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SEVEN DEADLY SINS

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SEVEN DEADLY SINS MUSIC EDUCATION RESOURCE

INTRODUCTION



Meow Meow in Victorian Opera's Seven Deadly Dins © Magnus Hastings

Victorian Opera's production *Seven Deadly Sins* brings together Kurt Weill's existing work from the 1930s and preludes this with a reinterpretation by four contemporary Australian composers, contextualised in seven Australian capital cities.

International cabaret sensation Meow Meow joins Australia's brightest young composers and Victorian Opera's next generation of stars as they reimagine the seven deadly sins for the 21st century. Discover seven wicked new songs inspired by the confrontational style of the Berliner Kabarett and the dark side of Australia's cities, featuring Brisbane as Sloth, Sydney as Lust, Canberra as Pride, Melbourne as Greed, Hobart as Envy, Adelaide as Gluttony and Perth as Anger. Then with a voice described as 'hypnotic' and 'mesmerising', Meow Meow brings to life the role of Anna, a woman in search of fortune who succumbs to the sins of the big city in Kurt Weill's *Die Sieben Todsünden*.

Conductor Tahu Matheson

Staging Cameron Menzies

Featuring Meow Meow

With Kate Amos, Carlos Bárcenas, Nathan Lay, Elizabeth Lewis, Jeremy Kleeman, Emma Muir-Smith, Michael Petruccelli, Cristina Russo & Matthew Tng

Orchestra Victoria



Featuring the students of the Master of Music (Opera Performance), a collaboration between Victorian Opera and the Melbourne Conservatorium of Music, University of Melbourne.

Commissions supported by Symphony Australia and the Composer Development Program of the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra

DIE SIEBEN TODSÜNDEN (THE SEVEN DEADLY SINS) – BY KURT WEILL & BERTOLT BRECHT

German title: *Die sieben Todsünden*

English title: *The Seven Deadly Sins*

Composer: Kurt Weill

Libretto: Bertolt Brecht

Cast: Anna I (soprano), Anna II (dancer)*, the Family (2 tenors, baritone, bass), corps de ballet*.

Orchestra: 2 flutes (and piccolo), oboe, 2 clarinets (B flat), bassoon, 2 horns (B flat) 2 trumpets (B flat), trombone, tuba, timpani, percussion, harp, piano, banjo (guitar), strings.

Duration: 35 minutes

Published Editions: piano-vocal score (German-English), B. Schott's Söhne, 6005

Authorized Translations: English -- W.H. Auden & Chester Kallman; Michael Feingold
French -- Edouard Pfrimmer

First Production: June 7, 1933, Paris, Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, George Balanchine, chor., Maurice Abravanel, cond. Tilly Losch and Lotte Lenya played Anna II and Anna I.

*Victorian Opera's production is without dancers, and Meow Meow will play both Annas

The Seven Deadly Sins was the final collaboration between Kurt Weill and Bertolt Brecht, created after they had both departed Germany after the rise of the Nazis.

The work was commissioned by Edward James, a wealthy Englishman who was a patron of the arts, particularly ballet. James wanted to have a ballet created for his estranged dancer wife, Tilly Losch. It was decided that the ballet would be sung, with the main character, Anna, 'split' into singing and dancing halves. This way, Weill's estranged wife, the singer Lotte Lenya, could star alongside Losch.

Kurt Weill's *The Seven Deadly Sins* is considered the last of his European theatre style which is characterised by its directness. He incorporated then popular dance music, barbershop quartet and the traditional church chorale.

“This is Berliner cabaret, similar to his other works. Kurt Weill has his own way of writing melody, they grab the ear. They are often created from one or two little motifs in a very concentrated manner. The personality of the music can't really be put into words, because if you could put it into words there would be no need for music.” Richard Mills

Brecht's libretto is satirical. It is a critique of capitalism as symbolised by America and allows for the 'head' to challenge the 'heart' as the Annas confront the temptations of the various sins. It also explores the notion of the 'level-headed' Anna and the 'commodity' Anna. As Richard Mills observed, “human folly has always been a very good subject for theatre, it has its own fascination, its



own kind of perverse joy. And the ability to engage the audience because the follies that we see on stage are daily resonated in our own hearts”.

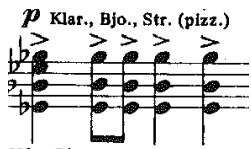
Synopsis and Thematic Overview

Anna I - singer and Anna II - dancer are the two sides of the same personality. At the request of the family, they set out to six American cities in order to make money to send back to their family, for them to build a little house on the banks of the Mississippi. In each city, she/they encounter a different deadly sin, and Anna I - the practical side rebukes Anna II -the artistic side for engaging in the sinful behaviour which hinders their creation of wealth.

Prologue – Anna I and Anna II

Anna I explains the relationship between her and Anna II - "Actually, we're not two persons, only one" and their quest. She identifies the rest of the family: a mother, a father, and two brothers.

- 4/4 - Andante sostenuto. Underpinned with an ostinato pattern, it is flowing and melodic.



Sloth – Family

Anna's parents note that she has always been lazy but in other ways has been a dutiful child, while the brothers intone, "Idleness is mother of all vices." The Family closes with a prayer requesting God to keep Anna on the path that leads to prosperity and happiness.

- 4/4 - Allegro Vivace. Repetition of a motif, sung by the family



- A stylised chorale, almost pedestrian march in feel.
- Tenor as father, tenor and baritone as brothers, bass as mother.

Pride – Anna I and Family (Memphis)

Anna I and Anna II are in Memphis. Anna II's new clothes have made her conceited. When she takes a job as an exotic dancer, she tries to turn it into art, to the displeasure of the paying



customers. Anna I scolds her for her pride and reminds her that she must do what is demanded of her.

