

Melbourne Elizabethan Trust Orchestra



The Melbourne Elizabethan Trust orchestra, leader Maurice Stead.

In 1971 I went to the **Rocks Push Sydney** jazz venue to play¹, where I met Carole McPhee, who was working for the Australian Ballet. She introduced herself when she learnt I had some association with the Ballet and Opera through the Trust Orchestra. She advised there was a job going for a double bass player with the Melbourne Orchestra. My ex-teacher, Charles Gray, was leading the bass section which made me interested in making contact. She passed on my interest and I was invited to join the Orchestra. There was no audition - that happened a lot in those days because there were not a great number of players, the competition was not great, there were always jobs to fill and if you had worked with people and they knew you, they usually considered you to be reliable. Why did I go back to an orchestra? In retrospect what was missing

¹ *Rocks Push*, a Blues & Jazz Club in the Rocks area of Sydney in the 1970s associated with jazz promoter Horst Liepolt, which regularly featured Galapagos Duck and others, delivering a repertoire of Swing, mainstream, Blues, Jazz and Latin Jazz. Building was demolished in the early 1980s and the club did not continue.

from my artistic activity was substance. I had been playing jazz with reasonably good players but we had not been entirely original except for the improvisation aspect. As far as creating new melodies and something from new, I had not been involved in much of that. The jazz pop band had risen to an artistically acceptable standard but nothing great. There were far better bands and I did not get a great deal of return from it. In Melbourne there was the opportunity to work in the same section as my teacher, something I had never done, and with his vast experience it would be an enjoyable and rewarding musical experience, and I would get back to playing music of substance. Although some players thought the ballet repertoire was not worthy of the same consideration given to serious opera, it was still quite good artistically; with a visual component to match the music. Completing a well-staged, well-danced and well-conducted ballet performance was satisfying; probably not as exhilarating as playing a Puccini opera but it was rewarding. I shared a spacious, Georgian house with a car salesman in East Melbourne. It was close to Charles Gray's residence and he would come round often when we were not working to chat informally about music and experiences he had with a piece of music. Without going into intense analytical detail, he gave the impression this Mozart serenade, or whatever, was rewarding at certain parts for the bass player and he would point these out. That was fascinating and I looked forward to those meetings.

Another member was Maurice Stead, having been involved in setting up the Orchestra, he was on loan from Sydney. The Melbourne Concert Master was Reginald Stead (no relation to Maurice), from the north of England, his wife an oboist who took the principal's chair, and an English cellist, Ken Jepson, became principal cello. In January 1971 the Melbourne Orchestra had forty-nine players including four cellists and three double bassists. To balance that there would have been five violas, probably six second violins and a minimum of eight first violins. There were at least twenty-six string players. To satisfy the basic needs of the operatic repertoire, a full wind section of eight players and brass section of four horns, two trumpets, three trombones and a tuba are needed. For some scorings three trumpets would be necessary, but at the bare minimum, at least ten horns and brass instruments were needed. There would be one timpani player and at least one percussionist. A lot of the opera repertoire required two percussionists but on some occasions, if budget was an issue, the timpanist could play some percussion instruments and the other percussionist would play the necessary tune instruments. The timpanist would play cymbals, hand cymbals and any portable instruments while sitting at his timpani. The Sydney Orchestra had fifty-four players but except for Maurice Stead, players did not move between orchestras for repertoire reasons. What was missing from the above line-up, especially for the big Puccini works, was extra wind players. A second flute could double on the piccolo, but at times the second flute, first flute and piccolo are all playing together and the three parts are

independent and necessary. The same issue arises with the need for a bass clarinet. The contra bassoon was always a problem because no-one had a good, playable, contra bassoon nor were there many players. The second bassoon player could be asked but lacked the expertise in many cases. Much better to have a player who specializes on that instrument. The Sydney Orchestra probably achieved the necessary extra wind players as opera conductors would have insisted. Even though such players may only be required for one work, to have them available and to fit into a rehearsal schedule so that they did not have to work around another's activities would have reduced frustration. If extra players were required, the user companies had to pay for these, rather than the cost coming from the Trust's budget.

If players were not adequate, the first person to complain was the conductor, employed by the Opera or Ballet; a pretty powerful voice against that player. It only happened once or twice. It was not about money, it was about availability. Conductors like consistency, the same person in position for the entire rehearsal and all performances; they do not want to see that face changing. That flies in the face of a lot of 'normal' in the music business where you can send a deputy along. It happens in London and New York and there are no complaints, but that is at a different level of competence. If you send a deputy into a London West End show, and if you were looking after your own business, it would be someone far better than you, and they would be welcomed back. That assured your livelihood. You had to do that because there was so much work you had to accept to get a full year's work and some of it conflicted, so you would have a string of deputies, but that is not the case in Australia. These are quite specialized instruments; a contrabassoon is not something you see every day although there is plenty of good music written for it and good players. With the music business anywhere, there are peaks and troughs of availability. One year a good French horn player will be hard to find, the next year it might be violas. In those days, institutions who educated musicians would suddenly offer scholarships for French horn players, knowing there was a dearth of players and they needed young people to come up. Three years later at the end of their diploma course, they would flood the market with an excess but that tended to work its way out at the end of the day when people do other things, but that is no good for an operatic conductor. The conductors, generally international, would arrive in Australia and the next day were at the first rehearsal. If they were lucky to be someone like Edward Downes they might have seventeen rehearsals but if they were not, they might get five or six; three orchestrals and maybe another six with the company. In those six rehearsals with the Orchestra, they have to mould their sound. They were in a strange country with a completely different attitude to music-making than they were used to. The Australian attitude to music-making in those days was completely unique. It was one of its great qualities and it is why we produce such good players. By and large, our musicians were innovative pioneers. They were doing things they

had never done before, so were prepared to experiment and maybe do things a graduate of the London Royal College of Music would never risk. Australians would do it freely and openly and most of the time it worked. The conductor would be faced with a group of musicians with that kind of attitude and not a level playing field of competence. There was immense variety within the Orchestra, from mediocre just getting by, to extremely excellent players.

Maurice Stead observed and reported that the orchestra could not rely on young players only; experienced professionals were needed to raise the standard of the Melbourne Orchestra which had to deal frequently with inconsistency in the level of playing. This was probably why the Trust employed Reginald Stead and Ken Jepson. Both were in their mid to late forties and Reg's wife was a similar age. They had played a lot of music and were experienced players such as Maurice would have been looking for. For extra players, it would not have been about money; whether the Opera paid for it or the Ballet paid for it; although the Ballet was concerned about going over budget, the Opera was not. I never perceived the Opera to be concerned about that, but the conductors wanted the same player throughout a season where the Company was playing in repertory and spreading that season over two or three months. If there was one opera requiring a bass clarinetist, and the second clarinet could not play the bass clarinet, there had to be one person available for every call. There may be one call a week for two months or six all in one hit. Getting that same person to the standard of the rest of the Orchestra was a nightmare for the conductor, and just when they find them, two or three days into the performances, that person advises they have a wonderful job with the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra which they must take. That is a problem always lurking for a conductor. Their great concern was stability and they pressured the Orchestra to make sure the establishment gave them what their scores required on a full time basis. I think that was one of the big problems between the Opera Company and the Orchestras, and to a lesser degree, between the Ballet Company and the Orchestras which came to a head when rostering came in.

