Composer
Alan John

Original Music composed and orchestrated by
Alan John

Conducted by Leader
Romano Crivici Mirka Rozmus

Performed by
The Elektra String Quartet and Friends

Choir
The Sydney Chamber Choir

With
Harpichord Winsome Evans
Accordion (sic) Ross Lombardo
Trumpets Paul Goodchild
Oboe Linda Walsh
Bass Adam Armstrong
Drums Hamish Stuart
Clarinet Catherine McCorkill
Peter Jenkin
Bassoon Matthew Ockenden
Trombone Wayne Freer
Saxophone James Nightingale
Horn Robert Johnson
Mandolin Michael Hooper

Recording Engineered and Mixed by Guy Dickerson
Original Music Recorded at Megaphon Studios, Sydney
Harpsichord supplied & prepared by Carey Beebe Harpsichords
Sony Consultants Damian Trotter
David Orwell

Music Editor Paul Charlier

Library Music Courtesy of AMCOS

"Tintarella Di Luna"
composed by De Filippi/Migliacci
courtesy of Accordo Edizioni Musicali S.r.l
and Fable Music Pty Ltd (for Australasia)
performed by Gina Zoia, bass by Adam
Armstrong, drums by Hamish Stuart, piano
by Alan John, saxophone by Rick Robertson

"Blue Moon"
composed by Eric Chapus
published by Sony/ATV Music Publishing
performed by Endorphin
courtesy Columbia, by arrangement
Sony Music Entertainment (Australia) Limited

"Dinnertime"
composed by Kram, Whit and Janet
published by Sony/ATV Music Publishing
performed by Spiderbait
courtesy of Grudge Records Australia
under license from Universal Music
Australia Pty Limited

"Dead From The Waist Down"
composed by Mark Roberts,
Cerys Matthews, Paul Jones & Aled Richards
published by Sony/ATV Music Publishing
performed by Catatonia
courtesy of Warner Music UK Ltd

"Non Stop Let's Rok"
composed by Rebecca Poulsen,
Ben Suthers & Jake Moran
published by Sony/ATV Music Publishing
performed by beXta,
courtesy dancepool, by arrangement
Sony Music Entertainment (Australia) Limited

"No Surprises"
composed by Ashley Naylor
published by Rubber Music Publishing &
Sony/ATV Music Publishing
performed by Even
Licensed by BMG Australia
"I'm The Problem With Society"
composed by Feltham, Forman, McDougall & Whalley
published by Rubber Music Publishing & Sony/ATV Publishing
performed by Frenzal Rhomb

"Passage"
composed by Eric Chapus
published by Sony/ATV Music Publishing
performed by Endorphin
courtesy Columbia, by arrangement
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"10-4"
composed by McCarthy, Frew, Salmon & Faulkner, © 1998 Kinetic Music Pty Limited
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published by Sony/ATV Music Publishing & Lost in Music/Universal Music Publishing Pty Ltd, performed by Antenna, courtesy of Mushroom Records International BV

"Supernova"
composed by Liz Phair
published by Sony/ATV Tunes
performed by Magic Dirt

"Anguish"
composed by Eric Chapus & Tammy Brennan
published by Sony/ATV Music Publishing & Tammy Brennan, performed by Endorphin
courtesy Columbia, by arrangement
Sony Music Entertainment (Australia) Limited

"Cuiri Cuiri"
music and lyrics traditional
performed by Rick Daniele
accordion (sic) by Ross Lombardo
guitar/bazouki by James Llewelyn Kiek
"Never Said"
composed by Melanie Forbes
and Nicci Heffeman
performed by Sister Madly
published by Sony/ATV Music Publishing

"Don't Say"
composed by Cindy Ryan
published by Sony/ATV Music Publishing
performed by Stella One Eleven
courtesy of Wow Records, Distributed by MDS

"With or Without You"
composed by and courtesy of
U2/Lyrics Bono & The Edge
under license from PolyGram
International Music Publishing BVP
performed by Hamish Cowan
and licensed by Rubber Records
/BMG Australia Limited

