

GENESIS OF IDENTITY IN AUSTRALIAN IMPROVISED MUSIC

by Timothy Stevens*

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The thing with jazz, as we’re all told, is to sound like yourself. Jazz history has been most frequently related as a procession of great individuals, each of whom re-read the work of the predecessors in a slightly different, somehow new, fashion, and re-worked the music’s materials in a manner that was personal even while it demonstrated an abiding respect and regard for what had gone before. The great achievers in jazz were the ones who put the personal stamp on the music, who changed it.

Because change goes along with continuity, and according to the most commonly articulated jazz tradition, if you can demonstrate fidelity to the achievements in the past, and respect for them, while speaking in your own accent, your own voice, chances are you’ll be accepted and approved as contributing to the music in a meaningful way.

Obviously we can refer to an entity such as ‘the music’ as though it were, as the young people say, a thing. And it is, even while it is constantly being negotiated, undergoing change; we have at least to believe that it is so that we can talk about it. There have been times when jazz was said to have come to an end; in most years since 1929 there has been at least a couple of people to have announced its demise. The silliness of this is obvious and renders it irrelevant, so I shan’t dwell on it. But jazz is particularly mobile, or fluid, or malleable because of the manner in which it is made and the essentiality of improvisation.



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The variables of jazz performance constitute so much of what makes it what it is, and there is no end of testimony to the importance of the momentary, the transitory, or the unrepeatable in improvised music. These are the things that permit and encourage the foregrounding of personal difference and the cultivation of unique musical personality inherent in jazz creation. The opportunity to make fundamental decisions in the moment of performance, from the notes one chooses to the sound one draws from one's instrument, to the choice of whether or not even to play, is one of the defining characteristics of jazz music.

Notions of jazz tradition and canon have been open to question for some time now, and I'm not going to go over them in detail here. Put simply, in the early days of jazz historiography major figures were identified and their work was given legitimacy or esteem largely through a formalist critique that drew the music away from its performance moment. A tradition was outlined in which certain turning points indicated changes in style or procedure, and in this manner the history of jazz was subdivided into its periods: traditional small group, big band or Swing, bebop, and so on. As I've suggested, one of the things that defines the jazz musician personally is his or her relationship with this tradition. I've long felt, although it's in the manner of an aside, that very often it is the first thing one hears as jazz that situates one within the jazz sound-world. The thing that gives one orientation remains a benchmark forevermore. It has seemed to me that very often an individual's musical journey has something to do with rediscovering or reclaiming something found long ago and never forgotten. Perhaps this is sentimental, but I hope it's not entirely irrelevant.



L-R, Paul Grabowsky, Allan Browne, Gary Costello: their 6 x 3 album was an enormously important recording for Tim Stevens...

One obvious, defining thing about jazz in Australia, historically, is that the tradition to which one has looked has its origins elsewhere. It seems only relatively recently that young Australian musicians had any idea of a local tradition that might compete realistically for their attention and affection with the American one. And that tradition – the one to which they look – is a lot briefer than the American one, not because jazz wasn't being made here seventy years ago, but simply because the

catalogue of Australian jazz recordings has not remained accessible as widely as might permit the corpus to be known, and the models to whom they look here are probably their own teachers, or perhaps their teachers' teachers. I have recently written some notes for the reissue of Allan Browne, Gary Costello and Paul Grabowsky's album 6×3, originally released in 1989. This was an enormously important recording for me personally, and I think it belongs in every Australian record collection, but how I have tired over the last fifteen years, telling students about it who never even knew it existed. Recordings are made and albums are released but they go out of print and are effectively forgotten.

Whether there's any benefit to the identification of specific members of a local canon, or tradition, is an open question. Things always get left out, and that's arguably a problem. It's not possible to tell the story of everything, any more than it's possible to model a piece of music as something that includes every conceivable interpretive variation. Attempts have been made, here and there; Kevin Lucas's film *Beyond El Rocco* is, in my opinion, the best effort to trace the development of modern jazz in Melbourne and Sydney, and the standard histories of jazz in Australia written by Andrew Bisset, John Clare and John Whiteoak, as well as the introductory chapters to Bruce Johnson's *Oxford Companion to Australian Jazz*, all make significant contributions.



