



Victorian George's 2014 Travel Prize
Michael Grebla
14/07-20/07/14

Introduction

I was very excited to receive the Victorian Georgians Travel Bursary and am extremely grateful to the Victorian Georgians who made such a generous opportunity possible. I had a wonderful time staying with Campbell and Jill, and I am very grateful to them and Trinity for being such gracious hosts. I used my time in Victoria to get to know Melbourne, and having a number of colleagues in the area, I asked them to show me around some of their favourite places – I find that this is a good way to get to know the non-tourist places. Similarly, I am extremely thankful to Tim Richards for giving me such a great tour of the city. For me the most enjoyable part of the city is the food, in terms of variety, quality and affordability (and likewise for clothing). I had a few shopping goals while I was there, one of which was to get a new coat - and lucky I did since it was so cold!

The trip was also a great chance for me to make less recreational enquires. I took the opportunity to interview for vacation work at Marshall Day Acoustics, an acoustic engineering firm which designs concert halls and theatres - The range of specialities in the Melbourne office would not be seen in any Perth based firm. I also used the opportunity to visit the other colleges at the University of Melbourne, in the hopes of expanding the College's new intercollegiate piano competition into a national intercollegiate piano competition. I am pleased to say that of the colleges I spoke with, all were excited by the idea of participating and even willing to cover at least half the cost of a student participating. Following my stay in Melbourne I also visited Sydney, where the University of New South Wales and Sydney University had a similar enthusiasm.

The following report gives a day by day account of my time in Melbourne accompanied by photos I took during my travel.

Again, I am extremely grateful to the Victorian Georgians for giving me this opportunity, and I look forward to visiting again soon. Besides - who knows, if this job works out, I might end up being a Victorian Georgian!

Kind regards,

Michael Grebla

Day 1: The Red Eye

I arrived just before 6 am and in the name of saving money (which I did), I decided it would be better to take public transport to my place of residence rather than a cab. After some misinformation from the elderly Chinese man working at Central Station, and a completely incompetent internal compass, I got lost for some time before finding the correct tram. The tram driver, Italian - a lot more Italians in Melbourne, which I welcome - was incredibly cheery, boldly casting jokes across the PA. After two hours of non-consensual exploration of Melbourne (that's an exaggeration, it was closer to an hour after the bus ride from the airport) I finally arrived at Trinity College and found my way to the deanery where I would be staying.

Here is where I made my second mistake of the day. I thought it would be a good idea to put my head down for just a little while, setting alarms to make sure I didn't sleep through the first meeting of the day at 11:00, with the director of music at Trinity College... but alarms appeared ineffective as

I woke up only to a phone call at nearly 12:30. Oddly while asleep I was dreaming about doing shots, and when I woke I had a splitting hangover.... which is funny because I don't drink and I've never had a hangover in my life (clearly I am a lightweight if dreams get me hammered!).



In a daze, I stumbled my way to the administration block of the College for my second appointment of the day with the Dean - Campbell. We had lunch in the College's dining hall, a beautiful old hall not unlike St George's. Nachos were on the menu and despite not being a fan of Mexican food, I took some comfort in the consistency of quality between Trinity and George's, feeling right at home.

No sooner than clumsily finishing my nachos with knife and fork (recurring in my mind the George's Warden's scathing review of my dining etiquette), I had to dash to another meeting. As another part of my travels, I was playing played the role of 'violin mule' for a maker in Melbourne, returning a violin from the violin professor in UWA. It was an exhilarating opportunity, and a small part of me was hoping the case had been padded with cocaine so I would have a more adventurous time in airport security ("It's not mine I swear! I'm delivering it for a friend! I've never seen it before!" are

responses I had contemplated as my luggage was screened). Alas, it was not that exciting, as I met my contact at the drop point and simply delivered the goods.



