

# Mixed success with WA works

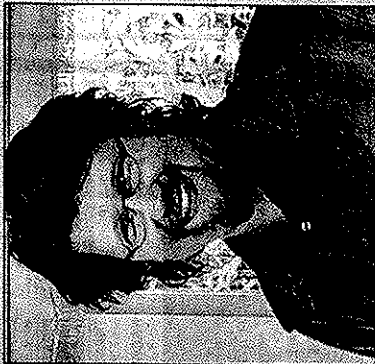
## CONCERT

University of WA Choral Society  
Wintthrop Hall  
Reviewer: Neville Cohn

This concert, devoted to works by West Australian composers, had the potential to be the highlight of the UWA Choral Society's 75th anniversary year. However, this was not the case.

The lion's share of the compilation was devoted to settings of sacred texts by Spanish-born Dom Stephen Moreno, of New Norcia. As well, we heard music by emeritus professor David Tunley and Iain Grandage.

Dom Stephen studied music in Rome and Munich; he was a prolific composer. He came to New Norcia as early as 1908. In 1953, in the hope of finding a cure for increasing deafness, he travelled to Europe but died in France in March of that year.



Iain Grandage

Time and again during Sunday's performance of Dom Stephen's settings one was left with the impression that had less of it been offered, with more time devoted to its rehearsal, then the overall effect might have been very much more polished.

Certainly, a more generous

investment in preparation would surely have yielded more substantial listening dividends. Frequently, tentative attack, a less-than-immaculate infernal/tonal balance (with tenors often too discreet) and moments of wavering intonation resulted in dull patches in this first part of the program.

Dominic Perissinotto was unfailingly supportive at the organ.

The program pamphlet listed all the works to be performed but there were no printed texts and no translations into English. And in not providing this basic information, it seemed an opportunity lost to make what was being performed more accessible to the concertgoer.

If the choir seemed reluctant to surrender to the Muse in Dom Stephen's music, its account of David Tunley's In Praise of Music was much more satisfying.

First performed at the Octagon Theatre last year at a concert to mark

his 75th birthday. In Praise of Music is a beautifully conceived little work — and, under John Beaverstock's direction, it was given a most pleasing exposition in singing, to which one turned as if to a refuge after the often indifferent accounts of Dom Stephen's compositions.

Grandage has a fine feel for choral writing. His a cappella settings of Three Australian Bush Songs are a delight. As the songs unfolded, we heard, in addition, an overlay of prerecorded birdsong. And a good deal of sibilance — and a sense of stillness — made the concluding Sunset a most meaningful offering.

I liked, too, Grandage's charming setting of Edward Lear's The Owl and the Pussycat. But the overall impact of his The Annunciation, with the composer at the piano, was lessened as a result of using an excessively strident saxophone.