan and execute appealing, innovative and modern programmes, to incite enthusiasm from supporters, attract funding, and be well versed in modern media and branding.

It is my aim to implement what I have learnt about these things in my continuing work as a pianist and teacher as well as in the running and development of my Brisbane concert series *DeClassified Music*. In the near future I aim to expand *DeClassified Music* with the creation of *Ensemble DCM*, a hookup of some of Australia's finest classically trained Brisbane-based musicians together personifying *DeClassified Music's* commitment to Brisbane, eclecticism and artistic excellence. In addition, I have been inspired by my research to work towards creating the *DCM Commissioning Fund*, its setup aimed at encouraging community participation and local cultural support in the arts to foster and support Australian composers and performers.

Even though Brisbane is small and relatively underdeveloped culturally, my Churchill travels have given me both the perspective to admire what my wonderful city already has to offer as well as the inspiration needed to incite me to build on this in my own way, hopefully with classical music inspired performance that is relevant, exciting, fun, intellectually stimulating and attractive to the modern audience.

### 3. Program

CITY & DATES	CONCERTS & SHOWS	MEETINGS WITH EXPERTS	SPECIAL TOURS & MEETINGS WITH COLLEAGUES
<b>London</b> April 2 - 24 2014	Southbank Sinfonia at St John's, Waterloo, 3 April	Roy Howat, Pianist and French music expert, 8 April	Meeting with flutist in Southbank Sinfonia, 3 April
	Chamber Music at Wigmore Hall 5 April	Kelly Lovelady, Artistic Director of Ruthless Jabiru, 11 April	Meeting with pianist in Artist Diploma at Royal College of Music, 5 April
	Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment at Royal Festival Hall, 8 April	Roy Howat, Pianist and French music expert 15 April	Tour to Edinburgh 7 April
	London Philharmonia at Royal Festival Hall, 10 April	2 members of the Administration of Southbank Sinfonia, meeting at St John's Waterloo, 17 April	Meeting with free-lance double bassist 10 April
	Grassroots Shakespeare Company - Othello Leicester Square Theatre, 16 April	Kathron Sturrock, Pianist/Professor at Royal College of Music/Artistic Director of "Fibonacci Sequence", 17 April	Meeting with student at Cambridge and tour of Cambridge 14 April
	Bill Bailey - comedian Leicester Square Theatre, 18 April	Susan Tomes, Pianist/chamber music expert (Florestan Trio)/author/writer for the Guardian, 21 April	Meeting with Baroque keyboardist, PHD candidate at York 16 April
	Royal Opera <i>La Traviata</i> , 19 April	2 members from administration of Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, meeting at Kings Place, 24 April	Meeting with composer, free-lance/working at Royal College of Music, 16 April
	Gielsgud Theatre, 22 April		Meeting with new-music pianist and recent Royal Academy PHD, 19 April
			Meeting with pianist working at London University, 23 April
			Meeting with pianist organising events for Royal Academy of Music, 24 April
<b>Netherlands</b> April 25 - May 2	Concertgebouw, 27 April	Bart van Oort, historical performance specialist and keyboardist, staff at The Hague Conservatorium, 28 April	Meeting with new music pianist based in Amsterdam 27 April
	Beethoven Festival, Musikgebouw, May 2	Eildert Beeftink, pianist & artistic director of Amsterdam Ensemble, 29 April	Meeting with French horn player based in Amsterdam, 1 May
		David Kuyken, pianist and head of piano faculty at Amsterdam Conservatorium, 29 April	
		Jan Willem Nelleke, pianist at The Hague Conservatorium, 30 April	
<b>New York</b> May 3 - 12	Ear Heart Music Series at Roulette, 6 May	Kenny Savelson, Executive Director of 'Bang on a Can, 5 May	Meeting with new-music clarinetist, 10 May
	<i>Le Poisson Rouge</i> , 7 May	Ronen Givony, Music Director of <i>Le Poisson Rouge</i> and Wordless Music Series, 7 May	Meeting with jazz pianist, 11 May
	The Met, <i>Così fan tutti</i> 7.30pm, 8 May	Vicki Chow, new-music pianist (Bang on a Can All Stars) 9 May	
	New York Philharmonic at Avery Fisher Hall, 9 May	David Friend, new-music pianist (Transit Ensemble), 12 May	
	The Jazz Standard (Jazz Club), 11 May		

## 4. Report

The opportunity this Fellowship offered was invaluable and I greatly appreciate that which I have learnt from the experience. The knowledge gained from my six week project I feel to be at least equivalent in value, however different in content, to that which I have gained in any other program or degree I have undertaken. I believe this is because of several reasons:

- Being older and more experienced than I was in any of my other programs of study meant I knew with greater clarity my research aims.
- Not being tied down to deliver a recital program at the end of this research, as I have been in previous study, meant I could get outside the practice room and instead spend my time exploring cities, venues, galleries and, most importantly, spend time talking to many different people.
- Having adequate funds meant that I could explore internationally, attend expensive venues and meet with individuals successfully.

