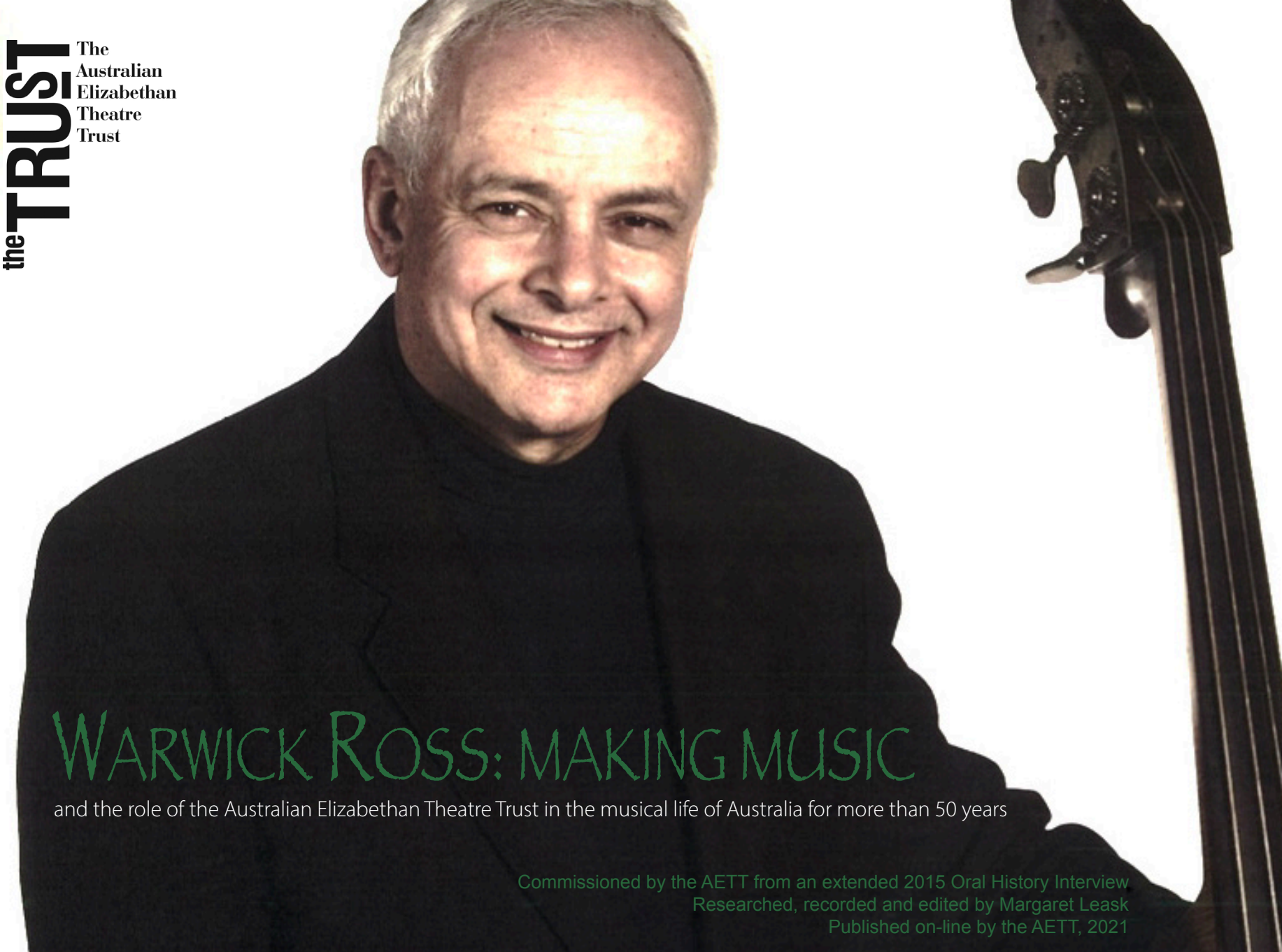
the TRUST The Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust



Warwick Ross: making music

and the role of the Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust in the musical life of Australia for more than 50 years

Commissioned by the AETT from an extended 2015 Oral History Interview
Researched, recorded and edited by Margaret Leask
Published on-line by the AETT, 2021

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Contents

Introduction

Warwick Ross has had a long, close and ongoing association to the AETT since 1967 when he first played double bass with the Elizabethan Sydney Orchestra. Since then, he has 'played' a number of different roles with the Trust, always with musicians and music as his principal focus. From the beginning, as he participated in the life of a touring orchestral musician, then as an orchestra fixer in the UK and for *Edgleys* in Australia, as a recording expert, as Administrator of the Trust orchestras and currently as Trust CEO managing scholarships which enable Australian musicians to study overseas, his quiet contribution to musical life and infrastructure in this country is considerable.

He applied patience and painstaking attention to detail to the transfer of the Trust orchestras to separate management in the late 1980s, the mentoring of musicians through the Trust scholarship program, the transformation of Sydney's Independent Theatre into a world class music venue and the nurturing of *Stuart & Son Pianos*. Along the way he studied law, explored jazz and continued to play double bass whenever possible as well as supporting his daughter in her musical pursuits.

Over two months in 2015 Warwick recorded his memories in an extended, 36 hour, oral history interview with Margaret Leask, who edited and referenced the interview in the light of Trust archival material. This edited transcript provides insight into how Australia's arts organizations were born, developed and blossomed as they confronted difficulties in relation to facilities, funding, unions and personalities while seeking audiences and artistic excellence. The Trust's important role in nurturing, fighting for and guiding Australian arts organizations towards independence has sometimes been forgotten or maligned. Warwick's story gives some of the detail of this process - much of it undertaken behind the scenes and unrecognized. It also shows how arts administration that has as its principal aim the encouragement of an art form, taking into account both the artists and the audience, is essential if the arts are to flourish.

This is Warwick's story ...

The Hon. Lloyd Waddy, AM RFD QC
Chairman, Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust Board of Directors

Acknowledgements

There have been many players in the development and telling of this story; musicians, creative administrators, AETT Board members, Trust members, audiences and supporters, as well as government and arts organizations who have participated in the work of the AETT since it was established in 1954. We thank them all.

For particular help with this project, many thanks to Trust Chairman, the Hon. Lloyd Waddy, AM, RFD, QC and his fellow Board members, Brian R. Larking, OAM, FCA, Gregory K. Burton SC, FCIArb, James RG Bell, BA, LLB, and Ian Hardy B.Ec, F.Fin.

Thank you also to editor and publisher, Robert Page, for permission to use extracts from *Theatre Australia* published in the 1970s and 1980s and to the National Library of Australia for linking the Trust Archives to *Trove* on-line. The Trust's extensive Archive, which includes material from 1954 to the present day, has been an invaluable source of material including Annual Reports, newsletters, programs, correspondence and images.