THE ELIZABETHAN TRUST ORCHESTRAS	
Administrator: Robert L. Stead Principal Conductor: William Reid	
THE ELIZABETHAN TRUST MELBOURNE ORCHESTRA	
Concertmaster: Reginald Stead Orchestra Manager: Peter Pearce Assistant to the Manager: Michael Andrews	
1ST VIOLINS	PICCOLO
Reginald Stead, Concertmaster	Peter Setek
Brian Beatty, Associate	OBOES
Concertmaster	Jack Shepherd, Principal
* Sue Borrett	Eileen Dickinson, Assoc.
* Mary Galan	Principal
* Max Henderson	Brian Harvey
* Trevor Holton	COR ANGLAIS
* Isabel Morse	Brian Harvey
* Victoria O'Brien	CLARINETS
	Pamela Webster, Principal
2ND VIOLINS	Albert Caselli, Assoc. Principal
Dan Scully, Principal	Diane Crellin
Philip Mortimer, Associate	BASS CLARINET
Principal	Diane Crellin
* Philippa Birtles	BASSOONS
* Peter Devlishev	Max Neil, Principal
* Noel Hughes	Zbigniew Wawryk
* Walter Reitmann	CONTRABASSOON
* Frank Zorz	Zbigniew Wawryk
VIOLAS	HORNS
Thomas Kidson, Principal	Campbell Barnes, Principal
Janet Mason, Associate	Gracne Evans, Principal
Principal	Terence Fahey
* Ian Cumming	Albert Vleak, Principal
* Karel Heber	Trevor O'Carroll
* Beryl Ramsay	TRUMPETS
CELLI	Mervyn Cavelli, Principal
Kenneth Jepson, Principal	Reginald Hamber
Joan Wallace, Associate	Rodney Lowe, Principal
Principal	TROMBONES
* Marjorie Long	Philip Davis, Principal
* Joseph Nadel	George Powers
* Cordula Neil	BASS TROMBONE
* Mary Rowe	Barney Hamid
BASSES	TUBA
Charles Gray, Principal	John Butler
* John de Colville	HARP
* Warwick Ross	Sue Smith
FLUTES	TIMPANI
David Bloom, Principal	Robert Augustinus
Kevin Thomas	PERCUSSION
Peter Setek	Ronald Brown, Principal
	Dennis Johnson, Assoc. Principal
	* players listed in alphabetical order
	The Elizabethan Trust Sydney Orchestra
	Concertmaster: Maurice Stead
	Orchestra Manager: Wolfgang Seyd
	Assistant to the Manager: Anthony Ingersent



The Princess Theatre, Melbourne, 1886.

Working Conditions

Our major rehearsal venue was a church, St Peter's, at the top of Treasury Gardens about a block from the Princess Theatre towards East Melbourne. It was a functioning church with a big hall attached to it. The Orchestra had its management offices and storage space for music stands and equipment there. The other venue was the Princess Theatre leased by the Trust. Several times we rehearsed in the top foyer, quite inadequate acoustically, but it was the only space that could contain a large orchestra. In April 1971, the pit at the Princess was extended by removing a row of seating from the theatre and lowering the floor by approximately two feet, which added space for fifteen more players, which meant it could seat about sixty-five players. We three double basses could spread out a bit, having been previously tucked in a V-shape behind the celli with very little room. Usually, we had to turn our basses on the side and bow across the side of it, or hit something. The extended pit gave us enough room to play and bow.

There was a new orchestral agreement in 1971 which took the salaries of rank and file from \$93 to \$100 a week and the touring allowance increased from \$50 to \$60 a week. I remember there had been talk amongst the Musicians' Union of a special award for people who played for the Opera and this could have been the first of those awards. If that was the case, there would have almost certainly been a rise in salaries because the unions would have made sure a new award would have established whatever the benchmark of the day was. The Orchestras never kept up with other trades, such as builders' trades, they were always two or three years behind; I would have been sure if there was a new award they would have used the new system to establish those salaries. A constant aim of the Trust Board was get the Orchestra on parity with ABC Orchestra salaries and expenses. ABC Orchestra members were receiving superannuation

and the Trust was aspiring to that without sufficient funding to do it. The Trust needed to be concerned: for a classical musician in Australia there were only two jobs—the ABC Orchestras in capital cities and the Trust Orchestras. The ABC salary and benefits was a great incentive over the Trust orchestras if you could get into one of its orchestras. Robert Stead, who was managing the Trust orchestras, was always concerned he would lose good players to the ABC. In early 1971 the Trust appointed **Joseph Post**² as its musical adviser but we did not see much of him.

There was a great distance between the orchestral members and the Trust, firstly geographical. The Trust head office was in Sydney; you could not walk around to Dowling Street to see someone; it just was not possible. Secondly, the line of communication clearly stopped at the orchestral manager. It was difficult to speak with Robert Stead. You had to have a good case and mostly the orchestral manager would say it would be taken care of without the need to talk to Robert. In June 1971, the chair of the orchestral committee, wrote to Robert Stead about the Melbourne Orchestra's future, seeking assurance as morale was at a very low ebb. It was rumoured it would become the permanent Ballet Orchestra and the players were feeling insecure. He considered it an embarrassing insult and waste of time to sit through a three hour rehearsal conducted by the Ballet Company's female pianist. He said the orchestra, in order to keep players, needed competent, efficient conductors at the helm. The pianist from the Ballet was very competent with a thorough understanding of the Ballet's needs. She was not an experienced conductor but she was preparing the work for John Lanchbery³. She knew what the dancers and conductor required and was probably an asset given the unpredictable nature of ballet performance. Opera is more predictable but in dance, anything can happen. Tempis can change. They start fast, end slowly and vice versa. They take rapid steps forward to accommodate a jump and a strong dancer like Rudolf Nureyev would not compromise; you have to play it to accommodate him. Suddenly a bar and a half can be squashed to half a bar and to know that is really valuable information when you are playing. Clearly the committee chair was not interested in ballet. We were an orchestra employed to play opera and ballet, not just opera. Admittedly, the fear of becoming solely a ballet orchestra is reasonable and something to voice concern about, but to actually not play the ballet is another issue altogether and to treat the ballet as a secondary state of music is quite wrong. It cannot be said Tchaikovsky's *Swan Lake* or *The Sleeping Beauty* is any less important than Puccini's *La Boheme* in its own right. If the execution of the music for ballet is haphazard, non-committal, it will sound terrible even if it is Tchaikovsky—especially if it is Tchaikovsky—but

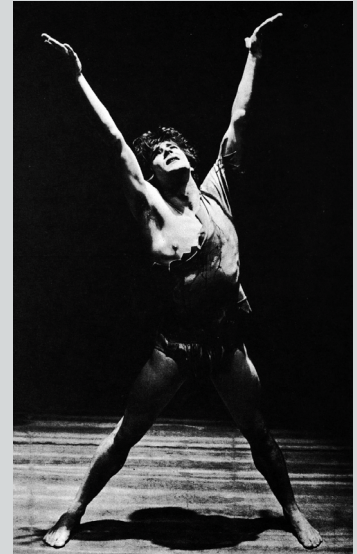
² Joseph Mozart Post OBE (1906-1972), Australian conductor and music administrator who made a major contribution to the development of opera conducting in Australia. Studied at the NSW State Conservatorium of Music where he subsequently taught oboe, cor anglais and piano and was then the Director between 1966 and 1971. He was a chief conductor with the ABC for many years and was appointed Musical Director to the Trust (1955-1957), conducting its first opera, *The Marriage of Figaro* in 1956.

