

## BIOGRAPHY (1770 words)

Peggy Winsome Glanville-Hicks, composer and critic, was born on 29 December 1912 at St Kilda, a suburb of Melbourne. Her father, Ernest Glanville-Hicks, was a journalist and former clergymen as well as an amateur poet (his *Songs of a Season, With an Odd Verse or Two* was published in Rotorua in 1911). Her mother, Myrtle, née Barley, was the daughter of a New Zealand clergyman, an amateur singer and artist. Peggy was educated at Milverton and Methodist Ladies' College in Melbourne, and then at Clyde school in Woodend before commencing composition studies with conductor and composer Fritz Hart at the Albert St Conservatorium. In 1932, after a farewell concert in the Town Hall on 2 June, she undertook further study at the Royal College of Music in London. For four years she was the recipient of the Carlotta Rowe scholarship, studying composition with R.O. Morris and Ralph Vaughan Williams, conducting with Malcolm Sargent and piano with Arthur Benjamin. Her early student works include the opera *Caedmon* (to her own libretto after Bede's *Historia Ecclesie Gentis Anglorum*), music for films and a *Spanish Suite* inspired by a visit to Grenada in 1935. In 1936 she was awarded the Octavia Travelling Scholarship and commenced studies with Egon Wellesz in Vienna before abandoning them at the end of that year in favour of study with Nadia Boulanger in Paris. After intermittent studies with Boulanger in 1937 she returned to London and then, briefly, to Australia in 1938. At the festival of the International Society for Contemporary Music in London on 20 June 1938 she attended the performance of two movements from her "Suite for female voices, oboe and strings" (*Choral Suite*). Also on the programme were Britten's *Variations on a Theme of Frank Bridge*, Bartók's Sonata for Two Pianos, Percussion and Celesta and a work by the Czech woman composer Vitezslava Kapralova. Glanville-Hicks was the first Australian to have a work performed at the ISCM; *Choral Suite* was recorded and published by Editions de l'Oiseau-Lyre in Paris, the publishing enterprise of another Australian, Louise Hanson-Dyer. On 9 November 1938 Glanville-Hicks married fellow composer Stanley Richard Bate (born 12 December 1911) and at the outset of the war she acted as assistant conductor, copyist and general hand for his ballet company, Les Trois Arts. Illness and disability prevented Bate enlisting and in May 1940 the couple travelled to Melbourne, where Bate was to teach composition at the Albert St Conservatorium. In the midst of scandal Bate left the conservatorium and they moved to Sydney with a view to emigrating to the USA. Sponsored by Nadia Boulanger, they arrived in Los Angeles on 19 April 1941 and travelled via Chicago to New York.

Over the next six years Glanville-Hicks and Bate lived in poverty and disharmony as they struggled to find work and obtain performances. At the beginning of 1946 Glanville-Hicks left Bate and in the following year—when she reviewed the meeting of the ISCM in Copenhagen for *Musical Courier*—she embarked on a career as a critic and commentator on modern music. Virgil Thomson, then editor of the *New York Herald Tribune*, employed her as stringer for that paper, the first of her 500 reviews appearing on 27 October 1947. In the 1940s she also contributed pieces to *Music & Letters* (on Paul Bowles), to *Musical America* (on John Cage) and to *Musical Quarterly* (on Thomson). In 1948 she travelled to the ISCM festival in Amsterdam, where her *Concertino da Camera* (1945) was performed. In 1950 she embarked on a 33-lecture tour of mid-West universities, a venture she had no inclination to repeat. In 1949 she became an American citizen and obtained a divorce from Bate; she subsequently married Rafael da Costa,

an Austrian-Israeli journalist, on 4 January 1952. They divorced a year later. Her career at the *Tribune* ended with the end of the 1954–55 New York season when music criticism in that city went into a period of decline and adjustment.

The decade of the 1950s brought Glanville-Hicks to prominence as a composer of “exotic” music, an advocate for percussion and modality, for cross-fertilisation with Middle Eastern and Eastern (especially Indian) music, and as a “catalyst” for the performance of new music. Her most performed work, a sonata for harp, was premiered by Nicanor Zabaleta in Caracas in 1951 and in New York in 1952, and was followed by concerted works for Carlo Bussotti (*Etruscan Concerto*, 1954), harpist Edna Phillips Rosenbaum (*Concertino Antico*, 1955) and violist Walter Trampler (*Concerto Romantico*, 1956). Since the late 1940s she had been compiling entries on American composers for the next edition of *Grove’s Dictionary*, edited by Eric Blom; on publication in 1954 the dictionary included 98 articles on American and Scandinavian composers written by Glanville-Hicks. From 1951 to 1960 (with the exception of the 1955–56 season) Glanville-Hicks acted as indefatigable organiser of the Composers’ Forum, an enterprise administered by the most eminent New York composers sponsored by the New York Public Library and philanthropic foundations. Glanville-Hicks was responsible for arrangements for mostly first performances of works by promising young American composers in seven or eight concerts each season. At various times she was a member of the boards of the Music Critics Circle of New York, the League of Composers and the American Composers Alliance. She was also a member of the junior council of the Museum of Modern Art which, at her initiative, promoted concerts at the museum including the premiere of her *Letters from Morocco*, conducted by Leopold Stokowski, on 22 February 1953.

