

THE ARTHUR BOYD LECTURE 2012

Robyn Archer

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Arthur Boyd's biographer describes his first day in London. He was 39 years old. His family drove from St Pancras Station 'along the northern road out of the city, up to the green fields and village of Hampstead.'

It took *me* a while to get here for the first time too – I was 29 , and it was my first journey out of Australia. I arrived at Heathrow, was similarly met by the man who had encouraged me to come here, and *identically* brought to Hampstead as my first stop. It was the home of the late poet Adrian Mitchell and his family, down at the Vale of Health end of the Heath. I had met Adrian in my hometown at the Adelaide Writers' Week where I was invited to sing a couple of the songs from his show *Man Friday*. He particularly enjoyed my version of *Fuck off Friday* and we became collaborators: the intention was that I would do a few gigs with him whilst in London.

But it wasn't the real reason I had made the journey . I stayed with Adrian and his generous family for three months – longer than I should have –then moved higher up to Windmill Hill and Volta House, the place where John Willett had been born. John was still living there with his family at the time of his death in 2002, though he actually died in France, Le Thiel, in the house where the family had welcomed so many friends over so many years. Though John might turn in his grave each time I say it, if ever I had a mentor it was him. He could pull me up by my moral bootstraps in a way no other person ever dared: his birthday was six days after mine, he was also an only child, and I had never really absorbed that he was only 2 years younger than my father, because he was a friend, and age never came into it.

I met John in Adelaide, and I have to talk about him first tonight because he was the reason I came to London. He had been brought out by director Wal Cherry as dramaturg on a production of *The Threepenny Opera* in which I played the prostitute Jenny. I have played two Threepenny Operas – the second some twenty years later than the first, and bleak testimony to passing years, in the second production I played the old bag Mrs Peachum.

I had made the transition from entertainment to art in Wal's production of *The Seven Deadly Sins* which opened the black box space at the new Adelaide Festival Centre. Wal invited John out for *The Threepenny Opera* about a year later: he liked the way I sang Brecht, with a distinctly non-operatic approach, and while still in Adelaide he started to feed me more of the repertoire of Brecht/Weill/Eisler and Dessau. Before he returned home he suggested that I might like to come to London for a show he was preparing for the National Theatre – a compilation of poems by Brecht including those which had been set to music, to celebrate the publication by Eyre Methuen of Brecht's *Collected Poems* which John and Ralph Mannheim had edited. He would speak to the National. The word eventually came back 'if Miss Archer happened to be in London then they would be happy to audition me'.

Happened to be in London! I had never travelled outside Australia – had only lived outside Adelaide for one year – in Sydney. It was one of those defining moments. I had had a bad motorbike accident some years earlier in Sydney and the cheque had only recently come through - \$17,000 – largest cheque anyone in our family had ever seen. I set aside enough for a future deposit on a house in Sydney, and there was enough to get me to London.

The production kept being postponed, hence the long stay with the Mitchells, and then with John's family . I lived in the attic at Volta House as so many had done before, under the wings of the Willetts.

But at last the auditions eventuated. I was in. Directed by Michael Kustow, I was in the room with Glyn Grain, Gawn Grainger, Peter Land, Jane Asher (what ? My first show outside Australia and I'm on stage with Paul McCartney's ex ?) and Tom Wilkinson. Tom was fresh back from Poland and full of fight. He didn't last long in our troupe , alas (aesthetic differences with the director) but I fondly remember sitting with him in the back stalls of the Olivier, as did *everyone* at the National- actors, cleaners, designers, costume etc - listening to Sir Peter Hall's impassioned plea for everyone to walk out with him if it came to the crunch. I forget what the actual issue was, but I know it felt as if Sir Peter might well *have* the resources to be able to walk, but the cleaners looked like they didn't. In any case they applauded his impassioned rhetoric.

In fact Sir Peter was the source of my funniest gig ever in London – he was preparing the Ring cycle with Sir Georg Solti and they wanted to test how a voice fared if its owner was actually in the water. The call went out for a guinea pig and as I was a singer, and Australian, it was assumed I could swim – correct assumption. Off I went one grey morning, to the West End set of *Steaming* – you know the dames in the steam bath. In I hopped – sing something said Sir Georg from the stalls as Sir Peter watched on:

“You saw sagacious Solomon”

“Can you hear me my dear ?”

“Yes ... you know what came of him”

“ Can you see me my dear ?”

“yes... How fortunate, the man with none”

They never did put the singing Rhinemaidens in the water – they used stunt doubles . I felt immortalised when the book of that Ring was published – there I am- the one and only published pic of me in bathers , and it’s in Sir Peter’s account of the making of that cycle.

Meanwhile life at Volta House was marvellous, and has remained memorable. Apart from the daily riot of the kids Tom and Essie ,and Anne’s mother Antoinette, with all of whom I was invited to share Anne’s wondrous French cooking, John and Anne would frequently hold parties to ensure I was introduced to interesting people: Michael Billington, Nicholas Horsfield, Sarah Kestelman, Ed Beckett, Eric Hobsbawm , Ruth and John Klauber , BBC journalist Ned Chailot, poets Adrian Henri and Carol Ann Duffy were all Volta guests.

Once rehearsals began, my routine consisted of taking the northern line only as far as Leicester Square , and then walking the rest of the way to the National. Crossing Waterloo Bridge became definitive: ever after, in returning to London, it was on Waterloo Bridge that I knew where I was. From various points of my walk across in the morning and back in the evening , I could ‘touch’ London – The National, Southbank, Westminster, St Paul’s, dredges and barges, and the river itself and its surprising tides.