³ John Lanchbery (1923-2003), English-Australian composer and conductor, Principal Conductor of the Australian Ballet, 1972-1977. Also Principal Conductor Royal Ballet 1959-1972 and Director of American Ballet Theatre 1978-1980.

if played well and the musicians rise to the challenge and the conductor is competent to match the music with what is on stage, it will be sizzling and rewarding.

At the end of the day it is the musicians who control the performance. If they commit to their playing and serve the music as it was written, then the outcome will be good and it will attract the support needed. It will be obvious if you are playing Puccini without the extra wind instruments: there is a deficiency in the sound and if the rest of it is good and played well it will be obvious to the audience and everyone that there needs to be an increase in the size of the Orchestra to make the music work. *Sun Music*, by Peter Sculthorpe⁴ in the 1970 season, was innovative stuff. Apart from the ballet itself, which was unique, the music was innovative. Sculthorpe was at rehearsals, calling out interpretive comments. There was one where the basses had to play a note; written on the bottom of the stave with a dash through it which meant 'What does that mean?' He wanted a really bottom end thump to match something on stage. That was creative. He had a sound in his head and a visual to match the sound when we finally got it. He stuck his head over the end of the pit whilst we were playing, about a bar before and said, 'Just play the note and stamp your foot.' We had a wooden floor and the three of us stamped our feet hard. A thud came out with the note: a great effect. It was an original moment. He was not clowning around. He knew what he wanted to achieve and that what we were playing was perfect in terms of its execution but it was not what he wanted. He had immersed himself in that ballet; his music made sense of the ballet and vice versa. It was stunning because of his collaboration with the stage, with the dancers and the Orchestra through the conductor and coming to rehearsals to put his six pennyworth in. The power of communication: if the Orchestra is committed to it, it will move anything and it does move obstacles but the notion of sitting round in an office, complaining about things and saying 'Do something about it', is not at all acceptable to me and never was.

At the outset in the Sydney Orchestra we received a travel allowance. If you elected not to fly with the rest of the group, you received an allowance, later formalized into train fares, perhaps because after a while people started giving lifts to others in the Orchestra. The financial burden was on the driver; he was giving lifts and not recompensed for any expenses. The orchestra committee asked the Trust that those not travelling with the company receive a train fare, so car travel costs could be shared. I usually travelled alone, except for a couple of times with Charlie Gray, and we split the costs. The idea of not having to go with the company on the plane and being reimbursed the equivalent of the train fare if you drove, was firmly entrenched and musicians often took up that option. On one occasion three musicians driving to Brisbane had an accident and one of them, John Brio, was killed. That was tragic and it came from an understanding that we could get in the car with an allowance and drive while the rest of the guys flew. We knew the



Karl Welander in *Sun Music*, The Australian Ballet—1970

⁴ Peter Joshua Sculthorpe AO, OBE (1929-2014), Australian composer. *Sun Music* was premiered by the Australian Ballet in Robert Helpmann's production at Her Majesty's Theatre, Sydney, on 2 August 1968, with designs by Kenneth Rowell.

risks. It was a double tragedy because more recently the driver of that car committed suicide. He had been obsessed and distressed at the life lost and deteriorated mentally after it happened.

Conductors and Repertoire

The orchestral administrator, Robert Stead, argued that a ballet orchestra would become inadequate to do concerts or opera and therefore would ultimately have to be the Ballet Orchestra. Stead wrote to Edward Downes with this theory, which he did not want to put to the test. I was with the Melbourne Orchestra in 1972 when Downes conducted *Der Rosenkavalier*. He brought with him a young assistant who became a fabulous conductor, an Elgar specialist, **Mark Elder**⁵. He was a great trainer. Downes gave him the early rehearsals. He knew exactly what was required and how to prepare the Orchestra, so when Downes came to conduct final rehearsals it was ready; there was very little to do except put finishing touches to it. I am not sure Downes really understood the Australian psyche—very few conductors did. Cillario and Agler got hold of it quickly but others struggled to understand what drove these people. Some players had come from rough and tumble times, used to the music streets, as it were. They were down-to-earth people and behaved that way, but they could also deliver.

While others were concerned the Orchestra would become a Ballet Orchestra solely, my concern was more financial because the Ballet administrator, Peter Bahen, was notorious for his tight-handedness together with his capacity to get people to give tremendously good sponsorships for the Company. There was no doubt he did good deals for them but he would not spend a penny. Probably the only one who could come up against him and succeed was Artistic Director, **Dame Peggy van Praagh**⁶. Bahen could deliver on deals so supporters saw a first-rate international dance company. It would have been his view to put the Orchestra on a seasonal basis, only engaged and paid during seasons in Australia, and not while the company toured overseas as it did frequently. Conductor Dobbs Franks would have supported him as this was the way it worked in America, and in England to a lesser degree. The Musicians' Union and musicians had worked hard to establish an award and acceptance that this was a full time job. Like an ABC Symphony Orchestra, it had its specialization: opera and ballet. It had been clear there was a need for another orchestra to relieve the Sydney Orchestra's workload. So the fear that one Trust orchestra would become solely a ballet orchestra was probably more about losing tenure and being back onto contracts, which everyone had done before. J.C. Williamson shows were contract based. There would be six weeks' work, then unemployment and the search for



Dame Peggy van Praagh.

⁵ Sir Mark Elder (1947-) CH, CBE, British Conductor, Musical Director English National Opera (1979-1993). Music Director of Halle Orchestra, Manchester, England, since 1999.

⁶ Dame Margaret 'Peggy' van Praagh DBE (1910-1990), British dancer, choreographer, teacher, répétiteur, producer and director, danced with Ballet Rambert and Antony Tudor's London Ballet in England and subsequently taught classes at Sadler's Wells Ballet. Appointed Artistic Director of the Borovansky Ballet in 1960 and then founding AD of the Australian Ballet in 1962. Between 1965 and 1974 was joint director with Sir Robert Helpmann. Was a great advocate for dance education and held various teaching positions in Australia.

more work, maybe in another city. It would have been relatively easy for management to go back to that. If a ballet orchestra had only seven or eight months' work, the musicians would have to go to Sydney to work as extras or seek work with the ABC Orchestras. Sooner or later the good ones would have permanent jobs and when the Ballet came back there would be a downturn in the quality of the players.

In June 1971 Dame Peggy expressed concern with the oboe player of the Orchestra, presumably in relation to the important, familiar, oboe solo in *Swan Lake*. Issues such as these had to be resolved. She wanted someone who could play it properly. Dame Peggy was very kind to me and lent me her flat in London. She was a centred person who would fix her mind on a problem and solve it immediately. If she identified a dancer who could not do what was required, she would remove them from the work. I doubt she could have worked as the orchestras did—giving players plenty of opportunity and training to develop their playing. She was happy to groom ballet school students if they showed promise but once in the company they had to quickly prove they could dance to her standard. Downes would have asked the question, 'Is this a player who can play and is the sound right?' and worked to help the musician to achieve that.

