

Complete Transcriptions for Piano and Vocal—“Weave” and Complete Piano and Vocal Transcriptions—“Mandarin Skyline”

By Leigh Carriage

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For a relatively small nation, Australia punches above its weight when it comes to producing world-class jazz vocalists, and Leigh Carriage is undoubtedly among their number. Based in Northern New South Wales, Leigh has a formidable reputation as a singer's singer—her flawless technique gives reign to a fully liberated freedom of expression, making her one of our greatest exponents of the vocal jazz art form. Leigh's 2014 release *Mandarin Skyline* is one of my all-time favourite vocal jazz albums. It features original compositions, some of which have entered the standard repertoire for other Australian jazz singers, such is the strength of Leigh's compositional abilities.

In addition to her creative work, Leigh is Senior Lecturer at Southern Cross University where she teaches into the contemporary music program. As a researcher, Leigh has a PhD from Sydney Conservatorium and has written for *Australian Voice* and is a regular contributor to *The Conversation* writing about contemporary music.

With all these strings to her bow, we can be grateful that Leigh has also now published two books which showcase her original compositions and vocal transcriptions for her most recent releases, *Weave* (2016) and *Mandarin Skyline* (2014). By providing melody, chords, lyrics, and transcriptions of improvised elements of the recordings, both books provide rare insight into the creative processes of the jazz singer-composer. Simple and tastefully rendered piano accompaniment is also included, so the publications are complete songbooks for those wanting to explore both the piano and vocal aspects of these wonderful recordings. Carriage's books remind me of the beautiful work of American singer Meredith d'Ambrosio, who has produced transcription books accompanied by her own art works.

While professional jazz and contemporary musicians may be equipped to produce transcriptions of recordings such as these, many non-professionals may struggle to hear and articulate what is happening musically in these jazz art songs. It is for this reason that these transcriptions make such a valuable and unique contribution to our understanding of Leigh's creative process. The books will be an appreciated addition to any singer's library and will be of great use to singing teachers seeking to unlock some of the mysteries of jazz singing and composition for their students. Using these books in conjunction with the recordings would provide a rich learning experience for students by listening to the stylistic elements captured in recordings (such as subtleties of phrasing and rhythm) which are difficult to reproduce on the page.

Both books are beautifully presented complete with artwork reminiscent of the original recordings, making them not only incredible practical learning resources for singers and teachers, but aesthetically pleasing works of art. My only critique of the books is that the binding does not lend itself easily to being used at the piano—but this is certainly a minor point.

Leigh Carriage's books of complete transcriptions make an important contribution to the Australian Jazz canon as a written representation of the work of one of our leading jazz singers. Not only are these books works of art in and of themselves, they contribute new knowledge as creative *research*, revealing in new ways the beauty, complexity, and nuance of a jazz singer/composer at the height of her powers.

Carriage, L. (2021). *Complete Transcriptions for Piano and Vocal: “Weave.”* Wagtail Books.

Carriage, L, (2021). *Complete Piano and Vocal Transcriptions: "Mandarin Skyline."* Wagtail Books.

BIOGRAPHY

Melissa Forbes is Associate Professor (Contemporary Singing) at the University of Southern Queensland. Melissa is a singing practitioner-researcher who researches the lived experience of singing across a broad range of contexts, from elite, professional singers to community groups. Her research uses qualitative methods to position singing as a unique health and wellbeing practice from which all can benefit.