- 3/8 - Allegretto, quasi Andantino A waltz.

Allegretto, quasi Andantino

Anna I *p*

Als wir a - ber
So we saved up

Ob., Klar. *p*
Fg. Trp., Pos.



Anger – Anna I, Anna II and Family (Los Angeles)

The Family notes with displeasure that the Annas have not been sending enough money. They are in Los Angeles, and things are going quite well until Anna II witnesses acts of cruelty and rebels against injustice. Then Anna I reminds her that such anger will make her unemployable and therefore useless, so she must set it aside.

- 2/4, 3/8 - Molto agitato. Forceful – dance sequence changes time signature. A foxtrot is used.
- There are careful contrasts between woodwind and strings.

Gluttony – Family (Philadelphia)

The family has received a letter from the Annas in Philadelphia. They are making good money, but Anna II's contract specifies that she may not gain any weight, even a gram. They recall that Anna II loves to eat and acknowledge her hardship but trust her to remember that a contract is a contract.

- 3/8 - Largo
- Commences a cappella, with a hymn-like barbershop quartet. The guitar eventually enters to accompany.

Largo
Familie - Family

Tenor I
8 Da ist ein Brief aus Phi-la - del - phi - a,
We've got - ten word from Phil - a - del - phi - a,

Tenor II
8 Da ist ein Brief aus Phi-la - del - phi - a,
We've got - ten word from Phil - a - del - phi - a,

Baß I
Da ist ein Brief aus Phi-la - del - phi - a,
We've got - ten word from Phil - a - del - phi - a,

Baß II
Da ist ein Brief aus Phi-la - del - phi - a,
We've got - ten word from Phil - a - del - phi - a,

Lust – Anna I, Anna II and Family (Boston)

In Boston, Anna II has found a wealthy lover, but she prefers another man, who is poor. Anna I points out that the rich lover will not tolerate divided loyalty. Anna II rebels, but finally gives in reluctantly and renounces the poor lover.

- 4/4 - Moderato
- Melodic, soulful and flowing, an elaborate dance scene.



Covetousness (Greed) – Family (Baltimore)

The Family learns that the Annas are in Baltimore. Men are committing suicide over Anna II, which will increase her earning power, but they fear she will get too greedy. They hope she will be moderate and not make herself too unpopular to earn money.

- 3/4 - Allegro Giusto
- Distinctive driving motifs with a parody of a heroic aria for the father.



Envy – Anna I and Family (San Francisco)

From San Francisco, Anna I tells us that Anna II is worn out and envious of those who do not have to work hard. Anna I preaches of the need to renounce the pleasures of the world and promises a reward to come. The Family seconds her, saying that strict self-control is the path to glory.

- 4/4 - Allegro non troppo
- A soulful Anna leads into a triumphal march feel that changes in pace.

Epilogue – Anna I, Anna II (home)

After seven years the Annas return to Louisiana. The house is complete, and the family is reunited.

- 4/4 - Andante sostenuto (like the prologue)
- A return of the ostinato from the prologue.

Meow Meow in Victorian Opera's Seven Deadly Dins
© Magnus Hastings



THE SEVEN DEADLY SINS - COMPOSED BY JESSICA WELLS, IAN WHITNEY, JULIAN LANGDON AND MARK VIGGIANI

Background Information



This work was the result of the composer development program run by Victorian Opera in conjunction with Symphony Australia and the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra. Richard Mills selected the matchup between each city/sin and chosen composers. The choice of instrumentation and vocal arrangement aligns with the Weill composition for practical considerations.

The intention for the brief was to capture the essence of each sin by relating to each of seven capital cities. Linking with the Weill/Brecht work, the sins of this work are expressed by reference to the Australian Capital cities of Brisbane (Sloth), Sydney (Lust), Canberra (Pride), Melbourne (Greed), Hobart (Envy), Adelaide (Gluttony) and Perth (Anger). These compositions are portraits rather than a narrative, with each sin only being allocated five minutes.

Composers and singers workshop Seven Deadly Sins at Victorian Opera © Victorian Opera

This work is also the final showcase for the Masters of Music (Opera Performance) students, who have been part of the Victorian Opera Developing Artists Program since the start of 2014.

Each composer was given complete freedom in their interpretations and contextualisation for their sin/city. Two workshop periods were provided for the composers involving the singers and piano in Melbourne and with the TSO and singers in Hobart.

The interpretation of each Australian Capital city is contemporary. The music is eclectic in the sense that each sin is distinctly interpreted by the individual composer with no clear overarching compositional theme or requirement. The libretto contains events connected to the cities and how the sin relates to that event.

Synopsis & Overview

Note: the musical descriptions of the sins included below are in the words of the composers.

Prologue – Julian Langdon

Using frequent time signature, pace and feel changes, the Prologue introduces the seven sins and their cities, creating an introductory pastiche. All of the singers are used in the Prologue.

For the Prologue it was advised to feature the seven voices individually so this influenced the orchestral palette in terms of creating little chapters of orchestral colour that were unique to each singer's presentation of their introductory stanza. I was also asked to feature the



repetiteur Simon in the Prologue so the piano plays the lead role throughout with only slight colouring from the orchestra. The Prologue features a brief introduction for each sin and each of these introductions has its own character and treatment of the musical elements. For example, Greed is a dark, serial-based approach, Pride is a chaotic circus-style approach with many meter changes and chromaticism and tritone harmony, Lust is a seductive and enchanting approach with sliding melody and a sexy, extended harmonic language. **JL**

Perth (Anger) – Mark Viggiani

Rosanna (the lover) and Gianina (the daughter) bitterly contest their perceived rights over Mr Big’s mining fortune.

