

Hollis Taylor Concerts and Lectures

Concert: Songs of the Australian Pied Butcherbird for Violin & Field Recordings

Come immerse yourself in the sound world of another species! In an area dominated by zoölogists, violinist/composer Hollis Taylor is the rare musician with an enduring devotion to and passion for a single species of songbird, the pied butcherbird. She spends hundreds of hours each year recording their songs, particularly in Alice Springs and Far North Queensland. These recordings form the basis of detailed birdsong analysis, but she has also created a body of (re)compositions based on her transcriptions. Her works for solo violin (and many other instruments) and field recordings do not aspire so much to improve on these birdsongs as celebrate and illuminate them.

Lecture: The Music of Nature and the Nature of Music

Is musicality a capacity we share with other species? Do non-human animals display aesthetic preferences? Is birdsong music? Through photographs, movies, and recordings, this fast-paced lecture draws on extensive fieldwork to provide some compelling answers. The lecture has been delivered worldwide, including in Paris, Berlin, Monte Verita (Switzerland), Utrecht, Cornell University (New York), Sheffield, Helsinki, Sydney (including the Australian Museum), the Blue Mountains, the Alice Springs Desert Park, and Perth.

Lecture: The Recombinatorial Vocalisations of the Australian Pied Butcherbird

The pied butcherbird (*Cracticus nigrogularis*) is considered a well-known Australian songbird, but until my research, no peer-reviewed paper had examined this species' vocalizations. Multi-individual group song is diurnal and delivered most abundantly in the autumn. These antiphonal songs typically consist of four to eight motifs (or sub-units)—and some consist of many more, part doubling is common, and the order of motifs often appears to be flexible. In the spring, nocturnal solo “long songs” may last up to six hours. Many of these long songs are distinguished by significant recombinatorial manipulation. To date, no two solo singers share all the same phrases, and most solo songs differ significantly one from another. These long songs hold potential in a search for formal rules governing sequential order and other structural attributes. The species is also an accomplished mimic. In this informal presentation, I will discuss and demonstrate the recent avenues I am pursuing to analyze pied butcherbird abilities to combine and recombine song units. I will include highlights of audio and video from my eight years of research.

Lecture: The Pied Butcherbird, the Music of Nature, and the Nature of Music

Is birdsong music? Pied butcherbirds, with their significant commonalities with human music, put pressure on music's definition. While the species is considered well-known, until my research, no peer-reviewed paper had examined their vocalizations. In this presentation, I will discuss and demonstrate the avenues I am pursuing to analyze pied butcherbird songs, especially their abilities to combine and recombine song units in their nocturnal long songs. It will include highlights of audio and video from my nine years of research.

CV Notes: Hollis Taylor is a violinist/composer and ornithologist whose compositions have won numerous awards. Her dissertation, *Towards a Species Songbook: Illuminating the Song of the Australian Pied Butcherbird (Cracticus nigrogularis)*, straddles the fields of zoömusicology, ornithology, and composition. Currently a Senior Research Fellow at Macquarie University, she formerly held research

fellowships at Macquarie University, the University of Technology Sydney, the Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle in Paris, and the Institute for Advanced Study in Berlin. She performs her (re)compositions of pied butcherbird songs on violin along with various outback field recordings, and she also writes birdsong-based works for other musicians and instruments. Her concerto for recorder virtuoso Genevieve Lacey premiered with the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra and will be performed by the London Sinfonia in 2019. Her double CD, *Absolute Bird*, was released in 2017. Taylor is webmaster of www.zoömusicology.com and author of *Is Birdsong Music? Outback Encounters with an Australian Songbird* and *Post Impressions: A Travel Book for Tragic Intellectuals*, which documents (in text, audio, and video) Jon Rose and her bowing fences throughout Australia. For more information, see www.hollistaylor.com, www.zoömusicology.com, and www.piedbutcherbird.net