

M U L T  
I V O  
C A L



## F O R E W O R D

Professor Duncan Maskell  
Vice Chancellor

Music has always been important in the life of universities, from enjoyment of music by members of our communities through to scholarly work and outstanding performances by students and staff alike.

Colleagues and students at The University of Melbourne create a flourishing musical culture that embraces multiple styles of performance and composition in a broad range of musical genres.

The teaching of music, musical scholarship and research, and the self-expression of musicians and students, are strong threads running through the history of our university.

All of this takes place in the context of music having been performed for tens of thousands of years on this land, as an important and enduring aspect of the lives of Indigenous people in Victoria.

All of these elements of musical tradition are celebrated in *Multivocal*, which is presented within the ceremonial heart of the University, the Old Quad.

Drawing on the richness of the University's Cultural Collections, and on exciting new work by several contributors, *Multivocal* brings alive our distinctive musical landscape in a way that celebrates the diversity—the 'multivocality'—of a great university.

I enthusiastically commend *Multivocal* to you.

Bryan Dowling conducting MUCS  
(Melbourne University Choral  
Society) at Tallebudgera campsite,  
Gold Coast 1961  
Courtesy Australian Intersivity  
Choral Societies Association,  
Melbourne



## INTRODUCTION

### Soundspaces and Soundlines

Professor Richard Kurth  
Director  
Melbourne Conservatorium of Music

Beginning in 1895 with just a handful of students, the Melbourne Conservatorium of Music now trains over 800 music students each year, in bachelors, masters and doctoral programs, plus thousands of University of Melbourne students in other faculties who enrol in its many breadth subjects. The Conservatorium's traditional curriculum in the repertoires of 'classical' performance, composition and musicology has grown to embrace the jazz and improvisation and interactive composition programs that first flourished at the Victorian College of the Arts and to include music traditions from China, Indonesia and Africa. It also now features world-leading programs in music therapy, music psychology and performance science. With each step in its trajectory, the Conservatorium has been an ever-growing space in which more voices, musical traditions and perspectives can resonate and be amplified.

As the Conservatorium celebrates both its 125th anniversary and its spectacular new home in the Ian Potter Southbank Centre, it is a fitting moment to contemplate the enormous polyphony of the voices and sounds of its past. How marvellous it would be to hear once again the passionate (and often controversial) rhetoric of George W.L. Marshall-Hall (1862–1915), the University's first Ormond Professor of Music and founder of the Conservatorium, and the persuasive eloquence of the subsequent Ormond Professors, Deans and other University leaders who successfully shaped its long history through their words and vision and made enormous contributions to Melbourne's musical life. How marvellous it would be to hear again the voice of Dame Nellie Melba (1861–1931), the Melbourne-born soprano who conquered the operatic stages of London, Paris and New York and supported the construction of the 1909 Conservatorium Building and Melba Hall, named in her honour. How marvellous it would be to hear benefactor Louise Hanson-Dyer (1884–1962) describe the musical passions that motivated her unique work as a publisher of contemporary Australian and French music and of impeccable editions of early music, including the complete works of Couperin. Imagine the creative zeal with which Percy Grainger (1882–1961) would describe the unique museum he designed to house his uniquely inventive musical work. Dream back across the past 125 years and imagine the sights and sounds of the bustling parade of Conservatorium staff, students, visiting artists and audience members, who since February 1895 have advanced musical performance and scholarship through their devotion to the muse. Imagine the echoing voices and instruments, the hours of practice, the thrill of performance and the racket of applause. Imagine too the sounds and noises of Melbourne's changing urban soundscapes since the 1890s. And imagine, long before that, the millennia of song and dance of the Kulin peoples, on whose lands the Conservatorium is located, the music of their languages and the infinitely varied sounds of their natural environment and their ways of life. We pay our respects by listening carefully for the wisdom and the creative vitality of the entire past – given to us in sounds and silences to nourish our own understanding and appreciation.



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Il piano è uno strumento musicale a corde, a cui si attribuisce il ruolo di rector in un'orchestra. È uno strumento polivalente, capace di riprodurre i suoni di tutti gli altri strumenti musicali, e di imitare la voce umana. È uno strumento che ha accompagnato la storia della musica occidentale, e che ha influenzato profondamente la cultura e la società. È uno strumento che ha permesso di esprimere emozioni e sentimenti, e di comunicare con gli altri. È uno strumento che ha permesso di creare opere d'arte, e di lasciare un'eredità che dura nel tempo. È uno strumento che ha permesso di vivere la musica, e di farla parte della propria vita.