"Don't You Know Who I Am'
composed by Janet English & Quan Yeomans
published by Sony/ATV Music Publishing
and courtesy of Polydor Records Australia
under license from PolyGram Pty Limited

"Unguarded Moment"
composed by Stephen Kilbey & Michelle Parker
performed by The Church
published by Sony/ATV Music Publishing

"Piove (Ciao Ciao Bambina)"
composed by D. Verde - D. Modugno
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Australia Pty Limited
performed by Domenico Modugno
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"Hymn For A Jubilee"
courtesy of Kincoppal-Rose Bay
School of the Sacred Heart

"Volare"
composed by M. Parish/D. Modugno/F. Magliacci
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"Divine"
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& Lost in Music/Universal Music Publishing
Pty Ltd, performed by Antenna
with Chrissie Amphlett, courtesy of
Mushroom Records International BV

"Teenager Of The Year"
composed by Luke Hanigan
published by Sony/ATV Music Publishing
performed by Brenda Starr
courtesy murmur, by arrangement
Sony Music Entertainment (Australia) Limited

"Tintarella Di Luna" (Version 2)
composed by De Filipi/Migliacci
courtesy of Accordo Edizioni Musicali S.r.l
and Fable Music Pty Ltd (for Australasia)
performed by Happyland
courtesy of Warner Music Australia Pty Ltd,
Consume Management & Universal
Music Australia Pty Ltd

“Veda Rhyddum”
composed by Sameer Sen Gupta
performed by POCKET
published by Sony/ATV Music Publishing

"Miss You Love"
composed by silverchair
published by Sony/ATV Music Publishing
performed by silverchair
courtesy murmur, by arrangement
Sony Music Entertainment (Australia) Limited

"Zadok, The Priest"
music by G. F. Handel
performed by The Sydney Chamber Choir
and orchestra conducted by Romano Crivici

Soundtrack available on
murmur - logo
through Sony Music Entertainment

**Music in the film:**

Pia Miranda’s Josephine Alibrandi puts a 45 on at the start and the end of the film, so that the pop song "Tintarella Di Luna" can be heard running over head and tail credits.

In between, Kerry Walker’s Sister Louise leads the school in a hymn:
Lyrics:

The song over the head and tail credits is in Italian, which is above this site’s paygrade. However Roadshow, which always did decent subtitles for its DVD releases, provided the guide below.

Head credits:

At first over black we hear people chatting in Italian and then a woman begins to sing over the ‘in association with’ presentation credit:

*Abbronzate tutte chiazze*
*Pelli rosse, un po’paonazze*
*Son le ragazze che prendono il sol*

(then an up-angle view of a plane coming into land)

*Ma ce n’è una*
*Che prende la luna!*
*Tintarella di luna*
*Tintarella color latte*

(a spoon stirring a brown sauce in a large pot)

*Tutta notte stai sul tetto*
*Sopra il tetto come i gatti*
*E se c’è la luna piena …*

(Dialogue off in Italian, “Come on! Hurry up”, as a man walks over to where a backyard bottling is taking place)
Tintarella di luna
Tintarella color latte
Che fa bianca la tua pelle
Ti fa bella fra le belle
E se c'è la luna piena
Tu diventi candida
Tin, tin, tin arazzi di luna …
Tin, tin, tin baciano te
Al mondo nessuna
E candida come te
Tintarella di luna
Tintarella color latte
Tutta notte stai sul tetto
Sopra il tetto come i gatti
E se c'è la luna piena
Tu diventi candida …

(The music keeps going as an instrumental, and fades out underneath the sound of another plane flying over head, and then a voice over - Pia Miranda’s Josephine Alibrandi - says “Oh, in case you’re wondering, this is Tomato Day …or as I like to refer to it - National Wog Day”)

Tail credits:

There’s a coming together at the end. Jacob - Kick Gurry - comes in to meet the family in the back yard, and Josephine races outside to invite her friends, sitting in the car, to come in, and to the sounds of Dean Martin singing Volare, they do. The same tomato bottling that started the film is once again happening in the backyard.

