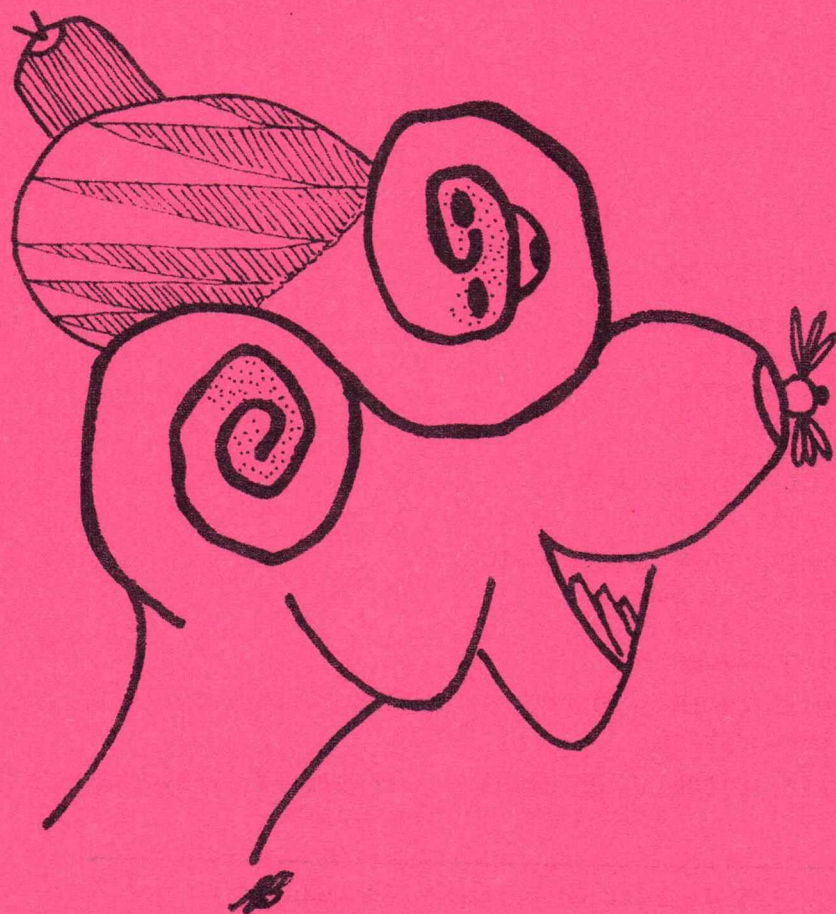
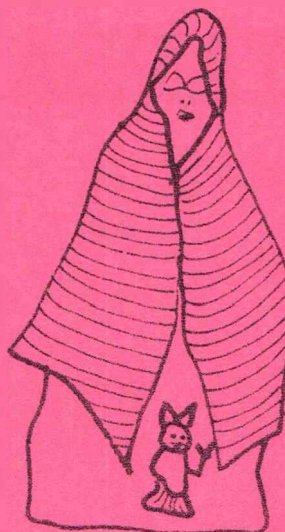


RATAPLAN TWELVE



RATAPLAN
TWELVE



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In these days of free-form fanzines I really don't feel inclined to jump on the bandwagon but there is something about free-form which makes it all too attractive, i.e., you don't have to think about what you are going to do before you do it. There is probably nothing wrong with taking time to think about what you are about to publish and fans like the Bowers and Glickshons have shown what results can come of this sort of thing, the results they get are almost seductively attractive but I don't think I'll be seduced this time.

Having a look in the old material folder doesn't look too promising so you're probably going to have to put up with a lot of editor written material, as always anyhow. On taking a look inside the editors mind I'm afraid to have to report that there doesn't look like there's much promising material there either so what happens in the course of the next few pages is quite haphazard, the index page over there to the left has been typed up last of all so I guess you could say that a little bit of planning went into this.

What we need is some inspiration, other peoples ideas thrown in to get ideas of my own bubbling up - original thoughts are so rare these days don't you find? So we'll begin with the letter column first.

D E P A R T M E N T 8 5

There aren't very many letters which is okay. At the National Convention in Adelaide a couple of weeks ago there was a panel discussion on the age old subject of fanzines and why fans bother to produce them. For those on the panel that time it seemed that fans produce fanzines for the response they produce, for egoboo you might say. In particular they were interested in getting lots and lots of letters and one of them even went as far as saying that he'd prefer to have somebody write him a note saying the last issue was very much enjoyed than being told face to face. Very strange. Would anybody knowledgable in the ways of the mind care to comment.

Not getting letters of comment on RATAPLAN is okay by me. I publish this little fanzine with the intention in mind of giving people a little entertainment and it is very rarely that somebody feels the need to write at length saying they were entertained so most don't write at all. If you don't write saying that you loved the last issue you don't have too. Maybe I'm a bit of an egoist but I do think that RATAPLAN isn't a crudzine and it is well enough done that fans should find it an enjoyable half-hour spent so I'm not really concerned if people don't go out of their way to boost my ego which is quite big enough as it is thank you.

Letters are welcome though and even more welcome if they are going to be interesting to readers if I print them. Letters are like little articles or collections of even litteler articles so they usually turn out to be entertaining in one way or another. If they are not then they should not be printed.

Enough about letters, let's have one. Oh, but before that one last thought. Letters are used to gauge if people are interested in getting more copies of a fanzine and if there aren't any letters there might not be any more fanzines. So some kind of indication of interest keeps you on the mailing list. Think

about it.

First a local lad;

David Grigg
PO Box 100
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Victoria 3053

I was saddened to hear of D'Arti Pointre's sad lapse of health. I think we need some kind of Fanzine Purity Board to keep all the fanzines coming into the country of a clean and wholesome nature. Ray Meagher could head up this board and could get his hands on all the filthy pornographic fanzines coming in and chortle away to his heart's content. I mean, if he could do what he did to Michaelangelo's 'David, what will he do to Richard E Geis?

