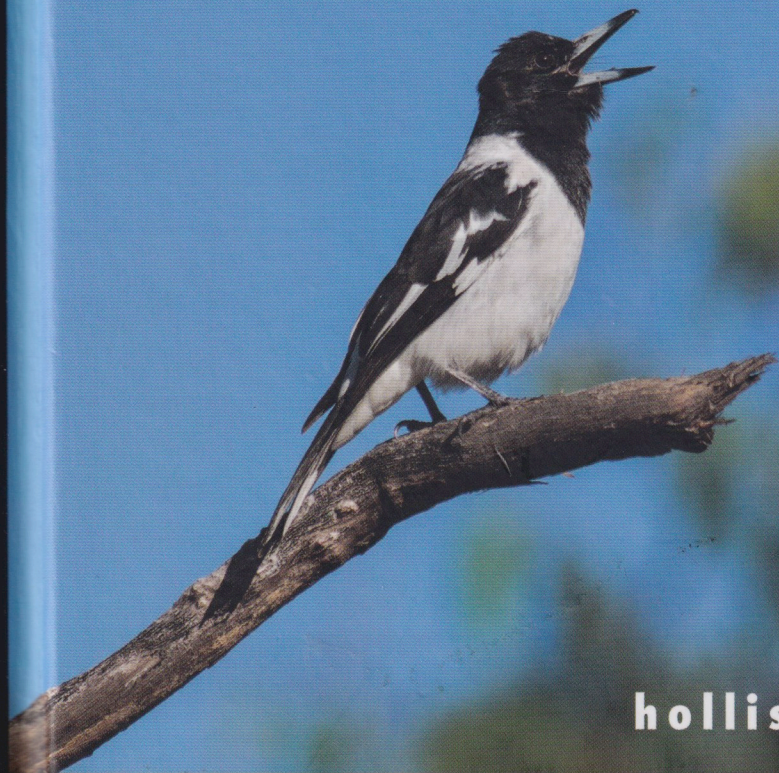


absolute bird



hollis taylor

CD 1

1. **georges six** (4:22)
2. **macadamia** (4:10)
3. **ten hockets: bribie island** (2:34)
4. **ormiston gorge** (1:15)
5. **bowen at n'dhala gate** (2:08)
6. **tocatta** (2:23)
7. **nightshift** (4:21)
8. **hugh river** (2:22)
9. **waltz with tree frogs** (3:42)
10. **lamington plateau** (7:09)
- song maps: alicie springs, no. 1:**
11. **song map 1** (1:33)
12. **song map 2** (1:43)
13. **song map 3** (1:48)
14. **song map 4** (1:04)
15. **song map 5** (:56)
16. **song map 6** (:31)
17. **song map 7** (1:21)
18. **song map 8** (:54)
19. **song map 9** (:54)
20. **green lake, victoria** (1:04)
21. **greens park, georgetown 2016** (9:00)
22. **saleyards** (4:00)
23. **madigan 1, 2, 3: alicie springs** (6:39)

CD 2

1. **owen springs reserve 2014** (6:19)
2. **cumberland dam: tema** (2:44)
3. **alice springs: palm @ ragonesi** (2:29)
4. **roe creek flow** (4:57)
5. **duaringa traffic** (3:24)
6. **cumberland dam: multifonica** (3:06)
7. **voices** (2:03)
8. **hall's creek** (4:18)
9. **banana paper** (4:19)
10. **riffingbird no. 1: west wyalong** (3:04)
11. **riffingbird no. 2: byron bay** (1:24)
12. **riffingbird no. 3: ponto falls** (1:50)
13. **riffingbird no. 4: taroom** (2:37)
14. **ross river** (3:20)
15. **racecourse: alicie springs** (2:46)
16. **solo-esque** (3:21)
17. **alice springs: gosse @ sturt** (3:16)
18. **bird-esk** (14:24)

One of our planet's most musical species, *Cracticus nigrogularis*, sings with astounding elegance and lyricism. Hollis Taylor pairs meticulous transcriptions of their rich, diverse songs (for violin, vibes, recorder, bass clarinet, bassoon, flute, bass, string quartet, and choir) with her field recordings from the Australian outback.

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absolute bird CD 1



WOGARNO STATION, Western Australia: I had an epiphany in 2001 at this remote sheep station. While wandering about, out of the blue I heard a leisurely, rich-toned phrase from a jazz flutist in a tree. An explosion of sound in another tree answered—a long, bold rattle descended sharply and swiftly, and a duet ensued—no, a trio. Twenty otherworldly seconds passed: low, slow, and enticingly familiar. I notated several phrases, but my aspiration was to know more precisely what these birds were up to. I came to devote myself full time to the heretofore unstudied pied butcherbird (*Cracticus nigrogularis*).

In the spring, soloists sing nocturnally for up to seven hours, especially on moonlit nights, and they transform their complex songs annually. Both sexes sing, including in ensembles. In addition, they imitate other species (like birds, cats, dogs, frogs, and horses) and even human whistles, car alarms, and cell phone ringtones.

As a field musicologist (or zoömusicologist), I spend months each year in the outback recording pied butcherbird songs and chronicling their musical activities. The success of this extraordinary species in creating a musical culture with significant commonalities with human music (including some features thought unique to it) has provoked me to reconsider an old question: Is birdsong music?—**Hollis Taylor**



CD 1

1. GEORGES SIX for Ganassi recorder and field recording

Genevieve Lacey, recorder

Based on six pied butcherbird nocturnal songs in Georgetown, N Queensland: Georgetown Golf Course 2010 (5:15am, 7 Oct); Goldfields Caravan Park 2010 (4:24am, 6 Oct) and 2013 (3:51am, 25 Oct); Georgetown Van Park 2010 (5:00am, 7 Oct) and 2013 (5:05am, 25 Oct); and Greens Park 2013 (4:37am, 25 Oct). Genevieve's recorder is paired with a cane toad (*Bufo marinus*).

Georges Six

Georgetown GC 2010

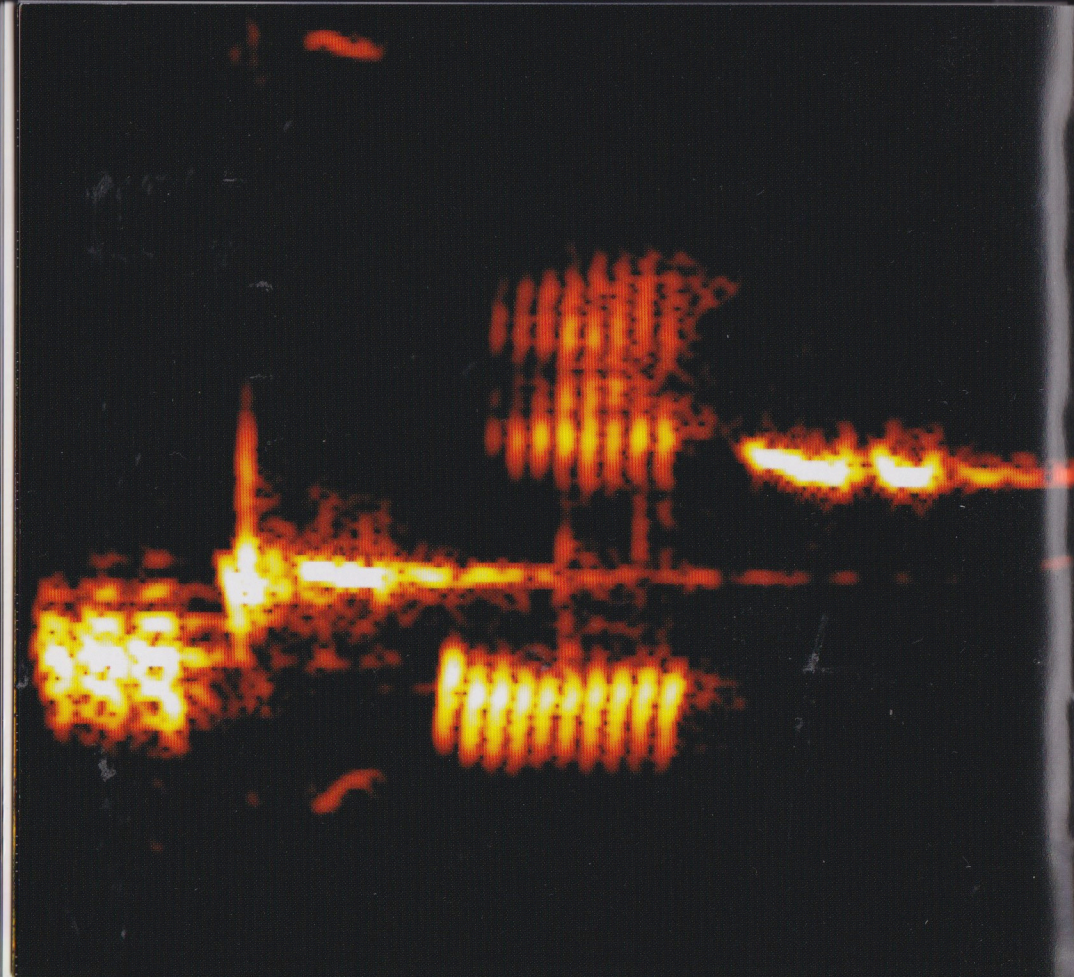
$\bullet = 112$

The musical notation for 'Georges Six' is presented on two staves. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a 4/4 time signature. The tempo is marked as 112. The melody consists of eighth and sixteenth notes, with a triplet of eighth notes marked with a '3' and a bracket. The second staff continues the melody, also featuring a triplet of eighth notes marked with a '3' and a bracket. The notation includes various accidentals (sharps, flats, naturals) and rests.

GREENS PARK, Georgetown: I recorded a bird in the dry Etheridge riverbed in 2015 for five consecutive days. In four of them, this energetic virtuoso of timbral tricks, large leaps, and combinatorics (including two phrases with harmonic implications convincingly paralleling eighteenth-century Western classical music) sang reliably from one songpost. Pull up, point the microphone, and wait—it's rarely so simple for me. Day three was more typical. I had to go running to stay close as s/he rotated among distant songposts outside the park.

Near dawn, the bird flew right over me and landed in a tree ten feet away. I was too close—perhaps for the bird, but definitely for my own sensibility. I turned down the input, but what I could not turn down was this virtuoso's high voltage presence. I took several steps back. The experience was larger than life, much as you might imagine a human soloist, who must project from the stage to the very back of an auditorium, suddenly being right there in your face. It took me back forty-plus years to when I accompanied conductor Walter Susskind to Henryk Szeryng's hotel room to hear a Paganini violin concerto. Szeryng was due to premiere it that week with the St. Louis Symphony. His virtuoso technique and the loud, luscious sound he made on his Guarneri del Gesù "Le Duc" were overpowering.





CD 2

1. OWEN SPRINGS RESERVE 2014 for vibraphone and field recording

Claire Edwardes, vibraphone

Based on a pied butcherbird nocturnal song recorded W of Alice Springs (5:20am, 27 Aug) and paired with the original recording.

This piece had its debut at the 2015 Tyalgum Festival where Jon Rose's Singing Up Tyalgum saw the entire main street resounding with pied butcherbird phrases, from a woodwind quintet and string quartet to a community band and an ad hoc choir, not to mention a found object percussion section.

2. CUMBERDEEN DAM: TEMA for violin and field recording

Hollis Taylor, violin

Based on a pied butcherbird nocturnal song recorded in the woods near Cumberdean Dam, Pilliga Forest, New South Wales in 2001 by

Jenny Beasley (4:30am, 22 Oct) and paired with the original recording. This is one of five movements in my suite for bassoon, *Cumberdeen Dam V & T*.

Avian performances often converge on sonic structures and behaviors familiar in human music, including features thought unique to it. While two or more bird-musicians may fuse their melodies into a single line to create a hocket, in another type of melody, a single musician alternates between high and low tones, pulling the melody apart and implying *two* lines. (Such a Gestalt grouping technique is found in the solo violin works of Biber and Bach.) The song suggests separate lines by means of large pitch jumps, creating what is termed a *compound melodic line* or *implied polyphony*.

I do not know whether this bird is attempting to infer the presence of two singers or is merely taking full advantage of contrast and balance so typical of pied butcherbird vocalizations.

3. ALICE SPRINGS: PALM @ RAGONESI for alto recorder and field recording

Genevieve Lacey, recorder

Based on a pied butcherbird nocturnal song recorded at Palm Place/Ragonesi Road in 2014 (6:10am, 1 Aug) and paired with Torresian crow recorded at the "Big Tree" at Ormiston Gorge, Central Australia in 2010 (8:20am, 15 Apr).

This was the first bird of the season in Alice to sing nocturnally in 2015, as far as we could determine.

4. ROE CREEK FLOW for vocal ensemble and field recording

The Song Company

The low opening theme is based on a pied butcherbird nocturnal song recorded by Gloria Glass at Gowrie Creek in 1999 (6:10am, 18 Aug). The avian chamber music partner was recorded at Honeymoon Gap, Alice Springs in 2010 (5:00am, 10 Sept), while the dawn songs in the final section were recorded there at 6:15am.

ROE CREEK at Honeymoon Gap, Alice Springs: Neuroscientist Constance Scharff has come from Berlin for a week of recording and study. We pull off the road several miles out of town by a small, dry creek. I've never recorded at this place, but with the immense river red



gums (so favored by pied butcherbirds) lining the creek and road, the place seems promising. Almost immediately, a bird begins to sing right where Scharff has pointed her microphone. We nod in silence, and I head off to record a more distant bird.

When the nocturnal song and dawn chorus end, something spectacular happens: a frothy brown foam, a bit like an enormous latté, starts to flow right at my feet. Over the centuries, Roe Creek has carved a gap in the soaring red sandstone cliff, but in my years coming here, I've only ever seen the dry "creek" as a place-marker for water.

With the dawn chorus complete, it's time for birds to feed—but no. Several species, including at least three pied butcherbirds, fly up to the few trees clinging to the cliff top and sing for ten minutes in an apparent jam session. It all works together.

5. DUARINGA TRAFFIC for violin and field recording

Hollis Taylor, violin

Based on a pied butcherbird nocturnal song recorded at Duaringa Town Park, Queensland in 2010 (5:00am, 9 Oct) and paired with the original recording.

18. BIRD-ESK for string quartet

James Cuddeford, violin; Hollis Taylor, violin; Erkki Veltheim, viola; Daniel Yeadon, cello

Based on pied butcherbird ensemble song recorded at Esk, Queensland in 2008 (throughout the morning, 5 June).

This group of 8—10 energetic singers disappeared in 2012. My extensive questioning of locals failed to come up with an explanation, and no conspecifics have claimed the prime territory six years' on. Also apparently gone—their superb singing tradition.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Compositions: All pieces (re)composed by Hollis Taylor except “Owen Springs Reserve 2014” by Hollis Taylor/Jon Rose.

Field recordings: All field recordings are from Hollis Taylor's archives except the following, used gratefully and with permission:

Tony Baylis (tawny frogmouth duet—CD 1, track 7); Jenny Beasley (pied butcherbird—CD 2, track 2); Vicki Powys and other Australian wildlife sound recordists giving their “ident” (CD 2, track 7); David Rentz (Mundurra balloon-winged katydid—CD 2, track 11); Jon Rose (outback fence and livestock auctioneer—CD 1, track 14; outback fence—CD 2, track 13); Andrew Skeoch (cicadas—CD 2, track 10); and Jane Ulman (various trucks and a car crossing a wooden bridge—CD 1, track 2; horses—CD 2, track 15).

Recordings: Jim Atkins recorded Genevieve Lacey in Melbourne. Jon Rose recorded Claire Edwardes at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music and Mike Majkowski in the Blue Mountains. Bob Scott recorded The Song Company at Trackdown Studios, Sydney. Joanne Cannon recorded herself in Melbourne. Jim Denley recorded himself outdoors in the Blue Mountains. Ros Dunlop recorded herself in Sydney. Hollis Taylor recorded herself in the Blue Mountains.

Production: Produced by Hollis Taylor; mixed and mastered by Bob Scott in Sydney.

Design: Graphic design by Glen Hannah, Studio Goonga.

For more about pied butcherbird vocalizations, see the book:

Is Birdsong Music? Outback Encounters with an Australian Songbird
(http://www.iupress.indiana.edu/index.php?cPath=1037_6355_9612)

Also see: www.hollistaylor.com
 www.piedbutcherbird.net
 www.zoömusicology.com

Photo credits:

- Front cover image: A singing pied butcherbird at Litchfield National Park, NT (Duade Paton 2014).
- CD and pocket image: “Flapper” in Maleny, QLD (Neil Boucher 2010).
- A pied butcherbird at Wogarno Station, WA (Chris Tate 2008).
- Hollis Taylor at Newhaven Bird Sanctuary, NT (Jon Rose 2010).
- Sunrise at the Hugh River, NT recording site (Hollis Taylor 2014).
- A pied butcherbird at Bribie Island, QLD (Robert Inglis 2011).



- A view along the Ross Highway, NT (Hollis Taylor 2016).
- A sonogram of a pied butcherbird phrase from Gibb River Road, WA, 1998.
- Roe Creek begins to flow at Honeymoon Gap, Alice Springs (Hollis Taylor 2010).
- Red quartzite cliff above Ilparpa Rd, Alice Springs (Hollis Taylor 2015).
- Ross River Resort campground recording site (Hollis Taylor 2009).
- A pied butcherbird at Miami Beach, QLD (Hollis Taylor 2010).
- A pied butcherbird at Miami Beach, QLD (Hollis Taylor 2010).
- A sonogram of a pied butcherbird phrase from Owen Springs Reserve, NT, 2016.
- Back cover image: The road in to Newhaven Bird Sanctuary, NT (Jon Rose 2010).

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absolute bird CD2