Josephine has a final burst of voice over: “I’d always dreamt of being someone really impressive and famous - you know, someone people could sit back and envy. I wonder what it would have been like growing up an Andretti, who never was an Alibrandi and who should have been a Sandford, and maybe never be a Coote …but I know now that what’s important is who I feel I am…”

(A plane roars over dangerously low, as they do every day of the year in the western suburbs of Sydney).

“I’m Christina and Michael’s daughter, and I’m Katia’s granddaughter … and we’re not cursed, we’re blessed …”
(Josephine cranks up a 45 on the record player.  
The opening song returns):

*Ma ce ‘e una*  
*Che prende …*

(Josephine calls out ‘nonna’, and takes a basket away from her, then gets her to begin to dance)

*La Luna*  
*Tintarella di luna*

(Others join in the dance)

*Tintarella color latte*  
*Tutta notte stai sul tetto*  
*Sopra il tetto come i gatti*  
*E se c’è la luna piena*  
*Tu diventi candida*  
*Tintarella di luna*  
*Tintarella color latte*

(The camera begins to crane up over the dancing crowd in the back yard)

*Che fa bianca la tua pelle*  
*Ti fa bella fra le belle*  
*E se c’è la luna piena*  
*Tu diventi candida*

(Cut to black, and then as the sub-titles note, an up-beat, or more to the point, speeded-up, much faster version of “Tintarella Di Luna” begins to play as the end credits roll):

*Tintarella di luna*  
*Tintarella color latte*  
*Tutta notte stai sul tetto*  
*Sopra il tetto come i gatti*

(We see a Josephine in a little box image on the right side of the rolling credits. She smiles to camera as she dances)

*E se c’è la luna piena*
Tu diventi candida
Tintatella di luna (Josephine has gone from screen)
Tintarella color latte
Che fa bianca la tua pelle
Ti fa bella fera le belle
E se c’è la luna piena
Tu diventi candida
Tin, tin, tin arazzi di luna
Tin, tin, tin, baciano te
Al mondo nessuna
E candide come te
Tintarella di luna
Tintarella color latte
Tutta notte stai sul tetto
Sopra il tetto come i gatti
E se c’è la luna piena
Tu diventi candida

(Musical interlude)

Tin, tin, tin arazzi di luna
Tin, tin, tin baciano te
Tin, tin, tin, baciano te
Al mondo nessuna
E candide come te
Tintarella di luna
Tintarella color latte
Tutta notte stai sul tetto
Sopra il tetto come i gatti
E se c’è la luna piena
Tu diventi candida
E se c’è la luna piena
Tu diventi candida
E se c’è la luna piena
Tu diventi candida
Candida … candida …

(The music ends with a flourish, but then Roadshow’s subtitles also give out, simply announcing a “lively Italian song” Again as this is in Italian, here’s the lyrics for Ciuri Ciuri by Carlo Muratori, performed in the film by Rick Daniele, as found online):

Sciuri, sciuri, sciuri di tuttu l’annu
l'amuri ca mi dasti ti lu tornu.
Sciuri, sciuri, sciuri di tuttu l'annu
l'amuri ca mi dasti ti lu tornu.
La, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la. 
Lu sabutu, si sapi, allegra cori,
beatu cu avi bedda la mugghieri.
Cu l'avi bedda ci porta i dinari,
cu l'avi brutta ci mori lu cori.
Sciuri, sciuri, sciuri di tuttu l'annu
l'amuri ca mi dasti ti lu tornu.
Sciuri, sciuri, sciuri di tuttu l'annu
l'amuri ca mi dasti ti lu tornu.
La, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la.
Si troppu dispittusa tu cu mia,
cascu du' letto si mi 'insonnu a tia.
Si brutta n'ta la faccia a n'ta lu cori
amaro cu ti pigghia pi mugghieri.
Sciuri, sciuri, sciuri di tuttu l'annu
l'amuri ca mi dasti ti lu tornu.
Sciuri, sciuri, sciuri di tuttu l'annu
l'amuri…

Translations:

Any number of translations of “Tintarella Di Luna” are available on line, including several here. This one is by Alma Barroca under the title “Moon Tan” was found here:

All the patches have been tanned
Redskins* are a little purple, (* as in native American)
The girls are those who take the Sun
But there is this one girl
Who takes the moon.