((Editorial aside: This letter is beginning to look a bit dated. Any fan in the street could tell you that Dick Geis no longer brings out Richard E Geis and anybody in Victoria could tell you that Ray Meagher is no longer in charge of the morals of the state. Overseas readers not familiar with the reign of Mr Meacher (and those Victorians and Australians who don't read the newspapers) would probably have been amused by his demands that a plastic replica of the famed Michaelangelo sculpture should be made decent to the eyes of moral Victorian citizens by the draping of a cloth across the offending pubic parts. I must admit that this episode so filled me with bored amusement that I don't remember what happened in the end. Mr Meagher caused no end of entertainment through the state and the commonwealth while he was in charge of morals by his pronouncements on the topic. Recently there was a state election at which the Liberals were returned to power but when it came to selecting the new cabinet poor Ray found himself a little in the outer and ended up with the quite uninteresting portfolio of Transport. He is doing his best though to make it interesting, he seems to have the ability to make a statment which might even be sensible sound downright silly.))

I must say that I got some sort of perverse voyeristic pleasure out of reading issues 1 and 2 of REG but it soon became, as all peep-shows must, terribly boring. When I say voyeristic, I don't mean of course the bits where Dick talks about IT but just the whole concept of somebody pouring out their private thoughts about everything, the morning mail, what have you, onto paper for others to see, is somehow obscene in itself.

But you've seen one pair of tits and you've seen them all, as Aristotle said, and I'm not the least unhappy that I don't receive REG in the mail. Bangsund's comments on the same are interesting. Perhaps the Americans are just more voyeristic as a nation than we are, what with the Vietnam war on tv, the boom of psychoanalysis, and just the general media explosion there. Gee, I dunno.

Dick Geis can afford to talk about himself, I suppose, because he doesn't have to meet the people who read his fanzine. Or does he?

I am also just a little worried about your comment at the bottom of John's letter. I suppose "David Grigg writes superbly within his limited framework of ability and experience" is supposed to be a compliment? Would you care to explain just what you meant by it? Whatever you did mean, however, I must say you show very poor taste in your fan writing. My favourite is John Bangsund by a long head start, then perhaps Bruce Gillespie and Leigh Edmonds, followed closely by Bill Wright and Paul Stevens.

Strange, they all seem to be Australians. Wonder why?

You said to me a while ago, and I agreed with you at the time, and I now feel it even more so, that even the crudest Australian fanzine is much more interesting to read than the average American (or Canadian) fanzine.

There are obvious reasons for this kind of centralism (?) such as the fact that our local fanzines are talking about things and people we know closely, but I must say that even taking that into account, I very rarely read right through an overseas fanzine, whereas I usually get pretty well stuck into SF Commentary and Skythrob or even Chao, Rataplan and so on. The only one I read all the way through without fail and always enjoy is Touchstone, put out by that Grigg fellow, but I may be being short sighted there.

But it seems to me that Australian fanzines in general take themselves a hell of a lot less seriously than overseas zines do. Even SFC is nowhere as serious in concept and motivation as, say, Granfalloon and the rest, and that's why I'd much rather read SFC than Granfalloon.

The other thing of course is that every good Australian zine seems to be much more suffuse with the personality of its editor than others, and to be suffused in a non-morbid and pleasant fashion. Only REG and Kwalqhat-sit by Ed Cagle seems to have this kind of editor identification in the States, and I don't want to read REG, because I think his introduction of personality into his fanzine is a morbid one.

Someone somewhere once talked about an advertisement in an English newspaper for raincoats. The writer of the article was an American and the ad read: "Perhaps the Finest Raincoat Made" or words to that effect. The writer said that that one word: "Perhaps" underlay the whole difference between American and English thought. There may be something in that.

((Indeed there might, but what has that to do with the state of Australian fanzines versus the rest, hey?

I suppose I'm going to have to justify my statment about David being a good writer within his limited framework of ability and experience, whatever they might be. To start with people will please remember that I wrote that six months ago and as always reserve the right to later change my mind, which I am going to do after a fashion. To do some updating I say that "David Grigg is a superb writer within his limited framework of ability and experience, both of which are expanding all the time." There David, does that make you feel any happier and does it answer your question. It should.

I think, David, that in commenting on the differences between Australian and American fanzines you have quite neglected to mention that well known American phenomena known as the Personalzine. If you get a handful of Personalzines you will find pages of nothing but editorial personality, just like apazines without the mailing comments - sometimes I think these personalzines are published by people who aren't members of apas.

As

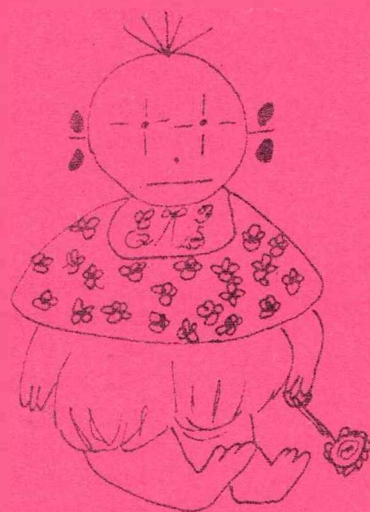
to your appraisal of Australian fan writers being the best there are these days I'm not sure whether to agree with you or not. It would be nice to agree with you but modesty gets in the way and one also has to have a bit of tact about these things you know - who wants to alienate the whole of American fandom. Perhaps somebody else would like to comment on David's statment that "Australian fanzines in general take themselves a hell of a lot less seriously than overseas zines do".))

John Snowden
28 Pt Hacking Road
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NSW 2229

Every time I read a Melbourne fanzine it is rare if it doesn't mention that funny word 'wine'. Everyone down there must carry a couple of gallons around with him/her to bring out at the slightest provocation. What are you all, a bunch of wineos? You never hear anything like that about clean living Sydney fans. Just because there is a rumor that someone put an aspro in his coca-cola... I hasten to add that this was totally untrue as the strongest drink we serve at a SSFF meeting is lemonade. So there! (There is another rumor which is that they have also been serving some stimulative drink called Coffee! I hasten to add that this is also perfectly untrue of course!) Have I said too much? I hope not.