The director Kevin Lucas: his film Beyond El Rocco is, in Stevens' opinion, the best effort to trace the development of modern jazz in Melbourne and Sydney...PHOTO COURTESY LUCAS PRODUKZIONI

But there is a degree to which Australians are in an awkward position when it comes to this sort of thing, since tradition and canon are already a little suspect. And then, can we really compare? David James, author of the recent book on Bennetts Lane Jazz Club, said out loud on Radio National's *The Music Show*:

A lot of the younger musicians are sort of referring to the tradition, [and] it's a bit of a double-edged sword. If you are not trained and you're sort of on your own, then you're actually more likely to be original, because there's nothing to guide you.

If you are trained, and you're given all these signposts and all this history and techniques and so on, it actually becomes much harder to be original. And it's become actually more difficult. I mean it's much more difficult to be a frenetic jazz saxophonist after you've studied John Coltrane, cos what are you going to do after that?^[1]

This is only one example of a hopelessly romantic attitude that simply will not die. It's full of problems, of course, because how did so-called untrained musicians ever train? How did they learn anything at all? If the author has a problem with the university curricula, he should probably own up to that, but education itself is by no means the problem. Indeed, the better informed you are about the vastness of the jazz landscape, the *more* likely you are to be original, because you have more resources from which to draw, and more examples to hand of people having synthesized and elaborated along personal lines. If the training you have received has encouraged you to think openly about musical possibility, even to include whatever



The young musicians in The Red Onion Jazz Band (pictured here) were not trained, according to Stevens. Back row L-R, Richard Miller, Rowan Smith, John Scurry, Billy Morris. Allan Browne is in the centre. Front row L-R, Brett Iggulden, Bill Howard... PHOTO COURTESY AUSTRALIAN JAZZ MUSEUM

^[1] David James, interviewed by Andrew Ford, *The Music Show*, ABC Radio National, 26 July 2014.

music you acquainted yourself with prior to engaging with jazz – because no-one here seems to have been born with it and stayed exclusively with it all along – then it's sufficiently likely that you'll produce a mix that differs from the next person's. And this is happening all around us, as it turns out.

Those who are prepared to confine their listening, or their thinking, to the accepted great American models, will probably only hear what they expect or hope to hear, and there's not much we can do about that. But what if even in resembling another musician, a model, you revealed something profound and true about yourself? What if we could hear clearly your musical personality even through the degree to which you are prepared to imitate?

This is but one way of thinking about it, but it conforms to a conviction of mine that one always sounds like oneself in the end anyway. Which, after a somewhat discursive preamble, brings me to my topic proper.

My PhD thesis concerned Melbourne's Red Onion Jazz Band, a traditional jazz ensemble that began in the early 1960s and wound up in the mid-1990s. The young musicians who formed the Onions were not trained; it was a time when even the selection of an instrument came down to which chairs were yet to be filled. The teenage boys' motivation for playing jazz, as they report it, was the desire to meet girls; their erstwhile passion for model aeroplanes was not getting the results they were after, and having seen something of what went on in Melbourne's traditional jazz scene, they wanted to be part of it. So initially they met to play purely for fun, not even identifying themselves as a band per se, but later gave their collaboration a name: The Gin Bottle Jazz Band.



Brett Iggulden (not on trumpet here): his father's record collection was a stimulating and orientating influence from the beginning...

The record collection of trumpeter Brett Iggulden's father was a stimulating and orientating influence from the beginning, and the boys worked according to custom and, I believe, instinct, by seeking to copy what they heard on the records of Bix Beiderbecke, Louis Armstrong, Johnny Dodds and so on. It's obviously a reasonable assumption that by copying the playing of someone whose work you admire, you might hope to develop or to acquire some of the characteristics of that playing. It goes without saying that this is how oral traditions work, and that were it not for recording technology jazz would be without the greater part of its historical document.

The tradition from elsewhere that informs the young musician as he or she learns to play jazz is so vast and various, even when confined to the population of great figures, that a selection of particular points of emphasis in preference to others is inevitable. Something I was taught as an undergraduate was to find the music that I found most stimulating, and to immerse myself in it. Whether this meant actually copying it I shouldn't say for sure, but I was invited to establish preferences, to identify the territory I wished to inhabit, and to find a path into the midst of it. And that's what I did for a while; I played my Keith Jarrett LPs to the exclusion of meals and sunlight, and marveled, and then practised for a bit.