With the clock still ticking I scrambled for my fourth engagement of the day - a job interview in Collingwood for the acoustics firm Marshal Day Acoustics. (Side note: the first shower after a plane trip is always so amazing, it's like liquid forgiveness). I suited up in my best and having learned my lesson after the mornings tram debacle I reluctantly coughed up for a cab. I arrived half an hour early which was a nice first for the day, and the interview went really well. For the first time in my life when applying for engineering job, I didn't feel like I was just ticking a box so I could graduate - and the engineering firm ACTUALLY valued my music studies. It seemed like a great fit, even more so as there would be opportunities for subjective research projects involving going out to great Melbourne venues like Hamer Hall, listening to several concerts and then conducting studies. The team seemed very supportive as well and it looks like a great opportunity for me to grow as an engineer (for someone who hardly ever travels, I am so glad I considered beyond WA for non-resources-related vacation work!). Hopefully something will eventuate.

I decided to walk back to college and see a bit of Melbourne. The walk was a bit over an hour and I soon learned that dress shoes are not conducive to recreational strolling. The rest of the day was not as eventful, save for a lovely dinner with the dean and an early night. I passed out at 9:30 with the light on and woke up at 1:30AM - despite efforts to the contrary I did not manage to fall asleep until 5:00AM. Remarkably, I managed to destroy my body clock with only a measly two-hour time difference - clearly I would not be well suited to the corporate life!

In conclusion, my advice for the red-eye flight: pay the extra \$40 for a non-red-eye flight!

Day 2: Exploring the City

While in Melbourne I had a few key shopping objectives given the limited variety and inflated pricing of Western Australia. It was my mission to find a new coat, a new pair of shoes and a new bag for uni. First, my day started with morning tea at Café Royale, just opposite Trinity College. I met with a musician from UWA, Ellie, a cellist who had performed in the College's concert series and who recently moved to Melbourne. (Many of my music colleagues end up living in Melbourne.) Ellie was kind enough to show me the conservatory and let me sit in on a rehearsal of her early music orchestra.

The rest of the day I spent exploring the city. What struck me about Melbourne was the huge amount of diversity in every respect. For a start Myers was huge! There was an entire floor devoted to just men's clothing! Also due to the population size, the city can support many more niche shops you just wouldn't see in Perth.

Similarly, there was a huge amount of cultural diversity, and what I found special about Melbourne is that the layout of the city allows for much of this diversity to be integrated with the CBD. I found no better example of this than Chinatown. The only equivalent of this we might have in Perth are parts of Northbridge, but again, it is still somewhat dislocated from the city center.

After some time wandering the city, I found a charming little dumpling shop for dinner. I'd actually never had Chinese dumplings before so I thought I would try something new and I'm glad I did! The serving was incredibly generous for the price, just \$8.90 for 16 dumplings. I wasn't sure how I would be able to finish them (but I did)! This was my first piece of evidence to support the notion that Melbourne had fantastic food and



was also much more reasonably priced.

As the sun had set, I started to find my way back to the number 19 tram to college and again was struck by the diversity of Melbourne. I encountered a group of Hare Krishna folk singing and dancing in jubilation on the street, inviting passersby to participate in the fun being had. For me this was quite a powerful experience. I had not seen anything like it in Perth. Also, it was the perfect example of not just cultural diversity in a city, but also integration. This kind of behavior was the norm and just another part of the city.



I retired to the deanery chuffed with my first impression of the city and planned out the following days of my stay.

Day 3: Intercollegiate Piano Competition – Patrick, Yang & Wicked

While in Melbourne, I took the opportunity to visit the heads of college from as many of the University of Melbourne Colleges as possible. It was my mission to expand the St George's College's Intercollegiate Piano Competition to a national piano competition. The warden of St George's College had already made some enquires on my behalf, as did the dean of Trinity College, though there was still a deal of cold calling to be done. To my delight, they were all very accommodating. Within 15 minutes of calling the principal of Janet-Clarke Hall, he shouted me his favorite Italian lunch, lasagna at Papa Gino's on Lygon St. On the way he walked me around college 'crescent' giving me a detailed account of the history of each College as well as advice on who and how to approach the proposal of an intercollegiate piano competition.