((You certainly have said too much and what is more I know for a fact that what you have written is completely untrue. For a start I know of no Melbourne fans who carry flagons of wine around with them all the time just to whip out at an opportune moment. It is true that Valma and I have been carrying around a flagon of Wynns for the last few months but we have had no intention of drinking it, we've just been trying to find somebody who would like to take it off our hands.

As for Sydney fans being clean living and never touching a drop, sheer rubbish. Recently up at Canberra I had a chance to see Sydney fans in action and they drink like fish and can keep up with the rest of them in a round of debauchery. Mild mannered Eric Lindsay may seem so in print but what I've seen him at would make a



a brickies labourer blush. And as for innocent Shayne McCormack, her stay in Melbourne earlier this year revealed a totally unexpected side of her personality.))

John Alderson
Haverlock
Victoria 3465

I have before me RATAPLAN 11 which I have to confess that I've read. So I decided to send you something for RATAPLAN 12 or 13, the something I took down for you way back in June. I've had the dog's disease ever since then and still have it. So if Valma sees this letter grab it from her before she can kiss my signiature (girls have a funny habit of doing that with my letters, course I suppose that's because I haven't come in person) or else she'll catch it too and spend three months in bed.

That leads me to a comment I intend to make about your story "Sleeping Bewdy Mate" which I notice was also published in Rats. At the end of the first section "those who were so inclined performed necrophilic acts upon Mr Brown." This worries me. I have been under the impression that necrophilic is derived from French, nec meaning kiss or cuddle, hence our word "neck" and philic a young girl, hence our "filly" for a nice young thing, and by a play on words "old nag" to describe them when they have turned twenty-two or so. So whilst being poofters those fellows might kiss and cuddle Mr Brown, but surely he was no "filly". You may be interested to know that when Achilles killed Penthesilea the queen of the Amazons he performed a "necrophilic act" with her, but she was a girl, even if she did have one er... um, having cut the other off so she could use a bow. But I suppose he was sorry he had killed her seeing she was a girl. Achilles was a simple man, very attached to his enemies. When he killed Hector he dragged him behind his chariot for a week or so until he got that high the Greeks made him stop... just like the Yanks used to do in Viet Nam, only they didn't always kill the fellow first. Still I am glad to see you have reservations about poofters being Australians. The place is getting overrun with poofters and wogs and that, in fact if I don't get a wife soon all the true Australians will be dead when I go.

As I said, I am down with the wog. Hoping you are the same.

((John, thanks for pointing out the error of my using the word "necrophilic" in the context I did. You may rest assured that I will make sutiable amendments in the final version which I will be sending to Harlan for consideration of inclusion in THE LAST DANGEROUS VISIONS.

However, with your claim to being the last living Australian I can only say that this is the first time I've heard this bit about True Australians having to be full blood Celts. Infact my previous information that the only true Australians are descended from the Norman invaders of 1066 seems far more logical and, of course, makes me a True Australian. Even if you are not a True 'Strine thanks for the article which will appear in a few pages.))

Tony Waters
3223 Nash Avenue
Cincinnati
Ohio 45226
US of A

Congratulations on getting a real ballot of your very own; that's something I don't have myself, never having been an absentee voter. As for the booklet that came along with it, you didn't say who published it, the Board of Elections maybe? If that's the case the general voter (me, for example) doesn't get one. However there's a group called the League of Women Voters - a national group as far as I know - which puts out a little one shot paper before the important elections, at least, with arguments pro and con each issue, mini-biographies on each candidate, and explanations of precinct or district boundaries, if necessary. It's available in libraries and post offices and other places as well.

The rest is a little difficult to explain, especially since I have no great amount of experience in this regard; the first time I voted was in May 1972. Your right that the Federal and State governments are not directly involved, although I'm not entirely sure who does what when. Cincinnati's votes for federal offices are counted by the Hamilton County Board of Elections. These particular people are sometimes outrageously slow in tabulating the vote.

Everybody should vote. The last time I voted I happened to be the only voter in the polling place for the few minutes it took me to vote. All the time I was there the three old ladies who took care of the paper work were involved in a discussion of the movie Deep Throat, the threat to our morals, etc.

Bernie Berhhouse
62 Military Road
Avondale Heights
Victoria 3034

It has come to the attention of my rather besieged senses and belaboured moral will of yet another vicious and extremely lewd statment of anti-patriotism, this time in a periodical which prior to the remark in question I had deemed to be unsurpassed in its uprightness, rectitude and Spartan integrity namely, RATAPLAN the Younger.

"Puffing Billy" indeed! Leigh you impure, foolish individual, can you possibly foresee the damage a remark such as this can have on the amorphous morality of Melfandom?

Ask your American counterparts, they can tell you!

Why (frightening as it may be) I would venture to suggest that without this divine quality known as Partiotism, all wars might cease on our landscaped planet - a disasterous and yet inevitable conclusion.

Now take your Americans for example, they have the right idea and yet their interpretation of the word to mean AMERICAN Patriotism is woefully foolish in the extreme.

I assume that dribbled smudge of ink on your front cover could in no way conceivable be misconstrued as something bearing conscious design, but is rather more properly attributable to a cross between the contortions and acrobatics of an evolving and ambitious young Golden Caterpillar refugee from an ink bottle, and the result of a peculiar (if not uniquely constituted) brand of ink, lapsing into a state of complete reverie and relief after suffering at the formidable keys of your typer, at being stamped into such vile words of propaganda and antipatriotic sentiment.

((Thanks, I needed that. This vitriolic attack has reduced me to seeming speechlessness and so I must retaliate with the words of Australian Fandoms latest folk hero, Ken Ford. "May your ears turn to arseholes and shit on your shoulders."))

And to round off this section of the issue there is a post card from from none other than Charlie Brown:

Two items of fannish history I've been meaning to write to you about.

1) Fanzine Control Numbers - Some fan wrote to LOCUS asking what he had to do to publish a fanzine. We immediately mimeod up a fanzine liscence and sent it to him. Tony Lewis liked the idea and added a number to INSTANT MESSAGE as a joke. End of story.