On Waterloo Bridge the distance between London and Australia shortened a little as I realised that this was the real-life setting for my mother's most-loved film starring Robert Taylor and Vivien Leigh. I'd often reflected on why Mary was so in love with the film *Waterloo Bridge* - perhaps some echo in the heart of her WW2 Airforce days in Adelaide, of which she often remarked that she should have "won her medals for fighting off the yanks on the banks of the Torrens", that mighty creek that runs through my hometown. This week I will venture across the bridge again, to feel where I am; not only recalling the thrill of being in London, but also to know in *my* bones that my great-grandmother, *and* my father's mother, knew the Thames and the East End in theirs. Long before the London Eye marked this spot, *my* eye understood its iconography.

Daily I took that walk to dive into everything that the National offered - working the songs with Dominic Muldowney, who became a long term collaborator, learning from those experienced actors, seeing other plays there, reading, thinking, consuming cheap meals in the canteen. Life was sweet. The show worked well, I was well reviewed and a door had opened.

When the time came to return to Australia I wrote a card for John and Anne - it paraphrased lines from Brecht's poem *Changing the Wheel*.

His poem is:

I sit by the roadside
 The driver changes the wheel.
 I do not like the place I have come from.
 I do not like the place I am going to.
 Why with impatience do I
 Watch him changing the wheel ?

I wrote:

I love the place I am coming from
I love the place I am going to
Why with impatience do I
Watch them re-fuelling the plane ?

I see John now giving me his lopsided critical grin.

Clearly, I would never attempt to align the quality of my innate talents to those of Boyd, whom so many rightly rated as a genius. But there is certainly one parallel. Like Arthur Boyd, I had no formal training. My first love *was* painting, I won many a prize, and by 12 I was making miniature copies of the cubists. Alas, the education system in Australia's 60s forced me into the top science stream and I wasn't allowed to do 'art'. I matriculated with double maths, physics, chemistry, latin and English, but gradually my painting dropped away, and in lieu I continued unconsciously to apprentice myself to my father – exactly as Arthur Boyd had done.

My dad was an untrained, but very good, singer , stand-up comedian and compere. My first gigs were in his shows, and what he gave me, whatever else I learned on the job in subsequent years, was the ability to work a crowd. That's proved useful to this day.

When I returned to London it was to be for ten years ,and many projects, and happily, many great times with John and his family. Despite the years and the closeness, I only scraped the surface of this man – a man who held back tears during a lecture he gave in Sydney as he expressed his sadness that Brecht and Auden hadn't gotten on better.

The Boyd biography describes a detour on that first day in London – before he even gets to his accommodation – ‘around a circular drive, into a high white mansion, across a wide eighteenth century hallway and took a left down a corridor to a room where Rembrandt waited. Kenwood House would become Arthur’s second home.’ It was also where John Willett’s memorial was held and where I heard many more remarkable stories about John– that he had been the youngest Colonel in the British Army, and that it was largely his intelligence that saved the Ravenna Mosaics. As I said, John died in France. I was in Zurich, giving concerts, on the day my accompanist, Michael Morley, a New Zealander who had studied at Oxford and also had the benefit of John’s generosity as a friend and a Brecht scholar, rang to say that John had died.

I was able to make some quick arrangements in Zurich and the next morning I left my small hotel at 5am to grab the only seat left, a business class seat, to Charles de Gaulle. A driver was waiting for me in Paris and we drove some 150 kilometres to Le Thiel.

Given that I was more often in Australia than Europe at this time, the family cheered my arrival. Anne greeted me with sad eyes. John was in fact still on the premises. France’s enlightened laws allowed the deceased to remain for four days on an ice cold metal bed, and thus there he was, in the room where they had slept together, Anne laughing that he had never looked so neat and combed in life, John being the only man she knew who wore a tie only to keep the breeze off his neck. It was comforting to spend a half hour with him there.

We then had lunch in the garden – and after lunch the undertakers came, and sealed the wooden box with wax and drove out the gates towards Rouen, with all of us standing there, waving farewell, just as Anne and John had done to us when we departed. Anne once said that when their guests had all left at the end of summer, she and John would farewell them from Dieppe, and then dance together on the docks at twilight. It's an enduring image that stands strong in the record of so many years of friendship, endeavour, passion and adventure in the northern hemisphere, but especially here in London.

Returning a second time, we re-opened the Drill Hall in Chenies Street, with *The Pack of Women* which went back to Australia to a national tour, a book, an ABC TV show and an ARIA award for best soundtrack that year.

We opened *A Star is Torn*, a success all round Australia before at the Theatre Royal Stratford East and eventually found a home at Wyndham's in the West End for a year. The two theatres happen to have identical chandeliers as their centrepieces and are very similar to play. It was produced here by another Australian – Helen Montague, a superb individual, born Helen McKew in Sydney, but thinking 'Montague' a name more auspicious for a life on the stage. She was married to a man called Willett - who turned out to be a cousin of John Willett. Helen died at her dressing table, here in London, about to go out for a New Year's Eve party : at the funeral the mourners all joined in on a rousing chorus of *The Night They Invented Champagne*

I recorded the Brecht repertoire, did Cabaret for the BBC, wrote, formed a small ensemble that included bassoonist Lindsay Cooper- we gigged in Britain and Europe. And my abodes in London went from Hampstead to Hackney to Ladbroke Grove and a flat ,as it were, *bequeathed* to us by the writer Michele Roberts. I in turn bequeathed that flat to Australian friends who live there still.

So, London is very much part and parcel of my life and it was only when I opened *A Star is Torn* at the Theatre Royal Stratford East that I realised this fully. You see, in my undergraduate studies I had read English Language and Literature at the University of Adelaide, the Department of English then headed up by a pucker Englishman called Colmer, who had a passion for Forster – well , his writing at least. I read all of Shakespeare, Blake, Milton, Hardy – loved them all – and of course the Romantic poets. I wrote essays and exam papers on the Romantics – but until I came to Britain for the first time in 1977, until I travelled north to the Lakes District and experienced the seasons there, I had no genuine understanding of what those poets were writing about. It was the same with my forebears , I really had no clues: yet twice my career led me back to exactly the place of their origins.

