



Source: AP, 'Iran silences Western music', *The Australian online*, 21/12/05.

Tags: [workplace](#)

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I'm sitting in my office...the door is open wide to the Perth midday light...the splashing sound of the jet in the fish-pond intersects with that of the whirring jetliner above me...very far above me...as it threads the distance once again from here to god knows where. This is the last day of the academic year and somewhere on the lawns on the other side of this building the Vice Chancellor is farewelling the staff.

I leave for Melbourne tomorrow morning at 6.00 a.m. to see my family for Christmas. I'm looking around the office at the gathering of papers and books and artefacts on shelves and tables...photographs of my parents and grandchildren...rolls of bubble wrap...boxes of slides piled on the lightbox...stacks of not-yet-paintings jammed between filing cabinets...Norton's Xmas bottle of wine still wrapped in gold gift paper. My mobile has seven unanswered messages on it and the red light on the office phone blinks insistently. I have 17 unopened email messages and a list of things to do before 2.00 p.m. that extends to the bottom of the page in my diary.

The big green leaf of the water plant stirs slightly with the first hint of the Fremantle Doctor. I'm going to miss all this I know. Derek calls to ask me if the Circle Cafe is still open. He wants a sandwich. I say, 'Yes it's still open.' 'Good', he says. And then, 'You know those tongs? They're

Melinda's.' 'I'll let her know', I say. And he says, 'Maybe I'll put a ribbon round them and give them to her tonight!'. I laugh.

I think of the perennial silence in my back garden, and the way the bougainvillea scratches its way through windy nights on the iron roof like the intimate talk of a never-heard animal. One morning, opening the car door, I waved tentatively at my elderly Italian neighbour while she was watering her front garden. Her son came out on the verandah and said '*Buongiorno*,' in a booming voice. 'How's the restaurant?' he said. 'What restaurant?' I answered. 'Don't you own a restaurant?' he replied. 'No', I said, 'I work at the university.' 'Ohhh,' he said, 'What do you teach *professore*?' 'Art,' I said sheepishly, knowing full well that this does not constitute the real thing. 'Aaaah,' he said. 'Well, is it classic or fine?' Surprised, I replied, 'both: classic and fine.' And then in a vain attempt to clarify this a little more, I added with emphasis, 'Both, fine and classic...' 'In that case,' he replied, 'In that case, if it's fine and classic then it's *buongiorno maestro*!' His mother looked up and smiled. I did too...and tooted the horn once as I drove up Chatsworth Road towards the light shining above the trees in Beaufort Street.

*Adapted for performance by Barbara Campbell from a story by Domenico de Clario.*