2) SMOF- Ray Fisher made up SMOF badges for the '68 MidwesterCon and formed a club called SMOF. Anyone could join, pick their own number and make up their own identification card. I got SMOF 1, Ray was SMOF 5, Tony Lewis was SMOF 3, Bruce Pelz was SMOF 2 etc. Bruce actually has a liscenceplate that reads SMOF 2. The joke petered out about 1971.

END OF DEPARTMENT 85

That was put up there just so that you knew I'd finished reading letters and thinking up witty things to say about them.

What is going to happen next is a bit of a mystery to me but given a few lines to work around to it what will happen is either that there will be a reprint of a music review thing that appeared in the paper a while back or John Aldersons article. Personally I have a preference for the music article mainly because we had a flash of John just a couple of pages back.

Okay, so it's decided then...

PERTH NOTHING BUT A BELLE SLUT

James Penberthy

La Belle Dame Sans Merci - Felix Werder (Concert Hall, Perth)

The First Australian to have his piece played in a serious ABC concert in Perth's new red and black music auditorium-pub complex was Melbourne's Felix Werder. For those who don't read the Melbourne 'Age' music criticisms, or know about the resident songmen, I explain that Werder is just about Australia's most intelligent and serious composer-critic.

He is humorous, honest, hard hitting yet burdened a little by the same sort of chip that rests on the shoulders of all Australian composers. Hetherefore pulls few punches when addressing himself to the so called Australian Opera for its wop opera policy, or when he is roasting the ABC for its ridiculous homage to Beethoven and the blue rinse mob.

Nevertheless it was bland old Auntie ABC turning the other cheek, who put Werder in the Perth concert hall as the first aussie in a dinkum sunscription concert.

The name of the piece is "La belle dame sans merci". This turned out to be a title of sheer prophecy. The music is attractive and well put together. It is easy listening, to the attentive ear: but it is contemporary and truly werderian.

On the firday night, Tibor Paul and the local symphony orchestra played it correctly. There was a capacity audience. Werder got up to take the applause. Werder quickly sat down again. Forty people clapped and one man booed.

On saturday, two people clapped and one man booed.

The music which followed Werder's was football. A trite and tricky concerto in D, by top fiddle charlatan Paganini (deceased).

Robert Davidovici, from abroad, entered holding the violin by its neck, as he would a dead duck. He did not pluck the duck, but the circus tricks were of the highest order. Not once did the flying fingers fail to be sul tasto; not once did the bow miss the gut.

The music was as sweet as a whore's welcoming smile and in the part which goes piddle-piddle-pom it was athletic. The sophisticated Perth mink brigade went out of its mind with fatuous hand walloping and selfconscious hoorays.

"That's real music," hissed a sweet little old lady right behind the werderian ear.

Had Davidovici hung by his heels from the microphone wire in full frontal nude and played 'Carnival of Venice' on the flute, he could not have engendered more delight.

In Perth les belles dames do not wait for the wounds of composers to heal. Some of the highest dignitaries invited Werder for an after concert guzzle.

"Why do you write such awful music?" asked one high ranking lady, smiling.

An even more important lady was even frendlier. "I hate your music," she said.

What could he say. I give him full marks. "I write it for the overseas market," he declared; but he must have been crying inside, right down to the soles of his feet.

An ABC offocial trying to outdo les dames in kindness murmured: "You must not blame them too much. The races were cancelled this afternoon. They are most upset."

Why should he worry? After all, he got his fare, economy class to Perth ... no applause, no publicity, no thanks. He has calculated that he will get \$9 for the hire of the parts.

Perth is nothing but a belle slut without the slightest merci. Only one

thing can be said in defence of her... musically she is further from anywhere than anywhere else.

(Nation Review -may 18/24)

I suppose your feelings about contemporary music might make you either sympathetic or otherwise towards poor Felix Werder's reception in Perth. Personally I think that he's just a bit short of god's gift to the nation as far as modern music goes and only the humorous manner in which James Penberthy wrote the article makes it all readable without getting quite angry at the reception contemporary composers get around the place.

By the way James Penberthy is no mean composer either. A couple of Months ago Valma, David Grigg and I went to a concert in St. Pauls Cathedral where works by both Penberthy and Werder were being played. I was along there for the Werder and because on the pervious Thursday I'd been at a lecture on Electronic music done by Ian Bonington where he mentioned he'd be having a work performed on Saturday - if he had it fininished in time.

The main reason I brought this up is as an excuse to print a bit of paper handed out at the concert, what you might call a partial score of program for the Penberthy piece which was for solo organ.

BEN'S CLOAK

James Penberthy (b. 1917)

1. LIFE - DEATH
 2. APOTHEOSIS (optional)
 3. ENCORE (scherzo)
-
1. spectrum - a cry - anguish - despair - defiance - hysteria - ugly - celestial - spiteful
 - and bamboo vaulting poles with holes
 - alors! mon enfant, comme la vache qui pis bis - allez!
 - rubato - dolce - how can there be such excruciating sorrow? what can human spirit bear
 2. omitted tonight
 3. scherzo or "my life"
 - spectrum - express man's loftiest and noblest resolutions in D minor - peg
 - follow with prayers for peace in our time - peg
 - lay on honied lard with an ecclesiastical trowel
 - my heart etc. are aching for the love of a good woman - peg
 - father dear father come home from the pub bring some gin and bacardi and plenty of grub
 - the organist now becomes a little devil on Benvenuto Cellini's

fountain squirting jets to a heaven always ending on G-sharp-peg

- you are pan piping and running up and down your mouth organ in bermondsey or spiros shooting little darts at tarts in picadilly or vice versa
- you are a nonconforming female breakaway pentacostal street revivalist singing "come one, come all" in 3rds whit her sister who once sang in the sopranos during "Merry Widow" - peg both decisively
- you play your own interpretation of devils in rooves of churches - bats in caves
- here you can use two hands to be more inventive than bach till you whiz out of pipes - peg immediately
- demonstrate $E=mc^2$ - kick in with a low pedal
- crescendo

Despite that up there the music was quite good but naturally nobody could follow it and were all left way behind. I thought we were half way through the third part when suddenly the music stopped. "Could that be the end of it?" I asked myself but I didn't know the correct reply. Apparently nobody else knew either because there was a deathly silence. The organist solved the problem by switching off the light in the organ loft and everybody felt free to applaud, which they did.