We appreciate the permission given by the Department of Communications and the Arts in Canberra to quote from the 1985 *Study into the Future Development of Orchestras in Australia*—known as the *Tribe Report*—from the Study Group to the Cultural Minister's Council, published by the Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra. The Cultural Minister's Council was a former inter-governmental committee to the Meeting of Cultural Ministers.

We acknowledge the work of many professional photographers over the years who have contributed to the visual material recording the Trust's many activities. We have attempted to acknowledge photographers individually, but this has not always been possible and we would welcome any advice to add acknowledgements as they come to light. Thanks also to Alan Rendell, transcriber Pat Francis and *Microsystems Pty Ltd*.

We are particularly indebted to Jennifer Stevens and John Senczuk for their contribution to the layout and design of this story and the conversion of the text for on-line access.

Throughout this on-line history we have embedded links (indicated in the text in bold) to many informative websites and Trust archival material and we hope this document will be an invaluable, inter-active starting point for further research into Australia's performing arts history. Up loading of Trust archival material onto the website will continue as part of the Trust's role in furthering understanding and access to the arts in Australia.

Dr Margaret Leask, formerly an arts administrator in London and Sydney, has been an oral historian and performing arts historian since 2004. In the mid-1970s she was Membership Manager and Editor of the *Trust News* for the Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust. This included involvement with the National Playwright's Conference and the establishment of the Australian Youth Performing Arts Association. Her first oral history project was for the 50th anniversary of the National Institute of Dramatic Art. She researches and records oral history interviews for the National Film and Sound Archive, Sydney Theatre Company, Sydney Opera House, the National Library of Australia and the State Library of NSW. Her book, *Lena Ashwell, Actress, Patriot, Pioneer*, was published by the University of Hertfordshire Press and the Society for Theatre Research in 2012 and was shortlisted for the Theatre Book Prize in 2013. She has reviewed Sydney theatre for *Plays International*, and has researched and written entries for the *Australian Dictionary of Biography* and obituaries for the *Sydney Morning Herald* and Melbourne *Age*.

the TRUST

Early Life

I joined the Elizabethan Trust Sydney Orchestra when I was 23 years of age but my musical experience started at least 13 years before. The second of three children, I was born in Randwick, Sydney, in 1944. Both my parents, Walter and Ethelwyn, were musicians. My mother studied the violin with my father before her marriage, but did not continue as a professional musician. My father did, but he ceased performing soon after Australia came under the effects of the worldwide Depression in the early 1930s. He became a baker and pastry cook in Sydney's eastern suburbs, making bread and pastries, and providing personalized delivery service to private homes throughout Coogee and Randwick. Before this, he was a successful violinist with his own string quartet. He derived income from performances in silent movie theatres, quartet and solo concerts and an established teaching studio. Unfortunately, my father was affected by the adverse circumstances of the Depression, especially by observing many of his musical colleagues and friends playing their instruments on street corners with their hat on the ground trying to earn enough money to eat.

When I was ten, we moved from Coogee to my mother's family home in Flemington, Sydney, which had been bought by my father after the sale of his bakery. Unfortunately, although the house was a fine, large colonial property, it was in a bad state of repair. I guess my family's wealth was measured in the assets it contained rather than any liquid cash (the house was situated on seven blocks of land). Accordingly, without the sale of some of the assets, which was not recommended due to potentially unknown medical expenses in the future, there was virtually no money to undertake massive repairs needed on the property. It was in this environment that I spent my teenage years. For about a year my father obtained employment by selling insurance policies door-to-door. However, sometime during that year he developed an illness arising from a stroke from which he had suffered and which had severely damaged his nervous system. He was slowly losing his capacity to function normally and was unable to work. We did not know it at the time but have subsequently realized that he was suffering from multiple sclerosis; a disease which in 1954 did not have the recognition and understanding it has today.

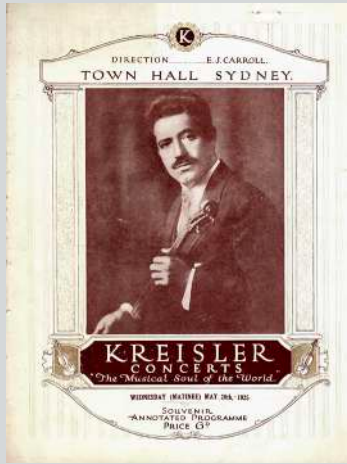
First Musical Education

When I was ten or eleven my father offered to teach me the violin and piano. At first I was enthusiastic about this proposal until I experienced, at first hand, my father's frustration at his diminishing technique on both instruments, and his distress with music in general which I assumed had come from his transfer from professional musician to baker and pastry cook. His

teaching style could only be described as strict Victorian with a strong focus on self-discipline and uncompromising insistence that only the highest standard was acceptable. I have no recollection that during my lessons my father allowed for the fact that I was a young child with, as yet, no formal understanding of music. Consequently, my lessons became very stressful and it was not long before I lost interest and lessons ceased.

My parents were passionate about music performances given by violinists such as Fritz Kreisler, Jascha Heifetz and Yehudi Menuhin and they had many recordings (in 78 rpm format), with which I grew up. However, this did not inspire me to continue piano and violin studies with my father. I think in retrospect his disease must have been the main reason for his failure to inspire in me a commitment to dedicated practice and study of music.

The purchase of the family home came with the condition that my mother's father remained in residence for the rest of his life. He lived well into his 90s and had the good fortune not to suffer serious bad health aside from the slow deterioration of his capacity to walk. My mother had never worked in paid employment since her marriage and with three teenage children, an elderly father and a husband with deteriorating health, she was faced with little relaxation time and inadequate funds to feed her family and maintain the home. To achieve this she took on a job each morning and afternoon as a cleaner in a local school. Considering my father's health was deteriorating rapidly and he needed constant care and attention, and my grandfather required assistance with his basic daily needs, it must have been extremely difficult for my mother to cope psychologically and financially.



Kreisler Concert program

School Days

My older brother, George, was an exceptional academic who won scholarship assistance to attend Sydney Boys' High School where he excelled in English, physics and mathematics. I was still in primary school when we moved from Coogee and my sister, Gail, was two years younger than me. I started primary school education at Randwick and concluded at Burwood after which my secondary education took place at Cleveland Street High School. I have mixed feelings about Cleveland Street. This was a time in my life when I had little incentive or interest in academic study and my home environment did not rectify this problem. For me, the time spent at Cleveland Street School was one of conflict with both students and teachers and the general education principles of the day. Aside from Ancient History, English and Geography, I showed little interest in the school academic curriculum. The consequence was that I failed the Leaving Certificate exam at the end of my secondary studies. At the same time, one of the unexpected and most satisfying experiences of my young days was involvement with the Air Force Cadet Unit 24 Flight, based at Cleveland Street. I joined the unit in second year and remained until

Air training Corps cadet Under Officer Course, Canberra 1961. Warwick back row, third from the left (under nose of DC3)—Photo: RAAF

my last day of school, after which I joined the air force reserve for about a year. During my school time I succeeded in holding every possible rank, awarded upon successful completion of an air force assessment camp, conducted at a Royal Australian Air Force base. The cadet unit taught me the value of independence, self-discipline and team leadership, including delegation of authority.