Later that day I met with Patrick Tong and Yang Xia, both Georgians now living in Melbourne, and asked them to show me their favorite parts of town - specifically, to show me some of their favorite parts of Chinatown. (*While in Melbourne I made a point of asking friends to show me their favourite parts their city.*) After freezing in the harsh Melbourne climate while waiting for Patrick to arrive (who lives in the CBD) we started exploring. Patrick and Yang first showed me to a 'Hot Pot' Chinese restaurant. I'll be honest, it was not something I have ever been a fan of but I was away from home and wanted to try new things. I had no idea whatsoever what I should order so I left it to Yang and Patrick. Soon enough there were multitudes of piles of shaved meats, mushrooms, and vegetables ready to boil. On the table was wagyu beef, drunken chicken (which were both great!) and tripe... which was not so great... but I am glad I was brave enough to try something new (even if it was a cow's stomach lining!)



Following dinner we wandered the city, deciding on how to spend the evening and we spontaneously agreed to see Wicked! We rushed to the theatre and managed to get discounted student tickets – it was a great way to spend the evening, not just because it was a great show, but also because

Patrick and Yang were the piano titans of College (and Yang was the winner of the intercollegiate piano competition). It was nice to bond over a musical event; the alternative was karaoke and I felt I had been adventurous enough that evening with the tripe!

After the concert we grabbed a quick bite from Hungry Jacks, and made our way back to Patrick's apartment in the city. At this point Yang had to leave to ensure he got the last train home. Patrick had a high rise apartment in the city with impressively sweeping views. Unfortunately I did not take a photograph from the balcony because I have a minor fear of heights, especially when on the 29th floor!

Having lost track of time it was already midnight and I was afraid of having missed the last tram home! I sprinted back to Elizabeth Street and luckily managed to catch the final tram at 12:20am.

Day 4: A day of tours

The day started with a meeting at Ormond College with the director of learning, Deb Hull. I am pleased to report that Ormond too was very interested in participating in a national intercollegiate piano competition at St George's and was willing to cover the costs for one or more students to participate! Deb also took the time to show me around the beautiful campus, which was immaculate and on a so much larger scale than St George's - home to more than 600 residents!

Next on the list was the walking tour of Melbourne (with a difference!) with Tim Richards. Tim, a Georgian, kindly spent his afternoon showing me around the CBD. As a local and a writer, he had a huge amount of knowledge about the history of the city. The tour helped me get my bearings for the parts of the city I had not yet seen, particularly all the laneways which was a world within the city most tourists wouldn't see.



The tour started in one of Tim's favourite coffee spots. The café was on the second floor of an old bank which had been converted and was only accessible from the laneway. The café was a little quirky as it also had workshops with large glass windows allowing café goers to see shoemakers and other craftsmen hard at work. After



being shown the ins and outs of the city, I parted ways with Tim at the old town square.



My next appointment was with a violinist from the Australian National Academy of Music, Isabel Hede. Isabel had spent some time in Perth during which she performed in the College's concert series. I was to meet Isabel under the clocks at Flinders station. I was a little early so took the opportunity to explore, and feeling a bit peckish, I stumbled on a stall selling churros at \$2.50 each. I paid for and I was given three generously-sized freshly made churros in a paper bag. I paused - she gave me more than I paid for, so I informed her I only ordered one - and she explained that it *was* one that had been broken into three. I was in disbelief. I've paid \$9 for something similar in Perth and it didn't taste anywhere near as good!



Shortly after I finished my churros, I met with Isabel. Isabel gave me tour of some of her favourite parts of the city as we looked for a spot for dinner. Isabel showed me to a place called Frenelli's which was the most upmarket restaurant at which I would eat dinner during my time in Melbourne. It was an Italian restaurant with Italian staff, and despite growing up in an Italian family I couldn't understand half of what was on the menu as it was far fancier than anything I would get at home - so I put myself at the mercy of the waiter and said surprise me! To my delight I received some kind of slow cooked lamb with mashed potato. It was delicious, but not particularly generously portioned.

After dinner, we trekked back to Isabel's car near Hamer Hall and made our way to the suburbs, a part of Melbourne I had not seen a great deal of. We stopped at a little gelateria on Lygon St that had a nightclub kind of vibe - I had never been anywhere like it.

We continued our exploration of the suburbs on foot while eating our ice cream. It was winter and the weather was not kind! It became apparent that ice-cream might not have been the best idea. Isabel threw hers away before

finishing because her hands were so cold she could barely hold it. My deep love of ice-cream helped me endure the cold to finish, despite some mild shivering. (In general Melbourne was MUCH colder than Perth.)

