

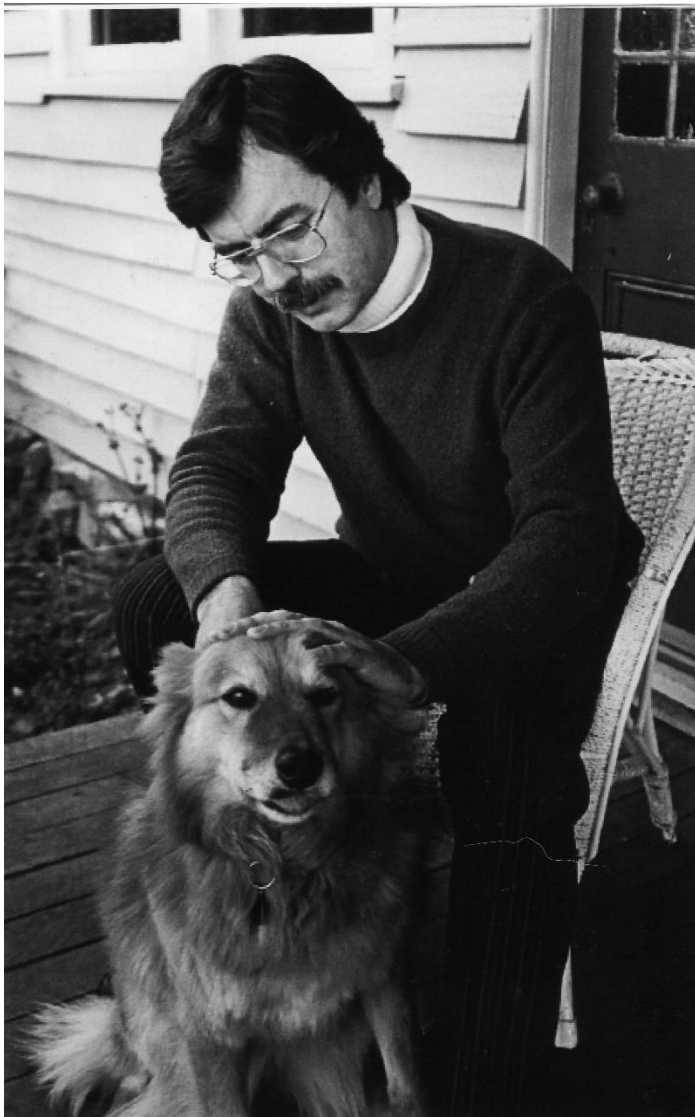
## BRUCE CALE'S JOURNEYS

by Eric Myers

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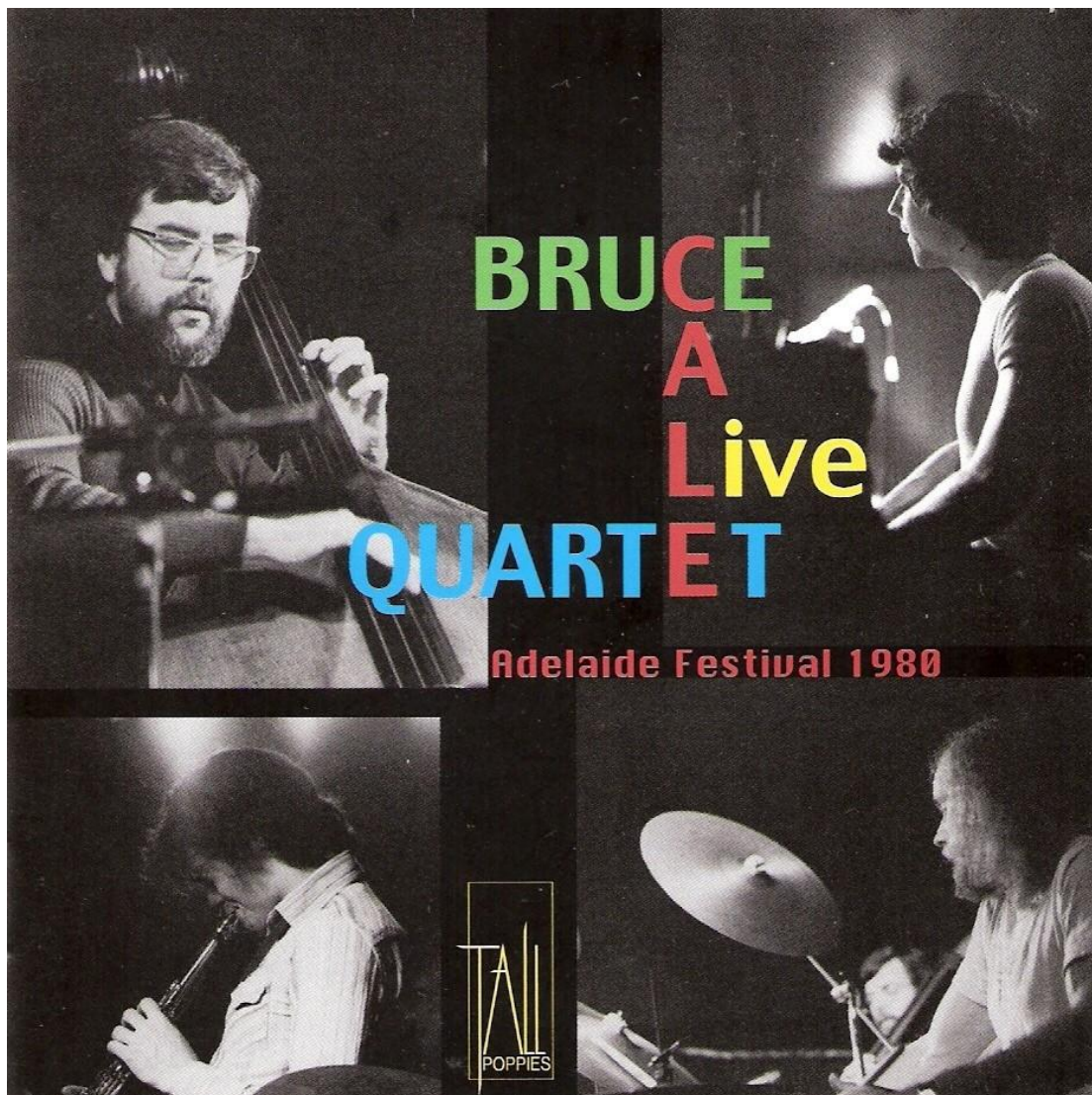
*[This article appeared in the Sydney Morning Herald on March 22, 1980]*

