

LUKA LESSON X QSO

THE FUTURE ANCIENTS PRESENT



MACQUARIE: AN INTERROGATION

COMMISSIONED BY
QUEENSLAND SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
COMPOSED BY GORDON HAMILTON

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INTRODUCTION

Commissioned by the Queensland Symphony Orchestra, the 'Macquarie' concerto was inspired by events both in Australia and in the southern states of the USA. Working with composer Gordon Hamilton, the concerto focusses on interrogating the life of Governor Lachlan Macquarie and his actions as Governor of New South Wales in the early 1800s.

Both the United States and Australia are going through a public discussion around the validity of statues and monuments honouring colonial figureheads or confederate soldiers. All colonial nations are called to face their troubled pasts, to confront the traumatic repercussions and healing still to be done. In Australia the contention around whether we should be honouring people who 'advanced' the colony while also violently dispossessing or oppressing Indigenous peoples is an important discourse at hand.

Although Governor Lachlan Macquarie himself is seen by some as a hero for 'developing the colony', he is seen by others as a villain because of his role in ordering the Appin Massacre against the Dharawal people of 1816, among other atrocities. This piece of work looks historically at Macquarie's life, and gives context to his own desensitisation to violence and hunger for 'success' since joining the British Army at 14 years old. It asks the question: "Should we still really be honouring someone who committed such heinous acts as these?"

The Macquarie concerto draws a line from birth until the death of this historical figure. But it also makes parallels between the initiation of violent encounters between Indigenous people and law enforcement hundreds of years ago, and today's lived experience of police brutality against people of colour both in Australia and abroad. With the statistics relating to Aboriginal deaths in custody continuing to rise in Australia, and all 300 recommendations of the

Royal Commission's investigation into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody being completely ignored, it is imperative that we use our voices and artforms to shed light on these issues.

We hope this work can add to the chorus of people who have gone before us, especially Dharawal elders past and present, all First Nations, Black, African-American, Latino and all POC voices calling for equality, and simple human rights. We also hope it can bring some context and understanding to the life, mistakes and repercussions of a controversial historical Australian figure.

This project was written with the permission and blessing of Dharawal elder Aunty Frances Bodkin and her son Gawaiian Bodkin-Andrews, who both looked over the manuscript before it's premiere.

With our respects,
Luka 'Lesson' Haralampou (Librettist)
& Gordon Hamilton (Composer)

[SCENE 1]
PROLOGUE

He grew up between a storm
and a sickle
born in the land of the sword
and the thistle

The Macquarie coat of arms hung
on the doors of the temple
his mother's fingertips tapped both his temples
said *he's a smart boy this one*

Before his journey had begun
he would wrestle his brothers shirtless
beneath the soft murmurs of the sun
the days were mostly long
cold
grey

His cousin died of dysentery
father died of old age

He learned to write his first sentence
Holy Communion and first repentance
the Holy Ghost and its two descendants
watched him make his first confession

But at 9 years old
what does a Scottish boy know
about right
and wrong?

what does a child know
about how to right

a grown man's wrongs?

At fourteen
he left his family on the Isle of Mull
to join ranks
strap boots
and set sail inside a hull
to fight the dull grey skies
and ignite the mind inside his skull

But whatever he tried to evade in Scotland
he would have to face in Boston
and Yorktown
where his battalion were battling
fighting against George Washington
and Alexander Hamilton*

He was on garrison duty
when his regiment surrendered
anticipating the failure of American Independence
looking for a way
to make his first impression
for a chance to make his name
worth a mention

He was sure
he could fight
he could shoot
he could rumble
so they placed him on front lines in Cochin and Colombo
the battle of Point de Galle in Sri Lanka
he was recognised for his hunger
rewarded for plunder

Between wars he found time to propose
to a girl named Jane Jarvis*
who said *yes*
with a full breath
and her eyes wide
closed

Tuberculosis took the breath from her nose
consumption took the marrow from her fragile bones

He tied on a black armband*
in memory of Jane
before setting off for more fighting again

As us men do when we're in pain
we turn our loss into ambition
block the consequences
and make sure history remembers our names

It was at the battle of Seringapatam*
that he would climb the ladder and reach the top rung
help to kill a Sultan
and raise that Union Jack
to the sun

but he had only

begun.