She got a Moon tan, she got a Milk colored tan
All night long on the roof
On the roof just like a cat does
And if there is a full Moon, you get even more charming

She got a Moon tan, she got a Milk colored tan
That makes your skin whiter
That makes you beautiful among the beautiful ones
And if there is a full Moon, you get even more charming.
Tin tin tin, a Moon ray
Tin tin tin, it's kissing you
No one else in the world is as charming as you

She got a Moon tan, she got a Milk colored tan
All night long on the roof
On the roof just like a cat does
And if there is a full Moon, you get even more charming

Tin tin tin, a Moon ray
Tin tin tin, it's kissing you
No one else in the world is as charming as you

She got a Moon tan, she got a Milk colored tan
All night long on the roof
On the roof just like a cat does
And if there is a full Moon, you get even more charming

And if there is a full Moon,
You get even more charming, charming, charming!

Sciuri, Sciuri:

The same site here provides this translation for “Sciuri, Sciuri”, aka “Cuiri, Ciuri”, under the title “Flowers, Flowers”:

Flower, flowers, flowers all the year
The love you gave me I give you back
Flower, flowers, flowers all the year
The love you gave me I give you back

La, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la.

Saturday as we know, gladdens the heart
Lucky who has a lovely wife
Who has a beautiful life brings her money
Who has an ugly wife feels his heart dying

Flower, flowers, flowers all the year
The love you gave me I give you back
Flower, flowers, flowers all the year
The love you gave me I give you back
La, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la.

You're too vexatious with me
I fall from bed if I dream of you
Your face and heart are ugly
I don't want you to be my wife

Flower, flowers, flowers all the year
The love you gave me I give you back
Flower, flowers, flowers all the year
The love you gave me I give you back

La, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la.

Red roses in blossom
Poor who believes in women.
Idiot who gets overwhelmed,
The door of paradise can not seen.

Flower, flowers, flowers all the year
The love you gave me I give you back
Flower, flowers, flowers all the year
The love you gave me I give you back

**CD:**

A CD of the soundtrack was released:
KILLING HEIDI Weir
HAPPYLAND Tintarella Di Luna
LO-TEL Teenager Of The Year
SPIDERBAIT Dinnertime
CATATONIA Dead From The Waist Down
ENDORPHIN Blue Moon
FRENZAL RHOMB I'm The Problem With Society
HAMISH COWAN With Or Without You
MAGIC DIRT Supernova
ANTENNA WITH CRASSIE AMPHLETT Divine

HAPPYLAND Don't You Know Who I Am
STELLA ONE ELEVEN Don't Say
GINA ZOIA Tintarella Di Luna

www.murmur.com.au
www.alibrandi.com.au
CD Murmur MATTCD103 2000

1. Weir Killing Heidi
2. Tintarella Di Luna, Happyland
3. Teenager of the Year, Lo-Tel
4. Dinnertime, Spiderbait
5. Dead from the Waist Down, Catatonia
6. Blue Moon, Endorphin
7. I’m the Problem with Society, Frenzal Rhomb
8. With or Without You, Hamish Cowan
9. Supernova, Magic Dirt
10. Divine, Antenna with Chrissie Amphlett
11. Don’t You Know Who I Am, Happyland
12. Don’t Say, Stella One Eleven
13. Tintarella Di Luna, Gina Zoia
CD Review:

Brad Green reviewed the soundtrack release for *Urban Cinefile*, available [here](#), saved to [WM here](#).

*There is a burgeoning barrel of positive superlatives buried deep in my vocabulary that is simply bursting to shower its contents of praise on a worthy Aussie soundtrack. I’ve been expecting such CD to arrive at any moment. And here it isn’t. So long as my poor CD player continues to be force-fed concocted compilations of bands with overdeveloped images performing underdeveloped songs, the poetic plaudits must remain untapped. Like most collections of rock-bop-teen-trash-punk-pop ditties posing as soundtracks, this is a collection of the good, the bad and the unforgivable.*

Fortunately, the first track belongs to the former category. Killing Heidi is a young band brimming with potential and although we’re all weary of Weir it’s a promising start. But the illusion that this could be a soundtrack of serious merit is seriously shattered by track two. Just when you thought it was safe to remove the novelty-song-protection ear plugs – The Macarena having long been tossed out with the stale spaghetti and Aqua’s Barbie drowned in a sea of its own banality – along comes Happyland with a less than felicitous sonic atrocity called Tintarella Di Luna. La Luna is precisely the distance I want to be from anywhere on planet Earth if this kitsch, crass excuse for a song becomes remotely faddish.