## Berak's 'Corroboree Song'

Mandy Nicholson  
Wurundjeri, Dja Dja wurrung,  
Ngurai-illum wurrung

Working at the Victorian Aboriginal Corporation for Languages for six years enabled me to access a broad range of historical records. These included old songs, one being Berak's (William Barak's) 'Corroboree Song'. Berak was one of Wurundjeri's most well-known and respected *Ngurungaeta* (leaders). He was a talented artist, enabling Wurundjeri people to appreciate and honour ceremony and dance through the imagery of his paintings.

After discovering 'Corroboree Song' and using skills gained to search deeper into language, I found that the ancient narrative began to appear and that this related to the Wetland Songlines of Victoria.

*Ee nga wagelaiya bundea genunwil*

*Nga burdangala yelengea gonowara*

*Nga wagelaiya bundea genunwil*

*Nga burdangala yelengea gonowara ... nga ...*

Songlines tell the narrative of Country, the cultural essence of Country in terms of Creation Narratives and spiritual journeys of Creators. They also define our own spiritual identity. There are Songlines of Country (on, below and above the ground) and Songlines of wind, sky and stars. All are Spiritual Songlines or threads that entwine everything together so that all can survive. *Baanj* (water) is the most important Songline and layer of Country, as it forms part of all that's embedded in Songline cultural structures. Hence, the Wetland Songlines are an intrinsic part of culture and need to be heard, repeated and remembered by as many people as possible.

The chant is about the wetland birds *Wadjil* (pelican), *Genunwil* (duck) and *Gunuwarra* (black swan). These are all *Woiwurrung* names and are joined by a second name for the pelican, *Burdangala*, from the Western *Gulinj* (Kulin) language family. The importance of these birds is reflected by their role in Creation Narratives that once stretched the length of Victoria. For example, *Booran* the pelican is known as one of the Creators for the *Gunnai* people of eastern Victoria. This Wetland Songline most likely stretches across the continent now known as Australia, its chant sung in many different dialects and languages.

Just like water, these Spirit birds are the threads that hold our culture together. They are gender specific: *Wadjil* and *Burdangala* are male and *Genunwil* and *Gunuwarra* are female. *Wadjil* and *Burdangala* are long-distance travellers, spreading and keeping their Songline alive. *Genunwil* the duck is significant as she is the mother of *Dulaiwurrung* (platypus), with the father being *Baanj Dayang* (water rat), sharing between them the particular traits that the *Dulaiwurrung* possesses. *Gunuwarra* is probably the most revered of the Spirit birds as she is the wife of the Creator *Bunjil*. *Bunjil* has two *Gunuwarra* as wives, who sit beside him (as the star Altair) in *Dharrangalk Biik* (*Dharrang/Darrang* = tree; *galk* = stick), the Forest Country above the clouds.

It is so important for Wurundjeri to take hold of this knowledge, as it is very rare to be able to embrace both the masculine and the feminine. This is because Wurundjeri women's ceremony, gender-specific language and attire were often not recorded, whereas men's were more likely to be documented.

Taking the lead in re-creating a dance when we had no idea what it had looked like was a very empowering journey. Thanks to Dr Lou Bennett, who brought it back to life in our ears, it was my cultural responsibility to bring it back to our eyes; this cultural exchange allowed it to once again be absorbed by our *murrup* (soul). We watched how the animals moved and interacted with their environment. My daughters and I created the feminine movements. Being the singer, I would have the visions of these moves, which my daughters would then refine into very hypnotic and graceful movements. The masculine movements were created and refined by my nephew Damien. This project provided a fantastic opportunity to keep our youth engaged with culture and to give them cultural confidence, as it can be quite confronting to be set with the task of teaching Elders.

The feminine moves of *Genunwil* (duck) mimic how she moves her body from side to side as she walks and to allow the water to flow off her back, while the feminine moves of *Gunuwarra* (black swan) mimic her dance on the water as she raises her wings above her head to lift her body from the water. The masculine moves of *Wadjil* (pelican) mimic many of these birds circling in numbers up in the thermals, as they rarely circle alone. The moves of *Wadjil* also mimic how he breaks from the group when diving down and gliding into the water.