### Background

I come from a background centred around piano performance and, like many pianists based in small Australian towns with non-musical parents, from a background that was relatively conservative and restricted in experiences. I left school young, finished a Bachelor of Music at the Queensland Conservatorium by age eighteen, spent the next four years based at the Australian National Academy of Music, and the next two and a half years completing a Masters in Performance back at the Queensland Conservatorium. I then spent a year at the Royal College of Music and was awarded the Postgraduate Diploma in Performance with Distinction. During these twelve or so years of tertiary study, I played in various concerts and competitions, accompanied various instruments, worked as a barista and piano teacher when the opportunities arose and attended the concerts that suited my low student budget. When I returned to Brisbane in 2009, after only 9 months in London due to my finances running out, I was then faced with the realities of life as a cultural worker and artist: how do I put my years of hard study to good use, continue to grow artistically, earn money and find the way forward in my art form?

Two important things happened in the next few years leading up to my Churchill application in 2013. The first was that I commenced doctoral studies at Griffith University in 2010, my research eventually crystallising so as to focus on the “pianist as a chamber musician”. This encouraged my subsequent focus on working in this role and being exposed to various situations associated with this sort of work. The second important thing was that the DeClassified Music concert series emerged in 2013. This grew from the Commercial Road Chamber Music Series (2011-12) which I started with Greg Thompson at Theme & Variations Piano Services, the Steinway piano distributor in Brisbane. With DeClassified Music I wanted to create a music series that was innovative and exciting, and one which also had an ethic of care for its musicians and provided professional

equipment and environment. Also, because of what I was learning and experiencing through my doctoral program and my recent performance experiences since returning to Brisbane, I wanted to change and evolutionize how the public viewed chamber music and classical music and through DeClassified Music hopefully encourage today's society to view it as relevant and attractive.

However, being trained only as a pianist, and having never been a part of such a music series, setting up DCM meant I had to learn the long and difficult way about the basics of branding, sponsors, grant applications, publicity, attracting/creating an audience, hiring/firing casual staff, funding and managing artists. Therefore, when I applied for the Churchill Fellowship in 2013, I was at a stage where I had lots of questions that I felt couldn't be answered by musicians, venues, concert series and institutions in Brisbane. I was looking for answers to questions that I had relating to classical music relevance in the world, career options for pianists, modern programming, innovation in classical music, marketing and classical music audiences in modern cities. As a musician I was also desperately looking for inspiration, new ideas, exposure to like-minded people and I craved exact and informed information about certain aspects of piano playing. The Churchill Trust offered me the opportunity to find both the answers to my questions and the inspiration to assist me with my tricky and bold journey into the future.

## **London**

**Dates: April 2-23, 2014**

**Accommodation: The Victoria League for Commonwealth Friendship  
Victoria League House, 55 Leinster Square  
London W2 4PW**

I felt it important to visit London. Apart from this city being a classical music and entertainment centre in the world, I knew many colleagues that were based in this city as well as several expert pianists who I desperately wanted to pepper with questions. From London, I took the opportunity to visit Cambridge, tour its university grounds and talk with a colleague who was on exchange there. I also took the opportunity to visit Edinburgh on another day trip so that I could explore this city and see for myself where the Edinburgh Festival and other large cultural events take place.

My visit to London started with my heading to Waterloo to watch a colleague play in the Southbank Sinfonietta at St Johns (actually, I spent the day firstly exploring the Museum of Natural History from top to bottom, even attending a Q&A with a paleoanthropologist - apart from this being interesting, I always find it worth my while watching how world experts and specialists in any field present their information to the public and run their 'events'). Following the Sinfonietta's performance, I was able to talk with this colleague, the flutist in this ensemble. From our conversation, I understood that this ensemble represented one of the many reasons why many

