

# Forging a Path The Douglas Lilburn Collection at the Alexander Turnbull Library

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Music, it is said, speaks for itself. Yet behind the sounds that stream forth lie the complexities of a human being, his or her circumstances, environment and associations, as well as the techniques of the music itself.

The music collections in the Alexander Turnbull Library's Archive of New Zealand Music, besides providing the actual music in both score and sound, include papers of musicians which shed light on the music and its creators. These are particularly important in relation to contemporary music, which often requires explanation before appreciation can occur.

When composer Douglas Lilburn produced his plan for an Archive of New Zealand Music to be established at the Library, he made a commitment to deposit his personal collection of music scores and related materials. From the time of his first deposit, on 16 December 1974, he has added materials to what has become one of the Library's most important collections.<sup>1</sup>

As Douglas personally delivers items to the Library, there is a sense of his support of the Archive, pleasure that they are deposited here, and at times relief at having more cupboard space in his Thorndon home. He often gives valuable information on items. Yet in depositing materials he realises, as few do, that the keeping of archives is an expensive business. This realisation led him, in 1984, to establish the Lilburn Trust, a priority of which is to ensure funds for the preservation and promotion of New Zealand music. This magnificent gift to New Zealand music is administered by the Alexander Turnbull Library Endowment Trust Board, with a Music Advisory Committee consisting of Douglas Lilburn, Margaret Nielsen and the Turnbull Library's Chief Librarian. In 1984 Lilburn was appointed Honorary Curator of the Archive.

When the Archive was established, a special condition was made to enable composers, needing ready access to their scores as part of their livelihood, to borrow materials they had placed in the Library. For this reason, many have deposited their collections on long-term loan with eventual bequest. The Lilburn collection began under this condition until 1984 when the sound recordings and papers were gifted; the scores remain on long-term loan.