It was only when I stepped onto the stage of the Theatre Royal Stratford East to sing a song made famous by Marie Lloyd

“ I’m a bit of ruin that Cromwell knocked about a bit – SING

It was only when I sang that song, in that place that I realised my paternal great grandmother very likely saw Marie Lloyd sing that very song in that very theatre where I was performing now.

Nana was born in Clapton and the word is that her family had a concession at the Bermondsey fish market –from time to time they travelled to various markets to sell their wares and it is said that to earn an extra penny, nana ,as a child, would spruik the toilets thus – “piddle and poop a penny ! ” It was this woman, Ellen Elita Hoad, nee Charlton who would elope with an actor and conman called Charlie Burnette, who wore a cravat to cover the scars from street fights in the East End.

Nana equally attached by press studs, wrist length lace sleeves to her summer frocks – to hide the amateur tattoos on her arms. Charlie was the man whom I always thought was my great grandfather, but none of it – he was simply the man who stole the real Mr Hoad’s wife and name and landed in South Australia. It was he who eventually ended up with Chas Hoad’s British Hotel in Lower North Adelaide where my true great grandmother taught me my first songs to be performed at 4 years old on the tables of the ladies lounge while she served drinks. I’m sure the song has political implications but my musicological skills are not sufficient to interpret fully

My Young man went to France [SING]

My show opening in the East End had brought me to the very stomping ground of my great-grandmother. I had genuinely not realised this until I stepped onto the stage.

I was similarly astonished to find the same thing happening with my mother's side of the family. Through that early apprenticeship with John and with Michael Morley I had been drip-fed the Weimar repertoire – especially Eisler. The recording of the Brecht repertoire in English translation with Dominic Muldowney and John Harle and the London Sinfonietta happened at Abbey Road. It was exciting for someone who had slept on the pavement in Adelaide to buy tickets for the Beatles, to be recording there – and the technology wasn't that much advanced- we recorded live to two inch video tape. The recording sealed my devotion, till this day and beyond, to that repertoire of Brecht and his collaborators.

I had visited and worked in Germany many times, including a stint where I was billeted in East Berlin to study at the Berliner Ensemble – watching Ekkehard Schall rehearsing, a master class with Gisela May and much more. But I had always been warned not to mention I had relations in East Germany. It was not until my second trip to Berlin after the wall had come down that I ventured out. I was taking part in the making of a film , *Solidarity Song*, about Hanns Eisler. I had to sing two songs shot in a dilapidated factory in former East Berlin.

On a day off I hired a neat BMW and drove down the autobahn to the sign pointed to Tucheim. I discovered a tiny farming village sporting a kind of coat of arms I recognised from a china plate sitting on top of my mother's kitchen cabinet in Adelaide: an old fashioned plough

with a yellow t-bar on a red background. I wandered the streets and asked someone 'Gibt es hier Wohlings' ya ya viele Wohlings. I connected with my east German family and realised that yet again my career and brought me back to almost the exact spot of my German ancestry

So it is for many Australians, all of whom, unless they are of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Island heritage, have their histories, 2nd 3rd 4th 5th or 6th generations back, from 'somewhere else'. From an Indigenous Australian perspective of tens of thousands of years, we are all recent immigrants to their land. And how many of us are attracted to Britain apparently because it's a good career move, but unconsciously because we are trying to reconnect with the culture of our forebears.

What was Arthur Boyd's reason? He said it was to get away from what he called 'shaping up' to the 'tyranny of the academic bully boys', but it was also to see the paintings that Europe held - the same kind of reason for which we all leave Australia in the first instance - to widen our horizons, as if Australia's horizons are not high and wide enough.

In twenty-first century speak it is also surely to 'broaden our markets', and certainly that was one of my reasons in the 1980s. I felt as if I might wear out my welcome if I kept touring each capital city and the regions at the pace I was. But what about Wendy Martin (at Southbank), Tim Walker (at the Royal Philharmonic), Craig Hassell, Jonathan Mills and of late Judith Isherwood, Chrissie Sharp and Michael Lynch, now in Hong Kong. In the arts, whether as artists, directors or more recently administrators, Australians have had

enormous success in Britain – and surely that sense of place has a lot to do with why we depart, and why we return.

Yet, even though Australians come and go, often in the past with a vacillating love/hate relationship with their homeland (that was never so in my case), I wonder how well Australians know their own vast land.

I was writing some of this in Darwin, and remembered my first of many visits to the Northern Territory, just a few months before Cyclone Tracy changed Darwin forever. I was on a tour with New Opera South Australia – with, of all things, that production of Brecht and Weills' *The Seven Deadly Sins*. It had been my first, late, entry into the world of the arts for that opening of the new space at the new Adelaide Festival Theatre (the Centre has its 40th anniversary next year). There are fond memories of the tour, not the least of which was my first collaboration with Lyndon Terraccini, who was in the family chorus in that production, and is now director of Opera Australia.

After that tour I always said and still maintain that an Australian has no idea of the country they claim as their own, the continent they live on, until they've been to the Top End. Darwin is half an hour's flight from Timor, our nearest neighbour. Next stop Indonesia is a country belonging to 93 million people who are mainly of the Muslim faith. And at our launch for the Centenary of Canberra a few weeks ago, a singer and dancer from Arnhem Land, Djukkapurra Munyarun, sang from within the deep knowledge of one of the oldest continuous song traditions in the world. Hearing those voices, seeing that land, changes your perspective on Australia forever.

Let the ever-intriguing Top End, then, be the link from my career past to the career present, and the challenge I have been so privileged to take up during the past three years; one which comes to fruition throughout 2013. Being the Creative Director of the Centenary of Canberra has been my main role over the last three years of a continuing mix of singing, writing, festival direction and advocating the role of the arts.