Perth uses a more free-flowing, dramatic operatic style, with the piece building in intensity towards a huge climax. It is dominated by strings with the piano having a strong accompanying role. Winds and brass are used to intensify characters – in Perth, Gianina’s lines are coloured by low winds, whilst Rosanna is accompanied by higher register wind and Mr. Big is identified with brass. The two movements have quite different styles of orchestration, with Perth using a heavier Straussian palette.

The singers use contrasting tonalities and metrical settings. Whilst Rosanna is presented in C major initially, she appears later in C minor when things become more tense. Gianina sings in the most part in F sharp. As the conflict develops, these tonalities are blended to create a more dissonant and tense harmonic palette. Mr Big occupies tonal middle ground in A, expiring in A flat minor. Metrically, Rosanna’s music bounces along in duple meters in contrast to Gianina’s heavier triple. Mr. Big tends to sing over sustained textures with little by way of rhythmic drive. **MV**

Hobart (Envy) – Mark Viggiani

Benita from Sydney, Katya from Melbourne and Maria from Hobart, compete for the prize of Prince Alfredo’s hand in marriage on Mr Zee’s game show ‘Pick a Princess’.

Hobart strings together three separate contrasting and self-contained feature arias in which the female characters state their individual claims. It is dominated by strings with the piano having a strong accompanying role. Hobart uses different styles behind each mini aria, but all are spare and economical. This movement also uses less orchestral weight – there are no trumpets and trombones, and the strings do the lion’s share of the work, with solo winds providing occasional colour contrasts.

There is a sense of rising tonal progression throughout this movement. The three contestants sing in E flat, F and G respectively, with the final aria modulating up another tone to A. Another device used is a recurring refrain (Choose me! / Do you like what you see?) which occurs between each aria and at the conclusion. Whilst the melodic material is consistent, the rhythmic and tonal settings follow the song style of each preceding aria, and also serve to link the arias together. These sections were also an opportunity to indulge in some ensemble vocal writing, with an extra voice added to each subsequent iteration, culminating in the concluding quintet. **MV**

Adelaide (Gluttony) – Julian Langdon

Bob, the food reviewer, contemplates his health and his need to diet following a doctor’s report; debating with his alter ego, Gustus, the glutton within.

For Gluttony I elected to write for only two voices: tenor and baritone. This was influenced by my decision to keep things vocally simple and also by the character/nature of the sin itself and the narrative elements I developed in my libretto—two overweight men. I tried very hard to



incorporate specific and particular things from Adelaide with reference to the nature of the sin. There are many, many references to food and drink that are iconic of the city like “The Pie Floater” and “Bung Fritz”. All of these foods are Adelaide-specific and feature in my libretto. Clarity of the voice and the libretto were the priority. All of the other elements were heavily influenced by cabaret. **JL**

Melbourne (Greed) – Jessica Wells

Who was John Wren? Sainly man or man of greed?

The opening is slow and grave, and then the piece takes off into a more textural undercurrent that supports the voices. When the character of Wren steps out and denounces the accusers, his music becomes tempestuous. A feature instrument is the tubular bells.

Greed has a mammoth introduction utilizing the tubular bells and the very low end of the orchestra in big earth-shattering dissonant chords. This then pulls back in dynamic to only four instruments: piano, basses, celli and harp. So there is a lot of contrast in dynamics and instrumentation in this piece. Greed uses a loose formal structure of ABCDCA.

The piece uses modulation to help move the music along when it needs to. It also uses a bass drone at times and a regular pulse (bass drum crotchet hits) to emulate a funeral march. The singers often sing with open 5ths in an ecclesiastical manner (reminiscent of church song). And at times there are Celtic lilt in the melody which refer to John Wren’s Irish background. **JW**

Canberra (Pride) – Jessica Wells

Australia’s recent political leaders (minus Turnbull) and a chorus of commentators guide us through snapshots of the last 9 years of Australia’s political leadership.

The libretto uses actual quotations from the real Prime Ministers represented on stage. Some of these “monologues” are spoken or half-sung. Pride is a grab-bag of pastiche styles which will be recognisable to the audience: military march, waltz, jazz, vaudeville, latin, musical showstopper, opera and more. Pride uses so much pastiche that the musicians inherently know how to articulate the genres of music they come across as the piece advances. In one moment 4 string soloists play “a bit half-arsed and out of tune”. It highlights a statement made by a politician which is seen as the audience as less than believable. **JW**

Brisbane (Sloth) – Ian Whitney

Joh and Pete struggle to manage the heat and humidity despite a visit from Milton’s Angel.



Sloth is more 'operatic'. For Sloth I wanted Brisbane humidity, haze and a 'floppiness' which I've tried to do through the use of uneven triplet and dotted patterns, occasional beats of silence and shimmering high string harmonics. Sloth uses dynamics and articulation very deliberately. The soprano, the only character with any sense of action, is in direct contrast to the two baritones. The men sing repetitive, relaxed lines whereas she has punchy and strongly articulated lines. **IW**

Sydney (Lust) – Ian Whitney

Two groups of Sydneysiders are eating at a café, a couple bemoaning the state of real estate, a trio discussing phone sex apps. The situation heats up as flirting dashes across tables and swirl around the waitress, Helene.

Lust is more 'music theatre-y'. . Lust is very plot driven so the quantity of narrative information meant that the music is much chattier and rattles along with minimal time to pause or linger. With so much information for the characters to convey, conversational rhythm and light accompaniment were essential. In Lust, the dynamics must support the text because there is simply so much of it and the whole thing falls over if nobody understands what's going on. **IW**

The Compositional Process - Interviews with the Composers

The process of composition, as with most creative endeavours, is very individual. The impetus for composition is also unique to each work. The initials of the composers are marked at the end of their responses.