The other pieces were also good, most interesting was a piece by a bloke called Ron Nagorcka which had people reading out of newspapers, ripping up newspapers, waving around ma-ma dolls and doing other like things. It sounds silly but I really wasn't. There were parts in it when you really couldn't help but laugh a little and I hope that the composer had done this intentionally or else he would have been a bit upset.

And this leads us back to the Felix Werder bit which I must confess to having forgotten completely (how it went I mean). He has made the discovery that there aren't any musicians who specialise in performing the EMS Synthi A (and/or AKS - which I happen to own) synthesizer which means that the composer is back on the concert platform once again. Perhaps this is a good thing too because when a composer tells a pianist to play a G chord he knows that a G chord is going to be played but if you tell a performer to make 30 setting on knobs to get a sound one of those knobs might only need to be out by a degree or two and the sound is different - the composer who is up there can make the right change but the performer would have no idea what to do.

Anyhow, as I was saying Felix Werder has discovered how to get himself unto the platform and he does it a lot these days. Three times I've seen his music performed this year and a synthesizer has been included in each one and he has played it. Two of those times he's written for duo synthesizers and other Melbourne composers have played

with him.

And this all leads us - referring back to a reference that Penberthy made in his article to Werder having things to say about "wop opera" to reprinting from a rather interesting fanzine put out by the International Society for Contemporary Music (Melbourne) called "Report of Symposium - Opera and the Australian Composer" which is what it says it is.

I attended this symposium and in lots of ways it felt like the first stf convention I'd ever been to. There were lots of real honest-to-ghod composers around, Colin Brumby, George Dreyfus (who seems to be the Lee Harding of the music scene) and a couple of others whose names I've forgotten. Felix Werder turned up on the second day and in the last item which was an open discussion had this to say:

"I'm sorry to join into this sophistry, but as one of the victims of the Australian Opera I feel bound to make some sort of statment.

"We seem to have in this sophistry two opposing views: the wrong one over there and the right one over here. I think the wrong one over there is born out of the typical apologetic sophistry of the agents of bourgeois vulgarity. Obviously these people have a vested interest in the views they hold, therefore they put them forward. Borgeois culture has always said that Bruckner must be a better composer than Mozart. After all, his symphonies are five times as long, therefore they must be ten times as good. This is an argument of the 19th century.

"Argument number two, which I as a composer find terribly amusing, is for somebody to tell me, as a value judgement: "Your opera is no good because it will not attract an audience". That again is bourgeois culture: the measurement of success by how many shekels I turn over at the box office.

"The problem is that we are faced with, in fact, bourgeois vulgarity, which has put up this monument concept of the artist. An artist must be a monument; he must be a Beethoven. You're not allowed to write a symphony unless it's number 10. Mr Dreyfus, for instance, has written a very successful symphony. But critics tell me it can't be a very good symphony because it's not the Beethoven 10th. It's the Dreyfus 1st. And therefore it doesn't count. All this is bunkum.

"What we need is tremendous creativity. Not "good" or "bad" - who are you to judge? I've been a professional critic for 20 years. Who the hell cares. That's not the judgement of art. The judgement of art is how many people we have in the community doing things. We need 500 bad Australian composers so that in 20 years we will produce a great one. Only out of the soil can we get these things.

"Now for a company to say to me: "We'll wait for you, Werder, to write this masterpiece, or for you, Dreyfus, to write this grand opera, before we will stage a production because we don't know" shows that you know nothing about music. You admit it: you don't know. If you can't read a score you oughtn't to be in the business.

"To continue this argument: ...and this is the right situation. The typical bourgeois argument as put up by Misica Viva, by the ABC - look,

it's not just an opera problem, it is an Australian culture problem. Why do you pick on these poor fellows who are the agents, the parvenus of this particular culture? You will find the concept in all our culture that if you write something it must pay, it must be a masterpiece.

"Now, history has shown us again and again - and I make this point as an historical materialist - that no composer, and that includes the two greatest opera composers of all time, Mozart and Monteverdi, wrote a masterpiece number one. If some of our administrators had lived at the time of Monteverdi we would never have had Poppea. If they had lived at the time of Mozart we would never have had The Marriage of Figaro, because they would have thrown Mozart out with Bastien and Bastienne. They would have said: "This guy's got no talent, it doesn't even warrant performances." If Mozart had not continued to work there would have been no Mozart.

"It is essential that a composer must write, in this field, hundreds upon hundreds of works. Verdi's first 20 operas are rubbish. It is only the Verdi of the middle period we look back on and say: "We might as well do Macbeth". Right? But if Verdi had done nothing but Macbeth, you wouldn't even look at it.

"So let's get things absolutely straight from the composer's point of view. To hell with your semantics. To hell with your arguments of logical necessity or what you think opera ought to be, or what somebody else thinks the Australian Opera company should do. What we need is lots of performances of lots of bad works, and let history judge. Because only after George Dreyfus has written 6,7,8,8, maybe 10 bad operas - that is what you would call bad - will he be able to write you a Marriage of Figaro. You cannot expect an artist, out of the blue, just like that suddenly to create the Beethoven 10th. And that is exactly what you are doing. And of course you are not going to succeed, because, like Musica Viva and like the ABC, you will have less and less quality. And you, Mr Divall, and your company, who have specialised in putting on religious music, in the hope of getting on religiously... What has the Victorian Opera Company ever done except put on cantatas and oratorios? When are you going to start doing opera? And don't compete with the Australian Opera, because they do Puccini better than you ever will: they've got the money. So forget about it.

"This whole concept of music being taken over by second-rate, would-be Sadlers Wells producers - for God's sake spare us the English producers, spare us the English theatre. Let's go back to opera. And opera is made by people like me, by people like George Dreyfus, like Richard Meale, and not by producers with their bourgeois evaluations of what culture ought to be."