Australian musicians might leave their home country to come to centres like London. The Southbank Sinfonietta is comprised of orchestral musicians who have left their studies and are in the difficult gap before they earn themselves a professional position, many hopeful for an orchestral position. The Sinfonietta pays their musicians a fee for the year, enough to cover perhaps the year's rent, and they perform a concert almost every week to a non-fee-paying audience of 200-400 at a few different venues. The orchestra is no student ensemble, and is made of leading young professionals who have clambered to get the opportunity to be a part of the ensemble. It is therefore of a very high standard indeed. It is comprised of new members every year, each given only one year in the orchestra, and they move through repertoire at a startling speed. I felt that this ensemble not only gives uni leavers an unbelievable opportunity, a valuable partial wage and a brilliant addition to their CV, but it also gives budding conductors, soloists, and probably no doubt composers as well, good opportunities. The gap of leaving studies and achieving full time employment is such a difficult time in a musician's life, and the Southbank Sinfonietta offers musicians a magnificent opportunity. Funding for this, as for many cultural bodies in the UK, seemed to come from a very large list of individual supporters. Seeing such lists always rams home to me the limitations of living in a 'colony,' a small city like Brisbane without 'old money' (I have found it very difficult indeed to accumulate individual supporters for DeClassified Music in Brisbane). But this aside, this performance from the Southbank Sinfonietta was just what I needed to see, starved as I was for like-minded colleagues and young, talented people enthusiastic about culture. The young players in this ensemble were around my age and all displayed non-apologetic, educated enthusiasm for the music they were playing - particularly the conductor. These musicians let me know that I was not alone and reminded me of the international standard of music performance. My colleague saw my enthusiasm, and put me in touch with marketing and administration individuals of Southbank Sinfonietta. They returned my emails promptly and met with me a week or so later, giving me their time to explain how their organisation thought, worked and operated. They offered me valuable advice about aspects such as image, publicity and audience, and they even especially printed me up some marketing advice! Both individuals were very helpful and generous and I left this meeting feeling encouraged and with many ideas.

Day two in London I had a meeting with a pianist of my age enrolled in the Artist Diploma course at the Royal College of Music. I found it remarkable that even though he was nearly 30 years old, this pianist was still mainly interested in his weekly lessons and the practicing and preparing for piano competitions. His career hopes were to become a concertising pianist who teaches a little on the side only when necessary. It was an interesting conversation that led me to better realise who I was, for it reminded me that I may have been thinking somewhat like this pianist in my early 20s, but since then had become interested in other aspects of the industry such as, was this a possible

career path in the 21st century in Australia? what would such a career involve personally and financially? was innovation in the profession important? should one organise one's own concerts and how? what were other instrumentalists/organisations doing? and, what might the future of the industry hold?

Following this meeting, I attended a concert at Wigmore Hall of chamber music featuring the likes of Joshua Bell and Steven Isserlis. I was struck by the incredible ease with which these musicians played and their innate professionalism. There was no posing or extrovert expressions. It was straight down the line playing of the highest level with earnest communication of the music. But, my goodness! The seating was so cramped and the crowded corridors and facilities made the experience exhausting. This made me realise that yes, it is so wonderful to have a venue with history and significance that day after day attracts the best players, but personal space, comfortable seating and good plumbing, like we have in Australian venues, should not be under appreciated! It was also interesting that the audience was similar to some Australian audiences in that some applauded madly in-between movements of a composition, even when the player's body language obviously implied that they didn't welcome applause in these spaces of silence. It made me feel a bit better about some similar concert experiences I have had in Australia.

My trip to Edinburgh was the next day, and the following I met with Roy Howat outside the BBC for coffee and a discussion about some of his music experiences and thoughts. It was a treat to talk with Mr Howat for he is not only a lovely man but is an extensive researcher and academic of the highest quality. However, it was interesting to me that he seemed little concerned with the future of classical music, how younger generations might perceive it, about available opportunities for young musicians or with aspects of marketing. Perhaps this was simply because he is of an older generation. At the end of our conversation, we made arrangements for me to visit him at his home in Leighton Buzzard the following week for an in-depth discussion regarding the composer Maurice Ravel, one of the areas of which he specialised. When this planned day arrived, I was delighted to see where Mr Howat lived and the area of Leighton Buzzard. We spent over two hours pouring over the score to Ravel's *Gaspard de la nuit* with Mr Howat explaining editorial errors and how Ravel's mind worked. We also talked about some of Ravel's colleagues, the world in which he composed and discussed various interpretations of the work. I had brought my score along and we edited this according to the autograph copy that Mr Howat had on hand. It was an extremely informative meeting and it gave me some deeper understanding of the music of Ravel and composers in general.

The day after my initial meeting with Roy Howat, I attended a concert at Festival Hall given by the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, an orchestra celebrating historical practices. The Hall was

full to bursting, the playing was of the highest quality and the conductor immediately likeable. The audience reaction, particularly after the Beethoven Symphony, was rapturous and frenzied and it was wonderful for me to see this level of appreciation for such music from an audience of mixed ages! I have always admired the OAE's brilliant marketing campaign, their logo and ideas seeming to me modern, relevant, colourful and far from boring, and judging by the capacity crowd and their enthusiasm, their marketing must be working! In the next week I was to meet with a colleague who gave me relevant email addresses which I could use to contact those who worked in marketing at the OAE. They responded immediately to my emails, much to my delight, and met with me at Kings Place at Kings Cross to have a chat. They discussed with me their marketing and media campaign and what I could be doing with DeClassified Music, discussing with me aspects of publicity, image and media. In particular, I found their conversation about their "Late Shift" concerts, designed specifically for x and y generations, of particular interest. It was a marvellous experience, made all the better as I was able to also see the new Kings Place venue.

Not long after my initial visit to Festival Hall, I had a return visit. A colleague of mine who played double bass had arranged a free ticket to the concert he was playing in. He took me backstage to give me the ticket, arranged a free program for me and we had a chat over a glass of wine. I was amazed at how similar his activities were to mine here in Brisbane, such as how he was trying to organise relevant concerts in the suburbs and how he had learnt about the importance of logos/branding/names. This conversation gave fuel to my enthusiasm for my work for DCM, for it made me feel that my journey here in far away Brisbane was shared with other musicians of my time, even those half way across the world right in the centre of things! The only difference, however, was that this double bass player could make a decent living from being a freelance bass player where he was stationed - this wouldn't be possible in Brisbane. The concert that followed our conversation was of the highest quality, but, quite frankly, it reminded me that I found orchestral performances of this nature usually rather boring: the shorter introductory work, the 'perfect' concerto soloist who played as if they could have played like that all night. Many in the audience obviously loved her violin concerto performance, but to me it felt plastic and had a 'it had all been done before' feel. The last work on the program featured additional brass and therefore had an extra level of entertainment. However by this stage I was bored simply because I had already listened to over an hour of similar music already. This experience led me to consider ideal concert length and exactly what I would expect from a performance that might keep me awake and interested.

The next day I had a meeting with Kelly Lovelady, an Australian conductor and founder and artistic director of the London-based organisation Ruthless Jabiru. We shared experiences and she advised me on aspects of social media, organising artists and sponsors.

I did get the obligatory travellers flu at this point in my travels, but still managed to get to the Warner Brothers Harry Potter Studio Tour that weekend, just for something different.....

The next person I was to meet was a colleague who was a composer and now worked part time at the Royal College of Music. We chatted about his compositions, his thoughts on certain contemporary composers and about commissioning rates from his time in Germany. We then hurried to Leister Square Theatre for a surprisingly intimate production of Shakespeare's *Othello*. The performance was given in a square in the middle of a small space with an audience crowded around them of about 40-50. Having the performance so close was exhilarating, and the actors moved amongst the audience, leaning over them and on them as part of the performance. This performance inspired me in two ways. Firstly, even though I found the sentences in *ye olde english* difficult to understand, I was surprised that I did not have a problem understanding the story and production. This was because the actors were so good. I felt a correlation here to musicians playing 'difficult' and complex music to uninitiated audience members. I realised that if the musicians were good enough, the audience would understand the music and enjoy the concert, even if they did not understand the musical details. Secondly, this production showed me how magical performances in small, intimate and random spaces can be.

I visited the Royal College of Music the next day to meet with Kathron Sturrock. She is a piano professor at this institution and has a long and respected professional history as an accompanist and chamber music pianist. I interviewed her at length about her experiences and life. She was simply delightful and had even brought me some cake and prepared me a coffee. She was of the same generation as Mr Howat and also seemed not concerned with innovation or the industry's future. She instead had knowledge of how the industry 'used' to work. For example, she mentioned that as an ensemble 'back in the day', you couldn't get an audience unless you were broadcast first on the BBC. This comment led me to ponder that this sort of connection between broadcaster and audience has changed. Indeed, it seems not as crucial today and there are, after all, many other ways an ensemble can promote themselves. Further in our conversation Ms Sturrock admitted that she was often placed in a submissive role as a pianist, people often treating her as 'background' in her work as an accompanist. She looked resigned to that disrespect. "That was simply how it was if you wanted the work," she said. This observation about her industry troubled me and it made me fervently hope that the industry had evolved enough so that my work today as a chamber musician and accompanist was considered suitably vital and essential so that it attracted the appropriate respect and support.

I returned to Leicester Square Theatre the next day to see a performance in one of their larger spaces - comedian Bill Bailey in a standup routine. I loved it and enjoyed seeing how the event worked and the audience's behaviour and reactions. The following evening I visited the Royal Opera at Covent Garden. The performance was of *La traviata*. It was an amazing evening and a brilliant performance, and I took note of the company's advertisements at the venue, who their sponsors were, how they looked after their audience and the audience's behaviour.

Next came my meeting with pianist and writer Susan Tomes on Easter Monday. I travelled out to her home at Wimbledon and benefited by seeing where she lived and meeting her husband and daughter. Even though Susan Tomes was the same generation as Mr Howat and Ms Sturrock, here was a different personality. Here was someone who admitted she didn't like to be made to act and feel submissive to others simply because of the uneducated and old-fashioned manner in which other instrumentalists might treat pianists. She also made a point of relating how she resented being treated as someone who should be 'submissive' simply because she was a woman and the other players in the ensemble men. Our conversation about such matters buoyed me greatly, for I had shared similar frustrations to her and was also unwilling to become a submissive, background character professionally simply to please others, bolster their ego and therefore gain employment. I agreed with Ms Tomes in that a truly egalitarian treatment in making music is ideal (and if anything, the pianist should be treated as the 'superior' considering that piano parts are usually more difficult than the others in chamber music, the pianist therefore spending many more hours practising their part and instrument in general!). Talking with Ms Tomes gave me encouragement that I was not alone in my thinking and experiences, and that, indeed, I shared ideas and perspectives with such a brilliant and respected pianist. Our meeting gave me courage and confidence - invaluable.

A few more days remained for me in London. I visited the Gielgud Theatre in Soho for a show and met with four other colleagues, all pianists living in London. One related their ideas on attaining work as a pianist in institutions and their experiences after being in London for 10 years; another, much younger, discussed their thoughts on London and Australia and their career intentions; one was a Baroque keyboard specialist and studying for a Doctorate; the last was a new music specialist and had just finished a PHD at the Royal Academy. All were inviting and delightful company, and with all I had informative in-depth conversations about the industry, new venues, the organisations with which they were involved and discussed their opinions on the future of classical music making.

After visiting some more inspiring places, including the Tate Modern, Shakespeare's Globe and Borough and Portobello Markets, I took the Eurostar from London to Amsterdam.

## Netherlands

**Dates: April 25 - May 2, 2014**

**Accommodation: Wagenaarstraat 10 - 2, Amsterdam  
North Holland 1093, Netherlands**

Amsterdam and The Hague initially became parts of my itinerary because both cities are centres of classical music and expert forte-pianist Bart van Oort, who I wished to meet with, was based at The Hague. I felt that the Netherlands would provide a good contrast to London and offer me new perspectives.

When I arrived in Amsterdam, I found that I had made the mistake of arriving on King's Day - a loud and frenzied public holiday of celebration in Amsterdam. One would assume one's travel agent would warn of such events that make a city come to a stand still! So unfortunately my first two days in Amsterdam were spent waiting for the city to return to normal and open its doors. This time at 'home' though was valuable and I used it to recover from my time in the Student House in London - to start with, I had a really long HOT bath and made a homemade meal.

As my first Dutch activity, I attended a performance at the *Concertgebouw*. I was not able to catch a performance from an amazing orchestra, but instead had to settle for a semi-professional orchestra performing Mahler's Symphony No.2. This concert hall is simply iconic and needed to be seen and it was indeed amazing. Hearing such a large orchestra and choir in this space was most enjoyable, even if some of the playing was not at a professional level and the child next to me was flicking noisily through a comic book throughout (even though unpleasant, this however also reassured me that uncontrolled children at concerts were not only experienced in Australia).

The next day I took a train to The Hague Conservatory to meet with Bart van Oort, an expert in historical keyboard practice. We spent hours discussing aspects of chamber music and historical practice, seeing various types of pianos and viewing the conservatorium. This meeting was hugely beneficial, for I was able to see Mr van Oort working in his home environment and managed to get informed answers to certain questions that had been plaguing me for the last few years regarding areas such as phrasing in classical music, balance in chamber music ensembles, general information about Beethoven and the performances/ensembles Mr van Oort was personally involved in.

The next day I met with Eilderk Beeftink, pianist and artistic director of the Amsterdam Ensemble. We met in *Vondelpark* and over coffee discussed his musical experiences, successful programmes, chamber music concerts in the Netherlands and the like. I followed this experience with a meeting that evening with the head of piano from the Amsterdam Conservatory, David Kuyken. Mr Kuyken generously took me on a tour of his new Conservatorium and discussed with

me his thoughts and experiences as a pianist who plays chamber music. Mr Kuyken was a man of much experience, having played at a very high level for many years and mixed with some of the most respected classical musicians in the world. I felt that I gained much from our meeting on aspects of classical music in general, being a chamber music pianist, programming and even artist payment.

The next day I revisited The Hague, this time to meet pianist and very experienced accompanist Jan Willem Nelleke. Even though a contrasting personality compared to Mr Kuyken, this conversation was equally of interest and we focused our discussion more on the skills he thought important when playing chamber music. Interestingly, like Roy Howat and Kathron Sturrock, Nelleke had a conservative approach, especially as regards classical music marketing (for example, when I showed him DCM's yearly booklet, he admitted that he would never pick up such a document - this is the opposite reaction to those, for example, from the OAE administration and most of my colleagues). A particularly interesting point in our discussion was when Nelleke described how he was employed by The Hague Conservatoire. As an accompanist, he was designated students at the beginning of their degree in first year. The conservatoire hired him for the same hours every week and he then worked with his designated students weekly at a set time, behaving as a teacher and accompanist, guiding them as to how to work with a piano, how to interpret the works and how to play chamber music. When it came to exams, these students then performed with him, performing the works that they had been 'rehearsing' for many weeks. Mr Nelleke explained that in the first few years he did most of the talking in the 'lessons/rehearsal' and, if he did his job correctly, in the final years of their degree the student talked more, having learnt from him how to talk about the music and direct the interpretation and rehearsal process. I found this extremely interesting. In Brisbane I had largely given up on being an accompanist to be called upon at the universities simply because I disliked the process that was expected of me there: I would be called a week or so out from the exam, I would be expected to learn difficult repertoire very quickly and then have usually only one or two rehearsals before the performance with the, usually, inexperienced student. It would hugely disrupt my weekly schedule, was unreliable income and I could never understand why it all had to be so last minute and stressful! Perhaps the 'resident' accompanists at the Brisbane universities worked more like Nelleke at The Hague? I am not sure. However, now I better understood that I am allowed to dislike working at these universities as they currently expect me to work, in a 'last minute,' stressful, and consequently below standard fashion. It also occurred to me that Brisbane universities could probably achieve a higher standard of performance from their students if they improved their accompanist system to match what was happening at conservatories like The Hague. Better for the accompanists, better for the teachers, better for the students!

That evening I planned to visit the unique organisation of *Splendor*, a gathering of artists and performers who each pay to belong to the organisation and together make a cultural hub with concerts many days of the week. However, this trip was unfortunately, and regrettably, cancelled, as the person I was to be meeting to take me there suddenly had other unavoidable plans.

Following this I visited the new *Rijksmuseum* and the beautiful *Muziekgebouw*. The *Muziekgebouw* was fresh and modern and beautifully designed. The concert I attended was very enjoyable, however it made me realise why Steinway pianos were created when the sound of the fortepiano on stage could hardly be heard from where I was sitting in a middle row! Even though limited sound production is a rather obvious trait of fortepianos, I had never fully realised the huge benefits of the modern piano until that moment.

Before leaving Amsterdam, I met with two colleagues, a French horn player and a pianist specialising in new music performance. The French horn player invited me to his Amsterdam house and described for me his innovative and colourful activities with his brass group K.O.Brass and the interesting Kytman Orchestra. The new music pianist took me to dinner at her favourite place after which we visited a venue where some of her colleagues were giving a concert that evening. This venue was tucked away, extremely casual and rather ratty and dirty, with dogs running around and an unkempt decor. This was apparently a typical space for Amsterdam musicians and I could see how some artists might find this sort of ambience cool and relaxed. However it made me feel uncomfortable and unsettled, but I found that it was just as valuable to find a venue that I didn't like so that it could better define what I did like!

## **New York**

**Dates: May 3-12, 2014**

**Accommodation: Manhattan At Times Square Hotel**

**790 7th Avenue  
New York, NY 10019**

New York was absolutely amazing. Nothing could prepare me for the size of this city, the beautiful spots of green, the iron buildings, Brooklyn Bridge and the loud, friendly people. As many have felt before me, you could feel that things were really happening here, the big modern thinkers were here, the facilities were here - this feeling was thrilling. After seeing this city so many times via American-made television and movies, and heard it referred to by so many musicians, authors and composers, it was tremendous to see this city for myself. So much seemed to make sense to me now that I have walked through central park and the museums, attended concerts, walked the streets and eaten at the restaurants.

After a few tourist bus tours of the city to enable me to get my bearings, my first meeting was to be in Brooklyn. I meet with Kenny Savelson at his place of work where he is Executive Director of the Bang on a Can new music organisation. I was able to view his office, chat with his colleagues and then enjoy a lengthy lunch where I listened to Mr Savelson talk about every aspect of Bang on a Can: its history, how it started, what worked, what they stood for. A few aspects stood out for me from this conversation. Firstly, there was the fact that when it started back in the 80s, this now very successful and world renowned organisation used to play for very small crowds, maybe 20 or so. This gave me much more confidence in my DCM series, for I would often get very stressed and worried about the small audiences that we would attract. Mr Savelson assured me that having 30-40 in an audience at the beginning of a series' development was actually very healthy, it was "halfway to a good audience." Secondly, Mr Savelson commented that to attract audiences, the music event must, after all, "be fun - otherwise why would they go?" It was as simple as that.

The next day I was back in Brooklyn to visit the venue *Roulette* and to see an Ear Heart Music concert. This venue was fantastic and one that I would ideally love to work with - an old style hall with atmosphere fitted out to its gills with modern lighting and sound system. The concert was terrific, the standard of playing very high - my first concert in New York and I could see that a big city makes big players. The type of audience that was attending this new music programme greatly interested me - it was an enthusiastic, trendy looking audience of about 80-100 with most aged around 30-40 years. Many seemed to know one another. I remember thinking that this was the type of audience I wanted to see at DCM events.