By the time I reached my last year of school I had successfully and completely disassociated myself from academic study, taught myself guitar, been elected a Prefect and fully engrossed myself in the air force cadet unit. I spent most of the time at school in the prefect's room practising rock 'n' roll on my guitar. Although still not interested in classical music I began to become enraptured by the popular music of the day. Rock 'n' roll was a lot tamer then but was developing rapidly in many ways, especially technically. I was able to afford six months of guitar lessons which gave me the basic understanding of chords and rhythmic structure. I was more than happy as I had acquired the habit of listening to performers I admired and then copying, to the best of my ability, their music. My musical influences included popular singers and bands such as Elvis Presley, Buddy Holly and Chet Atkins in America, *The Shadows*, Cliff Richards and *The Beatles* in the UK and Col Joy, *The Delltone*s and Johnny O'Keefe in Australia.

When I think back on my school days, I realize I did not develop many opportunities to help me in later life, but I learnt self-discipline from the air force cadets and the realization that if you want to achieve anything worthwhile you have to do it yourself and not rely on any person or institution to achieve your personal goals. I concluded my schooling in 1961 with no possibility of undertaking tertiary study, no academic qualification and no interest in the trades as a source of income. Not much had changed in my home life aside from the fact my father's health had deteriorated substantially and my grandfather required vehicular assistance to move around. My mother was still working every day and both my brother and I worked part-time at a local garage, where I guess I obtained my interest in motor cars. My brother had succeeded in obtaining a position in a Teacher's Degree course at Sydney University and my sister was still undertaking

secondary education. With no prospect of a university degree and no interest in the trades or apprenticeships, I was positioned to face my working life with very few immediately attractive prospects. Fortunately, in the 1960s in Australia a young person could gain employment reasonably easily as a labourer, office worker or retail employee. I think in my first year after school I found employment in all of these areas.

The Versatiles, 1962. John Martin (rhythm guitar), Wayne Davidson (drums), Warwick Ross (lead guitar).

Music, however, was my constant commitment and I put together my own rock 'n' roll band (for want of a better name) called *The Versatiles* and contributed musically by playing guitar and singing. As a band we were very raw and certainly not comparable to the best of Australian rock 'n' roll groups. However we found work, mostly Saturday night dances which we ran ourselves, with me as the entrepreneur. I do not think we ever made any money and I certainly barely returned the small investment I put into the dances. What I did achieve was the experience of learning how the general public responded to musical entrepreneurial endeavours, especially the factors which attracted them to attend rock 'n' roll events, vastly different from today.

David Foster

During this time I came under the influence of a drummer, David Foster[1], with whom I had been playing, who introduced me to jazz music. I accompanied him to Orange in central NSW and played with him in a small group at the *Royal Hotel* and the local golf club. I was still playing electric guitar and David encouraged me to play the bass part using the bottom four strings of the guitar. David's influence was to lead me away from rock 'n' roll to jazz and ultimately to classical music. He introduced me to an album by jazz saxophonist, Art Pepper, *Art Pepper meets the Rhythm Section* which had an immense influence on my musical tastes. Subsequently, I went with David to hear a live performance by *The Dave Brubeck Quartet* when they toured Australia in the early 1960s. This was the first time I fully understood how musicians work together to achieve an artistic outcome by virtue of their musicianship, instrumental technique and improvisational

1 David Foster (b.1944 -), novels include *The Pure Land* (1974), winner inaugural *Age* Book of the Year Prize, *Plumbum* (1983), *The Adventures of Christian Rosy Cross* (1985), *Dog Rock: a Postal Pastoral* (1985), *Mates of Mars* (1991) and *The Glade Within the Grove* (1996).

capacities. I was inspired to be part of this artistic expression and thought the way forward was to commit to jazz performance.

On one occasion whilst playing with David Foster at the *Royal Hotel* in Orange, I was approached by a gentleman from the audience who asked if I was currently studying music. When I responded in the negative, his response was advice that I should take music seriously and undertake formal music study. He was a teacher at the **NSW Conservatorium of Music** and offered to teach me classical piano. The notion that I might become studious about anything, and especially classical music, was of great amusement to my band colleagues and David introduced the sentiment that I would not last more than six months and dared me to follow up on the offer. I accepted that challenge, went back to Sydney and started learning the piano from **A.M.E.B. Preliminary Grade One**. I continued working for six months on the basic early levels and subsequently transferred my lessons to another teacher who took me to fifth-grade. Later that year I transferred to teacher Gordon Watson[2], then applied for, and received, a scholarship to study the double bass. Gordon Watson inspired me to look into musical areas I had hitherto ignored or did not understand.

Studying the Double Bass

The notion of studying the double bass arose from the need to fulfill the mandatory obligation for a Conservatorium student to study two instruments. However after a few months of study I became fascinated with the bass, especially its function in jazz ensembles, and with my drummer friend Dave established a small trio with an American pianist who was living temporarily in Sydney. It was during this period I realized the immense talent David Foster possessed, not only as a musician but as a science student and creative thinker. At the time David was studying science at Sydney University, composition with Ray Hanson[3] at the Conservatorium, and was interested in writing novels. In due course all of these commitments developed substantially. He completed a Doctorate in science which was followed by a world trip lecturing on his area of expertise. Some years later David developed a successful career as an Australian writer.

In retrospect I can see the influences that surrounded me were of such depth and high-quality, I was bound to benefit from their contributions to my life. My double bass teacher, Charles Gray, had been a member of the first English chamber orchestra, The Boyd Neel Orchestra[4], and after his arrival in Australia was the principal double bass of the **Sydney Symphony Orchestra** a position he held during my time of student study with him. Charles' influence on me was good

2 Gordon Watson AM (1921-1999), Australian classical pianist and teacher. Taught at Sydney Conservatorium of Music from 1964, retiring as Head of the Keyboard Department in 1986.
3 Raymond Hanson AM (1913-1976), Australian composer and lecturer in composition at the NSW State Conservatorium of Music.
4 Established by conductor and academic, Louis Boyd Neel (1905-1981), made its debut in London in June 1933. Toured Australia, New Zealand, Canada and USA from 1947. Later renamed Philomusica of London.

The Boyd Neel Orchestra with Charles Gray, double bass, 1933.

for two reasons. Firstly, it was not centred on an academic basis and, secondly, he was a man with vast experience of some of the icons of 20th-century music. As a member of the Boyd Neel Orchestra he was part of the development of the music of Benjamin Britten and Vaughan Williams, premiering many of their works in the 1930s. His understanding of the role of the double bass within the orchestral environment was immense, backed up by substantial firsthand experience with good international conductors and orchestras in the United Kingdom.