Thus spake Felix Werder and now, since I've gotten myself in this far, I suppose I might as well go on and explain what the whole bit was about - a slightly difficult job since the fanzine the ISCM sent out really didn't cover it so how could I hope to.

Also in passing I'd perhaps better mention what the ABC and Musica Viva are that Werder referred to a couple of times. The ABC is the Australian Broadcasting Commission which also seems to

have ended up with the job of running serious classical music in Australia and stuff like that. They controll the symphony orchestras in almost all the state capitals and put on all the major orchestral music about the place. Musica Viva organises the chamber music in Australia and apart from a very few minot organisations they run the only chamber music concerts you will ever come across. Their drawing power is that they make a point of imposting Big Name international performers and whiz them all around the country in two weeks playing them in front of near capacity audiences. (I invariably go to sleep during both ABC and Musica Viva concerts).

Back to where we were. Werder was referring to a couple of points of view about how to get Australian operas performed. One group, led by Richard Dival held that you don't worry about what the Australian Opera Company is doing because so far it has proved impossible to get them to put on Australian operas and so the smaller companies should be doing it. Of course the Victorian Opera Company has not put on any Australian operas either (Dival is their musical director) but they are supposed to be doing Lary Sitsky's "The Fall of the House of Usher" in November so that is atleast something.

The other point of view seemed to be that the Australian Opera Company doesn't call itself that for nothing and so you just do more to encourage the company to do something about it. There is a history to this which goes back to 1967 when the Australian Opera commissioned seven Australian composers to write for them. Of the seven operas which were supposed to have been written three were not, one was supposed to have been but got lost in transit, one was read and turned down flat - that was George Dreyfus' - and the other three were accepted. One of the three was a work by Peter Sculthorpe which was later recommissioned as a full scale work to be performed at the opening of the Sydney Opera House. It wasn't finished in time. The other two by Felix Werder and Larry Sitsky have been supposed to have been performed a couple of times but each time they've been called off and are now supposed to be tacked onto the end of the opening season at the Sydney Opera House next year.

But to my mind Werder was not actually attacking Richard Dival which is how things seemed at the time and how they read. Apart from the fact that Dival wanted to start out small and work up they agree in that you don't get people to turn out masterpieces just like that. So what is going to happen, that's what I want to know. Dival said that his company would be commissioning a couple of Australian operas each year but I've heard nothing about it. But then I don't have my ear very deep into the music scene in Melbourne to hear little bits of gossip.

One thing I have noticed recently and that is that Werder is saying some terribly nice things about Dival and the Victorian Opera Company. Maybe they've commissioned him to do something for them or maybe he's working for it. In this morning's "Age" Werder wrote a glowing review of a concert performance the Victorian Opera did last Saturday of some Mozart and Berlioz. Dival is hailed as the bright new shining light in the opera sphere and the Victorian Opera Company as the successor to the aged and

not too interesting Sydney Opera Company - he likes to refer to the Australian Opera Company as the Sydney Opera Company because the company is run from Sydney and I don't think that he has too much time for the people in Sydney who control Australian music as the ABC and Musica Viva have their headquarters there too.

So much for music.

Now

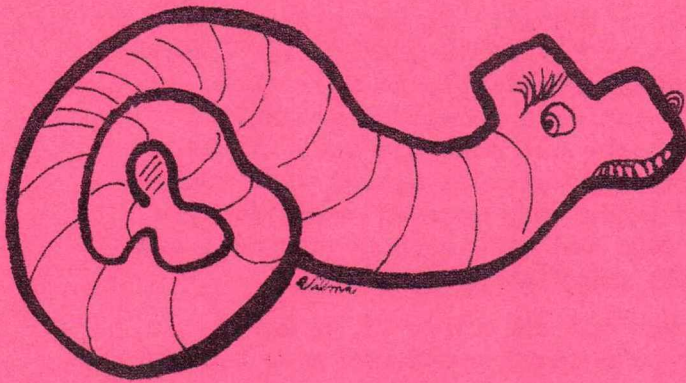
settle back and read this strange little article from the Mad Celt himself, John Alderson.

THE TRACK TO GUNDAGAI AND PLACES FURTHER OUT
or The Picnic After Syncon

On one of those bloody great hills in this great flat land of Australia, I did in the withdrawal bearing of my car. Now I drive a Bogward Hansa 1100, and I was on my way to Syncon. What I did was not to throw the old girl into angel's gear but to merely depress the clutch and coast down the umpteen miles of this hill, to cool the motor which had overheated on the way up, which was umpteen miles in second gear. A Hansa has four gears and only Victoria Pass got me into first. Now had the wretched mechanic not skimped matters and replaced the withdrawal bearing when he reconditioned the engine and the gearbox, this may not have happened. Had the bearing been a hunk of carbon like they usually are instead of the ball bearing it was it may not have happened either. The fact that I was not the mechanic merely makes it worse as I had a spare new bearing in any case.

Not that this threw the car out of action. Takes a lot to stop a Hansa. But I had very little clutch and steadily got less. So I did not take the car to Sydney but left it at Faulconbridge at Eric Lindsay's place where I spent a few days. So the day after Syncon I started home, and as luck would have it I had very little clutch work for the first day or so. When I say very little clutch work, I mean I did not have to actually stop very often. I had to change gears several times on every hill, and this without using the clutch. Well that's nothing with most mongrel gear-boxes they make in Australia, but the Hansa has a fully synchronised gearbox, and every gear change relies on the clutch to operate a brake to allow the gears to mesh. I had no clutch to waste on non-essentials like that and I had to time the change by ear. Well I got home.

The Hume Highway is pretty good in most parts, but in a few bottle necks it remains much as the original travellers with their drays found it, and on one of those torturous hills I spied a pile of broken wine flagons on an inside bend, and wondered fleetingly if they had been empty or filled when they had met their doom. But shortly I was in trouble. Changing without the benefit of the clutch meant that the petrol had to be worked, and on a particularly severe bend on a very steep slope, the cable came adrift and I was left with the engine ticking over, in neutral and... I know I should have tightened the handbrake. There I was with the car facing up a slope that would have graced a church roof and unable to do anything. The slope was too steep to have stopped the engine and used it as a brake! Luckily there



were some workmen having lunch , and I hollowed out that I was in trouble. One came over and chocked the back wheel with a huge conie and I set about repairs. The clutch worked enough to get me rolling again!