[SCENE 2]

NEW LEADERSHIP

It was true what they were telling him
no lies or embellishment
his army was required to stop the Rum Rebellion

In a far off land
found through south bound sails
a village called Sydney
down in New South Wales

A journey he would take with his red suited regiment
500 men
some servants for the settlement
a slave for the captain that they called *Black Tom*
I'm sure 'Tom' never liked where that name came from

And Macquarie's second wife
Elizabeth Campbell
they first stopped off down in Rio de Janeiro
'good Christians' knelt at the foot of their candles
they prayed for the success
of their personal gamble

They stopped in Cape Town
for rest and supplies
inspired - by successful apartheid

The threads of history
the ties that bind
the captain called on 'Tom'
to drop anchor
and arrive

On December 27, 1809
HMS Hindostan and Dromedary
landed in Port Jackson

On January 1st, 1810
Governor Macquarie
took his position

The rebellion was quashed
the revolution had been stopped
and those who'd been replaced by the coup
were reinstated to their jobs

Macquarie placed himself at the top
an autocratic-underdog
pulling up his socks

Expansion
more farms and more planting
Macquarie's focus
was on the colony's advancement

Expansion
more roads and more mansions
he lit his lantern
and wrote his memorandums

Red suited soldiers all ready for their orders
John Oxley among the colony's 'explorers'
he renamed 'New England'
'Brisbane'

drew borders
met people on his course
but completely ignored them

Macquarie gave convicts sold to squalor
most of the new jobs on offer
he put a hole in some coins to make the 'Holey Dollars'
and from then on
he worshipped the holy dollar

Governor Macquarie
built 265 new government buildings
during his reign

He was about perpetual growth
and nothing
would get in his way

So he built up what they laid down
ripped up that paved ground
new school and a playground
new dreams for that old crown

A hospital and a new barracks
offered all of them pay packets
these new people gotta pay tax
so that's income and they made stacks

Go hard
block dissension
focus on a new direction

*more work
that's more perks
that's more clerks for that cash collection*

More clemency
more currency
prosperity
made more money than Macquarie needs

*pick your spot he said
clear the forests
grow the grains he said
then ship it off*

*A thousand acres
a thousand takers
a thousand farmers
and their brand new crops*

*Eora Nations
Just go and take them
- civilise them he said
and sedate them*

*Keep taking...
make no arrangements
no negotiations
or offering of payment*

*We will build it:
the institution
the first place
kids are treated*

less than human

*Forcibly removed them
civilise the children
take them off the land
so we have room
to make our millions*

See the people

on the horizon

in the shadows

in their environment

they were hated

their lands were taken

there's no

development

without
displacement.

[SCENE 3]

BITTER WATERS

When the saltwater
 began to carve its way
into the sandstone shelf
 the birds
 stepped
 towards her edges

as the water swept into the first crevasse

 they gathered and gossiped about her mercury lining

 her succulent crawling...

As the birds called out
 their voices rippled on her reflection

 they saw themselves in all their feathered splendour
 their diamond
 cut
 beaks
 and amethyst tongues

 They spread their wings and flew above the moving mirror

 as it poured in from the oceans
 creeping deep

 into the ferned and festooned forest

 They circled her for a Millenium
just like us:
 each species has its own memory

in its DNA

time is constantly expanding and collapsing

The water carved her way through rocks and heavy causeways
poured through cracks
and made

w

a

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a

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s

out of dead. ends.

it turned red stone plateaus
into swimming holes
and cliff faces into perfect caves

The birds
witnessed as the water
wove her way into a serpentine web

...as she coerced
the earth to carry her

They watched

as the seasons changed and the mountains started
m e l t i n g

and the crystalline breath of winter
turned clear and dropped
~~below the surface~~

as the ice and snow
crept down the slopes

the rain dropped like macadamia shells on the undergrowth

As the
f r e s h
w a t e r
c r a w l e d

passed the mangroves
under the wattles

and joined the rivers

the fresh water and salt water *t o u c h e d*

their momentum cancelling out each other's intentions

they slow-danced in a bitter whirlpool

of the centre of the river

And just there beside them
on the edges
the water tickled the toes of a baby

she giggled
as it licked the souls of her feet

her family
had lived in that place for longer than the word *time* has been
in existence

She cried with laughter

as the sun began to set

and the w a t e r s

s e e p e d
i n
t o
e a c h o t h e r

[SCENE 4]
THE ORDERS

From the diary of Governor Macquarie, April 10, 1816:

"I have this Day ordered ... Military Detachments to march into the Interior ... for the purpose of Punishing the Hostile Natives, by clearing the Country of them entirely. The officers ... have been authorized to fire on them to compel them to surrender; hanging up on Trees the Bodies ... in order to strike the greater terror into the Survivors. — These Military Detachments ... Commanded severally by Capt. Schaw, Lieut. Dawe & Capt. John Wallis."