What is your process for composing?

I work straight into Finale or Sibelius software when I compose, but only because they have taken over from pen and paper and I use it like pen and paper. I wrote the melody and lyrics for the singers in sections and either wrote a piano accompaniment and then orchestrated it, OR I went straight into the orchestration if I knew exactly how I wanted it to sound orchestrally as I composed. This was mostly how I worked; since I work a lot as an orchestrator anyway I can hear what I want in my head in full (mostly!). If I wasn't sure then I would just write something and then fill it in later. But inspiration was with me on these pieces and I just went with the flow and it all seemed to be rather painless (which I was grateful for!) **JW**

In this case, the libretti had to come first. After far ranging research, this was developed over a period of several months. The libretti gave me basic dramatic structures, and then I was able to think about the overall musical sound and language of each movement. There followed a period of improvisation and experimentation at the keyboard to develop basic musical material. The next stage was a first draft of the vocal parts with some rudimentary accompanimental ideas. This was developed and crafted into a vocal score, which was in turn expanded into the fully orchestrated version. The final version was gradually refined through several subsequent drafts. **MV**

I am very boring. I'm essentially a left-to-right composer in that I start at the beginning and keep going until I get to the end- this is pretty easy when working with text since the architecture of the piece is already evident. Then I edit, tweak, delete (lots of



deleting) and refine. I'm also religious about deadlines because I'm too lazy to do anything without one. **IW**

Typically a lot of thinking, planning and research, followed by some musical development (so that I am building on my existing ability), lots of post-it notes and hand written sketches, piano drafts, recordings, hair-pulling, then trying to pull it all together in a score. **JL**

How did you use the workshops to further your work?

The first workshop was fantastic for getting a feel for how the vocalists interpreted what was on the page, and to hear their voices. Every singer has a different tone, range, weak and strong spots in their voices. I used the workshop to change things – like take a section up a third so it was in a better key for the women's voices, and for changing some sung sections into spoken sections to cut some time.

The orchestral workshop in Hobart was great for hearing how the orchestra supported the voices. Some sections needed to be thinned out in order to let the voices through the texture. All the composers were able to get a lot from the workshop in able to make changes for the better of the pieces. An invaluable opportunity which a lot of composers don't get when commissioned for a new work! **JW**

The first was useful in getting to know the strengths and capabilities of the singers. I made many changes (especially in register) to my scores, in one case changing a role from soprano to mezzo. I also gave another character some coloratura writing. Mention should be made of Nathan Lay, who was precise and frank in his suggestions, enabling me to finely tailor the role of Mr. Big to his unique and special voice.

The second workshop involved the orchestra, a few small changes were made to the vocal parts, I was able to improve the balance and the texture of the orchestration considerably. Sometimes this was as simple as refining the dynamic envelope, but sometimes it involved thinning the texture (removing brass and unnecessary doubling) or reconsidering the orchestration completely. **MV**

It's an essential part of refinement. Lust underwent heavy renovation after the initial workshops. **IW**

The workshops were immensely valuable. During the workshops I recognised many problems with my work, my approach and my response to the brief we were given. I totally re-composed my two pieces. I felt after the workshops that I could do better and so I aimed to do better. Let's see how they turn out!

These stages of the process was invaluable. **JL**

ACTIVITIES FOR STUDENTS

Responding Activities

Activity 1 – Kurt Weill's Seven Deadly Sins

Listen to a recording of the work. There are a number of recordings on YouTube, of the entire work and of the individual sins. [This link](#) is a version of the whole work.

- How do the changes in key signature and time signature affect the mood of the sins?

- Richard Mills (Artistic Director of Victorian Opera) commented about the Kurt Weill version "Musically it has wonderful tunes. And it has a lot of personality." Comment on the melodies of this work. How did you react to them?
- In what ways do you think the different compositional techniques and devices enhance the sin for you?



- Which interpretations do you find most engaging? Why?

Activity 2 – Australian version – Seven Deadly Sins

Choose one of the Australian City interpretations of the Seven Deadly Sins.

- Write a response to the interpretation you heard. You might refer to the interviews with the composers included as an appendix in the resource to assist in your response.
- What elements of the musical composition effectively connected to that sin for you?
- Which compositional devices did the composer of that sin use?
- How did the use of instrumentation affect your response?
- How did you think the libretti influenced the scores?
- How did the music of the excerpt gel with the theatrical elements?

- How do you think the interpretation works with the city and the sin? What culturally relevant influences might have affected the interpretation?
- What would you have done differently and why?

Activity 3 – Australian version – Seven Deadly Sins

- Write a response to the entire work. You might refer to the interviews with the composers included as an appendix in the resource to assist you in your response.
- How do you think compositional choices were influenced by the fact that it is being presented by an opera company using operatically trained singers?
- What were the key features of composition that contrasted the seven sins musically?
- How well did these contrasts work to distinguish the sins from each other?
- How did the entire *Seven Deadly Sins* work as a complete work?



Composing Activities

Activity 4 – Stimulus to compose

Use one of the Seven Deadly Sins – Lust, Greed, Sloth, Envy, Gluttony, Pride or Anger to act as stimulus to create a composition. Create a short musical theme, for two parts, that could be expanded upon further. You might use the following questions to focus your creativity.

- What does the sin make you think of?
- Can you think of a time when you experienced or witnessed someone consumed by the sin? What did it feel/look like? Which sounds, if any, did you associate with the experience?
- Can you think of existing music that connects to the sin for you?
- What are the musical features you would assign to the sin? For example, volume to anger or tango to lust, etc.
- What instruments or voices connect to that sin for you?
- Is it instrumentation or musical style that impact mostly for you when thinking of the sin?