The records show that for the Trust management, although he was generally popular with the orchestra, **Dobbs Franks**⁷ was something of a disruptive and difficult character. In June 1971 the Trust's General Manager, Jeffrey Joynton-Smith, was advised that Tony Conlon, the acting leader, had asked to resign because he found the lifestyle too disruptive on his family life. He had been persuaded to stay on and was given time off by the Orchestra Manager when he required it. He had taken off the first week of the stage rehearsals for the ballet and Franks was not happy. Robert Stead was in touch with Board member Sir James Darling saying he had joined the Trust to help establish and develop the Melbourne Orchestra. He saw it as a great personal challenge but Franks and his wife, violinist Ruth Pearl, were making demands that could not be met by the Trust and this had impacted on how the Orchestra functioned and was the reason the leader had resigned. His confidence was being undermined by Franks. In Hobart, Orchestral Manager Murray Brown was dismissed by Robert Stead for being disruptive and acting outside of his authority, followed by a threatened strike over his wrongful dismissal. I did not go on that Tasmanian tour with the ballet. I worked for four or five weeks in a club in Sydney, which was quite acceptable to the Trust. I was given leave without pay for two or three months.



Australian Ballet conductor Dobbs Franks.

⁷ Dobbs Franks (1933-), born Arkansas, USA, American conductor, studied Juillard School of Music, was Music Director New Zealand Opera Company 1965, conductor Australian Opera 1969-1970, Music Director Australian Ballet 1970-71 and 1979-1983. Author of *So, You Want to Be a Musician*, published 2018.



New Dimension: (L-R) Warwick Ross, Barbara Sampson, Ray Forster and Hank Meadows.

During this period I performed with a group called *New Dimension*. I had set up the group to be part of the Musician Matching Program established by the Musicians' Union. This program required promoters, who brought musicians in from overseas for concert performances in Australia, to engage the same number of local Australian musicians for each performance presented. The *New Dimension* was a group which could perform most music styles due to the unique instrumentation and versatility of the members. The group comprised Barbara Sampson (singer and bass guitar), Hank Meadows (singer, harpist and drums), Ray Forster (keyboard and drums) and myself, Warwick Ross (double bass, electric bass and guitar).


For me, Dobbs was a first rate musician and very competent conductor. He was not a compromiser when it came to music. He had a strong view about how to conduct ballet as did John Lanchbury and both of them would often be at loggerheads with all sorts of people in the course of executing their duties. Lanchbury would have a stand-up fight almost with some dancers or a director because he refused to change the tempi. Franks, to a lesser degree, would do the same and they made decisions based on solid and good musical grounds. **Ruth Pearl**⁸ was

⁸ Ruth Pearl (1916-2008), born Liverpool, England, violinist and concertmaster. Was the first woman to be concertmaster of a professional orchestra in England, the Jacques Orchestra, and she also led the English String Quartet before moving to New Zealand and then to Australia with her second husband, Dobbs Franks.

a first rate violinist, a member of the Boyd Neel String Orchestra. They had a wealth of experience to give to the two fundamentally important sections of an orchestra, one of the reasons why I was excited about going to Melbourne but Ruth had gone when I arrived. Her son, Mark Jackson, is a very good cellist. He was in the Orchestra with the capacity to be a tremendously good influence and I doubt the Melbourne Orchestra ever had a better cellist than Mark. He was not principal but was sitting second and he could have been a principal. Had Ruth stayed and had Dobbs stayed working with the ballet, between Ruth, Charles and Mark the standard of the string section would have gone up substantially. Some people would not have been happy because they were tough. Ruth and Dobbs were very strong about what they wanted. Mark left because he could not stand the environment. Two years later he was number two in the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra in London and subsequently went into number two in the London Philharmonic Orchestra, staying until he retired. To have held this position for more than ten years is a feat in itself and Melbourne lost that talent.

If you are a manager you give a good player the opportunity to grow. If you are an astute manager you do not put them in the deep end too fast, you let them grow up through the ranks but you never stop them from going forward and when they are anxious to go to the next stage you make sure they get that opportunity. Mark Jackson was progressing in a way that he was clearly principal material and yet they brought a gentleman from England who was not anywhere near the player Mark was even then, but there is no doubt the English player had experience. I believe an orchestral manager looking after home-grown product will have a better outcome.

Robert Stead was anxious for the artistic success of the Orchestras. He wanted additional positions to suit



WEST SIDE STORY

Dobbs Franks
Director and Conductor
Mark Summerbell
Assistant Music Director

Ligh Chambers
Choreographer
Denise Wood
Assistant Choreographer

Larry Eastwood
Set Designer
Lisa Elvy
Assistant to Set Designer

Terry Ryan
Costume Designer

John Raymond
Lighting Designer

Q. Sound
Sound Engineers & Equipment

John Keel
Production Manager

Geoffrey Rothwell
Company Manager

Malcolm Leach
Production Stage Manager

Michael Bader
Production Deputy Stage Manager

Lisa Travellick
Production Assistant Stage Manager

Diana Denley
Assistant to the Director

Ken Walkerdon
Props

Peter Harris
Scenic Artist

Coltriona Barrie
Wardrobe Manufacture

Anthony Jones
Wardrobe Manufacture

Jenny Bolton
Wardrobe Manufacture

Mel Dyke
Wardrobe Manufacture

Richard Weight
Construction Manager

Ray Elphick
Set Construction

John Murch
Set Construction

Frank Phipps
Set Construction

Charles Liversage
Set Construction

John Webber
Set Construction

Monly Webber
Set Construction

CONSULTANTS

MARKETING
Andrew L. Urban

ADVERTISING
Rod Brown, Jeremy Rowe,
Simon Connolly

PUBLICITY
Ingrid Berg & Associates

THE ORCHESTRA
Leader: Ruth Pearl

Violins
Mary Beers
Robert Ingram
John Lyle
Tom Fitzgerald
John Phip
Anne Hickey

Cellos
Barbara Woolley
Marc Bonatti
Ivan James
Susan Mavridis
Helen Lowe

Double Bass
Warwick Ross

Reeds
Michael Houghton
Paul Weil
Greg Mayson
Brent Stanton
Peter Stern

Brass
Richard Montz
John Hoffman
Stephen Williams
Anthony Bishop
Geoffrey Lowe
Bob Johnson
Peter Trofka

Percussion
Graeme Leak
Ron Lemke

Guitar
Graeme Brown

Piano
Mark Bersted

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requirements of the repertoire but also for what he called 'artistic vulnerability' in relation to overwork, the availability of a first class player and seating room in Sydney or Melbourne. There was a new musicians' *General Award* that came into operation in December 1971 following negotiations with the Musicians' Union but an uphill battle with the budget. Joseph Post was ill and not effective as a musical adviser. Good intentions and aspirations were thwarted on many occasions. Franks pushed very hard for his principles and he would not have stood down easily. There was respect for him musically at the same level as Cillario. There is only a handful of advocates for good ballet conducting internationally. In 1981, when I returned from England, Dobbs conducted a commercial performance of *West Side Story* at Her Majesty's in Sydney with tenor, Philip Gould, and I was a member of the orchestra. Dobbs put the show together very quickly, within two or three rehearsals and it was superb performance standard. His musical competence is without doubt and as a director helping to guide a fledgling orchestra as the Melbourne Trust orchestra was at the time, they could not have had a better person.

Rostering

There was much discussion about introducing rostering to reduce overtime costs and help players to take breaks and not be under such pressure. It took me a long time to understand the value of this. I was young and could not see what the issue was. I understood some players, such as wind and brass, experienced stress of their embouchures and needed someone to cover some of the hefty work from time to time, especially for Wagner. This issue was about taking a principal player out of the chair and putting someone else in. It meant putting in casual players and having musical inconsistency. In those days, funds were coming solely from federal and state governments, and rostering added to the costs. It could only have been justified on musical grounds and I did not think the musical grounds were strong enough. I held that view for a long time and it was reinforced in London. We did not know what work was in Australia; in London I learnt about demands on players. Not only did wind players have to work hard but mistakes could mean immediate loss of work. No tenure there, yet they did it well and uncomplainingly. There were stresses they succumbed to but they survived. Later, when I was managing the Orchestras, I found how rostering can work beneficially and where the problems were. There was no sophisticated approach in those days. It was, 'I need a break. Get someone in,' which could cause resentment. Rostering required tactful and astute orchestral management. None of those qualities existed in the Trust Orchestras in those days.