My intention was always to ensure that the celebrations be as much about the present and future of the capital, and its status and meaning in the minds of all Australians, as about its noble history.

I fashioned a competition called the CAPITheticAL – an international design competition for a hypothetical capital city for Australia in the 21st century. I wanted young designers and city planners, engineers and landscape gardeners to put themselves in the same place as potential competitors around the world found themselves 101 years ago, when the international competition for a new capital for the newly federated Commonwealth of Australia, was announced. What should a capital city be? What should it contain? What would it say about the progressive democracy it would serve and symbolise?

When addressing various groups of tertiary design students, I would make a couple of deliberate provocations to get them thinking. One of these was ‘If this is the Asian Century, would the capital of Australia not be more strategically placed closer to Asia – in Broome or Darwin? Both places already have powerful industrial connections to Asia, especially with regard to gas and the natural resources of northern Western Australia, Queensland and the Territory itself.

There's another potential advantage too. When surveying the land that would become the Australian Capital Territory, Charles Scrivener believed that the site would have plentiful water for 250,000 people. He was right, but now 360,000 people live in the Australian Capital Territory and sustainability is a key issue for the national capital's future. Serious investment in water storage for monsoonal rains in the north would mean that Darwin or Broome would never go dry.

The pioneering work of people like Scrivener, and the survey to establish borders for the new Australian Capital Territory, are all part of the splendid story of Canberra's beginnings. The history adviser to the Centenary team is here this evening – Dr David Headon – and I am indebted to his knowledge, generosity and writing (especially his book *The Symbolic Role of the National Capital*) for what I have learned over the past 3 years about Canberra – and how it was borne of Federation.

Notions about a capital for the newly federated Commonwealth of Australia were already in the wind when Federation occurred in 1901. One of the many mythologies (myth-busting being part of our mission in 2013) is that the new capital arose where it did because of a major stoush between Sydney and Melbourne. But this was never the case.

It was a profound and passionate public dialogue throughout the nation, and produced a decision that the new capital would be in NSW but at least 100 miles from Sydney. That notion still exists, for instance, with chef Janet Jeffs who runs Ginger Catering and the Kitchen Cabinet at Old Parliament House, which now houses *The*

Museum of Australian Democracy. Janet uses only food produced within 100 miles of Canberra: because the new capital was sited in a rich food-producing area, this gives her not only a wealth of fruits and vegetables (there's a woman growing truffles the size of bowling balls on her property right next to the very stylish new Canberra airport) , but also the capacity to breed Wessex Saddleback pigs (I understand they no longer exist here) which love the high country. One of the reasons the site was chosen was because the founding fathers believed that 'men thought better in cold climates'(I would hope that a post-colonial perspective would now *allow* Darwin or Broome) but the region also gives Janet all the bounty of pristine ocean waters (the coast is just 90 minutes away) and the cattle and sheep of even higher country (the snowfields are also a mere 90 minutes away in a right angle from the coast).

For the CAPITheticAL, we received 1300 expressions of interest and in the end 112 entries from 27 countries. The shortlist of 20 includes two from Warwickshire and one from Perthshire. There's one from New York as well and I'm sure the current US Ambassador, Jeffrey Bleich (who promoted the competition back into the United States) is hoping for a third success following the design of the capital won by Walter Burley Griffin of Chicago in 1912, and the design of new Parliament House (celebrating its 25th anniversary next year) won by Mitchell Giurgola and Thorpe, with lead architect Aldo Giurgola of New York and Philadelphia.

The finalists will be seen in an exhibition at the Gallery of Australian Design in March 2013 and the prizes to the value of \$100,000 will be awarded on the 14th.

The jury tells me that there are two things that stand out as the chief concerns in these hypotheticals . The first, which I thought would be the case, is sustainability .

The second most important consideration for entrants was the nature of our system of government, and its symbols – one of which, of course, in any country, is its the national capital. This is no doubt because of the provocations we offered them, but these are crucial considerations for Australia’s future ; not the *siting* of the capital – it is where it is and will not move, and that’s a good thing - but the flexible thinking , the striving for invention and the incubation of new and bold ideas ; things which have characterised Canberra from the start, and are crucial now.

We *need* powerful symbols of democracy. Recent polls indicate that a frighteningly large percentage of young Australians are indifferent to democracy – they think another system might work just as well.

This depends of course on which young Australians you speak to: many of those who emigrate ,and especially those who are seeking refuge and asylum, choose Australia precisely because of its effective participatory democracy. But for those who take it for granted, we need powerful symbols , and the Centenary of Canberra is very much about letting Australians know that Canberra is most worthy to play that symbolic role, exactly as it was conceived over one hundred years ago.

The Commonwealth of Australia was not yet 6 months old when, between May 6 and 17, the *Congress of Engineers, Architects, Surveyors and Others Interested in the Building of the Federal Capital in Australia 1901* was held in Melbourne. The Congress resolved that

‘ ... the Federal Capital should be laid out in the most perfect manner possible, and that, to avoid the mistakes made in many cities of spoiling the plan by utilising existing buildings, it is desirable that in any site obtained, all obstructions be removed that would in any way prevent the adoption of the most perfect design.’”

The search for a site, often referred to as *The Battle of the Sites* occupied the years from 1902 – 1908 and on October 8 1908 Yass-Canberra won the parliamentary ballot to determine the site of the new capital. Architect and town planner Sir John Sulman, who had emigrated to Australia in 1885, published a series of articles in the Daily Telegraph in 1907 and in 1909. Under the heading ‘Our opportunity’. He wrote:

“Such a chance as we now have of showing the world what we can do has rarely been vouchsafed to a young nation. My aim ... is primarily to direct public attention to our unequalled opportunity, and to arouse a patriotic interest in the future capital of our Commonwealth. Today it may be ‘in the bush’ but what we settle tomorrow and the day after will decide whether it is to be worthy of our branch of the great British race, which has made so big a mark in the history of the world...