After a year of study with Charles, I was fully committed to the double bass and a possible career in music as a double bassist. There were, of course, huge gaps in my musical education needing to be filled, but despite the fact that the Conservatorium would not admit a double bass student into the diploma course, I had access to some fine teachers with immense practical knowledge and experience. These teachers, in my opinion, were prepared to give of their time and knowledge over and above that which was expected of them. These influences stood me in good stead later on when I embarked on my musical activities in the United Kingdom. George Humphrey in particular. He took on the role of filling the holes in my musical education by providing me with one-on-one lessons to address essential theoretical issues as they arose throughout my study. Since I did not have the benefit of structured classes in history and harmony, this was invaluable and allowed me the opportunity to keep pace with my colleagues, all of whom were either in teaching or performance diploma courses.

I began at the Conservatorium in 1962 and left in 1965. During that period I concentrated on getting my bass technique to the highest level I could achieve, necessitating a commitment of up to six hours practice on the instrument per day. I did not own a good-quality instrument but there were two at the Conservatorium available to students. Consequently, I attended every day to gain access to one of those instruments upon which I could practice. Considering my very bad

financial position, I made the most of the opportunities presented simply because, if a student showed commitment, my teachers were interested, experienced, knowledgeable, and committed. My interest in jazz and limited experience in jazz related music assisted in me obtaining casual work in small dance bands throughout Sydney. I secured a regular Saturday night engagement at Manly Rugby Union Club which paid enough to see me through the week if I lived frugally and conserved my spending.

First Work Opportunities

In 1965 I was offered a job in the Bull 'n' Bush theatre restaurant band in Sydney[5]. This was full-time, six nights a week with an acceptable salary, my first real income!!! The Trio in which I worked was led by pianist, Sybil Graham, who wrote the score with Jim Wallett (Associate Musical Composer) for a theatrical revue, *A Cup of Tea, a Bex and a Good Lie Down*, staged from 18 September 1965 at the Phillip Street Theatre[6]. It was an immense success, playing to full houses throughout its entire run of 18 months including touring. Playing for this production was extremely educational for me. I learnt how the techniques of a good script, impeccable timing and flexible delivery combined to deliver the success of a show. I admit this depth of understanding did not occur to me until much later in life, but I believe, when I was involved in music management in the UK, it helped me with the solution of some difficult problems.

By 1967 I had a reasonable income and could assist my mother financially, but it was clear there was no

Warwick Ross (double bass) with Carl Sampson (guitar), July 1962

5 The Bull 'n' Bush, East Sydney: "for 20 years offered a singalong with a jovial host and costumed songstresses. It lost popularity after the sudden death of its long time host Noel Brophy in 1983 and closed soon after." (Currency Press *Companion to Theatre*, editor Philip Parsons, 1995, p.588)

6 *A Cup of Tea, A Bex and A Good Lie Down*, written by John McKellar, directed by William Orr, featuring the talents of comics Ruth Cracknell, Gloria Dawn, Reg Livermore and Barbara Wyndon, was one of the most successful intimate revues presented at the Phillip Street Theatre between 1961 and 1989.

The Bull 'n' Bush trio, 1965: Peter Pearcy (piano), Warwick Ross (double bass) and John Monterey (drums).

ladder to climb and no career progression visible in my unqualified musical condition. I was without the benefit of an academic qualification, which might have guaranteed long-term regular employment, but I did have hard earned experience in the field as a performer. It seemed to me I needed to obtain some widely recognized credentials. At the time the major employment for classical musicians was the Sydney Symphony Orchestra and a newly formed Elizabethan Trust Opera Ballet Orchestra. Both these orchestras were considered by the **Musicians' Union of Australia** to be full-time permanent opportunities for professional musicians.

The Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC), who managed the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, had set up a program of training for young musicians to prepare them for entry into the symphony orchestras throughout Australia. I auditioned successfully for the newly created ABC National Training Orchestra and commenced work with them in 1967 which required attendance five days a week. Within the orchestra were some extremely talented young musicians destined

to hold positions in the ABC orchestras in the future. My time there was beneficial as our entire time was spent playing orchestral repertoire and preparing some of that repertoire for public concerts.

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

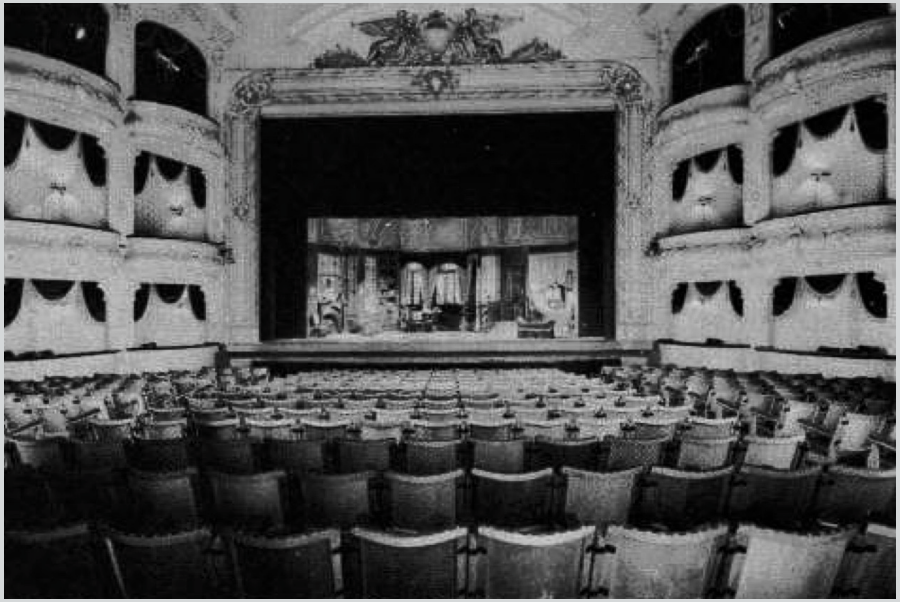
5 See Chapter Six.

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.

Melbourne Elizabethan Trust Orchestra

The Melbourne Elizabethan Trust orchestra, leader Maurice Stead.

In 1971 I went to the **Rocks Push Sydney** jazz venue to play[1], 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.