What makes this work so significant is that it's the first ancient song to be revived so closely to the original. Being sung by many people gives it its true glory. It wakes up the *murrup-al biik-u* (spirit of the earth) and makes sure it will never sleep again!

Lou Bennett  
*Corroboree Song Cycle: Pelican,  
Black Swan and Duck* 2020  
3 channel audio installation  
commissioned for *Multivocal* 2020



Rupert Bunny  
*Music* (n.d.)  
ink and watercolour on paper  
image 3.7 x 14.3 cm;  
sheet (irreg.) 9.6 x 14.6 cm  
The University of Melbourne  
Art Collection.  
Gift of the Bunny Estate 1948.  
1948.0278



Music

## The sounds of unity and diversity on campus

Peter Tregear

Principal Fellow, Melbourne Conservatorium of Music

1/ Daniel Barenboim and Edward Said, *Parallels and Paradoxes: Explorations in Music and Society* (London: Bloomsbury, 2003), p. 13.



Tom Roberts  
*Portrait of Professor George W.L. Marshall Hall* 1900.  
Grainger Museum Collection,  
University of Melbourne

Campus life is not, and never has been, a monolithic subculture; from the very beginnings of the University of Melbourne we can find evidence of sub-communities of women and men, young and old, resident and non-resident, who might also further identify as, say, insiders or outsiders, conformists or rebels. In such an environment, extracurricular activities like sport and music become more than just diverting pastimes; they also act as means of forging and framing such sub-communities. Just as often, they create spaces where those of very different backgrounds and academic interests can meet and learn from each other. Thus, it is on the sports field or in the rehearsal room as much as in the lecture theatre that campus values of inclusivity and diversity find their means of expression.

In such a context, music is an especially powerful phenomenon because it offers students both a commonly understood repertoire of soundtracks that they can choose to accompany their individual and collective identities and a chance to explore the culture of peoples otherwise separated from themselves by either time or space or, more commonly, both. As the pianist and conductor Daniel Barenboim put it, through music we can learn how 'each of us has the capacity to be many things'.<sup>1</sup>

The Melbourne University Choral Society (MUCS), which was founded in 1939 out of the merger of already-existing male and female glee clubs, for instance, has not only provided opportunities for all students to experience first-hand great works of choral music from across the centuries and across the globe, it has also (quite literally) given a voice to those students identifying as LGBTQIA+ and a space where they can feel safe and accepted and where their political and social activism can flourish (symbolised in the rainbow hat on display, knitted by MUCS male choristers).

Although it was part of the founding statutes of the University, music only became a formally taught subject on campus in 1892, a development that was encouraged in part by a growing belief that music teachers, who were often women, should be able to access the same kinds of professional status that degree qualifications afforded other disciplines such as law, medicine and engineering. The consequential rise of formal teaching positions in music on campus also provided a pathway for women to have a salaried career in the arts. But such inclusivity was not always met with enthusiasm from some sections of society both on and off campus; the fall from grace, and eventual removal, of the University's first professor of music, **George W.L. Marshall-Hall** (1862–1915), was in no small part due to the perceived threat of his particular views on the role of music and musicians to the 'respectability' of the young women who had enrolled to study with him. Above all, Marshall-Hall believed that music students, of whatever gender, should be more than mere social ornaments; they could, and should, play an active part in shaping wider society.



Georgette Peterson 1908  
Grainger Museum Collection,  
University of Melbourne



Music students at the State College  
with Ki Poedijono 1980  
Courtesy Melbourne Community Gamelan

One of these students was Mona McBurney (1862–1932), the fourth graduate in music from Marshall-Hall's Conservatorium and the first female graduate in music in Australia. Following graduation, McBurney had a very prominent career in Melbourne as a pianist, composer and conductor, and also as a teacher of French and Italian for the Conservatorium. **Georgette Peterson** (1863–1947), who came to Australia with her husband, Franklin Sievright Peterson (1861–1914), as Marshall-Hall's replacement in 1902, also quickly developed a profile and career as a pianist and composer, as well as as a portrait painter. In 1907 she rehearsed and conducted a choir of around 1300 women for the Australian Exhibition of Women's Work at the Exhibition Buildings, part of a major celebration of the early achievements of the Australian feminist movement.

By the latter half of the 20th century, both the University's student population and the humanities curriculum were becoming open to people and perspectives from outside white Australia, including Australians from non-European backgrounds and Australia's Indigenous communities. At the same time, 'world music' had emerged as a new musical genre, and by the 1970s students from across campus were able to experience and perform on instruments such as the **Balinese gamelan**, learn African drumming, or hear live music by Indigenous musicians as part of the regular lunchtime performances organised by the Student Union outside the Union Building. The University also became one of the founding supporters of the Indigenous Music and Dance symposia, held annually since 2002.

One person who would have looked upon such developments with some pleasure is Percy Grainger (1882–1961), whose capacious musical curiosity led him to engage with musical cultures across the globe and become a pioneer of ethnomusicology. Much of the music and cultural artefacts he collected over the years can now be found in his museum, located adjacent to Melba Hall. One of the more poignant and personal is a **hand-painted score of musical cues and mnemonics** Grainger created to aid his conducting as he aged and his eyesight began to fail him. Through its co-ownership of the Australian Music Examinations Board, the University would itself support the production of braille music scores by the Royal Victorian Institute for the Blind as part of a wider trend towards better addressing the needs of students with disabilities across campus.

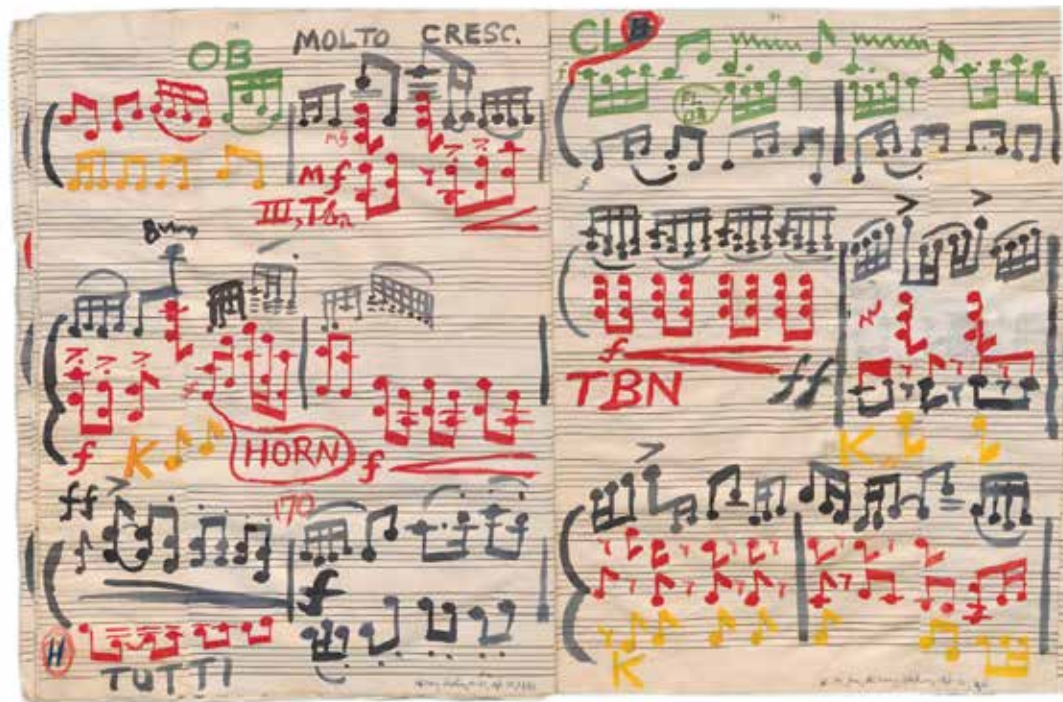
By the latter decades of the 20th century, music was also being formally recognised as an important tool in the promotion of both physical and mental well-being. The University's own music therapy course can trace its origins to the years after the Second World War when the use of art as a therapeutic aid for those traumatised by their wartime injuries or experiences grew. A formal degree course in music therapy arose in the late 1970s. The connection such a course of study explores between music-making, one's individual and collective identity, community service, and academic life ultimately unites all of the objects and artworks on display in *Multivocal*.





Meredith Maxwell Moon  
(instrument maker)  
*Spinet* 1970  
Grainger Museum Collection,  
University of Melbourne.  
Gift of the Faculty of Music, 2005

Percy Grainger (creator)  
Violet Archer (composer)  
*Britannia, A Joyful Overture*,  
*blind-eye score* 1946.  
Grainger Museum Collection,  
University of Melbourne



## Multivocal

Dr Heather Gaunt  
Curator, *Multivocal*

As I walk through the carpeted corridors of the Conservatorium at the University of Melbourne, powerful memories of studying here for a Bachelor of Music degree flood back. I hear brief snatches of musical activity: piano scales, a violin, a teacher's voice, a beating metronome. The building feels as if it is thrumming in sympathetic resonance to the sounds all around. These auditory memories provoke emotional resonances, the strongest of which are manifest in recollections of making music in collaboration with others and in the friendships that evolved. The highly personal, yet universal, experience of being present, attentive and enmeshed in a diverse world of sound motivated the curatorial exploration behind the *Multivocal* exhibition.

Music has been created, performed and experienced for thousands of generations in the various places where the University of Melbourne now operates, on the lands of the Kulin and Yorta Yorta Nations. Today, music at the University embraces a huge diversity of musical traditions and contemporary approaches to music, created and performed by the human voice and by acoustic and electronic instruments, in contexts ranging from formal learning to recreation. Focusing on the experiences of student learning and participation in music at the University, *Multivocal* leads visitors through key and interwoven areas of music activity, including vocal, orchestral and choral music; jazz, improvisation and electronic music; new and experimental music; music and its relationship to health; and music research.

The Cultural Collections of the University have provided the majority of the items on exhibition. These collections include the Grainger Museum, Rare Music, University of Melbourne Archives, University Library, Victorian College of the Arts Special Collections, Ian Potter Museum of Art, School of Physics Museum and Trinity College Collection. These collections are an invaluable shared asset; they reflect the collective creativity of the University community and allow us to step into individual stories of music making and appreciation. From the 'Truth' scrapbook of Conservatorium graduate Dorothy Mattingley, which lovingly documents more than four decades of music in Melbourne, to Percy Grainger's colourful 'Blind Eye' orchestral score reduction, used to assist with his deteriorating sight, our material cultural collections carry us into a diversity of experiences. The exhibition also draws on generous loans from private collections, many of which are owned by past students or current staff members.

**Top image:**  
Imogen (Regina Taylor) Cygler  
*Spaces Places* 2019  
Audio installation commissioned  
for *Multivocal* 2020

**Bottom image:**  
Alex Aoxan Wu  
*Frisson* 2020  
3-channel video installation  
commissioned for *Multivocal* 2020

Four newly commissioned creative and documentary works by recent graduates, staff and associates of the University remind us that music is a vital and emotionally powerful part of our University community today. Dr Lou Bennett's re-creation of William Barak's 'Corroboree Song' invites visitors to step into a space of deep and continuous listening through the ancient and present music and language of First Nations peoples. Imogen Cygler, graduate in Interactive Composition, has created an eight-channel soundscape that evokes the complex sonic environment of a busy contemporary music school. VCA film graduate Alex Wu presents *Frisson*, a multimedia study capturing the psychophysiological phenomenon of music chills. And a short documentary about the experience of a cohort of international students participating in the semester-long subject 'Chinese Music Ensemble' speaks to the power of music to create community and a sense of belonging in an increasingly complex and fragmented world.

The term 'multivocal', first used in the English language in the mid-19th century, refers to the quality of being open to many different meanings, interpretations, or applications. For this reason it forms the perfect conceptual framework for an exhibition about music at the University. Acknowledging the multiplicities and diversities of our experiences of music – the *meanings* that we make from our encounters with it – the word also evokes the idea of 'many voices' and a sense that through time the deeply human experience of vocalising, of *singing our humanity* through any instrument, links us to deep understandings of our place in the spiritual and physical world. My hope is that in experiencing *Multivocal*, all visitors will connect with a part of this ancient and present polyphonic landscape.



### *Multivocal*

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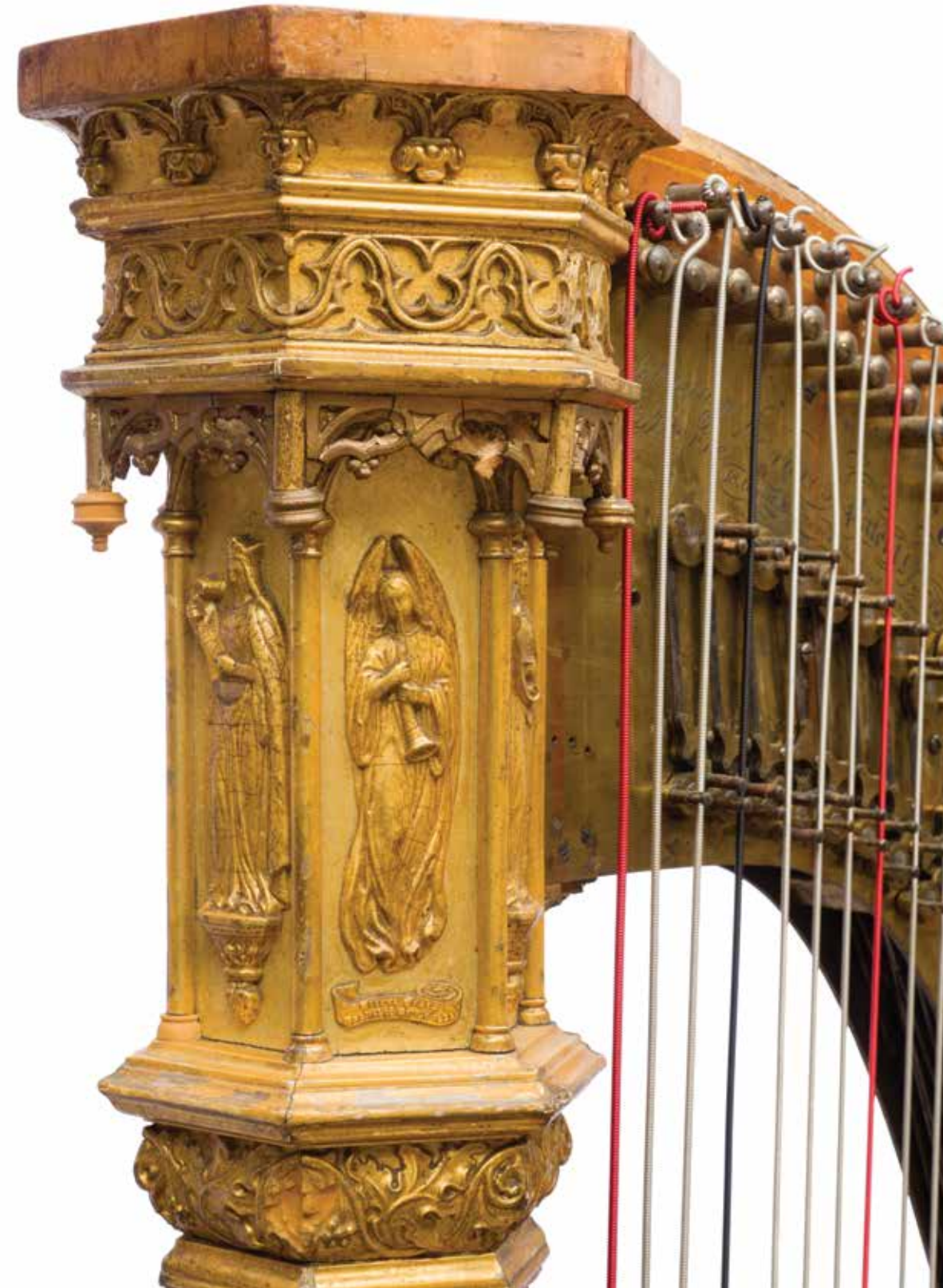
We acknowledge and pay respect to the  
Traditional Owners of the land upon which the  
Old Quad is situated, the Wurundjeri and Boon  
Wurrung peoples of the Kulin Nations. We also  
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Owners of the lands upon which all University  
of Melbourne campuses are located, the  
lands of the Kulin and Yorta Yorta Nations. We  
recognise the unique place held by Aboriginal  
and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the  
original custodians of the lands and waterways  
across the Australian continent with histories  
of continuous connection dating back more  
than 60,000 years. We also acknowledge and  
respect our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander  
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Performing Arts Collection, Trinity College  
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**Inside cover:**  
Wayne Stuart,  
Tasmania (maker)  
*Microtonal Piano* 1995-96  
Grainger Museum Collection,  
University of Melbourne  
Gift of Sir Jonathan Mills 2017.

**Inside back cover:**  
Sebastian Erard and Pierre Erard,  
London (makers)  
*Orchestral harp* 1835  
Grainger Museum Collection,  
University of Melbourne



OLD QUAD