No people can live without ideals, and these ideals to be effective must find expression in action. It is surely well

that we should enshrine all that we hold dear in the preservation of our liberties, and our rights, in a fitting setting.

We may find fault with our representatives as individuals, and become irate at the inefficiencies of departments, but, after all is said and done, they represent to us as free a system of government as the world has ever seen. Let us by all means try and make it better, and the way to do so in connection with the Federal City is to treat it as a matter of grave national concern. If we show that we regard our system of government as worthy of admiration and respect, its members will, at any rate, try and live up to the reputation...

It is this lofty ambition that I seek to re-invoke through the Centenary of Canberra. Currently there are numbers of Australians, often those who have never visited the capital, who equate the city only with federal government.

This is reinforced by Australian media, including the national broadcaster, which often substitute 'Canberra' for "Federal Government' – resulting in confusing headlines such as

Canberra 'issued backpacker's death warrant' (*News.Com November 7, 2011*)

“Canberra's mixed messages push people towards the boats”

“Canberra now a major irritant”

and more recently

“Assange blames Canberra for his predicament”

It's no wonder that some Australians judge the city according to their temporary disaffection with particular parties, policies or politicians.

I believe this needs to be turned 180' around, so that parties, politicians and policies be judged according to how well or how ill they uphold the national aspirations and ideals which the capital symbolises.

You see I am not in any way ambitious – I just want to change the outlook of hundreds of thousands of Australians.

Dave Headon writes that Sulman had an opportunity to express these noble ideals about a new capital for Australia:

“on a bigger stage , when he participated in the Town Planning Conference of the Royal Institute of British Architects [in London] in 1910. A gathering of the best town planners in the world at the time, including Ebenezer Howard and Daniel

Burnham, the conference sought to publicise major global developments in town planning. As it turned out Sulman did not get to read his paper because it was included in a Canberra/Khartoum session, and the chair, Lord Kitchener, exerted his authority and concentrated exclusively on Khartoum.”

Nevertheless Sulman’s leadership prevailed and in the second session of the fourth parliament one hears Labor Senator Arthur Rae echo the desire for a capital of quality:

“ ...I contend that we should make a magnificent offer so as to attract the best talent, because no country in the world can be always planning a new Capital. Such an opportunity will probably never arise again, and we should endeavour to obtain the most up-to-date plan for a Capital which the mind of man is capable of evolving... It should be a city which will be an object of pride, and I might almost say of veneration to future generations of Australians”

The competition was announced on April 30th 1911. Competitors were sent a competition box which included details of the geography of the region and were asked essentially to place the city in a landscape ,rendered large-scale in print for their reference.

With as many as 200 entries , perhaps even 400, from around the world, the winner was announced in May 1912 as Walter Burley Griffin of Chicago with the Finish Saarinen in second place, and Agache from France as third. Less than a year later , on March 12 1913, Lady Denman, wife of the Governor General of the time, stood upon the Foundations Stones and announced that the name of the new capital would be 'Canberra' . Dave Headon is meeting the current Lord Denman tomorrow and we understand that he has the very uniform and golden trowel his forebear used in that ceremony.

This is the day , March 12, celebrated as Canberra Day. We are lucky that Australia's most famous early film-maker, Raymond Longford, was between films at the time and trundled his camera to the dusty paddock to film the ceremonies, which included pomp, bands and a few dogs. The National Film and Sound Archive In Canberra has recently restored this footage and its first screening will be held at the beautiful Senate Rose Gardens of Old Parliament House on March 10 as part of the big birthday long weekend March 8 to 12.

It's worth mentioning that also sitting in the Rose gardens at that time will be the Famous Spiegeltent which has so often graced the

Edinburgh Fringe in years past. It will make its one and only visit to Canberra next year, not just because of its innate value as a festival venue, but in this instance because the owner David Bates and his wife were both educated at Canberra High School and met each other as students at the Australian National University's School of Art in Canberra. They run the tent as a family business and expressed the desire to bring it to the capital in 2013.

They are two of many Canberrans returning to the city in 2013 – artists, Nobel Laureates in science, and so many more who are part of the Canberra diaspora. It has ever been a transitory town from the first pioneering builders, defence personnel, politicians, diplomats, educators, scientists, and public servants: and we have captured some of this essence in a website called the Canberra Diaspora now hosting some very entertaining stories of life in Canberra.

I encourage any of you with a Canberra connection to upload your story and join this salute to the notion that the idea of Canberra is much wider and more influential than just the 360,000 who live there, love them though we do.

In an exhibition at the National Archives of Australia from March till September next year, the winning entry, including the exquisite renderings by Walter's wife and partner Marion Mahony Griffin, will be on show in an exhibition called *Design 29: creating a capital* .

[These renderings are fragile and are displayed infrequently – the last time was 10 years ago. Highlighted with gold and bronze leaf, the 16 drawings were done in around 6 weeks and no doubt influenced the jury's final decision. This exhibition will also display material related to other entries including those of Agache and Saarinen. And the CAPITheticAL website directs you to idealcity.org.au which has details of many more of the entries.]

At the National Library there will be an exhibition called *Dream of a Century: The Griffins in Australia's Capital*. The American couple Walter and Marion , were deeply spiritual and influenced by the thinking of fellow Americans such as Emerson , Whitman and Thoreau . [Alisdair Swayne, author of *Grand Obsessions: the life and work of Walter Burley and Marion Mahony Griffin* which won the Prize for Australian Biography , quotes Emerson:

If a man can build a plain cottage with such symmetry
as to make all the fine places look cheap and vulgar;
can take such advantage of nature that all her powers

serve him; making use of geometry instead of expense;
 tapping a mountain for a water-jet
 causing the sun and moon to seem
 only the decorations of his estate;
 this is still the legitimate dominion of beauty]

It was an honour for Dave and I just a few days ago to acknowledge this depth of spirit : we have come to London via India where we performed a simple ceremony at the gravesite of Walter Burley Griffin in Lucknow; he was designing there when he got peritonitis, died and was buried there. An Aboriginal artist, Jennifer Kemarre Martinello, who lives in Canberra, made a beautiful glass vessel at the Canberra Glassworks and at the ceremony we sprinkled from that vessel onto Walter's grave, water brought from Lake Burley Griffin.