If you are particularly keen you might decide to contrast it by creating a theme for the corresponding virtue. Chastity (Lust), Temperance (Gluttony), Charity (Greed), Diligence (Sloth), Patience (Anger), Kindness (Envy), Humility (Pride)

Activity 5 – Recording

In groups of three record an improvisation on a deadly sin. Work out what the basic structure of the improvisation will be first.

For example;

- Anger
 - Three sections – slow, faster, medium.
 - For three parts - drums, guitar and voice.
 - Using ostinato and repetition

- Blues style

Write up a reflection on the task.

Activity 6 – Create a compositional brief

Choose a text with which you are already very familiar. This could be a novel you are studying, a short film you like, a play you are studying, a favourite but very familiar work. You might have a friend doing drama who needs music for their play...

Imagine you are asked to create incidental music to accompany this novel for an audio book or as background to the film or during set changes for the play.

Commence the process of composing that music. Consider the following to start that process.

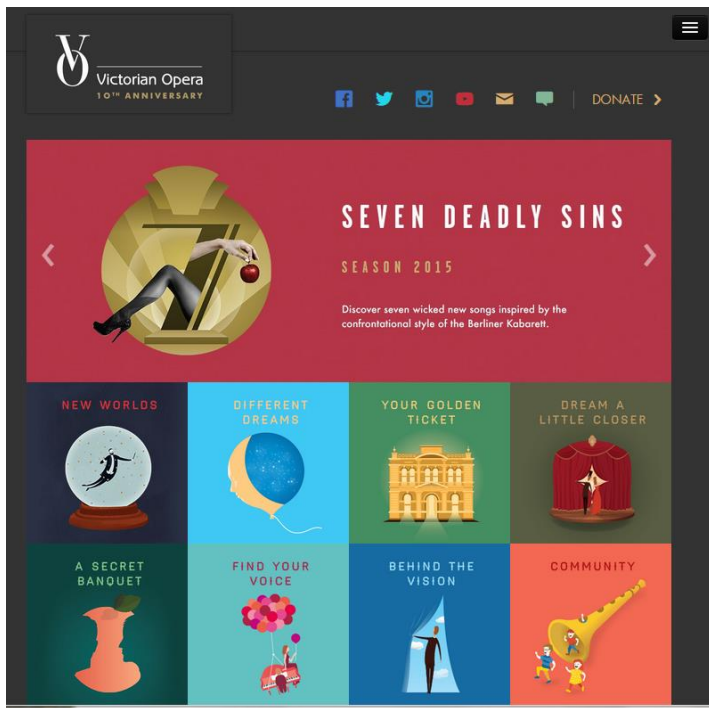
- What is the mood of the source (novel etc.)?
- What is the style of that source?
- What considerations do you need to take into account for this imaginary brief? E.g. will the music be played live or recorded? Is it able to be generated by computer or other means?
- Does the music require voice? Which instrumentation and which voice types would best suit?
- Are there cultural influences that need to be considered? E.g. what are the instruments associated with culturally?

Create the compositional brief for this work that you would present to the person for whom you would be composing, outlining your interpretation of your vision.



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THANKS

With thanks to Julian Langdon, Mark Viggiani, Jessica Wells, and Ian Whitney for their generosity and time.

Resource written by Deborah Vanderwerp, edited by Kate Stephens

Victorian Opera Education Program is generously supported by:

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APPENDIX

Full Interviews with Composers

The following is the full transcript of responses from the composers Julian Langdon, Mark Viggiani, Jessica Wells and Ian Whitney.

Were you able to interpret your sin/city in your own way? What was your inspiration behind your interpretation?

For Pride I felt “what other interpretation could there be apart from the sins of our biggest politicians – our Prime Ministers?” It was something I considered carefully but no other option seemed to present itself and so I steered myself and just went for it! I wanted the piece to be very slapstick, full of pastiche and making a statement about the failings of our PMs through comedy with a slightly dark edge.

For Greed I had Melbourne, which I wanted because my dad and his family are from Melbourne. I wanted to do something very dark and intense, something a bit “Underbelly-like” and involving the seedier history of Melbourne’s underworld. I decided upon John Wren who lived in the first half of the 20th century and was a controversial figure in Melbourne’s history. My dad, Jeff Wells, is a retired journalist and has written several novels, so he wrote the libretto for me and did an amazing job – I hardly changed anything and the writing inspired the musical interpretation. **JW**

In the locating of my sins, I looked to recent political and social events which were within the public sphere. Rather than associating particular cities with specific sins, I used contemporary events to provide the location for each drama. My characters are all based on easily recognisable public figures. Perth’s anger is demonstrated and explored by a feud between the wife and daughter of a rich mining magnate and Hobart’s Envy is described via a competition between three ladies for the hand in marriage of a foreign prince.

Whilst Weill’s original work can be read as a morality play, I have been careful not to allow too much judgement to creep in. In Perth, the female protagonists are treated equally, and the death of the man between them is seen to be a direct result of their aggressive behaviour and acrimony towards each other. In this way, the destructive force of anger itself is critiqued, rather than the specific characters who personify it. In Hobart, the result of the contest is left hanging (though history tells us who won).

