

## Notes on Songs

In 2013 Cathy Wainwright was honoured to represent Australia as a member of the Royal Australian Navy Band at the ANZAC Day commemorations in Turkey. 2015 marks the Centenary of that time when young men went off to fight a war about which they had little understanding – one great empire pitched against another. To walk on the Gallipoli peninsula, amongst the ghosts of so many young lives lost, on land that people have fought over for centuries, evokes strong and mixed emotions. And, lest we forget, Australians and New Zealanders were not the only casualties – Turkey lost approximately five times as many of its own young men.

It is impossible to imagine or comprehend what it must have been like one hundred years ago in the midst of the “Hell noise of the firing”. Yet one ANZAC Signaller, Ellis Silas, was able to pen the words that form the text of the first song, *I Wonder ...* – words filled with a vision and hope

for a better future. Cathy set these words to music for the ABC’s Gallipoli Songs competition in 2014.

Music had its place at Gallipoli. Its universal power to offer respite and solace was never far away. *Un Peu d’Amour*, composed by Stanislaw Silesu (1883-1953), and published in 1912 was one of the ‘pop songs’ of the day. A story has recently been uncovered that an ANZAC bugler was playing this in the trenches one night, when, from across no man’s land, came the answering phrase from a Turkish bugler. Cathy has reflected this call and response in the interplay of the two flutes in her arrangement.

The third song, *Anzac Threnody* written by our own Miriam Hyde and set to words by Dorothea Dowling was composed in 1951. Dorothea was the winner of the NSW Jubilee Anzac poem competition, and Miriam won the 1951 Anzac Song Prize with this setting.

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### (1) WAINWRIGHT (1957-) *I Wonder ...*

Fighting still continuing with unabated vigour –  
will this frightful noise never cease?  
I wonder what this valley will be like  
when there is no longer noise of fighting,  
no longer the hurried tread of combating forces -  
when the raw earth of the trenches  
is o’erspread with verdant grass.

Perhaps here and there equipment of War will be  
lying  
with fresh spring sprouts of grass  
threading through interstices -  
underneath the sad little mounds  
resting sons of a great nation -  
in the clear sky overhead, instead of the bursting  
shrapnel, little fleecy clouds -  
the scream of shrapnel, the Hell noise of the  
firing,  
giving place to an unbroken stillness  
save for the chirping of a bird or the soft buzzing  
of the bee!  
I wonder would it be thus!

Text from the diary of Signaller Ellis Silas 28 April 1915.  
Source: [http://www.anzacsite.gov.au/1landing/s\\_diary1915april.html](http://www.anzacsite.gov.au/1landing/s_diary1915april.html)

### (3) HYDE (1913-2005) *Anzac Threnody*

Why must men fight  
And crush earth’s blossoms down  
With ruthless tread,  
When they must know  
That magic lingers not  
Where flowers are dead?

Why must men scheme  
To quench the flutt’ring flame  
Of mortal life;  
Are they aware  
That beauty fades so fast  
Where there is strife?

Why must men die  
With half the golden years  
Of Youth untried;  
And yet the dawn  
Of Peace must break again  
Because they died?