Things improve considerably with Catatonia’s whispery, whimsical Dead From the Waist Down but it’s not enough to rescue this soundtrack from the dire sounds of Hamish Cowan delivering an ineffably awful U2 cover, Frenzal Rhomb demonstrating that there are more angles to a parallelogram than their linearly predictable music and Magic Dirt providing lots of dirt from their overdriven guitars but considerably less magic than Samantha "Bewitched" Stephens with a broken nose.

*But finally I’m won over . . . by the very last track . . . a reprise of Tintarella Di Luna that’s even tackier than the original. I give up. I’ve joined the novelty song bandwagon. I know the brilliant Aussie soundtrack I’ve been waiting for. Bring on a dozen dance remixes of Joe Dulce’s, Shaddap You Face, I say. Only kidding.*

Brad Green

Composer Alan John:

Alan John has long been a composer with an interest in the theatre. He was still scoring credits with the Sydney Theatre company, including the Australian premiere of *Orlando* in 2015, and *Machu Pichu* in 2016.
John had a relatively short wiki here, and Opera Australia had this short bio for him here, WM here.

Best known as the composer of the opera The Eighth Wonder (produced by Opera Australia in 1995 and revived in 2000), Alan has also worked as an actor, dramaturg, musician and musical director. Over the last 25 years Alan has developed close working associations with theatre companies, including Sydney Theatre Company (Orlando, Under Milkwood, Pygmalion, A Streetcar Named Desire, The City, The Great, The Wonderful World of Dissocia, Gallipoli, Tales from the Vienna Woods, A Midsummers Night’s Dream, The Season at Sarsparilla, The Bourgeois Gentleman, Mother Courage, A Hard God, Boy Gets Girl, The Give and Take, Hedda Gabler, Harbour, Hanging Man, A Man with Five Children, A Doll’s House and Major Barbara); Bell Shakespeare company (The Tempest, The Duchess of Malfi, The Government Inspector, Romeo and Juliet, Moby Dick, Antony and Cleopatra, Henry V, Henry IV, The Winters Tale, Hamlet and As You Like It); Malthouse Theatre (Optimism, Through the Looking Glass, co-production with Victorian Opera) and especially with Neil Armfield and Belvoir Street Theatre, including Seventeen, Once in Royal David’s City, Angels in America, Babyteeth, A Diary of a Madman, Gethsemane, The Man from Mukinpin, Snugglepot and Cuddlepie, Peribanez, Ray’s Tempest, Stuff Happens, The Chairs, The Spook, Our Lady of Sligo, The Threepenny Opera, The Underpants, Waiting for Godot, My Zinc Bed, Emma’s Nose, Small Poppies, The Judas Kiss, The Governor’s Family, Death and the Maiden, The Government Inspector, Diving for Pearls, Diary of a Madman, The Tempest. He has also worked closely with director Jim Sharman (Lighthouse Company 1982-88, David Malouf’s Blood Relations, orchestrations and arrangements for Chess); singer Robyn Archer (Musical Director 1984-88, The Last Decade – a Cabaret Song Cycle); writers John romeril (the musical Jonah - 1985) and David Holman (Frankie – an Opera for Young People).