Incidentally, the structure for the story in Hobart comes from the Greek myth The Judgement of Paris, in which the Trojan hero is asked to choose which of the three Athenian goddesses – Hera, Aphrodite and Athena – is the fairest. In my version, the presiding god Zeus becomes a game show host, and Paris is the Danish prince. The three goddesses are represented by contestants from Melbourne, Sydney and Hobart. Coincidentally, in the Greek myth, an apple from the Garden of Hesperides is the original prize, and this neatly transfers symbolically to Tasmania (the Apple Isle!) **MV**

I’m doing Sloth/Brisbane and Lust/Sydney, which worked out nicely since I’m from Brisbane and live in Sydney. **IW**

I tried very hard to incorporate specific and particular things from Adelaide with reference to the nature of the sin. There are many, many references to food and drink that are iconic of the city like “The Pie Floater” and “Bung Fritz”. All of these foods are Adelaide-specific and feature in my libretto. **JL**



What was the influence of the Kurt Weill on your interpretation?

Honestly I avoided the Weill as I didn't want to be influenced by it too much. I listened to it once and looked up some YouTube videos on various productions to get a feel for what it was about and how it was presented. Then I never referred to it again. **JW**

It would be totally inappropriate to attempt to compose 1930s German cabaret in contemporary Australia. I see this project as an attempt to create a valid and appropriate interpretation of the premise, and as such, needs to be firmly located in 21st century Australia. Whilst I enjoy Weill's work, I have not attempted to borrow from his style in any way. Having said that, this is not a cutting edge experimental work - I have chosen to work firmly within the boundaries of the traditional operatic/musical theatre convention. This is also partly influenced by the available forces – I feel that it is important to work to the strengths and tastes of the organisation and performers for whom you are writing! **MV**

I listened to the Weill a few times then put it away. I wanted to get a sense of the style but not get married to it - I didn't want to mimic it in my scenes. **IW**

No real influence comes to mind. Perhaps Weill influenced some of my choices regarding a unity of harmonic language but perhaps this was the influence of the cabaret factor in a general sense. **JL**

For vocal works the libretto or the text has to be right first. I was lucky that the Greed verses my dad wrote gave me the tempo I wanted when I spoke them out loud. The opening is slow and grave, and then the piece takes off into a more textural undercurrent that supports the voices. Once I had the main melody worked out I then used that to modulate to other keys, to use the pitch material in different ways, and to play with the harmony underpinning the vocal lines to enhance the meaning of the words (word-painting). When the character of Wren steps out and denounces the accusers, his music becomes tempestuous. It is important to create drama on the stage, with the singers as well as the orchestra. A feature instrument I used was the Tubular Bells. There is a funeral-style section of the piece and that gave me the inspiration to use tolling bells. They are very strong and quite a dark and ominous colour with the orchestration that goes with it.

For Pride I wrote the libretto myself, using actual quotations from the real Prime Ministers represented on stage. Some of these "monologues" ended up being spoken or half-sung, as singing them can take too long and be hard to understand. The music for Pride was a grab-bag of pastiche styles which will be recognisable to the audience: military march, waltz, jazz, vaudeville, latin, musical showstopper, opera and more. This piece is a series of "vignettes" which jump crazily from one style to the next. There is comedy in most parts of the piece, so the music needed to support the comic timing of the libretto. **JW**

Huge question! Where to start? Style – the two movements demanded separate treatments – Perth uses a more free-flowing, dramatic operatic style, with the piece building in intensity towards a huge climax, whilst Hobart strings together three separate contrasting and self-contained feature arias in



which the female characters state their individual claims.

Instrumentally, both are dominated by the strings, and the piano also has a strong accompanimental role. Winds and brass are used to intensify characters – in Perth, Gianina’s lines are coloured by low winds, whilst Rosanna is accompanied by higher-register wind and Mr. Big is identified by brass. The two movements have quite different styles of orchestration, with Perth using a heavier Straussian palette. Hobart uses different styles behind each mini aria, but all are spare and economical. This movement also uses less orchestral weight – there are no trumpets and trombones, and the strings do the lion’s share of the work, with solo winds providing occasional colour contrasts.

Texturally, there is an emphasis on solo singing. As this performance is intended as a kind of graduation for the VO singers, I have tried to give as many of them as possible a chance to shine unencumbered. Hobart in particular features short solo arias for three of the female singers. It does have some short ensemble sections, in which the characters maintain their own parts in dramatic and melodic polyphony, building to the climax involving five separate parts. By way of contrast, in Perth, the two female singers vie with one another, trading insults and attempting to out-sing each other.

I have not used a particularly challenging harmonic language, though Perth (probably late or post-romantic in style) does become fairly complex and harmonically tense as the drama develops. Hobart uses harmonic language borrowed from 20th century popular music forms – there is a tango, some New Orleans funk and a contemporary pop ballad, all of which are linked together by standard harmonic formulae. Melodically, I have tried to write accessible vocal melodies which are comfortable to sing. Whilst early drafts had a lot of orchestral doubling to aid the singers, most of this had been removed by the last stage. **MV**

I very consciously wanted my two sins to contrast. I tend to think of Sloth as ‘operatic’ and Lust as ‘music theatre-y’ but these are slippery definitions at the best of times. For Sloth I wanted Brisbane humidity, haze and a ‘floppiness’ which I’ve tried to do through the use of uneven triplet and dotted patterns, occasional beats of silence and shimmering high string harmonics. Lust is very plot driven so the quantity of narrative information meant that the music is much chattier and rattles along with minimal time to pause or linger. With so much information for the characters to convey, conversational rhythm and light accompaniment were essential. This is where Richard’s expertise and advice were essential in helping to get this right. **IW**

Clarity of the voice and the libretto were the priority. All of the other elements were heavily influenced by cabaret. The Prologue features a brief introduction for each sin and each of these introductions has its own character and treatment of the musical elements. For example, Greed is a dark, serial-based approach, Pride is a chaotic circus-style approach with many meter changes and chromaticism and tritone harmony, Lust is a seductive and enchanting approach with sliding melody and a sexy, extended harmonic language. **JL**

How are the expressive elements of dynamics and articulation explored in your sins?

