The Legacy of *Polyhymnia*:

Towards Understanding the Reception of a New Musical Work

- The physical score & audio recording of *Polyhymnia* anticipated to be *ONE of FOUR* REF outputs – the other three being monographs.

- The challenge, in due course, is to put forward a best case for the “impact” of this new creative work (21 minutes in length, and written for “multi-divisi” string orchestra).

**July 2012**

JONATHAN LITTLE
STRING, ORCHESTRAL AND CHORAL WORKS OF JONATHAN LITTLE

Polyhymnia

MUSICIANS OF THE CZECH, KIEV, AND MORAVIAN PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRAS
The Legacy of *Polyhymnia*:

Concisely examining the initial ideas and other musical and extra-musical inspiration that lay behind the composition of *Polyhymnia*, this presentation briefly follows the process of its composition, recording and commercial release. It then focusses on the “life” of a newly-recorded musical work following release: embracing airplay, reviews and interviews – and what worldwide press and other feedback might have to contribute to any statement about its “impact” – and indeed what one might subsequently be able to deduce about a work’s and a composer’s place in the wider context of “serious” contemporary music.
POLYHYMNIA =
latest completed musical project ...

ALTHOUGH FURTHER REVIEWS & MARKETING continue to Dec 2012

• String Orchestra work completed and published in Australia (May 2010: Full score and individual string parts)

• Recording undertaken in the Czech Republic & “first rough edit” delivered for comments (end of February 2011)

• Editing & mixing of the recording - to rectify balance issues, etc. (ca. March to July 2011); then artwork preparation ...

• Becomes title track of second major album of original string, orchestral and choral works (officially released: February 2012 – after advance marketing and review copies have been sent out at least six weeks beforehand, to radio and press)
Concept A is using the image “Oriental Musicians.” The subject of the painting, women playing instruments connects with the idea of Polyhymnia. The original cropping of the image is largely intact. Though this is a more traditional style painting the impact is created by setting the title in all capitals having it run the full length of the cover making it as large as possible. It is also white to give maximum contrast from the deep, red background. This red is sampled from the harpist’s cloths to create a consistent color pallet. The strong color is also very attention grabbing.
Concept B is using the image “Vintage Festival”. This image appears to be a traditional renaissance painting but on closer inspection we see the peculiar instruments being played. I think this is very engaging. It has antique quality while also having the gravitas we are looking for. The image is framed by a cool blue to match the overall hue of the image. I’ve also over laid a Grecian key pattern to tie into the Greek Mythology of Polyhymnia. The type is white again for maximum contrast against the blue. I’m using a tall, condensed font to help create a classical feel. This type of lettering also allows for it to be quite large. This is important as a lot of today’s music buyers are purchasing from the internet and are only seeing a small image of the cover.
Feb. 2012 onwards:
(50% creative time / 50% “marketing/gleaning” time!)

“ONLINE PRESENCE” (album & composer information)


• MUSIC PUBLISHER WEBSITE (Australia):
  www.AustralianComposers.com.au

• AMAZON WEBSITES & numerous other online retailers (Worldwide) –
  both physical and digital distributors

  Worldwide distribution/availability via NAXOS
  [world’s largest independent classical music distributor]

• OWN ELECTRONIC PRESS KIT/WEBSITE, & and own pages on sites of
  Professional Music Associations – e.g. BASCA (UK), AMC (Australia).
  See esp.: www.JonathanLittle.org

• VARIOUS OTHER MUSIC REVIEW WEBSITES for interviews and reviews
  To date: 2 interviews (US & Australia), and 12 reviews – mostly US (world’s
  largest music market), and also UK, Italy, Spain (+ more expected from possibly
  Australia, Canada, Germany, France, Norway, ??)
OWN PROMOTIONAL ELECTRONIC PRESS KIT / WEBSITE:

www.JonathanLittle.org

(MUSICAL EXAMPLES SHOULD COMMENCE PLAYING)
PROMOTIONAL BIOGRAPHY

‘The evocative music of British-Australian composer Jonathan Little is notable for its mystical beauty, intensity and richness of material. He studied Composition and Performance at the University of Melbourne, where he won the Lady Turner Exhibition for overall excellence. He holds the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in music for his research into the development of "exotic" 19th- and 20th-century orchestration. In 2011, the City of London's ancient Musicians' Company (established in 1500) bestowed upon him one of their highest honours – the prestigious Collard Fellowship – awarded to "a professional musician of outstanding ability" for "undoubted excellence in composition, research or performance". Music producer and publisher Martin Anderson has defined Jonathan Little's compositional style as “Ecstatic Minimalism” – blending art music, folk/Celtic, and other sacred and secular musical influences from as far back as the fourteenth century with new and innovative textures and orchestration. Other critics have defined his musical style as “Archaic Futurism”, or “Picturesque Archaism".’