My visit to Greenwich Village and *Le Poisson Rouge* was the next day. Greenwich Village was an amazing area, seemingly full of what looked to be, at first glance anyway, interesting and intelligent individuals. I met with the artistic/music director of *Le Poisson Rouge* and the *Wordless Music Series* Ronen Givony. An opposite character to Savelson, Mr Givony was a man of few words and rather serious and brooding in disposition. He did however talk of many interesting things, but one simple comment stood out for me. When I asked him about the age group he was trying to attract to his sell out concerts he replied, "All ages - anyone who is cool and interesting." I really liked that answer. After our meeting, the concert I attended at *Le Poisson Rouge* following my interview was all that I had hoped. The club-like venue was to the extreme - dark, threatening and exciting with experimental art hanging from the walls. The venue offered food and beverage, cabaret style seating and a concert of about 50min - and the crowd indeed looked 'cool.' The advertising on leaving this club-like venue surprised me - little scraps of paper detailing upcoming events, seemingly cut up casually by some random with a pair of scissors. It seemed to say "The events here are so cool that we don't need fancy advertising and glossy pamphlets." This altered my view on budgets for advertising right there.

After walking many of the streets of New York and visiting the Museum of Modern Art, the Guggenheim Museum and Central Park, I next visited the Lincoln Centre. What an impressive establishment! *That* is how it's done. Three extra large buildings set out around a courtyard and fountain - opera, orchestra, ballet - Bam! And right next door: the Juilliard School. If I had my time again, and lots of financial backing, how I would have loved to have attended that music school.... But I considered myself fortunate to be there as it was, courtesy of The Winston Churchill Memorial Trust and I attended an opera at The Metropolitan Opera, Mozart's *Così fan Tutti*.

Before returning to the Lincoln Centre again the next evening, I met with the pianist from the *Bang on a Can All Stars*, Vicky Chow. A pianist of my age, I visited her and her fat old dog at her place in a trendy part of Brooklyn. We talked at length about her thoughts on chamber music, on being a woman and Asian person in the industry, and about her work. I then caught the subway back to the Avery Fisher Hall to hear the New York Philharmonic conducted by Bernard Haitink. It was the phrasing of this orchestra that impressed me the most, how they tapered off phrases, letting the music 'breathe', and they were 'interpreting,' not just 'playing' the works. It reminded me of how important the subtlety of phrasing was and immediately revived some comments I had recently received about my playing which referred to it needing more variety in dynamics, more softs. I had an epiphany. These comments were probably encouraged by my possible lack of subtle phrasing, I wasn't 'coming in' at the ends of phrases to a softer dynamic. This was a small revelation for me. It also made me realise why I often found orchestral playing at home rather boring and non-vibrant: I was looking for a subtlety that often wasn't there

I could not leave New York without going to a jazz club and so I met a colleague, a jazz pianist, at Jazz Standard. An enjoyable set at this venue was followed by an informative conversation about the activities this colleague was currently involved in and his plans for the future.

I had two more meetings planned before I left this city to return home to Brisbane. One was with a clarinetist who worked in the new music scene in her ensemble Newspeak, and another with pianist David Friend from Transit Ensemble. Both conversations were illuminating. The conversation with Mr Friend was literally just before I hailed a cab to the airport and it was just the conversation I needed before returning to my projects at home. He made a point of saying that he believed that smaller ensembles were the way forward for the classical music industry and he elaborated on this observation in some detail. This last conversation topic was perfect, for it clarified what I was trying to do in Brisbane and gave me confidence in my projects and the direction in which I was taking them.

I was motivated to return home to continue with DCM and to work to expand it into something bigger and better.

## 5. Conclusions and Recommendations

As I mentioned in the Executive Summary of this document, when I arrived home after completing my travels, I felt a certain sense of assurance that classical music was not dying or becoming obsolete in the 21st century. This was not just induced by my seeing large enthusiastic audiences at the concerts I attended or from conversations I had with fellow musicians. This sense of assurance was indeed largely generated from my discovering the brilliant and modern new facilities for classical music performance being built. As recently as 2008 such large-scale venues as London's *Kings Place* and Amsterdam's new *Conservatory* and *Muziekgebouw* have appeared, showing that London and Amsterdam governments place high value on classical music and its performance. New smaller venues have also been appearing, such places as *Cafe Oto* in London, *Splendour* in Amsterdam and *Le Poisson Rouge* in New York. The innovation and freshness of these venues is inspiring and their combining of different aspects into one seems to be key. For example, on their websites, Kings Place is described as "*a hub for music, art, dialogue and food... which also provides world class conferencing, events and office space*", Cafe Oto as "*a home for creative new music that exists outside of the mainstream...comprised of one large cafe/ performance space open during the day as a cafe,*" and Le Poisson Rouge as "*dedicated to the fusion of popular and art cultures in music, film, theatre, dance, and fine art, the venue's mission is to revive the symbiotic relationship between art and revelry; to establish a creative asylum for both artists and audiences.*" I believe that simply having such inspiring spaces immediately brings classical music into the modern day and renders it more relevant and appealing to 21st century audiences and musicians.