I was prevailed upon to sing a hymn – I chose one of my favourites, *Abide With Me*, but feared that the non-believer might be struck-down mid-song and very close to mosquito and cobra-filled high grass. Not at all – in fact as the final benediction was being intoned, and fading light the colour of salmon, revealed an almost full moon rise, the call to prayer rang out from nearby mosques. Hindu, Christian, Muslim -this is Lucknow.

It was a genuinely moving occasion, and I only wish I could have paid during the same trip , an equal homage to one of my teenage idols whom I discovered only recently was born there – none other than that fan of tennis in Australia, Sir Cliff Richard. Now I know the source of those smouldering good looks - they were never actually British, but rather Anglo-Indian.

As architects Walter and Marion were products of the Chicago School and influenced by leading lights such as Louis Sullivan and David Burnham, both whom are buried, along with Marion, in what Swayne describes as the high Victorian pastoral landscape of Graceland Cemetery in Chicago's north. So influenced, no wonder that Walter's initial letters to Minister for Home Affairs King O'Malley were so impassioned. He wrote:

“I...entered this Australian event to be my first and last competition, solely because I have for many years greatly admired the bold radical steps in politics and economics which your country has dared to take, and which for a long time set ideals for Europe and America ahead of their possibility of achievement”

In late 1913 Griffin published the following in the magazine *Building*:

Australia, of most democratic tendencies and bold radical government, may well be expected to look upon her great future, and with it her Federal capital, with characteristic big vision... ..we may be justified in believing that she will fully express the possibilities for individual freedom, comfort and convenience for public spirit, wealth and splendour of the great democratic city ideal for which her capital offers the best opportunity so far”

It's worth pointing out that these spirited champions of democracy ignored the plight of disenfranchised Indigenous Australians who were at this time a sub-class at best. It's their absence from this process , and the very much still-alive consequences of Britain having declared the land they had occupied for tens of thousands of years 'terra nullius', which demands the rich spread of Indigenous cultural content as part of our program next year.

This includes contributions from local First Peoples such as the Ngunnawall, Ngambri and Wuradjeri , but also premieres of new theatre Yijala Yala from Roeburne in the WA's northwest Pilbara region; and from Central Australia, Kungarungalpa with authentic inma (ceremony) about the Seven Sisters Songlines - Pleiades as we call them.

This is the first step in a project which will come to fruition in 2015, when the grand Seven Sisters Songlines link across communities from the west coast to the east, manifest in painting, film, dance, song and contemporary interpretations. The National Museum of Australia in Canberra has a structural feature which points precisely to that part of Central Australia whence our project originates

The Indigenous program also includes contemporary works directly related to Canberra – *Jack Charles V the Crown* in which Jack performs the story of a case he brought all the way to the High Court in Canberra (where Terra Nullius was eventually quashed in the case brought by Eddie Quoiki Mabo from the Torres Strait Islands) – and Gary Foley's one man show in which he talks about his activist days at the Tent Embassy which this year celebrated 40 years in front of Old Parliament House in Canberra.

On March 11, the eve of the birthday, when we take time out to party around Lake Walter Burley Griffin, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander performance will be present alongside a new symphony; as will music from five music stages and all manner of interactive shenanigans. And on the birthday itself, March 12, 2013 a working day in the capital, we will recall the idealism expressed by Prime Minister Andrew Fisher's speech on the day:

Here, on this spot, in the near future, and I hope, The distant future too, the best thoughts of Australia will be given expression to, both in Legislative and administrative acts. I hope this City will be the seat of learning as well as of Politics, and it will also be the home of art.

Along with the hopes of the Minister for Home Affairs, King O'Malley, for Canberra to be a hub of technology, and the pre-eminent site of scientific achievement; much of this has come to pass. Eleven national cultural institutions sit in Canberra – the National Gallery of Australia has the largest collection of indigenous visual art in the world and two years ago broke every attendance record in the country with its *Masterpieces from Paris* blockbuster.

The Australian War Memorial never fails to move the hundreds of thousands who visit every year, and the National Library of Australia has every book ever published in our country as well as other remarkable collections, including archives that even deign to hold the papers of ratbags like me. The treasures which belong to the people of Australia are held , and well cared for, in Canberra.

At the same time, scientific organisations such as the CSIRO (Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research organisation) have been at the forefront of innovation for decades. They trace innovation from the time when Sir William Farrer was developing resilient wheat species on the land where Canberra now stands and where genetic modification continues to be explored.

It was the CSIRO who invented wi-fi and in recent years has defended its patent internationally to return more than \$5 million dollars in royalties back to the Australian government: there'll be an exhibition about that in the High Court next year.

The National Communications Technology Research Centre of Excellence in Canberra is playing a most significant role in the development of the Bionic Eye which will have its first implant by 2013. And in the recent Mars landing, NASA tweeted "Thanks to our friends in Canberra: we couldn't have done it without you". This is a reference to the deep space tracking station at Tidbinbilla, in the Australian Capital Territory: it celebrates its 40th anniversary next year. An exhibition at the National Museum of Australia celebrates the positive forward-looking spirit which abounded in Australia in *Glorious Days: 1913*. While many today mistakenly view 1913 as a mere precursor to war, the fact is that in Australia the young nation saw a future of progress and prosperity unfolding, and this exhibition will demonstrate that mood.

Of course, the advent of WW1 in 1914 had an impact on the building of Canberra, and we speculate what might have happened to both the capital and the country without the dramatic effects of war.