Instrument Allowances and Insurance

In 1971 the Trust decided to provide an instrument allowance on parity with the ABC, and to introduce instrument insurance, with a comprehensive policy that saw the Trust sharing half the premium cost with musicians. These changes, to compliment the instrument purchase arrangement, came about partly because some people lost instruments or suffered damaged in the Her Majesty's Theatre fire in 1970. The Opera was playing there at the time and there were a number of insurance claims. Bill Reid had arranged for a cello to be bought for Ken Jepson when he came to Australia which did not go down well with some people but the scheme did help a number of musicians. Purchased instruments included a contrabassoon and a very good set of Ludwig timpani bought for the Sydney Orchestra. Jack Purden was right when he recommended the Trust buy a set for touring so that the quality would always be the same, instead of getting to different places and hiring or borrowing them. There was a time when five or six Wagner horns were needed, which were bought. Also six or seven C trumpets—the long trumpet used in *Aida*. Not the sort of thing you could expect a musician to supply.

I paid my own annual instrument insurance and do not remember making any claims. I may not have even known about it. If you were there and something was happening, you would hear about it, but if away for a couple of weeks you may not have known unless it affected you. There was no formal noticeboard, e-mails or texts. If the orchestral or union stewards wanted to talk to the orchestra after the call, we would be asked to stay back for ten minutes. Most people just wanted to get away although a few were adamant about industrial and orchestral issues. In Sydney Peter King was a very militant unionist. If he had not been a musician, he would have been in the builders' trade union or the **CFMEU**⁹. He was prepared to speak out and was passionate about those things.

After the fire at Her Majesty's the Trust scrambled to get the Elizabethan Theatre, which was sitting idle, ready as a replacement venue by March/April 1971. I remember rehearsing there for *Meistersinger* or *The Flying Dutchman*, and afterwards standing on Newtown Station in need of a drink after all that Wagner! It was not attractive to work in, but I only played one season there. Also in 1971 there was discussion about the tolerable limit to touring and it was agreed two months each year with a maximum of three to four consecutive weeks at any one time. Early on, with the first orchestra, we did six months in Sydney, six months on the road. With the Melbourne Orchestra we were on the road for more than three months. Some centres could not sustain more than two or three week seasons—Brisbane, Adelaide and Perth were all three week maximums. Melbourne and Sydney you could play longer, six weeks in each was acceptable.

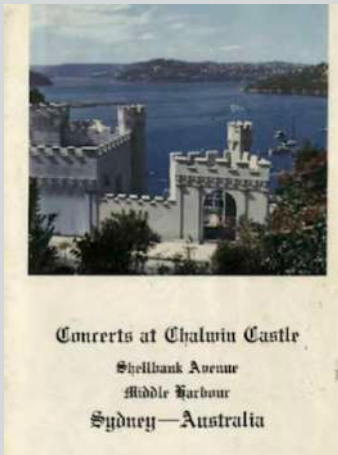
⁹ Construction, Forestry, Maritime, Mining and Energy trade union.

Without including Tasmania, nine weeks in Perth, Adelaide and Brisbane, and twelve weeks in Melbourne and Sydney, was half a year and that is how it was in the early days. I found that workable. A day or two respite between cities would have been good, particularly if you were driving, but I did not think there needed to be a limit set. That would have been the sort of thing a union organizer would come up with. They think of the workplace but a construction site is vastly different to a theatre. Yet the same basic principles apply: you do six hours' work and you have a break, but this cannot apply to an orchestra's situation. If we do not tour with the ballet and the opera, they would need a massive income to stay in one place. Today it is closer to that, but still difficult to make ends meet. We were a national orchestra committed to national touring. We had to play Brisbane and Perth, the same as we played Sydney or Melbourne. We rarely played Perth because it was so expensive to get us there.

In August 1971, in the light of discussions about tolerable touring, the Trust suggested the ABC orchestras be asked to do opera and ballet seasons in Perth and Tasmania, as a way to ease the burden, but the ABC already had full time commitments. It would have had a massive impact on the Opera Orchestra's morale to think they were not considered worthy enough to go to Perth. This would have been the thin edge of the wedge. There are a few wedges in the music industry that are entrenched. They inhibit progress, standards and people, in having the freedom to develop artistic expression and this would have been one of them. Touring an orchestra out of London to America, for example, for ten days. There will be a concert each day and travel each morning, with a quick afternoon rehearsal for one hour, just a top and tail, and a concert that night, followed by a reception, sleep and travel the next day. You might be away twelve days and do ten concerts. That is touring and everyone does it in England. When the reviews come in they are usually glowing: "The LSO went to New York: fabulous playing," or "The Berlin Phil comes to Los Angeles: fabulous playing." There is something about touring when you are playing. You get a different audience from the musician's perspective. I love touring. When I went to England and toured to different audiences, I had a completely different attitude to the work in London. It is altogether exciting, musically stimulating. If you are playing Rodrigo's *Guitar Concerto* in Spain, the land of Segovia, it really means something, and there is an atmosphere and expectancy in the audience that you are going to meet that expectation. If the orchestra is good enough and the conductor is sensitive to it, some of the best performances happen during tours. So being industrial about it, taking an attitude about limiting touring weeks, can kill that experience.

Getting Out of the Pit

By 1970 it had been recognized that it was artistically important and beneficial to morale to give the Orchestras status by providing opportunities to play on the concert platform away



from the pit. At this time it was more a hope than reality. There was some activity at Chalwin Castle, Sydney, with a chamber group from the Sydney Orchestra giving occasional concerts, but it was not scheduled in as a regular thing. Some concerts were arranged at late notice. I played a concert at Dallas Brooks Hall, Monash University, in Melbourne. It was fabulous, one of the most enjoyable things I ever did with the Melbourne Orchestra. We played Schoenberg's *Transfigured Night* conducted by Georg Tintner¹⁰ who was quite a character. This was music he knew and had prepared well. It was stunning to play, the opposite of anything I had ever done. I have fond memories since it was a foretaste of what was to come in my musical life. Apart from work with the Robert Pikler Chamber Orchestra¹¹, I had never played quite like that, with fifteen instruments, just one bass, with full control artistically in the classical environment as I had in the jazz environment. With Robert Pikler it was Mozart, Bach and Tchaikovsky string music. For the Schoenberg it was a combination of wind and strings and a contemporary composer. It had a major impact on me. I will always remember the feeling of sitting on the stage and the audience reaction.

Occasionally the Orchestra was mentioned in reviews of ballet and opera performances; at one stage the Trust board minutes noted that a reviewer had described the West Australian Ballet season as being enhanced by the Melbourne Orchestra's playing. The Orchestra had been applauded in its own right and the Trust realized the ABC Orchestra would not have been a good idea to go to Western Australia. There were mostly favourable reviews of the concerts, although some reviewers seemed surprised that we played so well. We seemed to be encumbered with our role as opera/ballet musicians. There was a view prevailing for a long time that kept the Orchestras in the eyes of the public down on the bottom of the pits and made it hard for them to come out of the pit and give concerts; the view that it was only an Opera Orchestra and it would be better to hear the Sydney or Melbourne Symphony Orchestras play the same repertoire. It is sad that musicians have been so pigeonholed. They deserve recognition as musicians in their own right, who play chamber music, symphony concerts or opera or ballet and they will play it differently from the way others play it and probably very well. It is an issue needing to be addressed in the public mind. The musicians can do very little about it and the organization running them can do very little about it. Publicity can help. The Trust spent money trying to promote the idea this was an orchestra that could play other things but we were inevitably off again to play opera or ballet for six months. This attitude impacted on the musicians, particularly if they wanted time off for other work and when rostering became an issue. The management was in a difficult position



The Robert Pikler Chamber Orchestra.