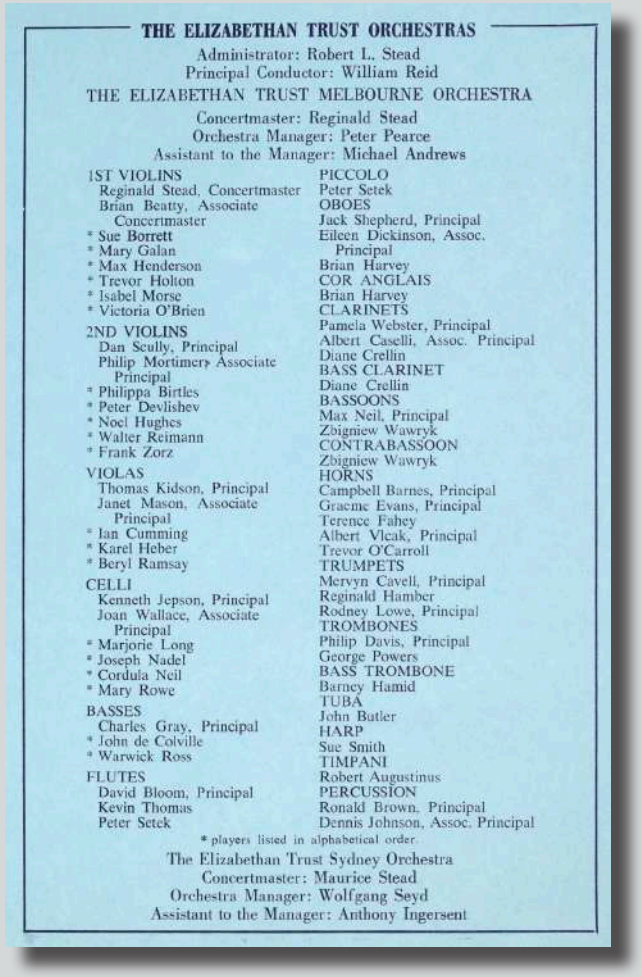
Another member was Maurice Stead, having been involved in setting up the Orchestra, he was on loan from Sydney. The Melbourne Concert Master was Reginald Stead (no relation to Maurice), from the north of England, his wife an oboist who took the principal's chair, and an English cellist, Ken Jepson, became 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 clarinettist, 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
Reginald Stead, Concertmaster
Brian Beatty, Associate Concertmaster
* Sue Borrett
* Mary Galan
* Max Henderson
* Trevor Holton
* Isabel Morse
* Victoria O'Brien

2ND VIOLINS
Dan Scully, Principal
Philip Mortimer, Associate Principal
* Philippa Birtles
* Peter Devlishev
* Noel Hughes
* Walter Reimann
* Frank Zorz

VIOLAS
Thomas Kidson, Principal
Janet Mason, Associate Principal
* Ian Cumming
* Karel Heber
* Beryl Ramsay

CELLI
Kenneth Jepson, Principal
Joan Wallace, Associate Principal
* Marjorie Long
* Joseph Nadel
* Cordula Neil
* Mary Rowe

BASSES
Charles Gray, Principal
* John de Colville
* Warwick Ross

FLUTES
David Bloom, Principal
Kevin Thomas
Peter Setek

PICCOLO
Peter Setek

OBOES
Jack Shepherd, Principal
Eileen Dickinson, Assoc. Principal

Brian Harvey

COR ANGLAIS
Brian Harvey

CLARINETS
Pamela Webster, Principal
Albert Caselli, Assoc. Principal
Diane Crellin

BASS CLARINET
Diane Crellin

BASSOONS
Max Neil, Principal
Zbigniew Wawryk

CONTRABASSOON
Zbigniew Wawryk

HORNS
Campbell Barnes, Principal
Graeme Evans, Principal
Terence Fahey
Albert Vleak, Principal
Trevor O'Carroll

TRUMPETS
Mervyn Caveli, Principal
Reginald Hamber
Rodney Lowe, Principal

TROMBONES
Philip Davis, Principal
George Powers

BASS TROMBONE
Barney Hamid

TUBA
John Butler

HARP
Sue Smith

TIMPANI
Robert Augustinus

PERCUSSION
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

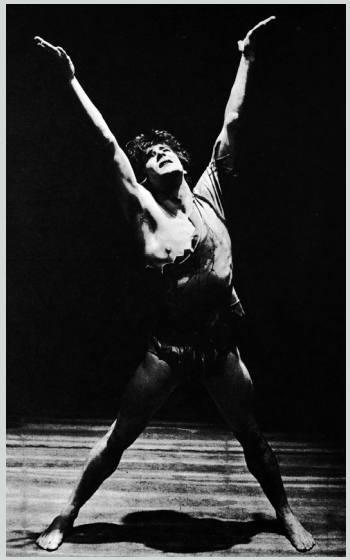
and the Trust was aspiring to that without sufficient funding to do it. The Trust needed to be concerned: for a classical musician in Australia there were only two jobs—the ABC Orchestras in capital cities and the Trust Orchestras. The ABC salary and benefits was a great incentive over the Trust orchestras 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 Lanchbery[3]. 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 Sculthorpe[4] 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.



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

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

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, repetiteur, 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.


Australian Ballet conductor Dobbs Franks.

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.

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).

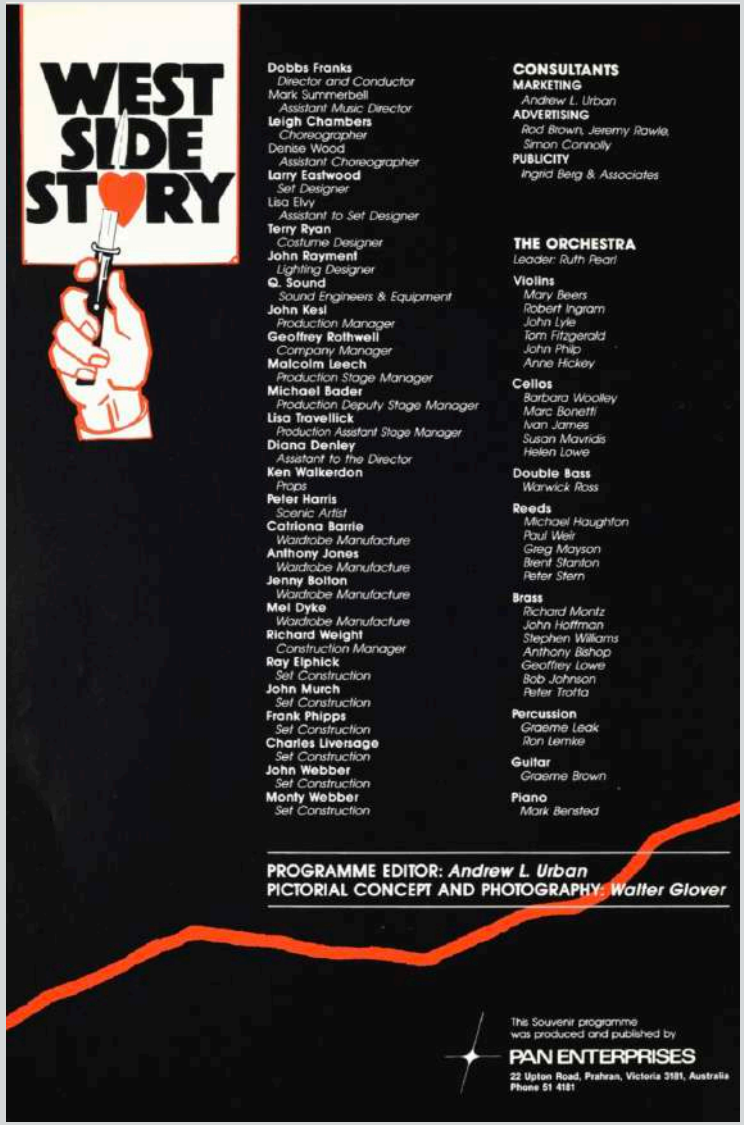
For me, Dobbs was a first rate musician and very competent conductor. He was not a compromiser when it came to music. He had a strong view about how to conduct ballet as did John Lanchbury and both of them would often be at loggerheads with all sorts of people in the course of executing their duties. 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



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 *Aid*a. 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.