In 1953 Glanville-Hicks was awarded an American Academy of Arts and Letters grant. Over that summer, while composing her opera *The Transposed Heads* in Jamaica, she was offered a commission to complete it by the Louisville Philharmonic Society through the Rockefeller Foundation, the first such commission for an American woman. *The Transposed Heads*, its libretto by the composer based on a novella by Thomas Mann, demonstrated her interest in the melodies and rhythms of Indian music and exemplifies her departure from the “dictatorship” of diatonic harmony. The opera was premiered in Louisville, conducted by Moritz Bomhard, on 3 April 1954 (in the same week as the premiere of Copland’s opera *The Tender Land* in New York), and then in New York on 10 February 1958. Once Glanville-Hicks’s appointment to the *Herald Tribune* ended in summer 1955 she was dependent on grants and commissions to fund her composition, now focused on opera and on the fusion of Eastern and Western compositional methods. With the award of a Guggenheim for 1956–57, and at the suggestion of Carl Haverlin, she composed *The Glittering Gate*, a “curtain raiser” based on the short play by Irish playwright Lord Dunsany. It was performed in New York on 14 May 1959 as prelude to a performance of Lou Harrison’s *Rapunzel*. Plans for additional operas to texts by Thornton Wilder, Wallace Stevens, Jean Cocteau and Freya Stark did not reach fruition, although some of the librettos survive, as do fragments of a projected libretto for Egyptian composer Halim El-Dabh. The Guggenheim was renewed in 1957, enabling Glanville-Hicks to travel to Greece for the first time in 1958 (via the first Spoleto festival) to research the composition of her next opera, *Nausicaa*, to a libretto devised by the composer and Alastair Reid based on *Homer’s Daughter*, a novel by Robert Graves depicting autobiographical scenes from the life of the

mythical Nausicaa. It was Graves's proposition, which Glanville-Hicks endorsed, that the author of the *Odyssey* was a woman such as the Nausicaa he portrayed. Over the next four years Glanville-Hicks travelled back and forth from New York to Greece sponsored by a Rockefeller grant "to study relations among musical forms in the West, the Middle East and Asia," and a Fulbright award to conduct research into the traditional music of Greece. Most of 1961, however, was committed to arrangements for the performance at the Athens Festival that summer of *Nausicaa*, starring the young Canadian soprano Teresa Stratas. The successful production of *Nausicaa*, premiered on 19 August 1961 in the newly refurbished Herodes Atticus theatre, represented the pinnacle of her career, drawing praise for its fidelity to Greek folk music, for the lyrical beauty of the music for Nausicaa herself, and for "ingenious" orchestration. But it left Glanville-Hicks in considerable debt and, in her determination to leave the "rat-race" of New York for Greece, with little prospect of further income. With the aid of her inheritance from her parents (and the astute management of her investments by Melbourne broker Sir Ian Potter) she purchased houses on Mykonos and in Athens, planning to rent one or other of them to fund her "retirement."

Projected performances of *Nausicaa* at the Liceo in Barcelona and in US houses did not eventuate. In 1963, however, Glanville-Hicks received a commission from the San Francisco Opera, aided by a Ford Foundation grant, to compose an opera to a libretto derived from Lawrence Durrell's play *Sappho*, recently premiered at the Edinburgh Festival. The opera was composed to a punishing schedule and under the strain of failing eyesight, and although San Francisco applauded its "beautiful use of the English language" it was not produced and the composer remained unhappy with it. Her major works of the 1960s were ballets, devised in conjunction with New York-based choreographer John Butler, including *Saul and the Witch of Endor* (1959), *Jephthah's Daughter* (1966) for CBS-TV and *Rimbaud* (also known as *A Season in Hell*) for the Harkness Ballet. After years of headaches and deteriorating eyesight, on 1 June 1966 Glanville-Hicks underwent surgery in New York for a pituitary tumour, which required further surgery on 1 April 1969. The illness and its aftermath robbed her of the ability to compose and was to undermine her health for the remainder of her life.

In 1970 *The Transposed Heads* was performed in Sydney and in 1972 *The Glittering Gate* was performed at the Adelaide Festival (the works were heard jointly at the 1986 Festival). Glanville-Hicks returned permanently to Sydney in November 1975, her affinity with the Asian inspirations of younger Australian composers leading to a position as Consultant for Asian Music Studies at the Australian Music Centre. On 2 May 1987 she was awarded an honorary doctorate by the University of Sydney. She died in Sydney on 25 June 1990 and in her will bequeathed her house in Paddington as a residence for Australian composers.