[SCENE 5]
THE CHASE

[1816]

They chase in the night
they chase in the day
one cry in the dark
gave them away
that night was a full moon
shining like a full bloom on the cliff
that night was a Captain Wallis
trying to be good to his boss like a little kid

Ten thug Police
search quietly
up the escarpment
and past the trees
blood pumps hard in their arteries
legs pump hard til it's hard to breathe

til it's hard to breathe

soldiers crept
stayed in a line
wait for a sign
in the grey of the night

One baby was crying
they heard one baby crying

And she broke the silence
and it broke to violence

Everyone run
never turn to fight it

jump from the camp
leave the burning fires
run from the dogs
and the heard of liars
hide from the men
and their guns for hire

and the bullet shells fell like rain on the undergrowth

Warrior stopped
faced to the soldiers
took six shots to his chest and his shoulders
just so the rest could run over the boulders
no time for a breath
or looking over your shoulders

Don't look over your shoulder!

[2018]

Still chased in the night
still chased in the day
trying to lock them away
get them trapped in a cage

Every day there's a new kid getting called a nuisance on the mish
every night there's a Captain Wallis
trying to get him pinned for some shit that he never did

Ten thug police search quietly
around the harbour and up the streets
if you're on a bike and you're just a teen
from Kalgoorlie* to Redfern Sydney*
then you'll still get chased and it's hard to breathe

But they can't expand
without taking more land
so they're chasing again
run with your life in your hands!

Through Hyde Park
past the tyrants
under the bridges built by migrants
dodging the trucks and their advertisements
over the bins and the fire hydrants

footpaths over sacred sites
now they chase with sirens
get roughed up & they take your license
and if you die
they'll just say you were non-compliant

It's shitty and a pity that people are sitting pretty
choose to make a million
oblivious to the killing

History is hidden in the buildings of the city
History is hidden in the buildings of the city

Never let the enemy get it into your way
Never let them hit you with anything in your brain
Never let them take away everything in his name
Never let him get away with murder!

Murder!

Murder!

[SCENE 6]
EPILOGUE

There
on the Isle of Mull
the *baar* floats across the channel
a thick grey fog covers his body
as he sits
and mulls over his legacy

The birds hover
they watch him
as he takes his last breath

His tombstone reads:

"Father
Of
Australia"

Do his actions and intentions still live in the bones of his descendants?

If we ignore history
do his chapters live on in modern messaging and mimicry?
in the psyche
and the fabric of society
in the tapestries woven by Macquarie's notoriety

The black waves
crash along the cliffs
they reach their sullen hands up to touch his wrinkled feet

The birds hover
they've seen this before:

men who are in pain
who turn their losses into ambition
block the consequences
and make sure history remembers their names

But the question remains:

How should we remember his name?

The question remains:::::

How will you remember

Lachlan

Macquarie?

[E N D]

ARTIST STATEMENTS

Luka Lesson - *Writer*

The Macquarie concerto was inspired by events both in Australia and in the southern states of the USA, where statues of Confederate fighters are being torn down because of their roles in supporting slavery during the civil war. In



Australia there is a similar contention about whether we should be honouring statues and memories of people who ‘advanced’ the colony while also violently dispossessing or oppressing Indigenous peoples. Macquarie himself is seen by some as a hero, and others as a villain because of his support of colonial expansion and his role in the Appin Massacre, and other debilitating actions towards local peoples.. This piece of work asks the questions: "Do these actions reverberate in the way we as Australians treat each other today?" And "should we still be honouring someone who committed such crimes as these?"

Gordon Hamilton - *Composer*

Macquarie is structured in five movements. A three-note motif (B G F#) represents ambition. First heard hauntingly on the E-flat clarinet, it recurs across four of the movements – though not the third, a depiction of nature and the balance prior to European



settlement. Sometimes the music crystallises into four-bar phrases (a natural fit for hip-hop and rap). This is often not the case, though: the third movement is an organic tangle of irregular phrases (both in the music and in the words). The opening material returns at the close of the work – *Macquarie's* grave, though here it is played out of time, without the rhythmic fortitude of the young *Macquarie*. The harmony – like his legacy – is far more ambiguous at the end than at the start.