Distance is an obvious challenge facing Australian jazz musicians, and it's been long recognized as such, but it's not merely a problem. There is, to my way of thinking, actually something liberating about it, and the successive *choices* made by generations of jazz musicians here are among the most significant contributing factors to their generating their own identities. My feeling is that in the years following the Second World War, Australia jazz musicians defined themselves often through a continuing re-examination of the American precedent, a concentration on hitherto un-explored or insufficiently featured aspects of jazz history. The eclectic repertoires of the Bell band, Frank Johnson's Fabulous Dixielanders, The Southern Jazz Group, Len Barnard's band and so on, are all different from one another; there



R G V Venables: he would never write about a black musician at all...

are original compositions among the American jazz tunes, and even some overlap of these between bands – something less likely to occur these days – but they reflect individual interpretations of jazz orthodoxy and the Onions were simply a later stage in a changing view of jazz essentials. Each contributed to an exploration. And as they tell the story, the Onions were part of a continuing effort to move closer to a jazz authenticity.

The history of jazz authenticity as a concept in Australia is a conspicuous one, because the written record provided by the magazines *Jazz Notes* and *Australian Jazz Quarterly* in the 1940s, 50s and early 60s demonstrates a rather narrow view of what jazz actually is, and an effort to define and preserve it. The writers for these magazines are tireless in their pursuit of something quintessential in jazz, and it's both funny and telling that each often comes with his (or very occasionally her) own idea of what that thing is and how it is represented. In this context jazz and Swing (as styles, or as musics) are not necessarily related – although the problem is as much economic as aesthetic – and the less said about bebop the better. There is even one writer, R G V Venables, who would never write about a black musician at all – the magazines' founding editor, Bill Miller, describes him as 'a complete jazz racist'^[2] – and he chooses instead to praise a population of white players, many of whom are now almost entirely forgotten. The evangelistic enthusiasm of Miller himself was such that a tone was set for the traditional jazz community in Australia, and a striving for authenticity was virtually mandatory.



Bill Miller: he describes Venables as 'a complete jazz racist'... PHOTO CREDIT NORM LINEHAN

Authenticity, for performing musicians, amounted to the appropriation of the right models, by and large, or a demonstration that fundamental elements from acceptable examples had been recognized and accommodated. Playing 'hot' was better than playing 'sweet', and in the cases where it was not clear if something was one or the

^[2] Bill Miller, interview for the Australian Jazz Oral History Project.

other, more favour was going to be apportioned to the former. Venables, writing on Bobby Hackett, asked, 'Is there such a thing as *pretty* jazz? The idea is rather repulsive, and the average follower of hot music probably dismisses it as such.'^[3] Heat is, of course, as difficult to define as swing, but perhaps as John Shand says of Australianness in jazz, 'you can just hear it and feel it.'^[4]

The peculiar thing is that after all this time we have amassed a history of Australian musicians who both developed and all the while demonstrated their own musical personalities, even while they strove to resemble or at least emulate predecessors from afar. One might say that it's possible to marshal a historical procession of significant figures something in the manner of the American one, and perhaps this could be seen as part of the imitative project. I myself talk about generations, and their relationship to one another as time passes, so this kind of thinking may be unavoidable. But is also consoling, admittedly, to feel there's a population, a consensus.

In the end though it's depressing to think of Australian improvised music simply as being forever fixed in a mode of trying to measure up to, or to echo, something happening so far away, and that's not the impression I'm trying to give. There are times that has happened, of course, and there are musicians living and working even now whose fixity on comparison is a tedious leitmotif in their playing and their conversation.

It's undeniable that the function of comparison in the objective determination of characteristic sound, or personal style, or general originality, is inescapable. But need the comparison always be conducted at the international, sub-stylistic level? I think not. Besides, it is not only sound or style that constitutes identity; there is also a band's manner of formulating and presenting itself, and here too each band works to a degree to distinguish itself from those around it.

Graeme Bell's band had performed original compositions in the 1940s; they were an important part of the band's repertoire and doubtless helped them along internationally when they travelled, serving to underline something of the band's local identity in titles such as *Swanston Street Shamble*, *Nullabor*, and *Goanna March*. The Onions did not contribute very many originals at all, choosing instead to demonstrate their improved purity through fidelity to American models. The tradition here is one where distance imparts the capacity to choose.