¹⁰ Georg Tintner (1917-1999), Austrian born conductor and composer, career principally in New Zealand, Australia and Canada. In Australia from 1954 was resident conductor, National Opera of Australia, then joined AETT Opera in 1957. Later was Music Director of West Australian Opera and in 1974 re-joined Australian Opera. Became Music Director of Queensland Theatre Orchestra in 1976. Moved to Canada in 1987. Is credited with pioneering televised opera in Australia.

¹¹ A freelance chamber music group formed in 1970 by violinist Robert Pikler.

because they had to keep the orchestra happy and they were paying very low wages. There are other ways to keep people happy than money, such as respite to give opportunity to get other work. I left the Melbourne Orchestra to work at a Sydney RSL club for about four or five weeks. It was lucrative, double the money earned in the Orchestra. That kind of arrangement makes the job more satisfactory if it does not damage the Orchestra.

In October 1971 the Trust called an orchestra representative committee meeting to discuss the new agreement for rates of pay and conditions and people came from Melbourne to Sydney to talk about a superannuation proposal. The Trust was considering introducing superannuation to the players in 1972. Very soon after that meeting the Orchestra, led by its orchestra committee chairman, carried a motion for industrial action if delay continued on the finalization of the new agreement, payments and other issues of concern. On October 21st, 1971, Jeffrey Joynton-Smith wrote to the Ballet Company about this. Players were not able to warm up before a performance because the dancers were using the stage and streamers were being thrown at last night performances which potentially could damage instruments in the pit. The musicians were also seeking proper meals, not just sandwiches, on longer charter air flights. The double basses were right in the line of fire of streamer throwers, but it was not really an issue. No real damage could be done to instruments. They were light and easily avoided. Anyone with a valuable instrument put it away before the streamers started. Also, it is incumbent on everyone to make sure the audience goes away feeling happy. If streamers make it festive, then why not. My bass can, and has, taken a few poundings along the way.

Maybe these issues masked ulterior motives in the attempt to win a point in an industrial negotiation. By the way, you do not have to be in the pit to warm up. At the Princess Theatre there was a large area underneath where wind instruments, which need to, could warm up. The only things in the pit that cannot be moved easily are basses, timpani and percussion and they do not have to warm up. There is a ballet using Tchaikovsky's *Second Piano Concerto* and the pianist may need to warm up but the pianist was engaged by the Ballet and would have arranged things accordingly. Half an hour before curtain up the stage had to be clear. I have never seen a musician in the pit half an hour before a call. Both those issues were furphies. With regard to superannuation, the Trust was incredibly forward thinking to have even voiced the idea, let alone implement it. Eventually they offered a superannuation scheme accessible to everyone involved in the arts in Australia, twenty years ahead of its time.

At the end of October 1971, the Melbourne Orchestra committee resolved to suspend trombonist Philip Mendel for two weeks for misconduct following Tasmanian press reports of industrial unrest in the Orchestra, which he had instigated. The rest of the Orchestra took strong exception to his conduct and he was considered a troublemaker. At the Trust board meeting

on 13 December 1971, Sir James Darling reported on the Orchestras. It had been a difficult but reasonably successful year. Melbourne had appointed a new leader, Brian Beattie, and a new deputy leader. Sir James also reported the Ballet had a new musical director, a new artistic director and that agreement had been reached with unions on a reasonable increase in salaries and allowances. He considered the Orchestras were underfunded, lacked proper instrumentation and there were areas that needed improvement, both the physical performance places and the Orchestras themselves. The funding bodies were not prepared to facilitate this in the budget allocated to the Trust, a continuing factor that extended right until the mid-1980s when I returned as administrator.

Touring, 1972

I was a member of the Melbourne orchestra until late 1972. We faced nineteen weeks of touring whereas the Sydney Orchestra had five weeks. The Sydney Orchestra increased to sixty-one players and the Melbourne Orchestra to fifty-seven. Each Orchestra played over two hundred performances with the Opera and Ballet. The Melbourne Orchestra gave two free symphonic concerts, three operatic concerts and a small number of Melbourne recitals, including the Tintner/Schoenberg program and a concert for the Moomba Festival. The 1972 Opera repertoire was *Die Rosenkavalier*, conducted by Edward Downes, *Rigoletto*, the 'Inevitable Twins' (as Stephen Hall called them), *Cavalleria Rusticana and Pagliacci*, conducted by Maurets Sillem, *Fidelio*, *Force of Destiny*, *The Marriage of Figaro*, conducted by William Reid, *The Rape of Lucretia*, *La Boheme* and three operatic concerts. Downes' *Rosenkavalier* was excellent. It was my first introduction to Strauss and very stimulating. Downes took the difficulty out of it because he managed to impart the style. He approached rehearsals by putting the work into the context of the staged performance. Most conductors will rehearse, play through, so that they know you know and can play the notes, then they shape it but he would take a phrase, shape it immediately and then you would play it. You were singing the part almost by the time you went to play it. Learning a new work that way, particularly a difficult work like Strauss, it becomes a little more acceptable and takes the awesome nature of it away and removes barriers which are mostly self-made. You can actually do it but you convince yourself you cannot because you see it on paper and it all looks black. In reality you can do it when you stop panicking about it. In rehearsals, Downes took the panic away, presented it stylistically, and by the time we played, it was no trouble at all. Like Cillario, he was an opera director who brought out the best in people although sometimes his 'Englishness' riled players who wanted him to speak 'Australian'. We also did *The Merry Widow* with Suzanne Steele and Robert Gard at the Princess Theatre in October 1972. My lasting impression of that period is one of many people doing all these things with no real experience and no

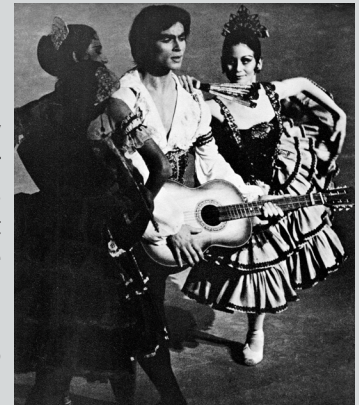
authoritative background. We did not have someone directing who had been twenty years at the Royal Shakespeare Company, we had a director who was learning it for the first time.

The Ballet repertoire in 1972 was *Cinderella*, with Robert Helpmann and Frederick Ashton, conducted by John Lanchbery, *Threshold*, *One in Five*, *Don Quixote*, *The Firebird* and *Yugen*, conducted by Alan Abbott, *Images Classique*, *The Display*, *Façade*, *Six on Percussion*, *Beethoven Dances*, *La Fille Mal Gardee*, *Mademoiselle Angot* and *Sebastian*. Reginald Stead was leader and Charles Gray was still principal bass. *Yugen* was a modern ballet with contemporary music by Yuzo Toyama. It was a challenge to play but I had seen it develop over the previous year and come together in rehearsal. I found it an interesting work from a movement point of view. Ashton was very understated in *Cinderella*. His communication with the conductor was modest. Helpmann demonstrated more than the ballet; he demonstrated an immense understanding of immaculate timing and stagecraft. He could convey an impression and message by simply turning in a certain direction and moving in a certain way at a particular time. His timing on stage was a bit like Sinatra's timing when he sang ballads at his peak in the 1950s and 1960s. It was immaculate, the way he placed the phrases. Helpmann did the same on stage. In his character roles, in *Don Quixote* and *Cinderella*, his movement would be controlled, never excessive, and when he moved you would almost say, 'Of course that had to happen then. That is the only thing he could have done to make an impression,' and you understood what he was trying to do. Even though it was over-exaggerated to reach the back of the theatre, it was still under control. What was probably most important was his timing. The ballet was simply the medium but he was a person who knew what to say when. More importantly he knew when not to say it. He was like that personally as well: I never heard him in rehearsals voicing an opinion. He would let everyone else voice opinions and then would say what he was going to do, despite other opinions, and what he did was perfect.

Australian Ballet's film of *Don Quixote*

I played for the music recording for the Australian Ballet's film of *Don Quixote*, conducted by Lanchbery, and recorded long before shooting started. I remember going to a converted hanger at Essendon Airport in Melbourne, where they were filming, with Carole McPhee who was working on the film's publicity and looking after Nureyev's needs. Nureyev was the most difficult dancer you could come across, the opposite to Helpmann. He and Helpmann co-directed the film. Nureyev wanted to have a real say in camera shots, like Helpmann, he knew what worked and where he had to be to get the jump and height he wanted and how much preparation he needed. He knew precisely where everything had to be, including the camera, in relation to jumps he would execute. One day on the set he insisted on sitting in the cameraman's seat on

Rudolph Nureyev and Lucette Aldous, *Don Quixote*, The Australian Ballet.





Robert Helpmann and the company, *Don Quixote* (film), Australian Ballet—1973

the camera dolly, and looking at the shot. He ran the music and the shot the way the camera was going to go. He was over half an hour doing this, just noting and looking. When he came down everyone on the set was pretty livid because he had held everything up. The worst part for the dancers was that they had to go for long hours without dancing, so they had to warm up again or to get up immediately and dance. This was one of those situations. No-one was allowed to move because he wanted to see the set as it was with everyone in position. He got shots changed and they all agreed with him at the end of the day. Probably the only one who could handle him was Helpmann, who, almost as if looking at his watch—he was not, of course, but it was that sort of body language, got up off the rock where he had been sitting still, waiting for Rudi to complete

what he wanted. He would have sat there for ten hours if it had been that. He took his position for the beginning of the shot, without saying anything and Nureyev moved into his position and they shot it. He was like that on stage as well but if you challenged him about something you had to be damn sure you were right because invariably you were not. Rudi was a unique person in terms of his art form. Everything he did was about his ballet—and not just the physical thing of rehearsing and classes—but everything was applied to his ballet. Margot Fonteyn told me that when touring with Rudi he would disappear for the day, spending it in the Louvre in Paris, for example, looking for something to put into the ballet that night. He went to everything: films, museums and galleries and read many books. Everything, everywhere in the world wherever he was, he went out every day with a view of bringing back to the performance at night. He had the technique at the height of his career but it made him the world's best dancer because he was authoritative. If you were dancing something that was meant to be evocative of a Monet, he had just been in the Louvre, seen the Monet, knew what was required and did it with authority. Margot said his mind was always questioning; he would never settle until he had the right answer, not his answer, the right answer that is accepted. He never wasted a minute, no sleeping in; while everyone else slept after last night's party, Rudi was in galleries. When they filmed, you would have thought there would be time to sit down and talk with the principal dancer, Nureyev, and the music and the movie director. Nureyev arrived the day before and filmed the next day. That is how things ran. He had the 'anything's possible' approach.

Financial Pioneers

There was talk of a Trust Youth Orchestra along the lines of the ABC one in order to bring players through the system but obviously money, if nothing else, put a stop to that. The negative view is there is no money, but addressing the question of how to get money for such activity has been better addressed more recently. The Opera now has money. It may not have enough, but it still has over a million to put into one production; it did not in the 1970s. These were pioneer times for us all; orchestral management, the Orchestra, the Opera Company, singers, set makers, costume designers, they were all in the same boat: they were all making it up as they went along.

The Australian Prime Minister was William McMahon¹² and at the beginning of 1972, the government announced, through the Minister for the Arts, Peter Hausen, reasonable increases in grants to the Opera, the Orchestras and the Ballet. A press release declared the Orchestras needed substantial growth for the move into the Sydney Opera House, which opened the following year. I was not very interested in politics and arts funding at that stage. Today, musicians and artists generally are more astute and aware and vocal when there is a change of government

¹² Sir William McMahon GCMG, CH (1908-1988), Liberal Party Prime Minister of Australia 1971-1972.

that affects funding but in those days, until Whitlam¹³ came in, there was no real concern—it was up to the administrators. With Whitlam it was as if he almost turned a tap on and money marked ‘arts’ poured out. Ideas were given the opportunity to flourish and you could not help but become aware of the power of government money affecting the arts: it got turned off as quickly as it got turned on, of course, the moment he left office. I was aware of great change in our society but it was still inexpensive to live in Melbourne and to buy property in Sydney, about a decade away from the time when the cost of property trebled. Living in East Melbourne I could walk to the Princess Theatre, across Treasury Gardens. Today, for me, there is nothing affordable in the area. We were not yet at the point where money became the main object of endeavour. We had not become so reliant on sponsorship: there were no massive one million dollar grants from *Esso* put on an opera. That came about seven or eight years later. The Australian Opera General Manager Patrick Veitch¹⁴ delivered the first sponsorship; within a few weeks of his arrival in Australia, he raised \$90,000, which was unheard of, and from then on the Opera Company went on to bigger things. There were still other values driving us: things like the music, the way it was played and who you played it with, the options and opportunities you had, the advancement you were after. Personally, I wanted to advance my playing musically. I was focused now only on classical music and knew I had to move on from opera and ballet, not necessarily to jazz. I did not return to the jazz field in a serious manner. I knew I probably needed to go to Europe and the target was England. I did not know what I would find there, although I had heard it was usually exciting and worthy. This was a time for me to consolidate, get as much information; not that I did this knowingly but in retrospect I wanted to get as much information as I could from Charlie Gray about playing and approaching music. There were not many internationally experienced players in the Trust Orchestras at that time.

Leaving the Elizabethan Melbourne Orchestra

When I left the Melbourne Orchestra in 1973, although I did not know it at the time, there was something really narking me. I could not quite put my finger on it, nor did I try because I went to England and changed my focus. I became interested in completely different things. When I left Australia there seemed to be no point in staying with the orchestras because they were not going anywhere. We were working day to day, week to week, tour to tour and there was nothing at the end of it; it was just next year’s Opera season or this year’s Ballet season or the long tour coming

¹³ Edward Gough Whitlam (1916-2014), Labor Prime Minister of Australia 1972-1975.

¹⁴ Patrick Veitch, an American, was General Manager, The Australian Opera, 1981-1986.

up for seven months out of Sydney or the short tour around country Victoria but there was no long term plan. Good conductors like Maestro Cillario were something to look forward to, but only for the next season. The notion of a career path to the heights of operatic and ballet music was so far removed from us all and yet it should have been the focus. There is correspondence in the Trust archive addressing serious points and issues arising within the Orchestra when a player vacated a position and the importance of how it was going to be filled. There was one such occasion when the leader, Ruth Pearl, resigned. She advised she would not audition for the position and the response was there was nothing to be done. While there was the realization that if she left, her son Mark, may go as well, in one fell swoop both left without any attempt to salvage the situation. From the discussions, it seems it was more of an administrative issue than an artistic one in finding their replacements. In 1973 Dr H.C. Coombs¹⁵, Australia Council for the Arts, wrote to Trust Chairman Sir Ian Potter making some suggestions aimed at going a little further than the Trust simply providing an Orchestra for the Opera and Ballet. He was looking to expand the Orchestra's use to other companies and he suggested there might be a rehearsal arrangement in conjunction with other companies where the Trust Orchestra could be used to benefit. These were ideas designed to try and improve the quality of the players, give them more than just what was before them in the Opera and the Ballet and develop their interest in supporting the Orchestra. His approach was very good but these issues were things an artistic director should take on board and solve, especially the case of the leader of an orchestra and a principal cellist in a fledgling orchestra which is only a year or so old. A musical director should guide and negotiate and with a good player, you do not have to audition them. It may be different today because there are bureaucratic requirements to fulfill, but in those days selections could be made on the basis of the player's quality, although this is only something a musical or artistic director could do. There was no artistic adviser, no musical director governing this. Even Sir Joseph Post's comments did not go to the heart of the matter, they simply went to the administration of the matter. He was not artistic director although he had influence in recommending people from overseas. That is how the Melbourne Orchestra gained two people from the BBC in England to solve the Ruth Pearl problem. With all due respect to those people, there might have been other ways to do it but only an artistic director could decide that. I left the Orchestra not only because I wanted to go to England and throw my hat in the big pond there, but deep down I left the Orchestra because it had no direction; no artistic life in front of it. The Ballet was a first-rate company with superb dancers. The Opera was developing and encouraging good singers and

¹⁵ Dr Herbert Cole 'Nugget' Coombs (1906-1997) Australian economist and public servant. Was the first chairman of the Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust in 1954 and the first Governor of the Reserve Bank of Australia 1960-1968. He initiated the creation of the Australian Council for the Arts (now Australia Council) and became its first chairman in 1968. In 1967 he became chairman of the Council for Aboriginal Affairs and in the 1970s was a consultant to the Prime Minister, Gough Whitlam.

building a very good chorus. They had good conductors but only seasonally. No-one would have been able to answer the question as to the orchestra's future in fifteen years' time. What would happen to a young player, like me, inexperienced and definitely not up to the high standard required of an orchestra as it rose to the challenge of meeting international opera and ballet standards, in ten years' time? Mostly they would have left, but the answer should have been help to develop young players with a program to assist them. Where they have problems, an artistic director would assist them to get through with guidance. If the artistic director had been in place when they selected the first concertmaster and before any musician was employed, they would have identified the need for an Orchestra to play well for opera and ballet, with a mix of older and young players and a training philosophy applied to young players as part of the process. The vision should have been to develop the Orchestra over a period of five to ten years to a first-rate, internationally accepted standard, by giving players a target and belief they belonged to something greater than just a pit orchestra.

Almost all Australian musicians since 1950 have seen the need to go abroad, for study, for career, and for the enlargement of personal understanding of life. Robert Ingram, Carl Pini and Ronald Thomas, all internationally acclaimed violinists, left Australia during the 1950s and 1960s, and in England became engrossed in orchestras like the London Philharmonia and Bournemouth Sinfonietta, and were good examples. The horn player, Alan Tuckwell, was another. Robert Davidovich, the violinist, went to New York. It was almost accepted that if you were serious about your career you would go sooner or later. I had an unhappy experience. In Melbourne there was a need for an associate principal double bass which was to be advertised for the section. The members of the team were myself, Charles Gray and John de Colville, a New Zealander. John was heading back home, which left a hole in the section to be filled with an associate principal. I felt I was probably suitable and was interested because it provided access to some of the solo parts of the bass repertoire for opera and ballet. I expressed interest but was told by the orchestral management they wanted the position filled by an overseas player, which flew in the face of all Union stands about imported players. I was told an overseas player would be better and more experienced, which is a terrible thing to say to a young person trying to earn his way in the Orchestra. I was advised that to be suitable for such a position I should go overseas for experience. I think the next week I resigned and decided to go to London. I was not really up to that position and my audition would have probably revealed that. However, the attitude annoyed me. There was no chance of negotiating an audition and having a fair appraisal. Whether correct or not, the view was that you were better if you came from overseas, preferably England.

There was another issue where a young violinist who had been trying out for the leader or principal position, was passed over on the grounds he was considered too young, inexperienced and immature. There was no reference to his musical quality or abilities, rejection was on the basis of his youth. He went to America and led the Met Orchestra for ten years; before he left he was one of Australia's up and coming violinists of the highest quality. What a tremendous loss to Australian music. We were not aware of this at the time, which is a pity, as a lot of effort was going into trying to fix the car with the wrong tools. Had we known, maybe we could have changed things.

Forty years on, things have changed. Most importantly, music pedagogy has improved substantially. Today, players, in what were the old Elizabethan Trust Sydney and Melbourne Orchestras, seem content and do not have to deal with the problems we had. Standards are very much higher: a young person coming into the Orchestra now is generally a graduate. In the late 1960s it was rare for a musician to do an undergraduate course; there were music performance diplomas, but no real academic study attached to it. It was performance based and focused, enough theory and academic to help the performance but not much more. Today players understand the music they are playing academically and from a performance point of view. They have analyzed the styles and if they have had a good teacher, they will know about approaching different styles of playing. For an opera orchestra member, playing Wagner is different to playing Mozart, so an understanding of those styles is needed. In those days we did not know; finding out the hard way; pioneers. Some, like Ruth Pearl, knew those styles and were invaluable in describing how to play certain phrases with awareness of the composer's style.

There are now fine teachers in Australia who prepare young musicians to go to postgraduate education at schools around the world. In the 1950s when you left Australia you were lucky to have a diploma, now generally players have Bachelor of Music or higher degrees and go to study for a doctorate or Masters in Performance. Standards are much higher and the quality of playing in rehearsal will be high, so issues are more likely to be about the pit environment or the workload. Even that has changed because the rostering fight has been resolved and artistic or musical directors provide guidance, and protocols are in place so orchestra members cannot make individual decisions that impact on the orchestra without being challenged. Effective rostering arises from adequate funding and having the establishment (numbers of players) appropriate to the work. I understand the Sydney Opera Ballet Orchestra is now possibly the highest paid orchestra in Australia. At the beginning they were struggling to get anywhere near the symphony orchestras. Parity has been achieved and surpassed; probably rightly so. It is a very demanding job with onerous conditions. If there is a good salary to be made, this adds to the attraction for a young player. There will be enjoyment, opportunity to play with good players and

proper remuneration and burn out is less likely. Today, if a vacancy occurs, rather than just accept it and look around for a replacement, the approach would be to start a dialogue on musical grounds to see if conditions can be improved to prevent the player leaving. Unless a musician is definitely moving away for personal reasons, most are interested in continuing to work with the orchestra because there has been interest in, and responsiveness to their wellbeing. So instead of looking at it as a constantly changing group of people, an 'establishment' of either adequate or inadequate size, it should be looked at as an Orchestra developing valuable players to keep and encourage to stay.

