

Books

Liber Amicorum John Steele: A Musicological Tribute

Edited by Warren Drake
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MARTIN LODGE

This is the first book compiled to acknowledge the achievements of a New Zealand musicologist. Not just the first New Zealander to make an international reputation in his field, John Steele has also supervised the musicological training and development of many students during his 30 years work in the University of Otago Music Department. The *Liber Amicorum* constitutes an affectionate salute from past students and colleagues.

Sixteen articles are collected in this volume. The contributors include colleagues currently working in New Zealand universities: Fiona McAlpine, Patrick Little, Warren Drake, Suzanne Court, Greer Garden, Peter Walls and John Drummond, who cover topics in Western musicology from the Middle Ages to Mozart. From Sydney come pieces by former colleagues Peter Platt and Richard Charteris, while sometime students Allan Badley, Ruth Lightbourne and Margaret Thompson also contribute substantial articles. Expatriate Margaret Mabbet writes from London and Richard Rastall from the University of Leeds.

The publication also includes one of the last essays written by the illustrious Howard Mayer Brown (University of Chicago) who unfortunately died suddenly before the *Liber Amicorum* was published.

John Mansfield Thomson offers a lively and fascinating account of his experiences at the Friedelind Wagner masterclass in Bayreuth in 1962, paying homage to Steele's own long-standing Wagnerism. This essay will probably have the most general appeal to readers of the volume. Thomson is also given the honour of opening proceedings with a brief but engaging introduction to Steele's achievement and personality. The annual long distance drives around the country with visiting musicologists, for example, are legendary.

The volume concludes with an impressive summary of Steele's

publications from 1956 to the present.

John Steele was born and grew up in Wellington. He began his studies at Victoria University before going to Britain to specialise in musicology at Cambridge University with Thurston Dart. He began lecturing at the University of Sydney in the late 1950s, but moved back to New Zealand in 1962 to work with Peter Platt, the then newly-arrived Professor in the University of Otago Music Department. In 1983 a personal chair was created for Steele at Otago.

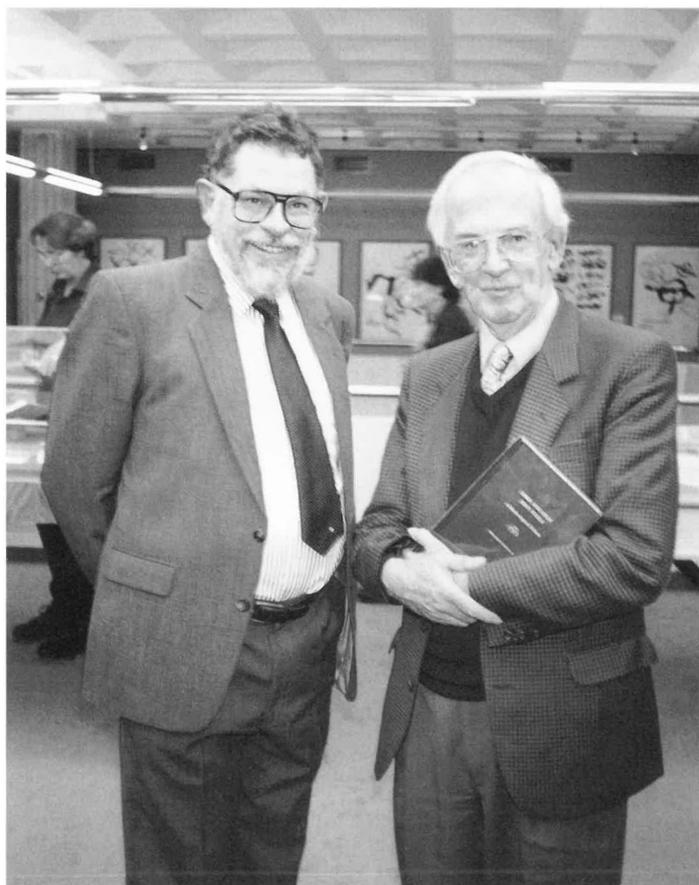
While his international reputation was established by the publication of scholarly editions of Renaissance music, notably of scores by Monteverdi, Bull, Marenzio and Phillips, he has also maintained an interest in music of his own time and place. As Warren Drake notes in his preface, although it is not widely known, Steele has given considerable support to New Zealand composers over the years, 'especially through his work for the University of Otago Press, the Waiteata Press, and New Zealand Chamber Music federation. He has always refused any remuneration for the labour of collating, editing and copying

manuscripts for publication'.

Congratulations are due to all contributors and especially to Warren Drake, whose editorial expertise and persistence have resulted in an appropriately erudite and handsomely produced book, affectionately celebrating John Steele's achievement in music scholarship.

During my own years in Dunedin as Mozart fellow, John was a welcoming presence at the University, and a congenial colleague as we both came to grips with the then newly emerging (and sometimes infuriatingly inadequate) computer technology for music notation. He now routinely prepares new editions to camera-ready stage himself.

Having retired from university life in Dunedin, John has moved north for the milder climate of Cambridge near Hamilton where he continues to work on new scholarly editions. The latest composer to engage his attention is Sigismondo d'India, whose madrigals he is editing in collaboration with former student Suzanne Court. Visiting colleagues and friends still enjoy his famous generosity, hospitality and dry humour. Long may they continue!



(right) Warren Drake (left) with John Steele (right) at the launch of *Liber Amicorum John Steele: A Musicological Tribute*