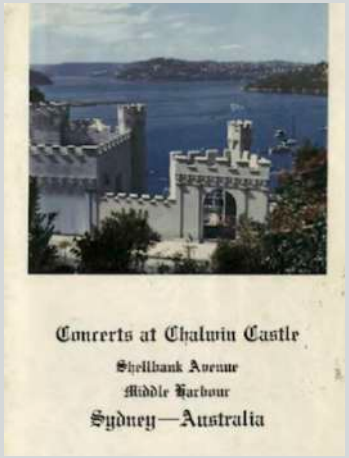
9 Construction, Forestry, Maritime, Mining and Energy trade union.

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.

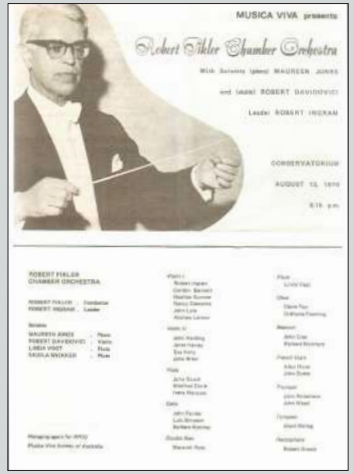
In August 1971, in the light of discussions about tolerable touring, the Trust suggested the ABC orchestras be asked to do opera and ballet seasons in Perth and Tasmania, as a way to ease the burden, but the ABC already had full time commitments. It would have had a massive impact on the Opera Orchestra's 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 Tintner[10] 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 Orchestra[11], 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.



The Robert Pikler Chamber Orchestra.

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

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 earnt 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.

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

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

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 McMahon[12] 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 Whitlam[13] 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* to put on an opera. That came about seven or eight years later. The Australian Opera General Manager Patrick Veitch[14] 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. Coombs[15], 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.

Going to England

Having married, Carole McPhee and I travelled to England in June 1973, arriving in London on the Queen's Birthday weekend. Driving a car into Hammersmith roundabout while the Buckingham Palace garden party was in progress at 2pm, I wondered why the traffic was so heavy. Only a foreigner would do that!

When I arrived I realized how far behind I was and was horrified at the difference in standard. Within a month it was obvious I would never have sustained the Melbourne job at the level expected. In England the difference in standard between Australian and English musicians was enormous in two main areas, firstly, technically. Whatever the instrument, the technical proficiency of musicians in England was far in advance of those in Australia. This applied to good players as well as average players, of which I was one. Even with the average or moderate players who make up the bulk of professional musicians, there was a tremendous gap in technical proficiencies. Despite that, Australian musicians did, and always will, accommodate the need of the job but probably not with quite the same ease or capacity to think of other things at the same time, like interpretation which is probably what puts the English player in front. The other aspect was the capacity to sight read. English players' workload frequently demands they walk in at the eleventh hour and play at the highest standard with virtually no rehearsal. In the West End, for example, you could be called to a show to deputize for someone with half a day's notice, and you never saw the part until the conductor was standing in front giving the downbeat. You dare not make a mistake because if you did, you would not be asked back and that sort of work for the English musician is lifeblood work, basic income. That goes right across the board for orchestral playing, West End and even recording session playing.

I think it is in the pedagogy; the teaching in British institutions with long histories. After more than a hundred years, the Royal Academy of Music and the Royal College of Music must be close to perfect and bearing their imprimatur means you have to be the best. It is not just good standards of teaching. After training there is much to do before getting near a good orchestra, it is almost like climbing a ladder, but it makes the capacity to survive in a cut-throat environment like London possible. Players go on the road with a ballet company and take out of town dates as second player until ready. Then they move to out of town first player and principal player gigs before coming back into London as a second player. The difference is in standard; on hearing graduates from the Royal College and the Royal Academy, I was astounded. Music that was for me incredibly difficult to approach and achieve, they just played. Of the hundred who graduate from the Royal College each year, maybe only ten get into the London scene and that is the differentiating issue. Those ten are excellent and can probably work in each other's jobs with

ease. The other ninety graduates find ways and places to work and survive. Musical standards were such that they start off on an equal playing field at a very high level.

We were staying in Peggy van Praagh's flat, across the road from the Abbey Road Recording studios and the famous *Beatles*' pedestrian crossing, when one evening at 11pm, I was walking home and ran into cellist Robert Truman. I did not know he had left Australia. He was a member of the London Symphony Orchestra and was heading to a session to record *Beethoven 5* with someone like Georg Solti; his fourth call for the day which had started with a morning rehearsal, a recording at Bishopsgate in the afternoon and an evening concert at the Royal Festival Hall, tied to the morning rehearsal. In response to my suggestion this was onerous, he advised that since no one would make a mistake, the session would only last as long as it took to play the work once. It was an example to me of how sight reading was relied upon out of necessity to fit such a call in. Needless to say I was not prepared to stand by as soon as I discovered this. I began practising ten to twelve hours every day, working on things I knew were necessary to raise my standard.

A Steep Learning Curve

Two or three months later a job came up in the BBC Symphony Orchestra and I auditioned with a concerto ready to play and feeling comfortable. I did not know what would happen about the orchestral excerpts which had to be sight read. The first thing put before me was the fugue from *Schwanda the Bagpiper* by Weinberger. It is a fiendish part and I had never heard the work, let alone played it. I stumbled all over the place. There were another ten people behind me. I learnt the expectation was at a certain level. Something that would take me two or three weeks to prepare, they expected to be ready immediately.

You had to be competent to do these things after a heavy day and without mistakes because your colleagues would let you know about it. You had to be competent at sight reading very difficult music, catching all the nuances; it was not enough to get through it, they wanted you to phrase it. Within three months I was working in London. My first date was a Tchaikovsky piano concerto for a Royal Albert Hall *Prom Concert*. Then I worked with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra which had been formed by Sir Thomas Beecham in 1946. Until then, I did not understand what the statement about wanting an overseas player in Australia meant. While I remember to this day that you should not treat people like that, this was the reality of musical life.