Greed has a mammoth introduction utilizing the tubular bells and the very low end of the orchestra in big earth-shattering dissonant chords (lots of fun!). This then pulls back in dynamic to only four types of instrument: piano, basses, celli and harp. So there is a lot of contrast in dynamics and instrumentation in this piece.

Pride uses so much pastiche that the musicians inherently know how to articulate the genres of music they come across as the piece advances. In one moment four soloist string players play “a bit half-arsed and out of tune”. It highlights a statement made by a politician which is seen as



the audience as less than believable. Sometimes using words to describe what you want the players to do is easier than trying to invent some sort of fancy notation. **JW**

I prefer to write vocal music in the Italian style, in which dynamics are left to the singers' interpretation. For practical reasons, the orchestra is kept to quiet levels under the vocals, but there are also some short instrumental climaxes where things are allowed to become much louder. **MV**

Sloth uses dynamics and articulation very deliberately. The soprano, the only character with any sense of action, is in direct contrast to the two baritones. The men sing repetitive, relaxed lines whereas she has punchy and strongly articulated lines. In *Lust*, the dynamics must support the text because there is simply so much of it and the whole thing falls over if nobody understands what's going on. **IW**

With limited variety to be honest—"don't drown out the singers" is the thing I kept hearing as I composed. Depth and volume can be achieved around the vocal but not behind it. Dynamics were really only explored as a direct means to add immediate drama and interesting transitional moments.

Articulation is just like every other element—have a good balance of consistency and change (repetition and contrast). That is my underlying principle. **JL**

Which compositional devices did you employ?

Greed uses a loose formal structure of ABCDCA. Most notably we hear the beginning come back at the end which ties up the piece nicely. Most of the harmonic and melodic material is used and reused throughout. John Wren's character has very different harmonic and melodic material than the rest of the cast. They are accusing him of wrongdoing and he is denying it. The piece uses modulation to help move the music along when it needs to. It also uses a bass drone at times and a regular pulse (bass drum crotchet hits) to emulate a funeral march. The singers often sing with open 5ths in an ecclesiastical manner (reminiscent of church song). And at times there are Celtic lilt in the melody which refer to John Wren's Irish background.

Pride has so many different elements of composition that it's hard to list them all! The use of pastiche is very effective in word-painting, especially with a comedic intent. The audience is meant to laugh at the politicians, though there are some darker moments where the music reveals a more sinister undertone. I wanted to highlight the fact that the pride of the politicians has become something that's not so funny after all.

In both pieces I did need to use some devices to allow the orchestra to repeat passages until words had been spoken. So in the score I used some repeat signs and also "ON CUE" for entries after a singer has finished a passage and the conductor brings in the orchestra at the right moment. **JW**

I pretty much used intuitive melody and harmony once the libretti structures were in place. However, there were some technical devices employed around harmonic structure, texture and meter. For instance, in *Perth*, the singers use contrasting tonalities and metrical settings. Whilst Rosanna is presented in C (major initially, but minor as well when things become more tense), Gianina sings in the most part in F sharp. As the conflict develops, these tonalities are blended to create a more dissonant and tense harmonic palette. Mr Big occupies tonal middle ground in A, expiring in A flat minor. Metrically, Rosanna's music bounces along in duple meters in contrast to Gianina's heavier triple. Mr. Big tends to sing over sustained textures with little by way of rhythmic drive.



Tonality is also important in Hobart. There is a sense of rising tonal progression throughout this movement. The three contestants sing in E flat, F and G respectively, with the final aria modulating up another tone to A. Another device used is a recurring refrain (Choose me! / Do you like what you see?) that occurs between each aria and at the conclusion. Whilst the melodic material is consistent, the rhythmic and tonal settings follow the song style of each preceding aria, and also serve to link the arias together. These sections were also an opportunity to indulge in some ensemble vocal writing, with an extra voice added to each subsequent iteration, culminating in the concluding quintet. **MV**

After the initial workshops, Richard suggested I use aleatoric passages in the background of Lust rather than notating it. This happens twice in the early parts of the scene, and it creates a chattering babble whilst giving the singers more freedom to act and play around with it. **IW**

Also the opening sequence of the Prologue is built from the idea of a mirror—specifically I have based a static chord on decreasing intervals (P5 tt P4 M3 m3 M2 m2) then stacked another chord on top of this in reverse order like a mirror. Again, this is another system-based or serial approach. Most of the other devices are strictly homophonic approaches. **JL**

What musical traditions did you draw on for your composition?

For *Pride* there were many elements of musical genres I “borrowed” from to use as pastiche. It was fun to use juxtaposition of well-known musical styles to highlight the ridiculousness of the politicians’ utterances. Basically I was using traditional musical styles as a tool for comedy and drama.

For *Greed* I wanted a dark and contemporary feel, using some ideas from musical theatre, opera and cabaret. When I studied composition I loved the operas of early twentieth century masters such as Berg’s “Lulu” and “Wozzeck”. I also studied vocal music by George Crumb and loved the choral music of Ligeti (the dissonant humming at the end of “Pride” is reminiscent of these contemporary works). My Master’s thesis was on a contemporary opera by Sydney composer Michael Smetanin, “The Burrow”, which was based on the life of Kafka. I also love musicals such as “Sweeney Todd” and “Into the Woods” – Sondheim is a complete master! **JW**

Perth- grand opera (Strauss?). Hobart – musicals, 20 century popular music styles. **MV**

I’ve always loved French music from around Bizet through to around World War 2 and I think this influences my orchestration. The use of woodwind in *Carmen* was a conscious model for *Lust*. I think like a lot of developing composers, Ravel is basically my Patron Saint of Orchestration, and this is particularly evident in *Sloth*. Rossini’s layering in comic ensembles and the ability of Mozart to pivot through his Act 2 finales were both essential references for me. Britten used aleatoric babble in *Albert Herring*, which was helpful for *Lust*. Since I wrote my own text, Sondheim is useful for setting English. If I can get to 5% of those models



I'll be happy! **IW**

Cabaret, jazz and opera. **JL**

What areas of context influenced your choices? Social, political, religious, economic?

