

Night Song (1995)

Peter Sculthorpe

"*Night Song* is an arrangement of *The Stars Turn*, an early work for soprano and piano. The words of the original song are by Tony Morphet, and the mood of this arrangement takes its cue from the first verse:

The stars turn, the sun turns,
The earth turns forever.
We throw our weight on the windless spars,
And little and steady it turns the stars,
And the sun turns, and the windlass turns
Forever.

Following an introduction, two verses of the original song are stated. A short interlude separates these verses from two variations upon them, and the work ends with an extended coda. The arrangement was made especially for the Verdehr Trio."

—Peter Sculthorpe

The world premiere of *Night Song* was on October 11, 1995 in Michelsen Concert Hall, University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point, Stevens Point, Wisconsin.

Peter Sculthorpe (1929–2014) was born in Launceston, Tasmania and educated at Launceston Church Grammar School, the University of Melbourne, and Wadham College, Oxford. He was composer-in-residence at Yale University while visiting the United States as a Harkness Fellow in 1966–1967, and Visiting Professor at the University of Sussex in 1972–1973. He received the degree of Honorary Doctor of Letters from both the University of Tasmania (1980) and the University of Sussex (1989), and that of Honorary Doctor of Music from the University of Melbourne (1989). Appointed Reader in Music at the University of Sydney in the late sixties, he became Professor in Musical Composition (Personal Chair) at that university.

Sculthorpe wrote in most musical forms, and his output, numbering over three hundred fifty compositions, relates easily to the unique social climate and physical characteristics of Australia. Furthermore, his country's geographical position caused him to be influenced by much of the music of Asia, especially that of Japan and Indonesia. In later years, his interests also included Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island music and culture. Certainly he is Australia's best-known composer, and his works are regularly performed and recorded throughout the world.

He was the recipient of many awards and prizes for his music, including an Australian Film Industry Best Original Music Score Award for *Manganinnie* in 1980, and the Australasian Performing Right Association (APRA) Most Performed Australasian Serious Work Award for his *Piano Concerto* in 1985. Recordings of Sculthorpe's orchestral works and music for strings have won Australian Record Industry Awards (ARIA) for Best Classical Music Recording in 1996, 2006, and 2015.

Sculthorpe was made an Officer of the British Empire in 1977, and in the same year was awarded a Silver Jubilee Medal. He became an Officer of the Order of Australia in 1990, and the following year was elected Fellow of the Australian Academy of the Humanities. In 1994 he received the Sir Bernard Heinze Award for outstanding services to Australian music, and in 1998 was named one of Australia's Living National Treasures. In 2002 he was elected to Foreign Honorary Membership of the American Academy of Arts and Letters.

Sculthorpe's life and works are discussed in Michael Hannan, *Peter Sculthorpe: His Music and Ideas 1929–1979*; in Deborah Hayes, *Peter Sculthorpe, A Bio-Bibliography*; in Graeme Skinner, *Peter*

Sculthorpe: The Making of an Australian Composer; and in John Peterson, *The Music of Peter Sculthorpe*. His personal memoirs are entitled *Sun Music: Journeys and Reflections from a Composer's Life*.

Additional information is available at Sculthorpe's archive at the National Library of Australia, Canberra: <http://www.nla.gov.au/selected-library-collections/sculthorpe-collection>.