Ade Monsborough, a member of the Bell band, was one of those named by Bruce Clunies-Ross in his article 'An Australian Sound' as giving 'a distinctly Australian flavour' to the jazz music being made in the 1950s, and another was Dave Dallwitz. Dallwitz composed many of the tunes his bands played too, and similar to Graeme Bell's, his titles are sometimes redolent of locality, for example *Iron bark*, *Crocodile Creep*, *Emu Strut* and *What's the use of reading books*. And curiously, although it's an aside, when first I met the trio of Browne, Costello and Grabowsky, one of the

^[3] 'Bobby Hackett – sweet or hot?' *Jazz Notes* 68 (November 1946): 4.

^[4] John Shand, *Jazz: The Australian accent* (Sydney: UNSW, 2009): 1.



Ade Monsborough: he gave 'a distinctly Australian flavour' to the jazz music being made in the 1950s... PHOTO CREDIT NORM LINEHAN

things that impressed me was that this ensemble performed original pieces with names like *Happy go lucky country* or *Colonial sketch no. 1*. Whether or not Monsborough and Dallwitz did indeed embody a short-lived, veritable Australian style, the legitimacy of original composition was unquestioned in these groups, and helped I think to mark them. The titles assisted, perhaps, in the suggestion of local character.

The Australian jazz population – I consciously avoid ‘tradition’ here – consists of people who, as I have said, sounded inevitably like themselves no matter what objectives they had at the outset or as they continued, and it’s the manner in which they worked to accommodate and re-imagine jazz music from afar, while finding space alongside local colleagues, that gives me the strongest indication of their achievement of identity. The Onions worked from records, and their performances demonstrate the effort they had put into learning the improvised contributions of the performers on those records: solos are reproduced and the ensemble is faithful to the recordings’ forms. Their repertoire reflects an idiosyncratic but somehow consistent approach to the reading of jazz history; in the mid-1960s, after several members of the band left to form the mod group The Loved Ones, attention turned specifically to music of King Oliver and thereafter to music of 1930s big bands. The latter was particularly adventurous for a small group, but their interests were broadening and they pursued them with determination.



Louis Armstrong: Brett Iggulden says that the first time he heard Louis Armstrong play “Shine” it was just mindblowing...

They drew pleasure from this; as the music had inspired them they felt the attempt to reproduce it drew them into greater proximity to its wonders. Trumpeter Brett Iggulden says of the example of Louis Armstrong:

Here was this thing you just couldn’t get past. I mean the first time I heard Louis Armstrong play that “Shine” – the way the breaks worked and the way he extended the song with a second chorus at the end – it [was] just mindblowing. To find that I had adequate range to do a duplication of that was a very pleasant surprise. And in a way, it forced you to try and develop a certain level of virtuosity, if that’s the right word, because you had a picture in your mind of what you associated with that song.[5]

In this manner, the learning of the model’s work was also a way of learning to play the instrument. And drummer Allan Browne says to Iggulden that the process ‘has forever stamped you as a person in your own right who didn’t learn the trumpet through learning scales and that at school.’[6]

In copying someone else, you become yourself. The replication of someone else’s playing engenders an authenticity – a personal authenticity – that formal, institutionalized education does not. Or so the theory goes.

[5] Brett Iggulden and Allan Browne, personal interview, 27 March 1999.

[6] Brett Iggulden and Allan Browne, personal interview, 27 March 1999.



Allan Browne: he said to Brett Iggulden that the process 'has forever stamped you as a person in your own right who didn't learn the trumpet through learning scales and that at school'...PHOTO COURTESY AUSTRALIAN JAZZ REAL BOOK

Several things are at work here. 60 years ago, there were fewer musicians to whom one was expected to attend, particularly if one were confining oneself to traditional styles. The conservatoria had not yet sought to include improvised music among the things with which students might engage, so there were fewer choices concerning how one might learn about jazz. Although the Onions, several of them, did take individual lessons from Ade Monsborough, and held great respect for him, his example was of someone who had also learnt from records, some 20 or 30 years before they themselves did, and his lessons involved playing with them, demonstrating on his instrument things they might play on theirs. There is also, it has to be said, a certain pride in having achieved what the Onions did without the help of academic institutions, and with it a variety of defensiveness that speaks against the academic model. And David James, who wrote the Bennetts Lane book, obviously feels much the same way, even now.

But my motivation for writing the PhD thesis I did, lay in coming to understand how the Onions had conformed to a practice that was already some decades old, and has subsisted until now: of taking reference from elsewhere, of copying, and then of emerging sounding like no-one specifically but themselves. Whereas this might have been accidental in the 1960s, an unforeseen and even un-trumpeted consequence, today it might even be empowering in its inevitability. The only surprise is in the journey itself.

Difference was born of necessity; the push towards an imagined authenticity took musicians in different directions and their contributions taken together demonstrate both variety and invention. A variety of sources, if you will, and the capacity of the Australian musicians to work *with* what it was they received. And this is the strength of the Australian jazz community, turning de-contextualised music into re-contextualised, balancing the will towards accuracy with the embrace of the obscure. Added to which, in the words of drummer Allan Browne:

We had no concept of being particularly creative people. We had no pretension at all about that. I mean we liked to be creative – mad and creative, funny and creative, wearing strange clothes – but as far as we were concerned our whole role, until quite late, was to play jazz from the '20s and early '30s that we loved, and mostly black, almost one hundred percent black music, the best we could like it was.^[7]



*Allan Browne: he said that 'as far as we were concerned our whole role, until quite late, was to play jazz from the '20s and early '30s that we loved, and mostly black'...*PHOTO COURTESY SYDNEY MORNING HERALD

Ian Clyne, who played piano with the Onions between 1964 and 1965, writes that

There was a trad jazz purism similar to other puritanisms and [it] got lost in its own ideals. Anything written or played after 1930 was looked on with disdain by the hard core band members, Allan and Brett. Yet there was always the fun element and humour – Bill [Howard] and Gerry [Humphrys] – that kept it from being too absurd by making it all absurd.^[8]

The understanding that what was sought was unattainable seems hard to miss, and demonstrates a commendable maturity.

^[7] Brett Iggulden and Allan Browne, personal interview, 27 March 1999.

^[8] Ian Clyne, personal email, 28 May 1999.

And whereas their repertoire was almost exclusively from American records, that is, it contained almost no original tunes, absurdity remained a very strong element in the work of the Red Onions, influenced as they were by Barry Humphries and the Goons. Their separation from that which they cherished was obvious to them and the fact that they could never achieve the thing they most desired – to *be* the musicians they revered, in short – led them to take a deeply ironic view of what they were doing, even as they did it. Ridiculous humour and obscure forms of dress and presentation came to identify the band alongside their particular style of performance. Such embellishments served to emphasise their difference and their originality within the local scene. The band was so much more than its records.

The example of John Sangster, whom I discussed last time I attended one of these meetings, which is last time it was in Melbourne, is curious also for the manner in which he demonstrated enormous stylistic flexibility after emerging as a performer within Melbourne's traditional jazz scene. If the split that produced The Loved Ones also drove the remaining Onions more determinedly towards a stylistically uncorrupted jazz conception, as I believe it did, as though to prove something of the value of what they were doing, and its continuing importance within the musical landscape, then Sangster saw nothing but opportunities to extend himself beyond the jazz that had identified him in the late 1940s.



A young John Sangster on cornet: described by Bisset as 'the find of the 1948 Australian Jazz Convention'...PHOTO COURTESY AUSTRALIAN JAZZ MUSEUM

Sangster is described by Andrew Bisset as ‘the find of the 1948 [Australian Jazz C]onvention’[\[9\]](#) and it was here, where he played cornet, he was awarded five pounds as ‘most promising jazz musician’[\[10\]](#). Shortly after this he began to play drums, and it was as a drummer that he toured to the UK and Europe with Graeme Bell’s band on its second international tour, between 1950 and 1952.



It was as a drummer that Sangster toured to the UK and Europe with Graeme Bell’s band... PHOTO COURTESY AUSTRALIAN JAZZ MUSEUM



Graeme Bell: he had taken enormous trouble to delve into early jazz... PHOTO COURTESY SYDNEY MORNING HERALD

[\[9\]](#) Andrew Bisset, *Black roots, white flowers: A history of jazz in Australia*, 2nd ed. (Sydney: ABC, 1987): 165.

[\[10\]](#) Graeme Bell, *Graeme Bell, Australian Jazzman: His autobiography* (Frenchs Forest: Child & Associates, 1988): 139.

The Bell band's repertoire at this time, as reflected by the recordings it made, is in many ways more eclectic than the Onions' would be a decade later, and there is no sense of the 'almost one hundred percent black' approach that Browne reports the Onions taking. Graeme Bell has written of his 'learning years...in Melbourne' during which he had taken enormous trouble to delve into early jazz, to get to the guts of the matter and then build up from a solid and authentic starting point. How can you create your own thing in an idiom by looking at a Picasso and a Jackson Pollock without ever having seen a Rembrandt and a Botticelli? Since getting hooked I had listened to as much jazz as I could get my hands on[11]– and he goes on to name a mix of black and white musicians, demonstrating what appears to be an entirely consistent enthusiasm towards all of them. The 'solid and authentic starting point' for Bell is such a mix, and his work is both synthesis and extension. The important thing is to have registered and attended to the examples. The freedom of choice in selection is worth noting.



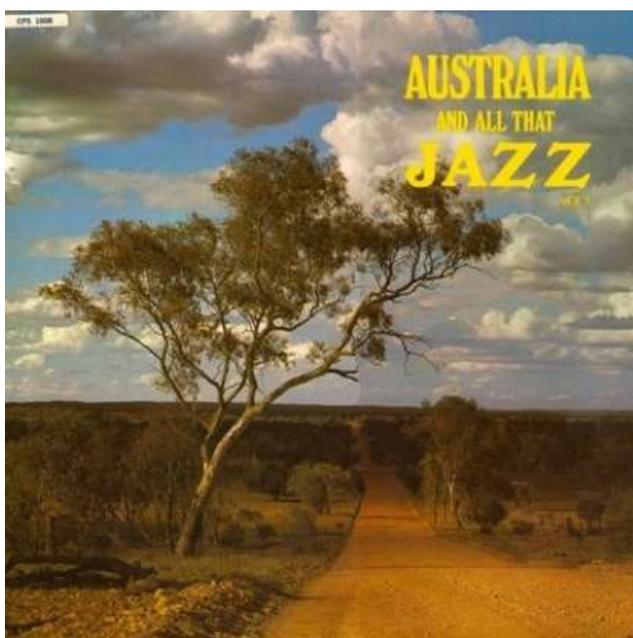
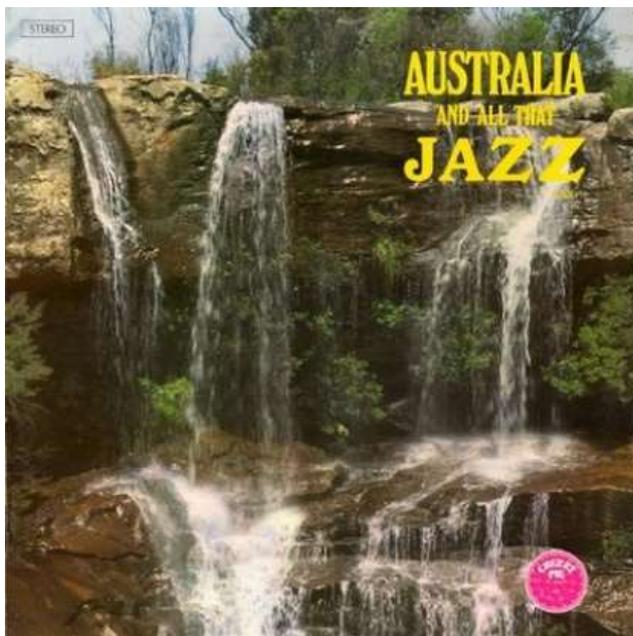
John Sangster, by the mid-1960s, was moving towards the vibraphone as his primary instrument... PHOTO COURTESY AUSTRALIAN JAZZ MUSEUM

John Sangster, by the mid-1960s, was moving towards the vibraphone as his primary instrument, and this and composition are what have come to define the larger part of his career. He is known and referenced as a multi-instrumentalist, but it is vibes on which he was predominantly featured throughout his own recordings of the 1970s and 1980s. With multi-instrumentalism went multi-influence-ism too, and probably because of the changeability of the music scene as the years went on, with different employment opportunities requiring specific musical styles or approaches, Sangster became hugely versatile and adventurous. Bell describes his own journey from the small-group jazz of the 1940s and 1950s to skiffle, and cabaret, and so forth, and Sangster travelled with him for much of this. Small venues, larger venues, pubs or nightclubs – the idea of staying constant to a single musical idiom seems slightly ridiculous.