Political context was paramount to *Pride*. The four Prime Ministers and their rise and fall over time provided the structure of the work. Howard was famous for saying he would NOT bring in a GST and then of course he did. He also refused to say "sorry" to our indigenous community and those things (along with others) led to his defeat by Kevin Rudd. Rudd is then in turn heard complaining about the factions in the Labour Party ("faceless men") and gets promptly ousted by Gillard. Gillard does her famous "blue tie" speech which is interrupted by Rudd once again pushing her off the plank! Abbott is last, and we hear his 3-word slogans. **JW**

Primarily socio-historical. I thought it was important to use recognisable contemporary stories (or myths!). I am certainly not interested in moralizing. **MV**

Social and economic contexts are very prominent in *Lust*, which begins with the very Australian topic of real estate. *Sloth* is more abstract. Interestingly, considering the topic, religion is barely sighted. **IW**

There were obvious traditional religious influences due to the nature of the subject matter. In *Gluttony* (Adelaide) there were many place-specific influences as I mentioned and also a light commentary on the issue of modern obesity. **JL**

What do you perceive the relationship is between the music and the cultural context in which it is composed and derived?

Music exists in the time that it was written in, and is relevant to the culture it germinated from. "*Pride*" was composed in a flurry of ideas borne from frustration at our current political situation. I hope to influence the audience it reaches, by making comment on how, in general, our leaders walk the path of pride until they fail to see reality around them and their pride eventually becomes a "sin". They constantly fail us and this is becoming a ridiculous farce. So the piece is a ridiculous farce! This piece would not exist without cultural context. Often in Gilbert and Sullivan operas the politicians of the current time were ridiculed and in different cities they would just insert names of local celebrities to amuse the local audience. "*Strictly Ballroom the Musical*" also does this, making reference to "Rooty Hill RSL" and other Australian cultural phenomena, which may not work on an audience in New York. **JW**

Art, whether we intend it to or not, reflects something of the society in which it was created. This particular work is extremely limited in its scope, dealing with stories and historical characters only well understood in this particular country. As such, it would not travel particularly well. This is not a work for posterity – it is designed as a reflection on contemporary concerns, and as such it can only really be relevant to this particular place and time. **MV**

Essential. Nobody is writing music in a complete vacuum. I think where there is difference in how much the relationship is conscious- how much something is overtly contextual. If, somehow, *Lust* is still being performed in 200 years, musicologists may write about the real estate references and why a 2015 audience found it amusing. *Sloth* is much less tied to a particular context but I'm a product of my environment and therefore so is what I write. **IW**



There is a huge lack of responsibility in our society, which I feel that a lack of integration of general governing principles like these 7 virtues and vices has helped to create (regardless of any religious allegiances). Berlin cabaret was a good source for social commentary back in the day so this could be a good vessel for us to challenge the audience and encourage them to briefly evaluate their virtues and their vices—are they do-gooders or sinners? Do they occupy a space of positivity on this planet or negativity? We show them a mirror and they see what they see.

JL

If you were able to advise young composers on their dream to pursue the career of composing, what would you suggest?

Just write. It may not make you money – it’s not really a great career choice unless you are successful in Television or TV commercials or Hollywood films. But if it is your calling then you’ll be like many other Australian composers and somehow make it work.

Write write write. Hone your skills and craft.

I was as equally interested in classical ballet and music at the age of 13. But somehow at that young age I knew that if I pursued my music I could do it till the day I die. So music won out. I never wanted to do anything else but music so that’s what I pursued and did it doggedly. Now I run my own business as an orchestrator and arranger and copyist so that at least when I’m not composing I’m working in the music industry.

Australian composers usually are good at lots of different things: they teach, they lecture, they perform, they write all kinds of music, they are academics, or they DJ in clubs at night. It’s this flexibility and having “fingers in lots of pies” that will enable you to pursue a career in music. **JW**

Practically, it’s difficult (but not impossible!) to build a career without formal tertiary study both in terms of having an environment to improve your craft but also building a network of musicians. Artistically, you have to be willing to experiment, collaborate and fail. There’s a weird and tricky balance of humility and ego. Sibelius & Finale are great but you can’t trust them, you have to take every opportunity you can to get real musicians to play through your work as it is still the best way to learn. **IW**

The business-minded me who is concerned with the longevity (even possibility) of the idea of “a career in composition” would advise to choose a different career path. There is no general financial security in the field, you are asked to work long hours (in many cases for little pay or for free), you are forced to carry your business around with you wherever you go (there is no escape), there are no secondary benefits, people undervalue and underestimate the time and effort in your work, and you have to make huge concessions in your personal life. There are many, many pitfalls in this career path that highlight the very real need to develop a career in composition that extends well beyond the role of composition: teach, studio recording, orchestration, performing, conducting, management, business, dish-washing, etc. Versatility is the only way to survive in this career, in this modern age. The artistic me loves making music and if paying bills and providing food on the table were not essential to existence then composition would be the perfect career choice. With these thoughts in mind some good advice would be to try to find some versatility, work your ass off in order to KNOW your craft, find a point of difference, be personable, communicate clearly with your collaborators/contractors, plan well, develop instincts, establish boundaries, and KNOW YOUR LIMITS. **JL**