In my opinion, Brisbane desperately needs similar spaces made with classical music in mind ie. acoustically viable with concert pianos and appropriate equipment. Having concerts 'locked' away in dull Conservatorium Recital Halls with dull marketing campaigns in my mind immediately dates the product being sold. Australian classical musicians and audiences already have to struggle upstream against Australian society's uber promotion of sport and pop music, and the superficial music education offered and low performance level accepted in schools. Classical music in general is continuing to grow and innovate and has a 400 year history behind it and we all know that educating the young with such music is beneficial and its performance gives audiences an experience of unparalleled variety, satisfaction and depth. Building venues that say "this is a welcoming, cool, innovative, attractive space which *of course* looks after and promotes classical musicians with the best acoustics, equipment and marketing" would be invaluable to the classical

music scene in Brisbane, and therefore to the Brisbane cultural scene, the Brisbane community, local music students and Australia in general. Such venues would encourage a higher standard of performance at concerts and lift Brisbane's image internationally.

However, not only is the future of classical music in Brisbane the responsibility of governments and rich sponsors. I believe that musicians in the industry also are responsible and they need to try to tap into what is 'happening' and 'now,' even though their particular art-form requires many hours of private practice, rehearsal and study time. Classical musicians themselves should get active and leave the old thinking behind, the thinking characterised by "I am an artist - I will practise and play and everything can be organised by someone else." I have experienced, even in today's world governed by media and marketing, that it is still often a challenge to extract even a publicity photo and biography from many musicians in Australia, let alone expect them to assist with social media, blogs or print media. I was once even expected to pay a local musician to turn up at a venue to have his photo taken for press about his own concert! I think that this laziness and narcissism is effectually helping to kill the industry and I believe that classical musicians have to change and evolve and get active!

Perhaps the importance of this can be introduced in Conservatoires during student years, even though I believe that no focus should be withdrawn from the practical learning of an instrument, for this is very serious business and a very difficult pursuit. Perhaps business and marketing skills should be introduced to classical musicians by key people in the industry. Finance is always an issue at universities, so to enable this, perhaps access to music university programmes should be more limited with universities accepting only the top percentage who will most likely to be able to find and create work in the industry. This way the funding and the education offered in music programs can be more supportive, more tailor made and more thorough, and therefore, ultimately, more successful.

Also mentioned earlier in this Report was my discovery of how The Hague Conservatoire treats its accompanists. Many Australian universities leave the calling up of the said accompanist to the student. They tend to leave this until a week or so out from their university exam and then throw together a few rehearsals and rush into the exam. This leaves the accompanist stressed, and overworked and their working hours completely at random and disorganised. At The Hague, students are designated their accompanists at the beginning of term and they have weekly, regular rehearsals with this pianist. The pianist can then plan their working week accurately, get a regular payment, feel less stressed and perform better. The student also has better preparation this way, more confidence and this, no doubt, results in better performance. I highly recommend that

Brisbane institutions rethink how they treat accompanists and that this example is possibly how Australian universities should manage their accompanists and students.

In my Executive Summary I also refer to the emergence and growing importance of small organisations in the classical music industry. I mention how I have discovered that world-wide many believe small organisations (small ensembles and local concert series) to be an important and possible way forward for the classical artform, especially when considering the current economic state of the western world and the place that classical music holds within it. I recommend that state and federal funding remains and grows for such organisations in Brisbane and they find a way to make small organisations feel secure financially so that they can relax and get on with the art and music making, taking the focus off the grant writing and worrying.

It is my aim to implement what I have learnt from my time overseas in my continuing work as a pianist and teacher, in the running and development of my Brisbane concert series *DeClassified Music*, and as a supporter of classical music in general. In the near future, if funding continues, I aim to expand *DeClassified Music* with the creation of *Ensemble DCM*, a hookup of some of Australia's finest classically trained Brisbane-based musicians together personifying *DeClassified Music's* commitment to Brisbane, eclecticism and artistic excellence. In addition, I will be working to create the *DCM Commissioning Fund*, its setup used to encourage community participation and local cultural support in the arts as so as to foster and support Australian composers and performers.

Even though Brisbane is small and relatively underdeveloped culturally when compared to such centres as London, Amsterdam and New York, I would not wish to be based anywhere else. I love my city and I feel that my Churchill travels have given me the perspective to admire even more so what my wonderful city has to offer. The Winston Churchill Memorial Trust has given me answers to questions that I had relating to classical music relevance in the world, career options for pianists, modern programming, innovation in classical music, marketing and classical music audiences in modern cities. It has given me new ideas, exposure to like-minded people and exact and informed information about certain aspects of piano playing. The Churchill Trust offered me the opportunity to find both the answers to my questions and the inspiration to assist me with my tricky and bold journey into the future as I attempt to build on what Brisbane has to offer in my own way, hopefully with classical music inspired performance that is relevant, exciting, fun, intellectually stimulating and attractive to the modern audience of all ages.