We continued to walk around Collingwood and Carlton with intermittent rain. Isabel explained the idea of 'gentrification' – a term I was until now not familiar with. She explained how many suburbs



had been 'cleaned up' and are now much fancier and trendy than they once were. She also explained how this was not the same with all suburbs and some were still in the process of being cleaned up - she said this while pointing out shoes that were flung over power lines in a dark alleyway, signalling a place where a drug exchange would take place.

After an informative and literally chilling tour of the suburbs we finally took shelter in a charming little pub in Fitzroy. Despite not being a drinker, I make a point of trying a local beer when I am away from home, so I had a 'pot' of Victoria Bitter! Isabel was kind enough to explain to me the different measures of beer in Melbourne compared to Perth and the rest of Australia, i.e the differences between pots, middy, schooners, pints, etc.

After a delightful evening in the pub, followed the cold trek back to the car in Carlton, Isabel was kind enough to drive me back to Trinity.

Day 5: Meetings, Lygon Street and Shopping

Campbell had been kind enough to put me in touch with the heads of colleges on college crescent. My morning started with a series of meetings with heads of college from Newman College and Queens College. Both were incredibly hospitable and helpful, again both keen to support the piano competition. The Master of Queens University invited me for lunch in their dining hall. As it was Friday, fish and chips was on the menu - a tradition of the college, which I found to have a happy consistency with St George's.

Following lunch with the Master I met up with a local who had recently completed a Masters in piano at the School of Music of UWA. Marco, also an Italian, showed me around Lygon Street and explained to me how Brunetti's was a quintessential part of the 'Melbourne experience'.



Not being a coffee person, I just signed up for whatever Marco was having. Unfortunately he was having a long macchiato and for someone who doesn't drink coffee, it tasted like percolated soot - and that was after a few teaspoons of sugar. The cannoli was great though!



After parting ways with Marco I headed to the city for late night shopping. Overwhelmed by variety and pricing, I managed to buy myself a new wardrobe of stylish Melbourne clothing. Here is a picture of me with my new get up in Sydney with my friend Alex (a Georgian who I was seeing off to New York where he will attend the Julliard School).



Day 6 – Melbourne Symphony – MH 17

This was my last full day in Melbourne. First on the agenda was the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra. I had booked a matinee of their Smetana's Ma Vlast at Hamer Hall. There was a minor incident at the ticketing desk where they couldn't find my ticket - which was a fright as in contrast to the food, the orchestra tickets in Melbourne were much more expensive than in Perth. The concert was wonderful though, the hall was impressive and it was quite exciting to think that I might have vacation work with the firm that designed the acoustics for the venue.



After the concert I headed back to the city centre to tie up a few loose ends. I had managed to find a coat but no shoes (I gave up on finding a bag). On my way back to the city centre though, I crossed the Princess Bridge - a few days earlier I had seen the large 'AIDS 2014' sign on the bridge, and not thought much of it. This time when I was passing it was very different. There were floral tributes and even news reports. Being on vacation I hadn't checked the news very often and briefly recalled something about a Malaysia airlines accident, assuming that it was referring to the search for MH370. As I walked further through the city to the old town square there was a demonstration by the Ukrainian community of Melbourne in front of St Paul's Cathedral Melbourne. It also doubled as a service of sorts as there was prayer and singing. The mood was sombre. I had



never experienced anything like this in Perth. While these events are disturbing and incredibly sad, you are never in the middle of it, you are always removed. In Melbourne however this was not the case – especially given the large contingent who were aboard the plane bound for the AIDS 2014 conference. I stayed for the service, and feeling a little deflated I went back home.



Day 7: Departing Melbourne

On Sunday morning I farewelled Trinity and the deanery. Unfortunately Campbell and Jill had to leave a few days prior. I hoped on the 19 tram to the city for the last time. Rushing around with my suitcase through the city I managed to pick up a few souvenirs I had spotted the day before. Having learned my way around the city, I was not as disorientated as when I first arrived, and managed to make my plane in a timely manner. It was a beautiful day to fly out and embark on the next leg of my journey: Sydney.

