Sydney Elizabethan Trust Orchestra

The Sydney Elizabethan Trust Orchestra, William Reid, conductor.

Late in 1967 I was continuing lessons with Charles Gray, who was by then principal bass for the Sydney Elizabethan Trust Orchestra, which was providing orchestral resources to the national opera and ballet companies. He suggested I have a lesson during an orchestral break at the Regent Theatre[1] where the orchestra was rehearsing with the **Australian Ballet.** I arrived at the theatre 10 minutes before the conclusion of the rehearsal. After checking I had my bow with me, Charles took me into the pit and offered me his double bass. He then advised I was to audition for members of the orchestra, including the concertmaster (leader), conductor and one other. Charles had always imparted to me the necessity to be ready to play at any time on any instrument which he suggested would be the norm when I entered the classical music profession. Although a little shaken, I was as ready as I could be for the occasion and was asked to play sections from the bass part on the music stand selected at random by the concertmaster

1 Regent Theatre, George St, Sydney, 2000 seats, designed by Cedric Ballantyne, opened March 1928, closed May 1984, demolished 1988. Was mostly a cinema, a Hoyts 'picture palace', but also hosted performances of musicals, opera, ballet and other stage shows.

and Charles. I played for about 15 minutes after which Charles asked if I wished to have a job with the orchestra. Although this meant resigning from the National Training Orchestra, I jumped at the opportunity to learn and understand the opera/ballet repertoire. I joined the Trust Orchestra in November 1967, remaining with either the Sydney or Melbourne orchestra until 1972 when I left for England. In that time I was exposed to a wide range of operatic and ballet repertoire and conducting experience from the many conductors engaged by the Australian Ballet and the Elizabethan Theatre Trust Opera Company, as it was then known.[2]

The Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust had established its first 45 member **Opera Ballet Orchestra** in April 1967 which gave its first performance on 20th May. When I joined it later that year I knew nothing about the Trust or the orchestra until I received my letter of employment and realized the identity of my employer. My educational and social influences in the past had never, to my knowledge, been interested in the work the Trust had been doing so I was unprepared for the artistic and administrative structure to which I would be exposed as a player in the next five years. Like many of my colleagues, I was incredibly naive about the arts in those days. Today, twenty-three year olds are well informed and educated about the cultural structures and organizations in Australia.

Charlie Gray was principal of the double bass section and there were two rank and file bass players. Charlie was leaving the Orchestra to return to his Coffs Harbour farm, which was why a position became available and why he had arranged my audition. I was young, had very little professional orchestral experience and my background professionally had been playing jazz and theatre music, musical comedy or revue. I came in at the deep end, completely unprepared technically, with a huge learning curve before me. Charlie left and one of the existing players assumed the position of principal. He was not an experienced principal but was a reliable rank and file player. They needed a good principal in the section.

I came in for that first season and had to cope with getting my technique to a level where I could function as expected by the conductors. That expectation was high.

Addressing the Issue of Standards

From comments, in the Trust's correspondence files, between the orchestra conductors and the Trust management it is clear the constant problem was one of standards, how to improve these and solve the problem of existing members of the Orchestra who were below standard. They were directed at specific players and were clearly very important. Much later, I found a note about myself, probably about a month after I joined the Orchestra, from a ballet conductor who had been asked to appraise certain orchestra members and I was one of them. He had judged

2 Elizabethan Theatre Trust Opera Company established in 1956, became The Australian Opera in 1970 and subsequently Opera Australia, as it is known today.

my technique to be inappropriate, my rhythm and musicianship not good, but added that I was a young player and would probably improve! I hope I did improve fast. I think I was able to fulfill the expectation within that season.

However, none of this was conveyed to me. Fifty years later I found this out for the first time. It should have been conveyed. It might have helped but maybe not; it depends on my mental attitude and psychological approach to it. I was young and probably open to guidance if it had been delivered as guidance rather than criticism and from what I read, the style of comment was critical rather than positively helping players to improve but that criticism was often justified. One member of the wind section constantly played out of tune. She should have been pitching against the overall sound of the wind section as led by the leader. The consequence was a pitch problem within the section. File notes over the first year or two of the orchestra indicate that pitch was a cause of agitation in the wind section and a cause for players to be distressed enough to consider leaving, given there was no apparent solution. There is always a solution. William (Bill) Reid[3] was not officially the musical director but he was employed by the Australian Opera as a conductor and was advising the Trust on orchestral matters along with other conductors. His view was that inadequate players should be removed but replacements were not easy to find. The other view was that if that person went, so too would the partner, meaning loss of half the wind section. It was hard enough to get satisfactory players prepared to take on the engagement without adding more fuel to that fire. This problem for Trust management lasted for probably the first ten years of the Orchestra, until 1976 when Bill Reid was finally appointed Artistic Director of the Orchestras. There had never been a policy or methodology established to solve it. What was in play at that time was the Musicians' Union approach to the Orchestra. The management of its members was more one of concern for the solidarity of the players, security of their employment and bettering employment conditions. The Musicians' Union probably did not see the orchestra as a serious career option for members. They thought career options for classical musicians were the ABC Orchestras. They had been working on the ABC Orchestras for years and had an award reflecting Union objectives of achieving the best conditions. I do not think they had the same view of the Trust Orchestra. They were Union members and bound by an industrial award to which the Union was respondent so they had the responsibility to administer the Union aspect. One of their policies, problematic early in the piece, was one preventing any member of the Orchestra criticizing another member. This rule was handed down from the Union to the Orchestra; you cannot criticize colleagues.

3 William Reid (c.1928-?) English conductor, came to Australia aged 40 in 1967 to work for the Elizabethan Trust Opera Company. Had been a repetiteur with the Carl Rosa Opera Company, then musical director of Sadler's Wells Opera for the company's first visit to Australia with *The Merry Widow* in 1960. He was then conductor for the London Festival Ballet. Initially trained as a scientist and worked for the *Anglo-Iranian Oil Company*.


Maestro Carlo Felice Cillario, conductor.

You could tell the conductor, musical director or leader about problems, but you could not say someone played out of tune, too fast or not in time because that was criticism. The Musicians' Union frowned on that and refused to let people formally give an opinion on another's playing. Hard to believe since this was an organization entirely dependent on each other for its success. Each section worked against another section within the musical score, each player worked with or against another player to get an effect, an outcome— and especially this was the case for brass and wind players—the wind section itself had to work together as a team. If there was a problem within the wind section, the aim would be to solve it internally but sometimes you would have to call on an outside pair of ears to be objective. The Union frowned on that. There was concern about the quality of the Orchestra. There were conductors who were frustrated about certain players and showed it at rehearsals, and at times during performances. They could complain to orchestral management and hope something would be done. They could also follow up on this. Within the Orchestra itself during rehearsals there were often comments directed to a particular player. Maestro Carlo Felice Cillario[4] was conducting a Puccini work and there was an oboe solo. The oboe sound was raucous and was not the correct sound. In frustration in the middle of the rehearsal Cillario yelled at the top of his voice, 'Oboe, why you play so horrible?' This in his broken English and Italian inflection while his body language and gesture confirmed his distaste.

Sometime during the first couple of years, Keith Kersey, Federal Secretary of the Union, released a memorandum to the Trust about the necessity of having a Standards Committee. He advocated two elected members from the Orchestra be positioned at auditions; a complete contradiction to what had happened previously. There were mixed messages coming to the Orchestra from the Union and management. There was no doubt everyone was confused. No clear guidelines were in place. This was the reality of being pioneers. It is understandable that players were critical of the Trust. I was not vocal about it as I was too concerned to improve my own work. It was obvious from day one there should have been an artistic director appointed, followed by an orchestra leader. Normally these two would work together and decide who should hold principal positions. If they could not find available people, they would work out how to find players and get them into the orchestra. That is standard orchestral artistic practice which any good musical director would have adopted. Also, no rank and file positions should be appointed until principals were in place, because with principals come the sound and quality of the orchestra. The unknown would be how they would work together as a collective sound but individually there is a pretty good chance of getting it right with careful selection at the beginning. None of that happened. The orchestra started with a leader, Maurice Stead, from the

4 Carlo Felice Cillario (1915-2007), Argentinian born Italian conductor, began conducting in Australia in 1968 with the Australian Opera, becoming principal guest conductor with Opera Australia in 1988 until his retirement in 2003. Some of his surviving music scores are in Opera Australia's Library.

In 1965 Joan Sutherland performed in J.C. Williamson's theatres throughout Australia and New Zealand in a sell-out season featuring *Lucia di Lammermoor, Faust, La Traviata, La Sonnambula* and *Semiramide*, conducted by Richard Bonynge with a young, comparatively unknown tenor, Luciano Pavarotti, in the company.

New Zealand tour of the **Sutherland-Williamson Opera Company**. He was a very good leader, outstanding player and useful advocate for both musicians and management.

The Role of an Artistic Director

Maurice should have had a musical director with a policy for the orchestra in relation to its ballet and opera work. The most important thing a director would have done would have been to consider whether the establishment of the orchestra was satisfactory for the work intended. The establishment was forty-five musicians (not accounting for rostering, which turned out to be an absolute essential when we discovered the qualities of the pit and their working environment. At that stage no-one knew that). With these numbers a Mozart opera would be possible, but not Puccini or Verdi, which was the lifeblood and core workload of such an orchestra. The orchestra as funded was inadequate to take on that role, so the artistic director would have to be strong and influential enough to make sure the Trust/government funded at least sixty players to cover basic needs; sixty-nine preferably, for rostering purposes, and extra players could have been supplemented from time to time. That would have been more realistic. For nearly ten years the wind section was short one player whereas all the others had full complement. The Trust made an error of judgment in not making sure there was a good artistic director from day one. George Humphrey, trainer and conductor of the student orchestra at Sydney Conservatorium, was competent enough to fill the role and there were others. They could have imported someone if necessary. Humphrey was a solid musician, technically proficient. He was in his late fifties with a lot of experience preparing orchestras. He knew all of the new students coming forward from Sydney, had conducted operas and would have been a perfect person to understand the musicians' capabilities and potential. If Bill Reid had conducted more he would had the opportunity for hands-on appraisal of the musicians under working conditions. He was limited to visiting rehearsals conducted by others, where he had no input and he could not test the Orchestra, so he was frustrated. That was the other aspect of the artistic direction which was ignored for a long time. Had there been strong artistic direction from day one, nearly all the concerns the *Tribe Report*[5] rightly identified in 1986 would not have existed. It appeared the ABC was not interested in collaboration with the Trust over the orchestras, which might have helped standards, although they worked together on projects such as the foundation of the **National Institute of Dramatic Art (NIDA)**. The ABC orchestras had heavy concert program workloads and appeared relieved not to have to work with ballet and opera companies. With the introduction of ABC simulcasts of opera from the Sydney Opera House in the late 1970s, there was a working relationship and no doubt the ABC recognized the Trust Orchestras as a

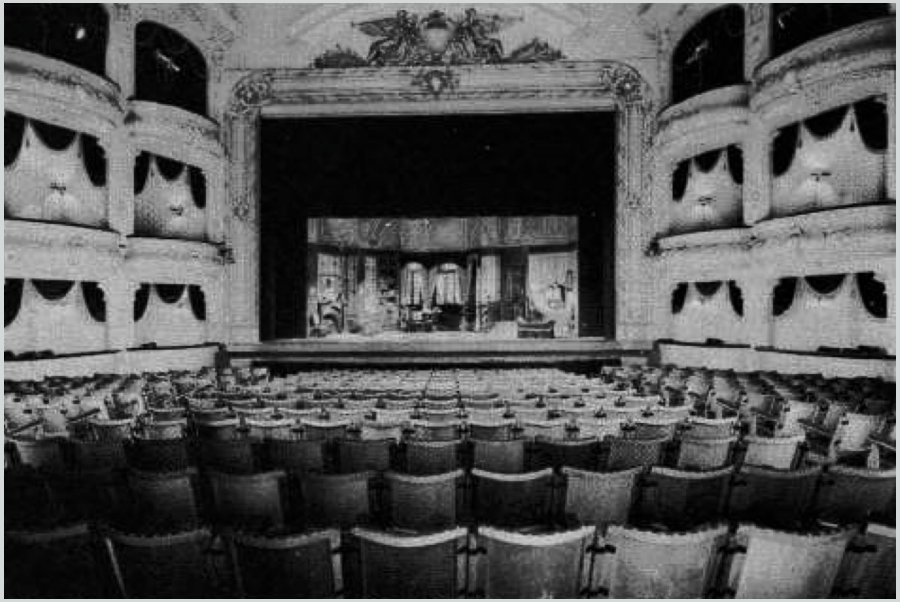
5 See Chapter Six.

platform for young and experienced musicians and a source of experienced musicians for their own orchestras. Certainly players did come from the ABC into the Trust orchestras and there was movement between orchestras. There was another concerning aspect for Trust orchestra musicians: no real recognition of the players. I can remember a time when the Australian Ballet did not name orchestral players in their programs. Complaints were considered to be a nuisance but eventually the issue was resolved and the orchestra was listed. The Trust seemed too busy to give us much public recognition. It had an **Opera Company, the Ballet, NIDA, the Trust Players and the Young Elizabethan Players**, state theatre companies in most states; and was about to begin a superannuation fund, had a costume hire department and rental facility for lighting and props and an entrepreneurial role. The orchestras received a government grant to cover 100% of their costs, which meant the Trust did not technically have to do anything. It did not have to be concerned about their profile because the program of work with opera and ballet was full-time. The Trust saw the orchestras as services to companies responsible for their artistic side, since they were planning repertoire and performance schedules.

My mythical artistic director, once principals and rank and file musicians were in place, would have looked at the amount of pit work and touring with ballet and opera repertoire and recognized the need to plan against burn out and loss of good players to the ABC, by seeking better conditions and opportunities for concert performances. Morale can be boosted by creating opportunities for the orchestra to function in its own right as an artistic music-making body. There may have only been one opportunity a year but that should have been musically intense, attractive to the players but within their capability, not asking them to do something they were not expert in, and presented as high profile, showing off to the Australian public the quality of musicians who play for Opera and Ballet. If that had been done annually from the outset, there would have been a different attitude and better morale for the musicians.

Performance Venues

Perhaps an artistic director could have influenced planning of the Sydney Opera House Opera Theatre pit. He would have needed a high profile and public voice to be part of discussions with the NSW Government and architects, who were struggling with the spaces defined by Jorn Utzon's original design. There were many issues involved and the pit was a small one compared with all the other issues. In the Trust archives at the National Library there are memoranda of the committee overseeing the establishment of the Opera House which finally opened in 1973. Members represented practically everyone likely to use the House. I remember discussions, run or chaired by the Trust, about what would go into the Opera House. One comment relates to the view that at that time opera could only play in Sydney for three weeks of the year, so what



The Elizabethan Theatre, Sydney.

would happen in the other forty-eight weeks? I think this was when the ABC came forward with the notion that their Orchestra's Town Hall 'home' was inadequate for a hundred concerts a year. So the originally planned Opera Theatre became the Concert Hall with a knock on effect on the other venues. The theatre planned to stage drama with a small pit became the Opera Theatre with a pit too small for opera repertoire orchestras.

At the outset we did not have the Opera House. In 1967 and 1968 we were playing in theatres built in the late 19th or early 20th centuries, which were mostly suitable for drama or musical comedies, and accommodated productions toured by J.C. Williamson.[6] They were inadequate for opera and ballet with the possible exception of the Elizabethan Theatre, Newtown, which had been refurbished. By and large around Australia there was nothing designed for an opera with sixty to seventy musicians in the pit and certainly not suitable for Wagner, which requires huge orchestral resources. The focus then was on the Verdi/Puccini and Mozart repertoire. The Ballet Company was performing short ballets, with small forces, and although they acknowledged *The Sleeping Beauty* and *Swan Lake* as important works to present, they were not the mainstream of the company at the time. The ballet had little requirement for more than about fifty musicians; a position it maintained for a long time. The government, having funded the two orchestras to provide for opera and ballet, had a dilemma when one of the major user companies did not consider they needed all those musicians while the other wanted to satisfy the needs of an intensive opera repertory season with three or four operas on the road. In the early days we were on the road for seven months. I love touring but for many people, particularly with families, it was no fun. Not all families were able to travel, although one colleague traveled with his wife and two pre-school boys and stayed in caravan parks. Not a very satisfactory situation. He left the

6 From 1874 to 1976 generations of Australians were entertained by the performing arts entrepreneurial activities of J.C. Williamson Ltd. Initiated by James Cassius Williamson, 'The Firm' established a nationally dominant touring circuit of music hall, comedy, pantomime, opera, dramatic theatre and film, providing access to international repertoire and stars, supported by local performers and behind the scenes creatives. Initiatives including the securing of exclusive Australian performance rights for Gilbert and Sullivan works, presentation of grand opera and collaboration with developing local organizations such as the Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust, contributed to the company's financial stability, growth and longevity.

Orchestra after that first year. He was a trained mechanic and ran a garage for a while. When the children were in their teens he joined the Police Band and stayed there until he retired. The Trust management knew about these issues but did not have anyone in the field to solve them. We had some great managers. Tony Gould was an even-tempered person managing the Orchestra when I joined. Later Wolfgang Seyd, a very efficient German, brought a love of opera to his job, worked hard and bent over backwards to make sure the Orchestra was accommodated as the Opera Company wanted, but also that the musicians' needs were met. He was one of the best orchestral managers the orchestras ever had. Peter Narroway, administrator of the Melbourne Orchestra when it transferred to the Victorian Arts Centre Trust, helped at a time when there was no policy or artistic direction to rely on. The managers did the best they could.

If there was a problem involving technical issues, they sought advice from players which was sometimes problematic. Players were under threat of trouble from the union if they gave advice involving other people in the Orchestra, such as rostering. There was no one who could talk with the union and negotiate a deal in relation to policies on certain matters. Retrospectively I can see we came to work knowing there was no real policy. We played the music. Many of us were not interested in orchestral or union committees or discussions with management. As long as they were paid weekly, musicians were not interested in funding or issues the Trust subsequently went through when the **Australia Council** was established to distribute public monies. In general, underfunding or shortfalls, while of major concern for the Trust, were not of concern to the players. So the notion of talking to management was not attractive, especially since we felt nothing could be done about pit problems. We had been on the road and seen them all! Her Majesty's in Brisbane, for example, same problems every time, and yet management could not do anything about it. To be fair to the Trust, it was not their theatre; just hired for the season. This did not help the players who felt many orchestral meetings just went round in circles. Practice or time with family was more attractive than meetings. Had there been a musical director the players might have had more confidence there was someone guiding the Orchestra. We felt we were being employed by someone who did not demonstrate that they valued us to the same extent as the SSO or the MSO. It was not until the **1986 Trust Annual Report** [page 4] that there was a list of the players' names. The report was quite articulate about the Chairman and Chief Executive Officer's view and what the departments did, but the language used was bureaucratic and mostly factual about numbers of performances. Good reviews were noted but there was nothing of substance to encourage, acknowledge or make the players feel supported.

I do not recall an orchestral office space at the Trust's Dowling Street base in the early days. Maurice Stead would go there to talk with management and pay issues were dealt with by accounts based there. The orchestral manager was usually housed at the back of the pit under

the stage. An example of the consequence of this position was that in Melbourne the orchestral manager was late advising the Trust in Sydney of the financial data for the week. He got pay slips in on time but the report necessary to go with them was always late. When questioned by the administrator, Freddie Gibson[7], as to why he could not improve, his response was that he was only one person, who had to move pianos, set up the pit, look after conductors and musicians as well as prepare basic information for their pay and he only had a corner behind the pit with a wicker clothes basket that he used as a table. Complex administrative accounting work was difficult in this environment.

In the early days, music parts and the score came from the user companies and were distributed to music stands by the orchestral manager at the first rehearsal. Players could take them away to practice or leave them on the stand. If left on the stand, the orchestral manager, when collecting them, had to remember which stand they were on, because if there are six first violins and six parts you might note the leader's part but unless you have numbered them you do not know the others. If parts were not returned to correct stands, there were complaints. Eventually there was a Trust directive that no parts were to be left after rehearsals or performances because music gets lost very easily, particularly parts where there are small one page excerpts covering a change in the score. For a while players were not allowed to take them home because obviously parts had been lost. There was another problem: the Ballet used to supply parts that were often difficult to read. In some cases, they were handwritten, not of a standard you would expect an amateur orchestra to read. It was one of the grievances Orchestra members eventually put to the Ballet Company and had solved but it took a few years. Eventually Bill Reid wrote a strong letter to the Ballet insisting the quality of parts be of professional standard and printed. The Ballet repertoire, particularly works like *Le Corsaire* and *pas de deux* where they had three different ballets on one night, were not in print; they were handwritten parts used many times. While normal from the Ballet's point of view, we were moving to a point where everyone was trying to improve the resources. Things began to get better when Bill Reid became artistic director in 1976, but the problem then was he was appointed without any power. He could make recommendations to management but had no hands-on experience. Occasionally, he played with the Orchestra for concerts outside but he was rarely in front of them as an operatic conductor and never as a ballet conductor. His understanding of how people coped was always second-hand from user company conductors. If they had a grievance with the Orchestra they could not do much about it because they did not have an input. They would have to go to management who could not

7 Frederick 'Freddie' Gibson (1934-2013), was General Manager of the Garnet Carroll Organization in the 1960s. In 1967 was deputy administrator of the Trust with responsibility for the orchestra and Marionette Theatre. Later worked with Harry M. Miller and in 1975 was appointed to manage, with considerable entrepreneurial flair, the new Theatre Royal in Sydney from where he retired in 1990.

take an artistic view. If you were talking about the quality of playing of a particular instrument at a certain pitch to management, it would be right over the top of their heads.

Bill Reid understood instrumental problems and how to solve them, but there were frustrations for the companies, too, in the early stages. Around 1970, the Opera and Ballet were asked to supply a conductor to advise the audition committee: they did not have a veto vote but could be influential. Some were good, like David Agler, an excellent conductor, good administrator and former chief conductor and administrator of San Francisco Opera, who had knowledge and useful suggestions to make. He had no control, but had a healthy, strong influence on the audition committee. The committee then was better structured and had moved on from the union objecting to their making decisions on standards of playing. It was also the first time the Musicians' Union started to acknowledge that players' artistic development was important; it was another aspect of their employment rather than just money, hours worked and penalty entitlements. To make the Orchestra stable and keep morale high, each individual member had to feel they belonged, they could work with the people around them and that the people around them did not impact on the quality of their playing by bad playing.


Conductor David Agler in action.

Jack Purden, Timpanist

Not all players were gregarious, outgoing people and not all were young as I was, interested in finding out things. One of the stalwart members of the Sydney Orchestra, a completely respected, experienced player was the timpanist, Jack Purden. Jack was a quiet man probably in his mid to late fifties, with a lot of experience, who did not have any trouble with the workload, but kept his counsel unless asked. He was very careful with what he said, with the maturity of his years showing. Having survived in an industry as a freelance player for some thirty years, he knew there were things you did not enter into. Everyone looked up to Jack and if he gave an opinion it was usually well-considered, realistic and workable. He often had to give an opinion on where to put the percussion section in the pit because the percussion and three timpani take up so much room. Whilst he was playing the timpani, he was also doubling percussion which meant he had to be in a location where the percussion were near him without getting off his stool and that takes room. If there is tuned percussion, the xylophone or marimba take up space. Using that space was always difficult because it was about half of what they really needed in any pit. Jack would be called upon to give advice which included not playing a particular part or using the cymbal instead. With the acquiescence of the conductor, and he was always practical, we knew it would work. He set a good example on work issues but we never knew his personal situation. He was well-liked but he did not fraternize. At the other extreme, I was really having a good time touring around Australia, driving and enjoying the countryside, and in the breaks we had in cities


Jack Purdon, Elizabethan Sydney Orchestra, timpani.

I was fraternizing with other musicians, jazz players, outside the Orchestra. Within the Orchestra there were a few friends and we would drink together. There was a lot of drinking going on in those days! There was one member of the bass section with whom I always stayed in the same place. In the old days it was bed and breakfast hotels; hotels with accommodation upstairs rather than motels. On tour you are thrown together with fifty people all the time; sometimes you want to get away from it.

You are together all day, working sometimes under difficult conditions, with music that is challenging or boring and people who are agitated about something. When you finish the call, particularly if you are in a rehearsal period and the calls have been from 10am till 5pm, the last thing you want to do is to spend time fraternizing with orchestra members. It is probably better to see a new face, watch television or go to a movie. Relationships are inevitable, often intimate and short lived, and the need to continue working with each other after a break up or the start of a new relationship can result in tight-lipped messages and tensions. You have to deal with that as best you can and try to prevent it damaging your reputation as a player, not always easy because the work is intense, every day of the week. Although the standard was eight calls a week, we often did ten or eleven when on tour. There was not the luxury of going home and reading a favourite book because you could not carry it; particularly if you were traveling by air, luggage was limited. You took the bare essentials and if away for seven months the bare essentials became very boring. I was very happy to meet jazz musicians but not everyone was interested in that. There were some good friendships made. We had to deal with touring in our own way without any guidance or help and we could not leave the job with any chance of finding other work easily.

Cillario's 'Friendly Notice'

On 22nd May 1968, Cillario sent "a Friendly Notice to the Ladies & Gentlemen of the Strings." He was

> most disturbed to observe that the majority of the strings ... even though they play with care, none the less 1. continue to make mistakes in bowing and phrasing, 2. use amateurish positions on the instruments—quite unacceptable to professionals, and 3. do not improve their technique, which is often lamentable. Accordingly, starting from tomorrow, 23rd of May, each afternoon from Monday to Friday, I shall be present in the pit between 6.00pm and 7.00pm to discuss such problems with any string players who may care to attend.

This was a great offer. I remember thinking it was something to grab. He had demonstrated a thorough understanding of operatic repertoire, especially Puccini, and the way it was attempted technically. Coming from Italy and experience at La Scala, he obviously had access to good musicians who were skilled with this. Unfortunately it did not happen. Bill Reid wrote to Stephen Hall[8] on 24th January 1969,

> We are all aware of [Cillario's] great value to us and his approach to music is typified by his inauguration in Brisbane last year of voluntary classes for string players. The opposition we have to expect is typified by the comment of a New South Wales union official to the effect that he had immediately put a stop to them.

So that very generous, genuine offer to people like me to improve our playing was stopped by some unfathomable principle of unionism with no formal reason given. They did not want conductors talking directly to players, except in rehearsal.

Cillario was obviously keen to help, skilled in doing so and many of us were open, like sponges, ready and needing that from an artistic point of view, but the timing was wrong. Eventually, the union's view turned around to recognize this Orchestra had to develop, not just be stable. By the time I came back in 1986 and began negotiations with Sydney secretary, Alan Nash, it was an entirely different union view. Alan was a superb trumpet player from the jazz field and played in the Jack Papworth Dance Band in Sydney. He knew if you had good players around, you would play well. You had to keep practicing and working at your art to get better and that resulted in security of employment. If you were good, you would get remunerated for it and if you remained good, your remuneration would be stable. In the many hours we spent talking about the Musicians' Union rates, his view was always supportive of doing everything to help management bring the Orchestra to stability. This was more than just money, hours and penalty rates. It was about giving people advancement, training and opportunities. This was on the eve of what was to become a major issue of training under the Hawke and Keating governments later.[9]

These things were happening in advance of their time and opportunities to capitalize on them for the players' benefit were lost. The Trust did not have the right mechanisms in place to bring it about. A paid orchestral adviser or an artistic director with public profile and respect who was prepared to go public on an issue like this would have made sure it happened. Bill Reid's frustration in this letter is obvious. He could not do anything about it as an opera conductor, but

8 Stephen Hall, AM (1936-2014), Arts Administrator and Director of the Sydney Festival for 18 years. Was acting administrator of the Elizabethan Trust Opera in 1966, and directed productions for the company from 1967. In 1968 he was appointed Secretary/Coordinator of the Trust and from 1971 to 1975 was Artistic Director of the Australian Opera, overseeing its move, and opening season in 1973, to the Sydney Opera House.
9 Australian Labor Prime Ministers Bob Hawke, 1983-91 and Paul Keating, 1991-1996.

he could see something needed to be done and was concerned that we did not lose Cillario's interest in the Orchestra. Why did the 1986 Tribe Report recommend what it did? Maybe some of the answers lie here. Also, the Trust was under attack from public funding sources to maintain and hold or reduce the costs of the Orchestra. Maybe if the Trust musicians had been more capable and interested in negotiating with their employer, some of these things might have happened and may have assisted the Trust in mounting a much better argument to the funding bodies.

Reid and Gerald Krug, an opera conductor who subsequently worked with the ballet, talked about the quality of the players and made strong recommendations requiring toughness and standing up to the Musicians' Union because they involved letting players go and replacing them. There was no question then of training or stepping them sideways until they improved because the needs of the work did not allow for that and it was not current thinking. After many discussions and suggestions made to the Trust orchestras' management, in 1968 they wrote,

> Unless it is made abundantly clear that inferior playing will not be tolerated, we run a very real risk of losing the few really good players we now have. We cannot accept the argument it is useless to replace incapable players unless we are sure the replacements will stay with us. That line of reasoning will ensure that the personnel of the Orchestra will only change when the players wish it as there can never be any guarantee that replacements will remain with us indefinitely. The cry 'Gestapo, Himmler', is common enough in orchestras all over the world and is always raised by players under notice and, of course, by the union. We strongly urge that such remarks be ignored by responsible members of the organization.[10]

This strong statement identified problems with flutes, violins, oboes, clarinets and horns, a substantial part of the Orchestra. These concerns were justified and supported by conductors' complaints, and from the Orchestra, even though players were not allowed to comment formally.

The Concept of Orchestra Self-management

When I went to England later, I became aware that self-management by orchestras was a workable concept. The four main London orchestras, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, the Philharmonia, London Philharmonic and the London Symphony, all had fantastic rank and file players and the principal players were the best players to be found almost anywhere in the world. Experienced players had been in the orchestras for many years. We really had only timpanist Jack Purden and violinist Maurice Stead, who were experienced and stable enough musically to make decisions affecting the artistic direction of the Orchestra. In the London orchestras those

10 Memo in Trust files, 11 December 1968.

people as a committee run the orchestra. It is democratic and all players have a say although they are happy for decisions to be made on their behalf. When I was in England Tony Camden was in the oboe section in the London Symphony Orchestra. He was a very fine player and musically experienced. He knew what conductors wanted and what sort of conductor the orchestra needed to achieve its sound. His knowledge was sophisticated and reliable. As an advocate, he could be relied on to represent you as a wind player. We did not have this situation and to have given management responsibility to the Orchestra under those circumstances would have been a nightmare, particularly when personal preferences started to emerge and people got special treatment. The equity of the Orchestra would have disappeared. In London you decide the conductors. If you make the wrong decision you affect everyone's livelihood because the London Orchestras are not full time orchestras. There is no guarantee of the money. If you accept 70% of the dates offered, you can consider yourself a member of the orchestra but there is no guarantee you will get any more after that first season so your playing is on the line all the time. More importantly, if you want to make a living you need a lot of calls and the orchestra will only get the calls that people are prepared to engage it for. Income sources are concerts and recordings: if you have a conductor who can attract recordings, you will have an income source. In the 1970s recordings provided 60% of that income. The key was to get the right conductor and the right soloists. The orchestral committee made decisions on that. You needed experienced people who knew which conductor with credentials could win recording contracts for the orchestra.

When I joined the Sydney Orchestra, with the first run of rehearsals for four or five operas before me, all requiring different skills to understand the various styles, I had little experience. There was Cillario, expecting and demanding the same standard he had received elsewhere in the world. The three double basses were on edge all the time and there was a lot of pressure. I reacted by getting migraine headaches and by the end of the first year, they were coming at a regular pace. They were most evident when a difficult work was coming up and someone like Tibor Paul or Edward Downes[11] was coming with a reputation for being exacting, so it was stress-related. In the last season I did with the Orchestra on tour in Melbourne in 1969 before I left, I was off work for over a week. I could not function in any light and spent a week without any food. I realized this was the job's effect on me. I had the opportunity take some club work in Sydney, so I left the Orchestra. I had been having treatment from a chiropractor in Sydney who was expert with this sort of thing and helped me to cope with and manage migraines but I had not seen him for some months while we were on tour. This is the other problem about touring: you do not get

11 Tibor Paul (1909-1973), Hungarian/Australian conductor, migrated to Australia in 1950, taught at Sydney Conservatorium of Music and was Principal Conductor of AETT Opera Company 1954-55. Spent time in Ireland, AETT invited him back to Australia in 1968 to conduct Trust orchestra for ballet and opera. Principal Conductor, West Australian Symphony Orchestra 1971-1973.

Edward Downes, CBE (1924-2009), English conductor, specializing in opera. Became Australian Opera's Music Director in 1970, conducted first opera performances (*War and Peace*) at Sydney Opera House in 1973. Had long association with Royal Opera, Covent Garden. London.

your medical advice or access to your sources of help. He had given me a program to follow and cured me of migraine headaches by showing me exercises to do, dietary changes and how to identify in my body when things started to tighten up. He told me, if tense when driving, to chew an apple, an action which frees head movement. I attended regular sessions with him and had acupuncture. During this time, Wolfgang Seyd, the Sydney orchestral manager wrote to Freddie Gibson, Orchestras' administrator,

> As regards Warwick Ross ... he saw his doctor in Sydney on the way through and received a favourable report on the course of his treatment. He is most interested in coming back in January if the position is still available then'.[12]

I did go back to the Orchestra and since then I have never had a migraine. Seeing this letter in the files makes me realize the Trust management was trying to solve problems but it did not always have the right resources. It needed independent artistic advice and direction to guide the Orchestra, help players through individual traumas and help management understand what was necessary to convince funders to make sure resources were adequate and provisions were in place for artistic advancement. Without this, the Orchestra would fall into a nondescript group, not identified with anything until they played as the Opera or Ballet Orchestra, which was confusing for everyone.

When I left the Sydney Orchestra in 1970 I wanted more variety in my musical life. I had only been in it for a year or two at the most, and could see a pattern emerging. I was in a rank and file position with no personal input. When I left, I played jazz where I could express myself and try something completely different with a fusion jazz rock band in the Philippines. My contribution was critical and crucial to the outcome of performances, which I had not experienced in the Orchestra and I enjoyed that. When I came back from the East, I played jazz with a trio on a cruise ship. It was a very good job, fun to play and with full creative freedom. Most of that music was playing by ear, you did not read anything, so you learned tunes and every night they were different, and I felt very satisfied.

12 Trust archives.