In a nice coincidence for us tonight, King George V laid the first foundation stone for this building, Australia House in 1913, so we share centenaries. I made this point in a recent speech and, as is so often in Canberra where no matter what topic you alight upon there is always a collection and a congregation of experts to correct you, someone pointed to what Alisdair McGregor had to say about that.

‘spending on the capital declined from more than 100,000 pounds in the fiscal year of 1916-17 to a paltry 8,744 pounds over the following three years. It is telling to compare this with the near one million pounds spent on the site acquisition and construction of Australian House in London from 1913 to its completion in 1918. Imperial ties overwhelmed national sentiment”

In 2013, however, there will be ample opportunity to rouse national sentiment and explore the noble and high-minded origins of Australia’s capital city: I hope that Australians will reflect on those early ambitions, and renew their respect for a very deserving capital. I trust that Australians can discover fresh perspectives of Walter Burley Griffin’s ambition :

“ I have planned a city not like any other city in the world. I have planned it in a way that I expected no government authorities in the world would accept. I have planned an ideal city – a city that meets my ideal of the city of the future.”

But it was always important to me that the celebrations next year not just be rooted in the past, but make manifest the city’s current energies, and also look to its future. It has been ,in the simplest terms, a twofold approach: firstly to invite a re-imagination of the national capital and its symbolic role in the context of a successful democracy in which all Australians are obliged to participate.

Secondly, because the capital has been increasingly identified only with Government and national institutions, it is important to profile this interesting 21st century city and debunk many of the myths that exist about it. Having lived in London for 10 years – and for scattered periods stayed and worked in Paris, New York, Tokyo, Berlin etc I must say that I have been passionate about Canberra since the first time I worked there. This was exactly twenty years ago next year, when I was given my first opportunity to be an artistic director. At that time, artistic direction was nowhere on my horizon – I was a performer and writer and director for the stage. Artistic Directors of Australian festivals were to my knowledge British, and had beards – and were men. I had grown up in Adelaide and seen the great things achieved by outstanding Brits like Anthony Steel and Lord Harwood in Adelaide and David Blenkinsop in Perth.

Given the opportunity to direct my first festival in Canberra, 20 years ago next year, I discovered a city with a fascinating underbelly. It's not a city that's in your face like London or New York or Tokyo: its best secrets are hidden and you have to dig to find them, but when you do you are amply rewarded.

I often wonder what might have happened had someone like Frank Gehry built new Parliament House, celebrating its 25th anniversary in 2013 : if we had a vast glimmering shimmering boastful beast atop Parliament Hill, would people view Canberra differently ? It was that other American, an Italian born classicist, Aldo Giurgola who led the team of Mitchell Giurgola and Thorpe to build the new Parliament which Her Majesty the Queen opened 25 years ago next year. Aldo obeyed the Griffin plan and he too set the new building within the

landscape. Adhering to the democratic principles so prized by the Griffins, he built Parliament House into the hill, with only the flagpole visible and a hill of green so Australia's citizens could walk over the top of those who represented them.

The almost one hundred embassies and high commissions in Canberra are at first sight, hidden – these entertaining national architectural models, on some of which great Australian architects worked – Phillip Cox and Robyn Boyd to name just two. Also on the hidden agenda, this is surely the only city on the world where you have to have blue signs that say SHOPS, because otherwise you wouldn't know they were there. We'll be celebrating that with Parties at the Shops next year. What powerfully remains of this 'bush capital' is what the World Heritage assessors love about Canberra – the best surviving example of the garden city or ideal city movement.

Its riches include not only the things which Betty Churcher has summarized in her new book *Treasures* – her pick of the best stuff in the cultural institutions – which of course include Boyds along with Nolans and Streetons, Whiteleys and Blue Poles, but also there's a tree planted by Eleanor Roosevelt, Jackie Chan's bedroom (his parents were servants at the American Ambassador's residence) , the basketball team , the Capitals, that Lauren Jackson plays for (she who carried the Australian flag at the London Olympics) and the home of Australia's hottest and highest paid actress Mia Wasikowska.

To the current rich (but again often hidden) cultural calendar Canberra already follows, for 2013 we have added some special treats wherewith locals and visitors alike can remix their national capital experience. There are some 20 commissions of new works. These include a massive hot air balloon by one of our most successful sculptors, Patricia Piccinnini – who incidentally will have an exhibition at the *Haunch of Venison* here in July, and will visit the Bristol company which is manufacturing the balloon . There's the new symphony and other new musical works . For the twenty-fifth anniversary of Parliament House we have commissioned the Australian Ballet to make a work about the building, and Aldo's democratic approach to it- *Monument* is choreographed by the artistic director of the Australian Dance Theatre, Garry Stewart and designed by British born longterm Australian resident Mary Moore .

It was my decision to make the Centenary celebrations primarily using Australian talents, and while there is international participation in the programs of many and varied companies and institutions, there is only one directly commissioned international artist – and that is London resident Jyll Bradley who is here tonight.

Jyll is part of the program because her work is unique – she always works within community and almost always with botanical or horticultural materials. I commissioned Jyll for the Liverpool European Capital of Culture and her project went on to win the Silver medal at Chelsea. Jyll has been to Canberra and her project is *City of Trees* which sees her collaborate with BBC radio producer Jonquil Panting – they go to Canberra very soon , and collaborate

with young local composer Michael Sollis and any number of tree-lovers in the ACT, including the Indigenous rangers at Tidbinbilla.

The result will be recordings of walks in wooded areas of Canberra – with people who know and love those trees and will be available from March. There will also be an exhibition of Jyll's big lightbox format photographs and the live activation of the recordings at a new exhibition space at the National Library of Australia.