Alan also composed the music for Tyler Coppin’s one man show Tales of Helpmann and for Khoa Do’s stage show Mother Fish, which was recently adapted into the critically acclaimed feature film Missing Water. His film and television credits include The Beautiful Lie for ABC/Endemol; Holding the Man with director Neil Armfield; Three Dollars and The Bank (both directed by Robert Connolly); Looking for Alibrandi (director Kate Woods); Travelling North; the ABC mini-series The Farm (director Kate Woods); Dangerous for Southern Star/Foxtel; Love My Way for Foxtel; Cops L.A.C for the Nine Network; ABC TV’s telemovies The Shark Net and Loot; Edens Lost (producer Margaret Fink, director Neil Armfield); Coral Island (part one of Jan Chapman’s Naked series) and for Film Australia’s animation
Alan has been awarded an APRA/Australian Guild of Screen Composers Award for The Bank (best music in a feature film in 2002), Human Contraptions (best music for short film in 2003) and The Shark Net (best music for mini-series or telemovie, 2004). In 2005 Alan was nominated for an APRA/ Australian Guild of Screen Composers award and an AFI award for best music for a feature film for Three Dollars. In 2009, Alan won a Green Room Award for best new operatic work for Through the Looking Glass.

The STC published this Q and A with John on 2nd December 2011, available online here, WM here. While more about his theatre work, it does give a clue to his thinking on music in drama.

Describe your process for working on a new score.

Every show is different and so is the process.

Early responses to the script and discussions with the director are of course crucial. Some directors have very clear ideas about the kind of score they envisage while others are completely open to suggestion.

I remember when working with Peter Evans on Tony MacNamara’s The Give and Take (a contemporary comedy) we both knew transition music was going to be very important to the production but neither of us had a clue as to style. Peter said there was something of the Italian opera about the level of passion in the play and I felt some of the writing had a classic 1950s American workplace comedy feel. Hmm.

Not a great deal of common ground there but I started fiddling around with some ideas that seemed to lead to a kind of mini-piano accordion-concerto with chamber string orchestra. Unlikely as it may seem, it fitted: it had pace, humour, a whiff of period sitcom about it and the fact that it had absolutely nothing to do with the milieu of the characters seemed to heighten the absurdity. Years later I watched Curb Your Enthusiasm for the first time and realized that they had made a very similar choice for probably the same reasons.

I used to work with pencil and paper (composing at the piano and orchestrating from what they call a "short score" – as did Wagner, Mahler and Stravinsky to name a few) and still do when writing opera or setting song lyrics. When having to work very quickly I write 'in my head' during rehearsals and scribble something down on the back page of the script. Plays with songs (especially by Shakespeare and Brecht) need carefully prepared scores in advance of rehearsals to facilitate the coaching of actors, who rarely have music reading skills.

Absorbing the production design concepts is also important. Set and costume designers often work from a collage-folio of 'references', and
theatre composers should do the same - even if their set of references is different. If you go into rehearsals with some masterpiece that can’t be touched, it’s not going to be a happy experience for anyone. Composing for theatre is not about self-expression; it’s about serving the play and the production. That’s not to say it’s all about pastiche, parody or near-plagiarism either (although they are all useful skills for sure). As with the designer’s work, a distinctive voice can shine through elements influenced by period, ethnicity, class or character, and that voice is what can help unify a production. On a couple of projects I’ve been chuffed rather than miffed when cues of mine were mistaken for period recordings (tick the pastiche box) but felt that overall the scores transcended the references and were carefully tailored to the mood of each play.

**What is the most challenging part of putting together a musical score?**

Underscored dialogue. What is accepted and often subliminal in film music (where actors can work at intimate vocal levels and still be heard even over richly scored music cues) can seem obvious and melodramatic in the theatre. Film actors, of course, can’t hear the score whereas real humans on stage can be 'thrown' by music that perhaps doesn’t tally with how they (or their characters) feel the moment, or interferes with their pacing of the lines. On the other hand, a great underscore in the right kind of production can, without drawing attention to itself, act in a way analogous to a lighting cue: subtly guiding the audience’s attention to a moment of text, or adding a new level of emotion – even one contrary to the prevailing mood of the scene – to a particular set of words. Sometimes the actor can use the underscore like a prop: riding it like a wave or waiting for a particular shift in the recorded cue to plant a certain word. When played live the actor and musician(s) can work hand in hand and then the music, like the spoken performance, will never be quite the same from show to show.

Far from a technique borrowed from film, musical accompaniment to dialogue goes back to the origins of drama as ritualised story telling. I particularly admire the way Shakespeare builds it into his plays (Orsino bids an offstage musician to "play the tune a while" while he has a gorgeously sensual exchange with the disguised Viola, and Prospero summons a "solemn aire" from the ether to make his reconciliation speech doubly moving).

