



Correlations - One

The Reins of a Golden Chariot

Dedicated
with love, affection, and thanks,
to my friend, David Tolley

RRaPP
the ReUNION Retreat and Performance Project
a spiritual experience

Conceived, Convened, and Guided by David Tolley
Invited Guest of Honor - Phil Treloar

◆◆◆ Participating Improvising Composers ◆◆◆

Carolyn Connors, Dur-é Dara, Tony Hicks, Anita Hustas, Scott McConnachie,
Sam Pankhurst, Adrian Sherriff, Adam Simmons, David Tolley, Phil Treloar,
Ted Vining, Ren Walters, Julien Wilson

Documentation & Pre-Production

Audio/Visual Documentation - Brendan Tolley
Visual Documentation - Elizabeth Bell
Visual Documentation - Sian Kelly
Audio Documentation - David Tolley
Planning Assistance - Elizabeth Bell
Additional Consultation - Dur-é Dara

Support

David Jones, Tom O'Kelly & *Just Percussion*,
KOROGI Instrument Makers, Gerry Koster,
The Nudel Shop, Peter Wockner (*Jazz & Beyond*)
Helen Punton (video equipment)

Technical Support

Sean Baxter & Stephen Richards (The Make It Up Club)
Annabel Warmington (La MAMMA)
The Sound Crew at NMIT

Venues

La MAMMA
the Make It Up Club, Bar Open, Fitzroy
North Melbourne Institute of Technology
The Tolley/Dara Residential Studio Space
(home base and sponsors to the RRaPP project)

Whatever it is that enables us humans to communicate with each other via ‘artistic’ expressive means – visual, aural, or otherwise – remains, to me at least, a mystery. When I first embarked on my musico-creative journey almost fifty years ago, simplistically perhaps, I thought music-making was something one *did* and that all one needed to do was acquire certain skills appropriate to a common linguistic mode and *voilà*, it would all be forthcoming. And forthcoming it was. But *what* it was very quickly became the source of increasing dissatisfaction. I soon discovered that the communication of feelings, thoughts, ideas and predilections, even when apposite, was anything but a simple matter. I quickly realized instrumental technique and the acquisition of linguistic skills to be but a small part of a much more complex story and that discovering a path to tread consistent with my character and honest in its representation would be a life-long commitment.

At first my commitment and aspirations gushed forth in a gung-ho, hell-bent mode that served to drive away attention as much, or more, than to attract it. Though my spiritual drive was apparent very early on, giving voice to it proved to be an exceedingly difficult and complex call. Many more times than once was I tempted to give it all away as a lost cause, telling myself that, in essence, I didn’t have what it takes. But even in the darkest times, *the call* kept calling. It seemed that, for the most part, I was chasing myself round in circles and that the merry-go-round was a vicious circle from which no escape was possible. And having been from birth, somewhat of an all-or-nothing-at-all sort of person, resignation was no option.

In those early days there were precious few with whom I was able to discuss the problems and confront the personal and creative on mutually beneficial ground. In this regard, Roger Frampton and I were to spend several years together though the exchanges between us were, in general, much more weighted towards the music as the way. I felt there was more to it than music per se, though precisely what that *more* might be seemed beyond reach. It was not until meeting up with David Tolley and Dur-é Dara circa 1975 that fertile ground serving as a support to both the personal and the creative became exposed. Their insights, generously given at that time regarding this meeting place and its positive, generative nature provided me with a key my journey was lacking. For a brief period I viewed them, and particularly David, in Guru-like terms. And the key? That to consider a division between what one did and who one was, was to consider a fiction. Residing in Sydney as I did at the time, regular trips to Melbourne ensued, musico-creative exchange between us flowered, and under David’s auspices, CONNECTIONS – Dur-é, Tolley, and myself – came into being. We gave public performances in both Sydney and Melbourne – The Basement, The NSW State Conservatorium of Music, The Melbourne Musician’s Club, and Philip Institute among these – and spent countless hours playing and problem-solving together in the various spaces David and Dur-é always maintained and devoted to these specific pursuits. From where I stand today I realize we were like-minded spirits who gravitated towards each other in what was, by and large, a rarefied (if not barren!) creative-music atmosphere, our extremely diverse backgrounds and experiences serving, if anything, to attract rather than repel. There was immense richness to fathom and fathom it we did. And the key I’ve carried from that time to the present continues, inexorably, its exponential trajectory.

