

## Ann Carr-Boyd

### A musical life

Composer, Ann Carr-Boyd, was born to create music. Although she intended to pursue a career in commercial art after completing her Leaving Certificate at Queenwood, she says, there was no escape from a life and love of music.

“I grew up in total music surroundings,” she says. With her grandfather a violinist, and father Norbert Wentzel and uncle Charles Wentzel both playing viola in the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, Ann Carr-Boyd’s childhood was immersed in music. So it is not surprising that she became one of Australia’s leading composers and musicologists, having created, broadcast, taught and performed for more than 50 years.

“I would see my father go off to rehearsals with his viola,” she says, adding that he was an equally good pianist. Ann recalls growing up in a house with a grand piano in the front room and an upright piano at the other end of the house with her father acting as her first piano teacher. “My brother practised at one end of the house and I would practise at the other.”

There was practice in the morning, lessons in the afternoon and ensembles on the weekend. “It was non-stop music,” she says.

When asked her earliest memory of music, Ann recalls how as a small child she sometimes had difficulty sleeping and her father would play Chopin’s *Raindrop Prelude* to help her sleep. This early exposure clearly had an impact with Ann composing her first piece, *Running*, at the age of six.

Starting Queenwood at the age of 10, Ann was not the first in her family to have an association with the school. Her mother had been a teacher of art, geography and maths at Queenwood after having met Miss Lawrance, the founder of Queenwood, when she was teaching at the Glennie School in Toowoomba.

The connection continued when Ann became a student, and remains today with Ann officially opening the recording studio in the redevelopment of the campus at 47 Mandolong Road, the same site on which her mother would probably have taught.

Little did Ann realise on finishing school, that she would become a trailblazer in Australian music. She attended the University of Sydney becoming the first Bachelor of Music graduate and later gaining a Master of Arts degree, both with 1st class honours.

This came about under the tutelage of Professor Donald Peart from Oxford University, who was the foundation Professor of Music at the University of Sydney. She recalls sitting in the quadrangle with him one day when he encouraged her to apply for a Commonwealth research grant. The following

three years were, “spent in libraries combing through old newspapers” researching classical music in colonial Australia. “No one had done it before,” she says, “it was a surprise to discover the rich history we had.”

From groundbreaking research Ann went on to win a scholarship to study in London under Alexander Goehr, where her career headed towards composition.

In this phase of her career she studied composition and piano and took part in the rich cultural life of England and Europe. She also married, and two of her three daughters were born in England.

*Fandango* is possibly one of her most well known pieces, for which she was nominated for the Most Performed Classical Composition at the 1999 APRA Awards, and ranked 55 in the 2008 Classic 100 chamber survey conducted by ABC Classic FM radio.

Collaboration continues to be the most enjoyable part of her work with Ann describing the thrill of hearing two new pieces she composed rehearsed in Melbourne this year.

“I’d been commissioned to write a trio for flute, clarinet and piano,” she says. “I was able to workshop it with them ... and that is the best experience. That’s my favourite way of working.”

She considers one of the great rewards of her career “to start scribbling something on a piece of paper and later hear it brought to life.” Like most composers Ann also works with the computer program Sibelius.

A concert ‘Four Generations of Music’ was held at the State Library of New South Wales to mark Ann’s 70<sup>th</sup> birthday. The program featured her music as well as music by her grandfather, father and performances by daughters Xanthe and Katrina, along with her niece Alexandra Wentzel, highlighting the musical lineage of the family.

Ann continues to create and inspire with a CD of her work titled, *Flying West*, being released this year.

While her school days may seem far from the international stage, lasting links remain, none more special than her two friends Jenny Young and Pam Murray, who remain close today many years after they left Queenwood.