In the thirteen years between leaving the Melbourne Trust Orchestra, working in England, returning to Australia and taking the job at the Trust as their administrator, an enormous amount happened to me which changed substantially my perspective. When I left Australia I was a completely different person. This is important to note because it was what I did in those ensuing

Warwick Ross, studio pic, London 1974--*Photo by Peter Hampson.*

years that caused the change, not directly, but it was a kind of growing, slow change which I did not know had happened until I started to draw on new skills acquired.

After a couple of years in London, I was doing a recording session in a studio at West Hammersmith. I had also been booked to play with the Royal Philharmonic on that day, with a 10am Festival Hall rehearsal tied to the evening concert. I was engaged to deputize for a bass player who had taken another booking and was confident I could do it because it was close to the Festival Hall. He told me to be at the recording session for 9am and it would be over by 9.30am. I took the risk and accepted. In those days you could park easily at both venues. There was no-one at the session studio except the engineer and the producer who advised a 9.30am recording start. I got ready but there was no music. At 9.28am almost to the dot six violinists walked in. I had never met any of them before but learnt later that they were the core of the London recording scene. None of them worked with the orchestras, they spent their entire life in studios. They were well-dressed in suits and looked like accountants. They sat down without fuss, took out their violins, tuned and waited. The music director gave parts out to everyone. It looked like a commercial jingle of some kind. It was moderately difficult but I did not have problems reading it. We started playing at 9.29am, it was down within three minutes on the first take and the violinists without any further direction started packing their instruments. The director said it was alright and they left for a 10am session elsewhere. I arrived at my rehearsal and was on stage ready to go at 9.55am, without any idea what I was going to play. Had I not been able to sight read to their standard, I would have delayed those six players and incurred their fury if their next session had been missed. That is the way the London scene works: the ability to sight read is paramount for survival. It became apparent to me there was a large gap in our standards. It is more than just teaching; we had good teachers in Australia and diligent students; and there were quite a few Australians in London holding key positions in the orchestras. All these people had an Australian educational background, although they had studied overseas at some stage but the standard capacity was there. It was more than pedagogy and individual player's capacity. It is the heritage of playing music; the history of music that exists in England. It is accepted as part of the fabric of English life and revered as important. You have only to look outside of the profession into amateur areas to see this fact.

Musical Life in England

There are very good amateur orchestras all over England, playing difficult music for the love of it and staffed with reasonably good players, most of whom have not been professional musicians. Many professional people, such as doctors and lawyers, use it as relaxation from their daily work. Their standards are commensurate with what has been historically accepted as the

australian sinfonia

The many top-rate Australian orchestral musicians living and working in London prompted the formation of the Australian Sinfonia late in 1975. Since then, successful concerts in the Queen Elizabeth Hall and St. John's, Smith Square, have established the Australian Sinfonia as a fresh and potent force in London's musical life.

The Australian Sinfonia is supported financially by the Australia Council and both English and Australian business interests. The orchestra consists basically of thirty string players, most but not all Australians, with additional wind players or chamber ensembles according to programme. The Australian Sinfonia is building a diverse repertoire which ranges from masterpieces of the classic and romantic eras to interesting new works by European and Australian composers.

The close musical ties which exist between Australia and Great Britain have been exemplified by the Australian Sinfonia's fruitful collaboration in concert with artists such as John Ogdon, Jane Manning, John Wilbraham, Shura Cherkassky, Erich Gruenberg, the King's Singers and the London Percussion Virtuosi. Australian soloists who have found a valuable platform through the Sinfonia include Roger Woodward, Rhondda Gillespie, Ronald Thomas, Valda Aveling and Judith Hall.

New works have been commissioned from Australian composers Alison Bauld, Anne Boyd and Haydn Reeder. Music by Richard Meale has also been performed and the Sinfonia is to present compositions by Barry Conyngham and Malcolm Williamson as part of a forthcoming concert at St. John's, Smith Square, on Sunday 29 May.

Photo: Mary Greig

If you wish to be included in the Australian Sinfonia's mailing list – free of charge – please contact:

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Australian Sinfonia,
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London N2 9LJ.

Telephone: 01-883 7306

australian sinfonia

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In accordance with the requirements of the Greater London Council:

Persons shall not be permitted to stand or sit in any of the gangways intersecting the seating or to sit in any of the other gangways.

No smoking in the Auditorium.

The taking of photographs in the Auditorium is not permitted.

The Australian Sinfonia gratefully acknowledges assistance from the Australia Council and Mr. Rupert Murdoch towards the cost of this season's concerts.

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norm. A lot of Edward Elgar's works were written for and first performed by such players. *The Dream of Gerontius* was first performed by an amateur group and choir in Birmingham Town Hall in October 1900. It was something of a disaster and received scathing reports which disturbed Elgar immensely but that is irrelevant. Most of these amateur players played new music and the standard classical repertoire. In Wales the place abounds with male singers. Male choirs are part of the Welsh way of life. They accept that they are good singers and in interesting choirs; it is not unusual. It is the same with brass bands comprising mostly musicians who have been in the mines and colliery bands: there to enjoy music at the end of a gruelling working day. I saw this as I did casual orchestral dates round England. Provincial music producers would build up sections occasionally with London players to add more strength; especially with the double bass since there was not an abundance of double bass players. I began to understand the social situation of musicians and that this was their heritage impacting on young students whilst studying. You had to work hard to improve technique to live and survive as a musician in the UK, work hard at your

technical deficiencies and I had plenty. It was also important to listen to what was going on in the entire music scene, not just in the four London Orchestras. There are some tremendously good events and festivals, such as the annual Aldeburgh Festival, established in 1948 by Benjamin Britten, Peter Pears and Eric Crozier.

I played a lot of string orchestra chamber music, including a concert with the Oxford Chamber Orchestra. On this occasion their regular bass player was unavailable. There was a morning rehearsal and the program was mostly Benjamin Britten's works, including *The Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra* which has a demanding double bass solo at Variation H. At the rehearsal, the conductor topped and tailed because he did not have time to play through the entire program. He did not rehearse individual solos, assuming players were comfortable with their pieces. He would start the solo to get the tempo right, go for a couple of bars and go on with the next piece. I was pleased my sight reading was good by then, but it was still a gruelling experience. After the rehearsal I stayed back and ran over a few of the parts to get myself a little bit in front. There was a slight delay to the start of the concert. We were waiting for the guest of honour, Benjamin Britten: it was a concert for his sixty-first birthday! If I was nervous before, I was doubly nervous playing this great man's music in his presence, hoping not to make it the worst birthday he ever had. It worked out, thanks to my sight reading skills.