Gingerly I crept through town after town, until at last I turned off for Canberra. Troubles began early. They have an inflated idea of the amount of traffic there and have

traffic lights way out in the country side, worked on the same timing pattern as the New South Wales' ones, ten seconds green and two minutes red which makes it impossible to time your speed to roll through at the right moment. The second set of lights left me with a clutch that needed major repairs and a petrol cable that needed fixing again. I pulled off onto a side street and parked on a hill under a tree in as secluded a spot as I could find. I had then intended to sleep in the car there. Couldn't leave it overnight, someone might have swiped my collection of fanzines.

For reasons I need hardly specify I had not eaten that day since breakfast and I began looking for somewhere to eat. I should have taken a cut lunch! Finally I wound up at the National Library where I had to do some research. It took them half an hour to tell me they did not have the books I wanted. I then asked one of the librarians where I could eat and was directed back to the other end of the city, across that vile bridge with more cars to the yard than a dog has fleas. Canberra is made in two sections and all traffic between them goes via a bridge which spans the lake. Everybody in Canberra has two cars. He drives one himself and has a chauffer drivethe other. Holding my nose to avoid suffication from the noxious exhaust gasses I ran across, wandered through several acres of lawn cut by paths along which motorists howled at dizzy speeds (I thought Melbourne was bad enough but in Canberra they have short cuts through the lawns). I finally found a milkbar and had a drink of milk and a pie. Then I set out to find John Bangsund's abode. His place fronts the lake. He has a beautiful view is he gets on the roof and looks above the madly speeding cars.

I had been to Canberra more years ago than I care to remember. It has grown, in size, and architectually arragant with power. An enormous fountain shot from the lake, a fantastic height into the air. It is not beautiful or artistic, just a blatant symbol of power. The basic keynote of all the architecture is massiveness, and gives no excuse not to realize that this is the Capital, this is where men rule.

I wandered down the street where John Bangsund lives and found the half

house he lives in... he lives a batchelor existance in three rooms. He had a very muddy drive way with fresh tracks going in and fresh tracks going out (he had come and gone in other words). On his back veranda was a bookcase where he kept his files of RIVERSIDE QUARTERLY. No-one in their right mind would pinch RIVERSIDE QUARTERLY, no more than anyone in their senses would steal a pick or a shovel or an axe. I wandered around for an hour and came back, but John had not. I was disappointed, I had wanted to see Lesleigh Luttrell again, nice young females are scarce. As I discovered later they were all at a party a few blocks away. I left a note for John and made back to the car, and threading through the side streets hit the Highway for Yass.

Had intended to stay awhile in Canberra but the worry of my car (illogically enough because a day or so's spell would not have made it worse) spurred me onward.

Gundagai is an old town on the crossing of the Murrumbidgee River. It features extensively in folklore, probably the most famous piece being "The Dog Sat on the Tucker Box". Five miles out there is a monument to the pioneers that uses this motif of the dog on the tucker box as the monument. I once met a know-all who had been everywhere so I asked him what the inscription was and he quoted...

"The dog sat on the tucker-box
Nine miles from Gundagai..."

And I set him back on his heels by telling him that it was a monument to the pioneers of the country...

"...who won her when wooing was dangerous,
And now are gathered unto her again."

The tucker-box of the bushman is, or was a wooden box. That of my father was about eighteen inches long and ten inches square. The one of the monument was of different dimensions. Alas for pretensions. The "sat" of the ballad is a euphemism, and the "on" should be in. So legends have grown. Jack Morse wrote the original ballad. There are of course many others of Gundagai. There is an old song which runs

"The blue gums are growing
And the Murrumbidgee's flowing,
Beneath that summer sky,"

and entitled "There's an old track winding back..." But alas, the writer of that song had not been to Gundagai because blue gums don't grow there. There is a parody that fitted the bill better for me, which runs...

"Oh how we roared, in that old fashioned ford,
Along the road to Gundagai.
With water in the petrol and sand in the gears,
And haven't seen a garage for forty seven years,
Oh how we roared in that old fashioned ford,
Along the road to Gundagai."

It has by the way an interesting tune, quite catchy in its way.

Gundagai sprawls on the side of a hill overlooking the valley of the Murrumbidgee. The original settlement was built in the valley on Government orders, but it did not survive the first flood. Today two long bridges span the river, road and rail. Alas, I did not stop. Years ago I explored this road by bicycle. I wonder now, what ever

possessed men to build a major highway along the top of a mountain range for four hundred miles!

Shortly beyond Gundagai the road branched off for Wagga Wagga. Within a few minutes I was driving along level road and the torturous hills left behind. I say level, they were low hills, miles from crest to crest, and all top gear work. At last I could relax, away from bad driving, away from traffic.

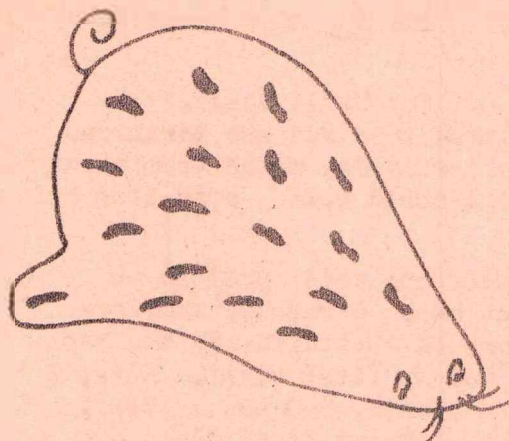
Wagga Wagga (the name is always written twice and said once) is an aboriginal word meaning a reeling or a sick man. Generally they are having a drought. One of the proverbial men of Australia was the Man Who Rode the Wild Bull Through Wagga. It was my first visit. Alas, I came to some traffic lights, way out in the country and had to stop. The trouble I had getting started again (Wagga Wagga is as flat as a billiard table) took away any idea I had of wandering around. I kept on.

Perhaps I should say something about a Hansa. Almost every part of them is galvanised and coated with fibre-glass, or made of aluminium. After ten years the old girl hasn't a speck of rust. Almost I said. The fuel line, which like almost everything else, is internal, was ordinary steel and running along the floor. The floor of all cars gets damp and the line had rusted through. A full days driving in the heat with plenty of petrol fumes made me violently ill. I struggled on across the great flat plains to Corowa. Oh there are names on the map ... they have them there so you won't get lost. Generally they represent a road junction. Corowa is Aboriginal for pine, and all through this area there is, or was pine... Murray pine as it is some times called. A lovely tree in favoured districts degenerating to an ugly half dead horror in the nine inch rainfall belt. Corowa has vineyards, so has Wahgunyah across the River, so had Rutherglen a few miles on. And wineries. To my mind they make the best wines in the country here, and my trip was planned to take in some of these wineries. So much for planning. Nor was it the first time I had passed this way with the same plans and the same result.

From Corowa the road dips to the bridge across the glorious Murray. A great lazy old river, just known to most of us as The River. It winds and doubles back like a snake with a broken back. It is said to have fish in it though I am hanged if I have ever been able to properly confirm this. Worse, the thing belongs to New South Wales and one must have a NSW fishing licence as well as a Victorian one to sit on the Victorian bank and dangle a line in the water. Of course if you have a boat that is different, you register the boat in both States! Of course if you haven't got a licence you try not to get caught, and after all, who put the fish in the river if there are any there!

There is a fruit-fly inspection point on the Victorian side, half way up the bank, and here all fruit must be left. I crawled up to the man and said, "I have nothing" and he looked at the dust-covered car and the Victorian plates and waved me on. God bless the gentle hearted soul.

I found a road leading down to the river or a billabong and stopped to camp. About five o'clock all manner of girls and kids began trapizing by and cars began speeding along the road. There is a football ground



along the road and the boys were going up for training, but don't ask why all the girls and kids of the village have to go too. They all drove back. Not that I cared much. I was too crook.

In the morning I set out to explore some of the wineries and about half a mile on the car stopped. With help I got a tow and got it going, and kept going. I crawled through Shepparton, a town devoted to canning fruit, mainly pears and stone fruits. Thank goodness you can creep through

Victorian towns. Interestingly

the Aboriginal name is Kanny-goopna ("the place in the River where big fish are caught"). There is still an Aboriginal settlement there (at Mooroopna which means "an evil spirit") and so on to Elmore. Here I had to get petrol.

As I pushed the clutch in for the last time there was a horrible sound and the clutch ceased to work at all. Another motorist gave me a push and with the engine just idling I slipped it into gear.

Bendigo is a large city... it has traffic lights and worse, motorists. I slipped around the lights and had to ram on the anchors when a motorist appeared on my right. I went in search of some strong, good natured men to start me. I found them without trouble and I was away again. Forty miles from home, seventy miles without a clutch at all. I made it, and thankfully stopped the engine under the block and tackle that still hung there from my last repair job.

It only took a week to repair the damage and completely recondition the gearbox. Now it works better than it had ever worked in its time with me. When I finally wiped the grease from my hands I could say that Syncon and the picnic afterwards was over. And Lesleigh may have been back in the States before I had done.

See you all in '75.

That's a very nice article John, thanks for sending it.

If any other fans happen to spend some time driving around the back blocks and feel like writing it up I'd be more than happy to print the result. This is the sort of thing that I really like and if any of you have read the latest issue of David Grigg's TOUCHSTONE with Ken Ford and his article you might appreciate why David had to force me to hand it over after Ken had given it to me to give to him.

Before I start to run out of room there is one comment I'd like to make about this article from John, and

that is the reference he makes to the great fountain of water which shoots out of the lake at Canberra and washes all the cars which happen to be crossing the bridge at the time.

If I may quote; "An enormous fountain shot from the lake, a fantastic height into the air. It is not beautiful or artistic, just a blatant symbol of power". When we were in Canberra at the same time that John was wandering around John Bangsund, or maybe it was Helen Hyde, told us that the trouble with the fountain is that it costs an awful lot to run and so it is only turned on when there are going to be tourist around. Now if we tie this in with John and his idea that it symbolises the power that resides in Canberra we can draw the conclusion that power in Canberra is there only for show as well. Or then, perhaps they only have the fountain going when Parliament is in session so that the symbolism and the actual power are at work at the same time. I bet parliament cost a fair bit to run too, that's probably why they don't have it sitting a all the time. They cut costs both ways, there's nothing like having a few cents left in the bottom of the Treasury at the end of the financial year.

Word has reached these shores that we have won the bid for the WorldCon in 1975 and naturally we are all happy with this. Of course we now have to concern ourselves with putting the convention on which is not something we thought too much about when we first dreamed up the idea of an Australian WorldCon. However we will manage and the interest that has been shown so far is real encouragement.

The Australians at TORCON all had a good time from what I have heard so far, there has been in particular a very enthusiastic letter from Bruce Gillespie who enjoyed himself immensely and from what Barry Salgram has had to say everybody else feels the same way.

In Bruces letter he said that already a couple of prominent have said they will be coming and that some of the americans who voted for Australia have already converted their supporting memberships to attending memberships. The A75 committee has already received a few letters enquiring about the convention and we really seem to be moving ahead.

Anyhow, with over 330 supporting memberships the 1975 convention laready has more members than any Australian convention.

Meahwhile Bruce also mentioned in his letter that there will be a DUFF race to DISCON II in Washington DC next year between as many Australian fans who care to be nominated. Already Paul Stevens, John Bangsund and myself have said we intend to run and since I intend to win you will not find me printing any of their writings in this fanzine. But this is beside the point and perhaps not exactly true because nobody could turn down a Bangsund or Stevens article.

Shayne McCormack and Lesleigh Luttrell will be administering the fund and they should do a pretty good job of it. All we appear to need will be lots of votes and money. Nominations close on November 1. After that voting begins.

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