But we also have in addition to the new Indigenous works for theatre, a play about the rise of the sex industry and the Australian Sex Party in Canberra, one about kids who slip through the cracks in social welfare (yes Canberra is like any other 21st century city in that respect, there is a measure of disadvantage there too) , an adaptation of Kate Grenville's *The Secret River* and the development of Frank Moorhouse's *Cold Light* for the stage (last in the Edith trilogy, a lot of which is set in Canberra), and a new play called *Thursday* – which is a collaboration between Adelaide theatre company Brink and the English Touring Company – inspired by Adelaide woman Jill Hicks who actually died several times in the London bombings – it's written by Bryony Lavery.

Next year , alongside Jyll's *City of Trees* , also sees the opening of the new *National Arboretum Canberra*. January next year marks ten years since devastating bushfires swept through land very close to the heart of Canberra: houses and lives were lost From the ashes of the burnt out slopes now arises the new National Arboretum – one hundred forests of one hundred trees (most of them endangered

species from around the world) plus gardens, an amphitheatre, playgrounds etc. It is a visionary project which will be at its best one hundred years from now – and its opening on February 1st 2013 really kicks off the Centenary celebrations.

We are also developing for two Canberra hospitals , in their mental health precincts, Scentenary gardens, planted with fragrant native plants, and created by a terrific young collective of young architects under the name of Canberra Lab as they mentor landscape design students from the University of Canberra. This collective also has a project called Dear Marion in which Walter returns to Canberra in the form of cartoon paste-ups in which he writes to Marion – we understand Walter will probably have his own Facebook page !

New projects in Canberra also include the completion of Australia's most environmentally friendly apartment building, Nishi ,in the ultra cool New Acton Precinct: the capital already has more green buildings per capita than any other city in Australia – and Canberrans are also the highest attendees of arts and cultural events, as well as the greatest number of sports participants per capita and the greatest number per capita who bicycle to work.

The celebrations run all year and cover everything that the city is – not just arts and environment but science, ideas, sheer fun, and of course sport . The sports program has many first – the first cricket international ever in the capital – a day/night Australia V West Indies, the Brumbies (rugby union) versus the British and Irish lions ,and the only scheduled rugby union test in Australia next year – between Australia and New Zealand.

There's also the Handa ISPS women's international golf open at Royal Canberra (right next to Government House where our most esteemed governor general Quentin resides and presides), along with a splendid list of national championships and as befits the city with the highest per capita rate of participatory sport , a huge number of local sporting fixtures. I might say , with reference of the Governor General, and just in case no-one here noticed, that when Her Majesty visited the capital last year we had a female monarch, a female Governor General, a female Prime Minister and a female Chief Minister of the Australian Capital territory. Barry – if only Dame Edna had been in the room at the time !

Tonight you take home a copy of VOL 1 of our program – it was too big for just one – VOL 2 will be published in March. The website www.canberra100.com.au has the whole program up to see – though we do keep adding detail daily. Via the experience of this Centenary program we hope that after 2013 no-one will ever look at Canberra in the same way again.

I should mention that during 2013 the Royal Academy here will host the first survey of Australian art in fifty years – a collaboration with several institutions including the National Gallery of Australia No doubt there will be Boyds, ...and incidentally, in 2013 it will be one hundred years since Merric Boyd named his new house Open Country – in Murrumbateman.

It's a huge year for the capital, and I'm privileged to have been granted the task to fashion these celebrations. My mantra for 3 years

has been seed now, blossom in 2013, flower for another hundred years. I hope that proves to be so: I am unapologetically proud of Canberra, and all it stands for: and hope that this program will inspire others to feel the same, to take ownership of , and pleasure in, their national capital

Should you be in Australia next year , any time will be a good time to visit Canberra: it's an invitation to re-visit the capital and the 'idea' of the capital, and to drink deep of the aspirations of its founders. No better time will be on the Big Birthday long weekend Friday March 8 to Tuesday March 12.

The newly commissioned symphony will have its first performance on March 11, played by the Canberra Symphony Orchestra and conducted by an Australian currently enjoying rising success in Europe, Nicolas Milton . I was pleased to discover that the composer ,Andrew Schultz, has chosen texts from Sullivan, Burnham and Griffin for the choral section of *Symphony Number 3: Century:*

The unaccompanied choral preludes to each movement constitute a stand-alone piece called *Three Architects*

BURNHAM – is sung by a children's choir:

Make no little plans,

They have no magic.

Make big plans – aim high,

In hope and work.

A noble plan, a diagram,
Once drawn is made.
A noble , logical diagram
Once recorded, will never die.

But will be, when we are dead,
A living thing,
It will insist:
Let your watchword be order
And your beacon beauty.

SULLIVAN is sung by an adult choir *to* the children's choir:

Do you, or do you not, intend to be architects in whose care
Democracy may entrust its dreams and aspirations ?

I warn you the time left for an answer is acutely brief.

For as young as you are, you are not as young as you were

Yesterday

- And tomorrow ?
- Tomorrow !

GRIFFIN is sung by the combined choirs:

Unity is essential to the city-

So complex a problem requires a simple organism.

Purity in proportion, and unity in scale.

Eliminate the useless,

Eliminate what serves no role.

A general simplicity,

A maximum of repetition,

A maximum of rhythm.

Honest direct solutions.

A civilization of aspiring ideals,

So limitless,

Greater than any on earth.

Number, size, scale, elevation.

It's sad that Griffin died at just 60, that his gravesite lay unmarked for so many years; that Wright, in whose studio Marion and Walter met, had such celebrity and Griffin so little. Despite the frustrations he had in trying to fulfil his design for Australia's capital, the fact is that atop Mt Ainslie I can still see it, am still able physically to recognise a big idea. I will relish forever not only the moment I shared with Dave Headon in Lucknow, but also that mighty opportunity, the most recent in this patchwork career, to fashion a celebration both of the Griffins' legacy, *and* of the very best to which 21st century Australia aspires.

Thankyou