Now that wireless amplification and spatial sound design has become more reliable and accepted in appropriate productions the way is paved for complex underscores on a large scale.

**What is your favourite part of the process of composing a score?**

I love song writing. There are an infinite number of possible settings for a finite set of lyrics but when you feel that you’ve nailed one – so that you will never be able to read those words again without hearing your melody – is
very satisfying. The lyrics are the DNA, the song the living thing.

Who are your favourite composers for stage and/or film?

A lot of superb theatre music from the past is now not performable in its original context. Sibelius' massive score for The Tempest was written at the height of his creative life. It's fantastic to hear on CD or in a concert hall but would feel ludicrously overpowering in an actual theatre production today – even one with a budget and set that could accommodate a symphony orchestra.

In 1986, the Rustaveli Theatre Company from Georgia brought their Richard III and Caucasian Chalk Circle to the Adelaide Festival. Among their large entourage was the great Georgian composer Giya Kancheli, then largely unknown in the west. He conducted his brass band and percussion score for the Brecht with a large pit band, while his bizarrely eclectic recorded score for the Shakespeare involved loud and spectacularly vulgar electric guitar solos.

Both of them had a huge impact on me, and before the company got on the bus for the airport I embarrassingly thrust a cassette of a music theatre piece of mine – crudely recorded on a four track with me singing all the parts – into the composer's hand. He raced back into the hotel and returned bearing a highly decorated enameled wooden spoon (any implied symbolism was lost on me) and an unobtainable vinyl recording of his Symphonies No. 4 and 5. Listening to them I was thrilled to hear a beautiful passage that had caught my ear during Chalk Circle (so he recycles too!) and it made me think how little music from the theatre survives on recordings (it's a miniaturist art form in the main).

Kancheli is now a respected composer throughout the world; renowned for his monumental and meditative orchestral music but last year ECM released a charming collection of his theatre music arranged for bandoneon violin and vibraphone! It was so heartening to hear exquisite pieces from Hamlet or King Lear – of necessity tiny in scale but still charged with drama and deep emotion.

In film, Bernard Herrmann, of course, but also Alex North (I love scores from the 50s and 60s) and the under-rated and often unfairly reviled John Williams, whose stylistic range, gift for melody and orchestral imagination is dazzling.

How much music do you have to compose on average for, say, a show that runs for two hours?

It varies. Some shows require scene change cues only, and often this is not apparent until you are in the theatre so the music the audience hears is less than what was composed. Others are almost 'through-composed'.

On paper John Romeril's Jonah Jones [created for Sydney Theatre
Company in 1985, with music by John] was neither musical nor opera nor 'play with songs' but it had fragments of lyrics on every page and choral refrains recurred often 20 pages apart. While it was my first foray into large scale music theatre, it remains one of the most difficult things I've done because it involved almost continuous music (some two and a half hours of it), with the actors having to treat large sections of dialogue as 'set'. A few safety vamps aside, they had a finite amount of time to complete the text before the next bit of singing – very hair-raising.

As far as normal plays go, 45 minutes of music for Bell Shakespeare's Winters Tale is probably my limit.

**What is the mark of a good theatrical score?**

It's hard to generalise. The truism has it that if the audience doesn't notice the music, you've done your job: it's unobtrusive and part of the whole. Sometimes, though, a bold and highly coloured approach is preferable (as in the Rustaveli example above).

Whether discreet or 'inyerface', a good score is one that demonstrates a genuine grappling with the text and subtext of a play. Its sound world (choice of instrumentation and harmonic language, or lack thereof in the case of some electronic scores) should somehow encapsulate the essence of the piece through a symbolic language, without stating the bleeding obvious or spoon feeding the audience or leaving them feel manipulated. Bold is fine, overstated is not.

(Below: Alan John - as he appears in Neil Armfield's film adaptation of Twelfth Night).

(Below: Alan John - exponent of Shakespeare down under, John Bell, is behind him in the first photograph)
Trailer promotions:

The film's DVD release promoted two of the music videos offered as extras: