Aktuelles aus Forschung, Lehre, Wirtschaft, Medien etc.

Rede von George Dreyfus

**anlässlich der Verleihung des Bundesverdienstkreuzes Erster Klasse
am 25. Februar 2002 im Parliament House von Melbourne**

Border Crossing or the worst news is ...

I have always crossed borders, some times willingly some times unwillingly, crossing from Germany to England and then Australia in 1939, crossing from Australia to Italy and then back to Germany in 1954, and countless times thereafter, crossing the borders of musical styles with the greatest of ease. "Dreyfus empfindet keinen Bruch" to quote Berlin musicologist Dr. Albrecht Dümling. The worst news is that all this border-crossing has been an occasional rough ride, as soon you'll hear.

My brother Richard was working as finance writer on Sydney's *Mirror* Newspaper. In 1965 I crossed the border into N.S.W. to record the music for Tim Burstall's Children's Feature Film *Nullabor Hide Out*. Richard got me an interview with the *Mirror*'s arts writer, the worst news is the heading read "Schizophrenic Composer". Richard hit the roof, horrified, "schizophrenia is an illness", he shouted. I was unperturbed, after all what else could an artist be who wanted to keep himself alive in Australia solely by writing music, I had to split myself, do anything that came along.

Since then I have composed everything, from Schoenbergian high-art to popularist realism, just like Hanns Eisler, my much loved cultural hero. My border-crossings are amply illustrated in my list of works, orchestrally speaking my Symphonies cross with my Suites of Film Music, operatically speaking my operas cross with my Pram Factory inspired Musicals, chamber musically my high-art ideologically committed *Didgeridu Sextet* crosses with the light-hearted ditties of the *Galgenlieder*, even in my world of Concert Band the recently finished *Widersprüche*, music from my opera *Rathenau*, I wrote it as a thank you for having been made a member of the unutterably elitist *Walther Rathenau Gesellschaft*, just like Johannes Brahms wrote his *Academic Festival Overture* to say thank you for the great event, the honorary doctorate from the University of Breslau, just like Richard Wagner wrote his *Siegfried Idyll* to say thank you for the great event, the birth of his son by Cosima, perhaps I should have written a work for this afternoon's great event, come on George you could recycle a piece just like your cultural hero Hanns Eisler did so many times or do a quicky like this

He says he wrote it in 5 minutes, come on George!

What's holding you up!

My *Widersprüche* definitely crosses over the border with my popularist realist

which of course I have repeatedly proclaimed to be completely imbued with Brahms – Schoenbergian developing variation techniques (*Entwickelnde Variationen*), a real slice of Australian musical border-crossing, if there ever was one.

The worst news is that with all this border-crossing the serious music people only like my popular music.

"We can't play your symphonies; but the *Dimboola Water Music* will swallow well". And the popular music people only like my serious music, "the *Didgeridu Sextet* makes my spine tingle" says folk music improviser Peter O'Shea. All except Herr General Consul Hans-Michael Schwandt, who in his long career has crossed many borders. And here the best news is that he takes all of me and all of my music very seriously indeed, thank you Herr Schwandt for nominating me for this afternoon's great honour.

And not being satisfied with border-crossings form one style to the other in separate pieces.

The worst news is that with the song *When I get younger*, which I wrote together with pop-singer Deborah Conway – we collaborated for Australia's contribution to the International Year of Older Persons – the worst news is that my colleagues here thought nothing of it, but the German colleagues loved it.

"You are a smart cookie George", they all say,
 "Du bist doch ein toller Hecht, Georg", wirklich?

Surely there must be a message in all of this border-crossing. The worst news is: I never made any real money. My brother Richard never really thought much of that, but then he was a partner at A.C. Goode, sharebrokers, and subsequently close confidant of Frank Lowe, Westfield Shopping Centre magnate, a border-crossing if there ever was one, he's got his own Boeing 707.

Nonetheless, I have enjoyed every minute of my border-crossings, well, most of them, my Australian-American ones, my opera *Garni Sands* in New York 1975, my feature film *Tender Music* in New York 1983. And here comes the real good news, die wahren guten Nachrichten, my Australian-German border-crossings. I think back to the Kurorchester in Bad Hersfeld 1955, we played in the freezing cold at 8 o'clock in the morning

Alte Kameraden,

I think back to the simultaneous 50/50 Triumph and Zerriss of my opera *Rathenau* in Kassel 1993, I think back to the total, except for the prestigious *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, totalen Zerriss of my opera *Die Marx Sisters* in Bielefeld 1996.

The best news is that unperturbed by the Zerriss of *Die Marx Sisters*, the Bodelschwingh College in Bielefeld named after the famous 19th Century German educator, staged my children's musical *The Takeover* 1997 which encouraged the Else Lasker-Schüler College in Wuppertal, named after the famous 20th Century German poet, after 1933 vertrieben to Jerusalem, now a treasured daughter of her home town, to stage *The Takeovers* 1999.

I was vertrieben in 1939, lucky old me one could say, but perhaps now that I have been honoured with the Bundesverdienstkreuz, Erster Klasse, Wuppertal might name the Städtische Musikschule after me, or, wait for it, the Boroondara City Council might even name a street after me – we should not hold our breath.

And I think back to countless performances of any *Open House with George Dreyfus*, in Germany, it's the program of my very Australian film and television music, to think that I have by now played the music with innumerable German flautists and guitarists, and I am really pleased that one of them, Jochen Schubert is here this afternoon. And I think forward to the next round of performances of the *Open House*, in Glambeck on May 19, turn off from the Berlin-Stettin Autobahn at Joachimsthal, in Berlin-Marzahn on May 29th, catch the S Bahn Richtung Ahrensfelde and ...

I hope forward to the may-be concert, nothing finalized yet, at Daniel Liebeskind's prestigious, brand new Jüdisches Museum at the U Bahn Hallesches Tor, the *Kammerensemble Classic Berlin* will play a program of my earlier works, *Galgenlieder*, *Trio*, *Larino Safe-Haven*, *The Adventures of Sebastian the Fox*, narrated in German!

Perhaps Bundespräsident Johannes Rau will turn up, after all. He lives just around the corner in the Bellevue Palais, and he is a favourite son born in the city of Wuppertal – just like myself.

However, just in case, I genuinely request that you, dear Herr General Consul Hans-Michael Schwandt, convey my sincere thanks to Bundespräsident Johannes Rau for awarding me the prestigious honours of the Großes Deutsches Bundesverdienstkreuz, Erster Klasse.