When David, Dur-é, and I re-connected in September, 2010, it was immediately obvious to each of us that little had changed with regard the nodes between our respective bridges: harmonic purity had been maintained across a hiatus of twenty years. David sent me CD after CD of collaborations he presently &/or recently enjoyed and with each one, and each listening, in it, I seemed to hear a ‘natural’ place for myself. Idiosyncratic as most of this music is, I heard it as neither exclusive nor dependent. Rather, it seemed to me to function from a foundation akin to ‘interdependence’, a foundation I, too, had

been building on for many years albeit from a very different perspective; a field of confluence within a broader field of interdependence, finding its intersecting elements in 'improvisation' as a notion &/or an ideal whose potential for exploration does not depend on common linguistic formula – i.e., construals within the borders of a '*Sensus Communis*' – but rather it discovers communicable elements *en route* through open hearts and a preparedness to pool perspectives freed of the demand of definition; a constantly malleable state whose structures and forms are never reified.

There was neither struggle nor conflict of intention. RRaPP emerged through an initial stream of e-exchanges that not only sang the praise of the music already documented in David's massive library but also sang songs volubly; songs of potential. As RRaPP's organization developed under the astute eye and mind of Tols, as feedback from all who expressed unmitigated enthusiasm for the project mounted, it became increasingly clear to me that something of unprecedented magnitude and creative spiritual power was coming into being. The cast of RRaPP's creative potential appeared more as an unbounded vista. Tols had taken the reins of a golden chariot.

With assistance and enormous support from Elizabeth Bell and Dur-é, RRaPP took on the form of its initial intention, inimitably signified as ReUNION Retreat and Performance Project. In the event, it not only upheld the promise of its title but exceeded by a country mile whatever boundaries might have been implied by it.

When I arrived at Tullamarine on October 24, Tols and Dur-é were there to greet me. Irrepressible joy filled us to repletion. We went directly to the rehearsal space of percussionist, David Jones, who had generously contributed to the celebration of RRaPP with the offer of instruments to borrow for its duration. D.J.'s open-hearted kindness seemed to open up to me, sonic potential. On our arrival at No. 20 – RRaPP's home-ground – there were two large boxes containing the smaller of my two marimbas. This instrument had been shipped by KOROgi, the instrument maker here in Japan, as his contribution to the RRaPP project and my subsequent musical activities in Australia. This amazing generosity was made more palpable through the kind heart of Tom O'Kelly (*Just Percussion*) in Brisbane, who'd coordinated and contributed to the shipping process. Within the hour of my arrival at No. 20 the marimba was up and playing. RRaPP had begun in no uncertain terms. Where perhaps an extensive moment-to-moment, blow-by-blow description of RRaPP could fail to communicate its glory, an overview may better etch its might.

The incontrovertible creative bent intrinsic to David Tolley's character enabled a structural framework on which RRaPP's process of emergence unfolded. This unfolding was, in all respects, a shared endeavor with RRaPP's form emanating as the result of creative contributions made by every person who actively engaged. What is this form? How might it be seen to have manifested? Were these two questions to be put to each member of the RRaPP Pack one would most likely find a different answer. And in some cases the difference may even be vast. But this, in fact, provides a key to RRaPP's extraordinary formal shape – I'll coin the phrase, *correlated diversity*. And what might be the mutuality found in this co-relationship?

Mutuality is not necessarily a synonym for sameness. It might just as well infer something shared ... something like 'diversity', for example. If a noun was ever suitable to ride tandem with RRaPP, then 'diversity' is a great candidate. To my way of feeling and thinking the form RRaPP traced out was powered by this. But set as its keystone securing the entire edifice were the bonding elements of warm-hearted love and humility.

Far from the terrain of technical 'stuff-strutting' or 'in-crowd' secrets, RRaPP's form took shape on the ground of open-hearted acceptance and the pooling of creative resources and predilections. Ironically perhaps, each member of the RRaPP Pack is able to furnish astounding technical wherewithal. This, however, remained covert and only energized in the name of collective purpose.

Never for its own sake. The ‘stuff’ of humanity determined both sounds made and silences chosen. Thus, the voice of each protagonist became the voice of RRaPP itself. In fact, so consistent was this that if the notion of ‘normality’ applies at all, then it’s found in these terms. But normality, per se, was never an operative constituent. None of the people involved with RRaPP could be described as ‘normal’. They have all sought a path of their own, one that enables creative expression freed of stylistic dictates and servitude yet emblematic of what it is to engage with creativity in the moment; of honest self-expression; of recognition and acceptance; of intelligent, warm-hearted being and a generosity of spirit overwhelming in its magnitude.

Those who participated as audience members brought to bear a focus on the music that placed them inside the sound and thus, active in the process. Sharing in creative space with the RRaPP Pack was, and remains for me, an immeasurable honor. My deepest, heart-felt thanks to you all. And to Tols, Dur-é and Elizabeth, endless gratitude for opening the door to your heads, hearts, and hands.