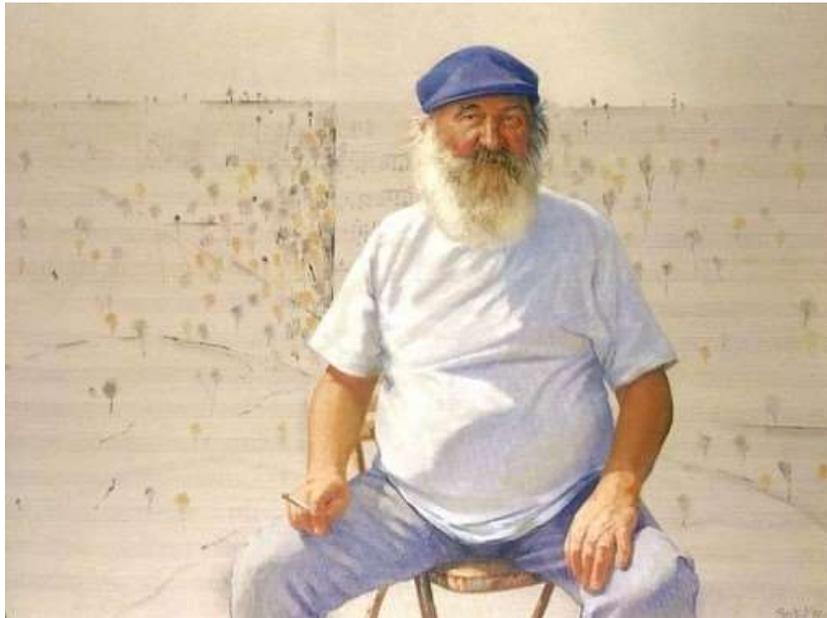
[11] Graeme Bell, *Graeme Bell, Australian Jazzman: His autobiography* (Frenchs Forest: Child & Associates, 1988): 184-5.

Sangster and Bell however were drawing their livelihoods from the music, as were the members of the Onions who left to form The Loved Ones. The remaining Onions were not, and it is clearly much easier to be 'pure' about one's musical orientation when one's income is not dependent on it. There's a degree to which this recognition is essential in understanding Australia's traditional jazz community.

Sangster's career is a story of opportunities grasped, of adaptability, of invention, and of the power of a strong musical personality both to accommodate and to capitalize upon the changes in the popular music scene. As a session musician Sangster's work was very broad – I have a copy at home of Mark Holden's first album, *Dawn in darkness*, and Sangster contributes to that. He composed for film and television, and for advertisement. He contributed also to a music of acknowledged locality: *Australia and all that jazz* is a pair of album releases in which



the compositions' titles and the cover art are charming in their obviousness. Sangster demonstrates further the freedom of choice available with detachment. The smorgasbord of styles on which he draws throughout his epic *Lord of the Rings* project is evidence both of his broad interests and awareness, and of the range of options he felt at liberty to utilize. Nowadays it said to be noteworthy that younger musicians are transcending category and mixing their jazz skills with their popular sympathies, but it's not a new thing. The wildly popular original production of the musical *Hair* had Sangster in the pit, alongside the rather ghastly band Tully, and Sangster developed one of his three Festival label albums from this experience.



John Sangster: he demonstrates further the freedom of choice available with detachment... PORTRAIT BY BOB BAIRD

My feeling about the development of identity in Australian improvised music is that it takes place as a consequence not only of the international benchmarks one selects or to which one is drawn, although obviously this is of great initial importance. The act of being influenced by something changes the behaviour of the one who feels the influence. His or her work *with* that influence will draw on his or her own musical personality, which does exist aside from any single influence, and then the manner in which he or she relates to colleagues in rehearsal and performance will further inform and refine the nature of his or her approach.

What the traditional bands in the 1950s and 1960s had was not only their affection for recordings and their wish to emulate them; they furthermore looked around them to take their bearings from local colleagues. This was usually so as to mark points of dissimilarity, as it turns out, since finding a place in the local scene relied upon demonstrating one's *difference* from what was around one. This might be closer to the American model of jazz tradition and doing one's own thing. But in the case of the Red Onions, it was explicitly achieved by demonstrating in recording and performance a view of what was important in jazz that differed from that of their predecessors and their contemporaries. This is the significant thing that the traditional jazz musicians in those generations did, fusing the international perspective with the local, and the consequences are ongoing.