Alternative label (“-ism”) recently used by an Italian critic (= ability to sound very old & very new at the same time)

Label (“-ism”) recently used by a reviewer in America’s leading record review magazine
Available now through iTunes, Amazon, and Naxos of America

Nominated for “Best Album of the Year”
Reviews New Age, Spain

“Polyhymnia conjures up a heart-rending panorama: it is immensely poetic, almost otherworldly, and employs an exceptionally hypnotic array of musical colour.”
Tempo, UK (January 2012)

“as warm and fervent as religious poetry ... a sonic tour de force. Little is an expert orchestrator”
InfoDad, USA (March 2012)

“full of rich string orchestra harmonies and based on some beautiful melodic ideas. The texture is rich, and the effect is quite moving”
American Record Guide (May/June 2012)

“Gorgeous, exciting, chilling and surprising ... an elegant gift to the ears ... the beauty, the elegance, the intensity ... A host of adjectives are insufficient to categorise this otherworldly recording”
Reviews New Age, Spain (February 2012)

POLYHYMNIA features Polyhymnia and Terpsichore, two orchestral pieces from Little’s Nine Muses series, along with the powerful Fanfare, the atmospheric string quintet Sacred Prelude, and the intricate polychoral Kyrie.

JONATHAN LITTLE is current holder of The John Clementi Collard Fellowship in Music – one of the most prestigious awards of The Worshipful Company of Musicians. He is the first composer to receive a Professional Development Award from the UK music business’s own charity, the Musicians Benevolent Fund, and is recipient of ASCAP and Critics’ Choice awards in the US, and PRS for Music Foundation, Bliss and Leighton Trust awards in the UK.

Current projects include the epic, multi-tableaux Greek mythological series, The Nine Muses. The first two of these musical portraits appear on his new album, POLYHYMNIA. www.jonathanlittle.org
To show particularly by reviews, interviews, & any awards attracted, that quality is of some international standing (and innovation and importance of work – in comparison to the work of other contemporary composers)

2. To pursue a “three-pronged” strategy of “impact” that can be evidenced particularly in these “territories”: the UK, North America, and Australia = important to maximise international presence and publicity
CREATIVE AIM

A MUSICAL “EVOCATION” of an ANCIENT GREEK MUSE

FROM THE EXPLANATORY NOTES (sample text that may be used for REF – explaining the concept, while also showing innovation, and – towards the end – any recognition/commentary internationally, too):

'In Polyhymnia – a searing, many-layered “Lamentation for String Orchestra” (with soloists) – the melos or “melodic thread” often weaves between all parts, and is slow-moving throughout. Initially, it emerges like a cry from the deep. Tension is built, maintained, and released over long periods. ... [it] gradually builds up clusters of notes into evolving, ever-changing, and ultimately resolving chord patterns.

The string orchestra is employed multi-divisi throughout: there are four individual violin lines (besides an extra four solo parts), ditto in the violas, eight individual cello lines, and two bass lines. This tends to create a thick, rich and complex texture, yet there are also some exceptionally lucid passages – for although Polyhymnia is also the Muse of Eloquence, She is sometimes characterised as a serious, pensive and meditative holy woman (whose main role is to sing praises to the gods). ... ’
THE NINE MUSES
are the Ancient Greek goddesses of INSPIRATION, LEARNING, THE ARTS, AND CULTURE

According to ancient allegory, ZEUS (Almighty Creator and Father of the Gods) lay with MNEMOSYNE (Memory) and she gave birth to the Nine Muses:

1. Calliope (The Fair Voiced) – muse of Epic Poetry
2. Clio (The Proclaimer) – muse of History
3. Erato (The Lovely) – muse of Love Poetry
4. Euterpe (The Giver of Pleasure) – muse of Lyric Poetry
5. Melpomene (The Songstress) – muse of Tragedy
6. Polyhymnia (She of Many Hymns) – muse of Sacred Poetry
    for multi-divisi string orchestra: completed 2009; recorded 2011 (21 minutes)
7. Terpsichore (The Whirler) – muse of Dance
   for large orchestra: completed 2007; recorded 2008 (15 minutes)
8. Thalia (The Flourishing) – muse of Comedy
9. Urania (The Heavenly) – muse of Astronomy
Polyhymnia, Op.10

EVOCATION OF THE SIXTH OF THE NINE MUSES
"She of Many Hymns"
or,
Muse of Sacred Poetry

Violins I, II, III & IV (including 4 solo violins - but ideally with 4 extra)
Violas I, II, III & IV (including 4 solo violas)
Violoncelli I, II, III, IV, V, VI, VII & VIII
Contrabass I & II

MINIMUM SUGGESTED BALANCED FORCES:
8 (+ 4) vlns / 8 vlas / 8 vc / 2 cb

(ca.21 mins.)
© 2010
AWARDS TO DATE:
THAT CAN IN SOME WAY BE RELATED TO POLYHYMNIA PROJECT - in part or whole

• 2012 – Nomination for “Best Album of the Year” (Spain)
• 2012 – PRS / Bliss Trust Composer Bursary (UK)
• 2011 – John Clementi Collard Fellowship of The Worshipful Company of Musicians (UK)
• 2011 – Elected in May 2011 to “Associate Artist” status of the Australian Music Centre (AUS)
• 2009 – MBF Professional Development Award (UK)

Holders of THE JOHN CLEMENTI COLLARD FELLOWSHIP
Awarded on average every three years since 1931, being one of the most prestigious awards of The Worshipful Company of Musicians (established 1500)

1931 Herbert Howells
1934 Constant Lambert
1937 William Alwyn
1939 Edmund Rubbra
1940 Sir Jack Allan Westrup
1943 Gordon Jacob
1946 Lennox Berkeley
1949 Alan Rawsthorne
1952 Priaulx Rainier
1955 Bernard Stevens
1958 Peter Racine Fricker
1962 John Gardner
1965 Adrian Crui
1968 Alan Ridout
1971 Bernard Roberts
1974 Christopher Brown
1977 Hamish Milne
1980 Edwin Roxburgh
1983 Justin Connolly
1986 Alec Roth
1989 Benedict Mason
1992 Ann Mackay
1996 Robin Grant
2000 Ronald Woodley
2005 Mike Diprose
2008 Marcus Barcham-Stevens
2009 Férida Stone-Davis
2011 Jonathan David Little
SOME MUSICAL PRECURSORS:

TOP TEN large/multi-divisi string orchestra works of the last 100+ years (in no particular order & in a couple I cheated and included other instruments too):

1. Mahler – Sym. No. 5 – slow mvt.
2. Wagner – *Lohengrin* Prelude to Act I
3. Wagner – Parsifal and the Grail Knights music
4. Mascagni – Intermezzo from *Cavalleria Rusticana*
5. Barber – Adagio for Strings
7. * Richard Strauss – *Metamorphosen* – COMPARISON MADE BY ONE CRITIC (but harmonically quite a different basis)
   http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KS3VOASoOgQ&list=PL68B6AEE1E76F5BDB&index=7&feature=plpp_video
8. RVW – Fantasia on a Theme of Thomas Tallis
9. ***Franz Schmidt – Intermezzo from the opera, *Notre Dame*
   VERY thick texture, but it works!
   http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ts5t_5HeECE&list=PL68B6AEE1E76F5BDB&index=9&feature=plpp_video
10. Jonathan Little – *Polyhymnia*
    DIFFERENT type of thick texture & harmonic basis again
    http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hUXjZNSeKrE&list=PL68B6AEE1E76F5BDB&index=11&feature=plpp_video
REVIEW HIGHLIGHTS TO DATE:

SUCCESES:

• “Album des Mes en RNA (Febrero 2012)” (Album of the Month in Reviews New Age, Feb. 2012); & Nomination for “Mejor Álbum RNA de Año” (Best Album of the Year) (Spain)

  WHO’D HAVE PREDICTED THAT ONE?! ! (P.S.: What a cultured people are the Spanish!)

• Major feature in Sept-Oct Fanfare magazine: 3,300-word interview + 3 substantial reviews (US)
  • Airplay in America – substantial portions of the album – 30 mins+ (US)
  • Record Company to put forward Polyhymnia for Grammy Award nomination 2013 (US)
  • Two widely-read articles on Polyhymnia published in Australia (AUS)
  • First reviews gained in countries outside the “Anglosphere” (= Italy, Spain)

“Less than” SUCCESES (!):

• No UK airplay whatsoever (or remote sign of) to date (e.g., Radio 3; Classic FM) (UK)
• No Gramophone or major broadsheet reviews to date (UK); nothing in France; Germany.
• [Just one major review in CUP’s Tempo & a short one in Classical Music magazine, so far in UK]
REVIEW SAMPLES 1 of 2 (solely from US Fanfare):

CRITICS CAN’T YET DECIDE ABOUT, OR CATEGORISE, THE MUSIC
CAN REF PANEL?! So what can be made of such material?

NOTE THE NEED TO COMPARE – STATE WHAT IT IS “LIKE”:

*   *   *   *

- ‘It’s obvious ... that Jonathan Little issues from a similar school of sensibility to that of the “holy mystics” of Eastern Europe, composers like Arvo Pärt and Pēteris Vasks.’

- ‘When I first encountered Jonathan Little’s music in 2008, I gave it an enthusiastic review. He is quite obviously an excellent composer, in fact a composer difficult to pigeonhole because his works span a wide and interesting array of styles. ... I found it [Polyhymnia] to be the spiritual cousin of Strauss’s Metamorphosen for 23 strings ... I liked Polyhymnia better, overall, than Strauss’s Metamorphosen ... Little’s music sounds like no one else’s ...’
‘The notes quote one unnamed commentator as stating that the music is “completely novel, yet hauntingly familiar.” This seems a fair assessment, in that no other composer among the thousands whose music I’ve heard immediately comes to mind … Perhaps Górecki in certain of his more tonal works comes closest, although Little’s music is about seven notches above the quality of that of the Polish composer …’


‘[In Polyhymnia] melodic figures coalesce into an enormous tapestry of musical color. It’s excellent music for dreaming! This music can waft the listener back to a pastoral scene in ancient Greece, where the gods spend lazy days basking in the sun on Mount Olympus.’

- ‘Polyhymnia conjures up a heart-rending panorama: it is immensely poetic, almost otherworldly’ – Tempo, UK (Jan 2012)

- ‘as warm and fervent as religious poetry … a sonic tour de force … Little is an expert orchestrator’ – Infodad, USA (March 2012)

- ‘an enormous tapestry of musical color … Little composes with a great array of technical skills’ – Fanfare, USA (Sept-Oct 2012)

- ‘full of rich string orchestra harmonies and based on some beautiful melodic ideas. The texture is rich, and the effect quite moving’ – American Record Guide, USA (May-June 2012)

- ‘Gorgeous, exciting, chilling and surprising .. An elegant gift to the ears … the beauty, the elegance, the intensity … A host of adjectives are insufficient to categorise this otherworldly recording’ – Reviews New Age, Spain (February 2012)

*** NOMINATED FOR “BEST ALBUM OF THE YEAR 2012” ***
SUPPORTED BY THE MUSICIANS' BENEVOLENT FUND
WITH FUNDING FROM THE WILLIS AND GRACE GRANT CHARITABLE TRUST

Polyhymnia, Op.10
“She of Many Hymns”
or,
Muse of Sacred Poetry

EVOCATION OF THE SIXTH OF THE NINE MUSES

Lamentation
for
String Orchestra

Violins I, II, III & IV (including 4 solo violins - but ideally with 4 extra)
Violas I, II, III & IV (including 4 solo violas)
Violoncelli I, II, III, IV, V, VI, VII & VIII
Contrabass I & II

MINIMUM SUGGESTED BALANCED FORCES:
8 (+ 4) vins / 8 vlas / 8 vc / 2 cb

by

JONATHAN LITTLE

[ca. 21 mins]
© 2010

Finalised and published full orchestral score

PUBLISHED IN AUSTRALIA

MAJOR SPONSORSHIP FROM U.K.

RECORDED (IN EUROPE) FOR A RECORD LABEL BASED IN U.S.
Released Feb. 2012 -- and continues its journey gathering critiques, and finding its “meaning”, to the end of 2012 and beyond . . .