In a lovely cottage at Hampton, NSW, the Australian composer Bruce Cale looks out over the Gangbenang Valley, with the Great Dividing Range in the distance. The Cales have been in this area of the Blue Mountains since 1878, and Bruce's grandmother, Florence Annie Cale, lived in the cottage until she died at the age of 101. Cale has written an orchestral suite dedicated to her memory, entitled *A Century Of Steps*, as well as compositions called *Bindo*, and *The Upper Run*, inspired by the glorious surrounding countryside.



*Bruce Cale, pictured outside his cottage in Hampton in the Blue Mountains with his dog Muffin... PHOTO CREDIT MARGARET SULLIVAN*

Later in the week, he was to spend a few days in his North Sydney studio teaching — he has 11 students — and rehearsing both a quartet and a ten-piece orchestra. Recently he attended a one-day seminar for the Queensland String Bass Society at the Queensland Conservatorium of Music, where he lectured and demonstrated the George Russell chromatic concept relating to jazz improvisation and composition. Of the three jazz combos appearing at the Adelaide Festival of Arts this month, the Bruce Cale Quartet enjoys the distinction of being the only Australian group.



*The quartet which performed at the Adelaide Festival in 1980, Cale (top left) then clockwise Roger Frampton (piano), Phil Treloar (drums) and Dale Barlow (saxophones)... PHOTO COURTESY BRUCE CALE*

Bruce Cale's lifestyle is not typical of the Australian jazz musician and he is playing an important role in Australian music as a result of his 13 years of intense experience in the demanding jazz environments of the UK and the United States. He left Australia in 1965 and returned in 1978.

Before he went overseas, Cale was part of an avant-garde group of Sydney musicians, centred on pianist Bryce Rohde, involved in exploring the Lydian concept of tonal



organisation which had been developed in the fifties by American composer, theorist and philosopher George Russell.



*Cale (left) pictured with pianist Bryce Rohde in Hampton the following year, 1981...*  
*PHOTO COURTESY BRUCE CALE*

Arriving in England in 1965, Bruce Cale established himself quickly as a top-class bassist with many groups, including those of Tubby Hayes and Dudley Moore. He also became involved in the "free jazz" movement. Later, in the United States, where he went in 1966 to study at the Berklee College of Music, Boston, he continued his involvement in free jazz at a time when groups like the Art Ensemble of Chicago were coming to the fore.



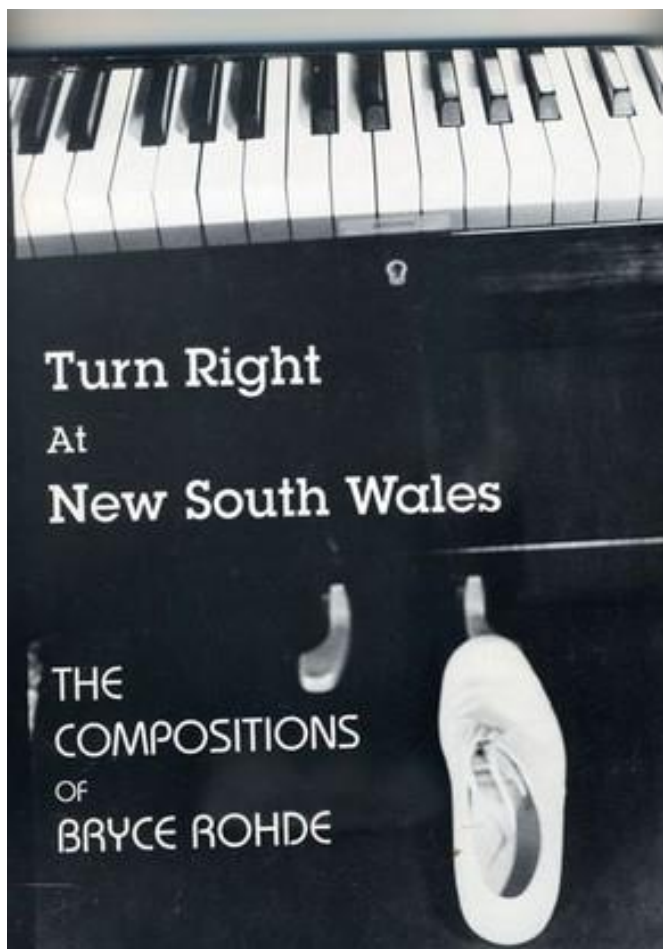
*The Art Ensemble of Chicago: presented by Horst Liepolt at the recent Festival of Sydney...*

The "free jazz" movement in America was begun by black musicians intent on recapturing jazz for themselves by purging the black aesthetic of the restrictions placed on it by Western harmony, melody and rhythm. Some 12 years later, the Art Ensemble of Chicago was heard live in Australia — presented by Horst Liepolt at the recent Festival of Sydney — and although its music astonished many people not familiar with it, Cale feels that "free jazz" has very much run its course.

"When we were playing 'free' in the United States we thought we had thrown off the shackles, but it was meaningless," he says. "We were less free than ever before. It's a players' music, a form of self-indulgence, if you want. Although there are moments when the music is exquisite, I don't think the listener goes on the trip the player goes on".

Similarly, Cale was intimately involved in the new phenomenon of "jazz-rock fusion" in 1968-69. This was the movement which saw the widespread adoption by jazz musicians of electronic equipment, and the utilisation of rhythmic feels more usually found in rock music. From 1969 onwards he was based in Los Angeles.

By 1973 he had become dissatisfied with the West Coast jazz scene, and returned to serious study of George Russell's Lydian concept. Teaming up again with Bryce Rohde, who had been living in America for many years, he recorded an LP of original Rohde compositions in 1976 called *Turn Right At New South Wales*.





More importantly, Cale became increasingly immersed in writing for combinations of classical instruments between 1973 and 1976. In ten months during 1976 and 1977 he completed his first major orchestral work, *Land Of The Aborigine*. This symphonic work in one movement was recorded in November, 1979, by the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, with Leonard Dommett conducting, and is soon to be broadcast on the ABC.



*Leonard Dommett: he conducted the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra's recording of Land Of The Aborigine...*

*Land Of The Aborigine* is a remarkable and impressive work by a composer who has emerged from the jazz idiom. It opens with a short ballad section with a rich, dark melody beautifully scored for strings. This is followed by a section in 5/4 which builds in momentum, with a number of rhythmic developments throughout the orchestra, and gradually moves into two keys.

"I develop the piece from a chromatic point of view," Bruce Cale has said, "so I use many variants, many harmonic and rhythmic possibilities. At one point, two keys explode together, and this symbolises for me the clash of Aboriginal culture and Western culture. Later, there is a resolution and one large statement, which is a reversion back to the original melody. It is, hopefully, a poetic statement, symbolising one Australia."

Cale has a substantial body of works behind him, having written 36 pieces, including one for nine instruments dedicated to Stravinsky, a woodwind quintet called *Kookaburra*, and a piece for symphony orchestra, jazz orchestra and voice, dedicated to John Coltrane.

Now, Cale is rehearsing a new ten-piece orchestra as a vehicle for his music. Among Sydney musicians, this is said to be one of the most interesting developments in Sydney jazz for some time. This larger band will be performing at the Australia Music Centre on May 4 and at the Manly Jazz Carnival in October. Bruce Cale's music may be the most advanced of the types of modern jazz at present being played in Australia.



*Bruce Cale Orchestra circa 1986. Standing L-R, Cale, Tony Buck, Mike Cleary, Warwick Alder, Graham Jesse, next person unidentified. Seated, Alison Campbell, then clockwise Kevin Hunt, Jim Kelly, Mike Haughton... PHOTO CREDIT JANE MARCH*

While most musicians are still involved in exploring the established idioms of acoustic bebop, hard bop, jazz/rock and "free jazz," Cale's music represents a consolidation of past idioms, and a view into the future. His music is not the light "mainstream" jazz which is current in Sydney's hotels, wine bars and jazz cellars. An outgrowth of the evolution of jazz as an art form in America, it is intense and cerebral, to be approached with the high-minded seriousness of contemporary classical music —another area where Bruce Cale seems destined to make his mark.