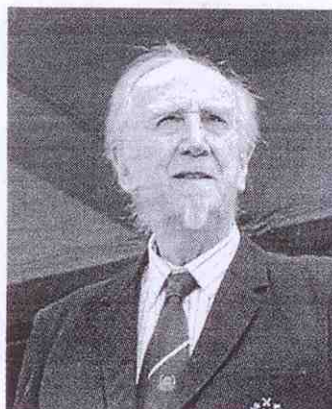


Composer's scores neglected but he chalked up kudos in cricket circles

ROBERT WILLIAM TRUMBLE
AUTHOR, MUSICOLOGIST
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By **ROBERT STOVE**



THE Australian musicologist Robert Trumble, who has died at a nursing home in Kew, aged 91, could have been called “the man who reinvented Vincent d’Indy”, the formidably versatile French composer.

D’Indy’s star — once as bright as those of Debussy and Ravel — faded almost to nothing after his death in 1931 and Trumble, having fallen in love with his music, embarked on a one-man campaign to publicise it.

This crusade resulted in a pair of books, *Vincent d’Indy: His Greatness and Integrity* (1994) and *The Compositions of Vincent d’Indy* (2000), based on French primary source material largely unknown to anglophones.

The fact that both volumes were self-published, rather than dignified by an academic imprint, reflects poorly on Australian musical scholarship. Fortunately, the French government appreciated his labours and in 2003 president Jacques Chirac bestowed on Trumble the title of Chevalier dans l’Ordre des Arts et des Lettres.

Trumble’s name also resounds in cricket lore: his father, Hugh Trumble, is one of only three Australians to take two Test match hat-tricks.

Hugh married Florence (nee Christian) in 1902 and Robert and his (older) twin, Ken, were the last of their eight children.

Hugh was the inspiration for his son’s first book, *The Golden Age of Cricket* (1968). Other non-musical titles of Trumble’s include *The School on the Hill* (1987), an official history of his alma mater, Trinity Grammar School in Melbourne, and *The Trumble Family in Australia* (1972). But is Trumble’s contributions to music for which he perhaps is best remembered.

For more than three decades he worked for the ABC’s music department. In 1976 he took a music doctorate from Melbourne University, and later turned to his ABC career for

more books, *Recollections: Thirty Years with the Australian Broadcasting Commission* (2002), and *Reminiscences and Reflections* (2005). His powers of memory and documentation yielded studies that are a gift to historians seeking to evoke the ethos of a performing culture now gone.

On a personal level, Trumble would have wished his own music had done better than it did, in terms of attracting attention. None appears to have been recorded for commercial, as opposed to broadcast, purposes.

“I am supposed to be a musician,” he told *The Age* in 2004. “I have written quite a lot of music. But in the last few years, I seem to be more with the written word than with the written note.”

Unfortunately for him, Trumble was among Australian composers, including Dulcie Holland, Raymond Hanson, Clive Douglas, Robert W. Hughes and Franz Holford, who attained creative maturity in the 1940s. They were a somewhat pinched generation by the 1960s standards of arts subsidies, drooping moustaches and Peter Sculthorpe. Trumble suffered accordingly. But recent CDs have shown that Holland, in particular, warranted comprehensive revival — and the same might be said of Trumble. The National Library of Australia has a catalogue of original Trumble pieces — most of them for solo piano or chamber ensembles.

Trumble is survived by Joan (nee Klatter), his wife of 59 years, and children Simon and Christine. Siblings Arthur, Charles, Hugh, Kathleen, Kenneth, Thomas and Violet predeceased him.

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p. 14.