For a while I was principal bass for the English Sinfonia, a full chamber orchestra with wind and brass based in Nottingham, in the Midlands, where the conductor lived. There was an Australian leader, violinist John Glickman, and Ronald Thomas led it during the time I was there. Most of the freelance players lived and worked in London and came together for four or five concerts a year in Nottingham, Derby, and throughout the north with an occasional London performance. London dates were usually with a really good soloist, such as Mstislav (Slava) Rostropovich playing a Haydn cello concerto. Also, I worked occasionally with the London Mozart Players, the longest established chamber orchestra in the United Kingdom, founded by Harry Blech in 1949.

During those first few years in England I played anywhere and everywhere. I turned nothing down, which was a good thing to do. I went out of London into the provinces and amateur circles. I played with the Worthing and Brighton Orchestras who did three or four concerts a year. They were just one day events but you met interesting people who had been part of the fabric of the English heritage of music. It began to change my attitude to playing. Initially it was about playing well enough to get a job to make money to live. Things started to change. After a couple of years I began to play well enough to play with good musicians and money mattered less. If you play with an amateur orchestra you are really only receiving your costs and the money in the orchestras was limited anyway. Besides the recording business, you did not make any money in London unless you were flat out. Orchestral players did two to three calls a day, every day, just

to make ends meet. So it was not about money but it was certainly about music and there were some good conductors coming into London regularly. There are four major orchestras, outside of the BBC, all giving concerts with interesting conductors and soloists, so it was a very vibrant musical activity. If you could be part of that, even a small part; it was very rewarding and there were some magnificent moments which made you forget altogether about money.

By the mid-1970s, I had a completely different view on music. I had a technique to accomplish essential things. There were certain things I would not be capable of doing because I had left it too late. I could survive and had a circle of fellow musicians I enjoyed being with socially. We used to have a good time playing concerts, especially with the smaller orchestras like the Sinfonia and Mozart Players. I saw musicians as unique to other sectors of the workplace in that they live their work and their work is their life and they commit to it wholeheartedly. That is not to say they do not have a life away from the instrument but the social connection, usually in the pub, usually after a concert, is a very valuable one which allows you to communicate. Some of the members lived in the north, Birmingham way, so I got to know those societies which are very different from London, although there was the same desire to serve the music to the best of your capacity without any nonsense and without flaunting it. A valuable thing to understand and very enjoyable to be part of, because you always felt part of a team; everyone supported each other. I never worked with anyone who was not supportive of what I was trying to do and my limitations. It was always a pleasant experience and wherever you sat in the section, whether a principal or in the rank and file, people worked with you and helped. I could not quite believe this was happening; I was not used to that kind of attitude. I had come from an attitude where you have to be good and you take the job, play your best and do all you can to keep it from someone else. That was necessary for survival in England but it was not dealt with that way. You work with your colleagues and you support them, otherwise you do not function properly.

London Mozart Players

First Violins
David Takeno
Felicity Notariello
Roland Stanbridge
Margot Macgibbon
Nigel Beresford
David Edwards
Joseph Tuban
Sheila Beckensall

Second Violins
Nicholas Dowding
Levine Andrade
Jonathan Strange
Susan Fisher
Philip Galloway
Gillian Harrit
Eva Gruenbaum

Violas
Roger Best
Channa Salomonson
Richard Wilson
Natnie Jamieson
Trevor Snoad

Cellos
Bernard Richards
Angela East
Ursula Hess
Martin Thomas

Double Basses
Joseph Kirby
Warwick Ross

Flutes
Peter Lloyd
Michael Hirst

Oboes
Jenny Caws
Janice Knight

Clarinets
John Stenhouse
David Campbell

Bassoons
Kerry Camden
Linda Nealgrove

Horns
James Diack
Anthony Catterick

Trumpets
Michael Laird
Mark Emney

Timpani
Robert Howes

Orchestral Manager
Susanna Sparks

General Manager
Michael de Grey
105 Hartfield Road
London SW19 3TJ
Tel : 01- 542 5698

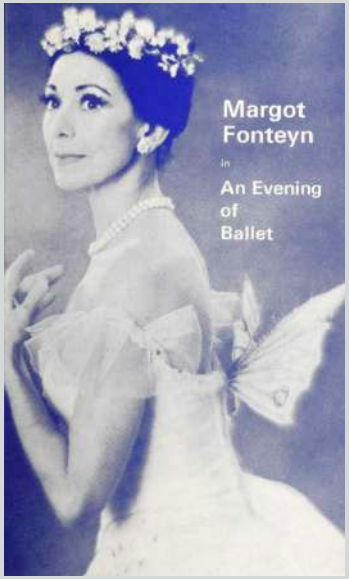
I began to see there were certain people who worked better with each other in the orchestras, and if you sat certain people together, the result from that desk was magnificent. Move the combination slightly and you do not get quite the same result. You could pick people, not

because of their playing so much, but because of their personalities and capacity to be part of the team, to get maximum effect. There were several double bass principals I liked to play with and others not so much. When I was with someone I liked playing with, it was enjoyable and generally very musically rewarding with a successful outcome. If you had the choice, you pick the right people, and in England you do have the choice, whereas in Australia it was difficult, as we had experienced with the Melbourne Orchestra, to find good players for a double bass position. In England there would be over a hundred good players who would be interested in that position. You make decisions on the personalities and style of playing to suit the orchestra. Clearly that is what the English did which we had not done: they developed an individualization of string playing styles. The four London Orchestras had different string sections and string sounds: there was a Philharmonia sound, an LSO sound, and so on. If your playing suited that sound, you worked with that orchestra. It was never articulated but it was obvious; although an audience member once said to me they liked the Philharmonia string sound better than any of the other orchestras and supported it for that reason. This was a non-musician who identified a very subtle idiosyncrasy. When you worked with people who had your concept of the sound required, you usually had a good result and it did not matter whether they were professionals or amateurs.

The Fonteyn Galas

At that time Carole was assisting Dame Margot Fonteyn, as proof-reader, in the writing of her book[1]. She had a long association with Fonteyn from Australian Ballet days in the early 1970s. Carole was a first rate publicist, working with the British Council[2]. Prior to that, she had worked on publicity for London Festival Ballet. One Sunday afternoon, we were sitting around with a group of ballet people, mostly from London Festival Ballet[3], including Beryl Grey's[4] assistant and a couple of dancers. We played with the idea of asking Fonteyn to dance concert performances of solos and *pas de deux*. This had not been done before. The idea developed further to involving three sets of dancers, representative of various styles. No one really thought it could work but Carole talked to Margot who thought it was a great idea. That was the birth of the Fonteyn Galas which ran for the next eighteen months across the UK and Europe. This concept was later picked up by Michael Edgley and brought to Australia. With Margot's help, we put together a group of six

1 *Margot Fonteyn: Autobiography*, first published by WH Allen, London, 1975.
2 British Council, founded in 1934, an organization specializing in international cultural and educational relations and opportunities and the promotion of wider knowledge of the United Kingdom and the English language abroad.
3 London Festival Ballet, founded in 1950 by Anton Dolin, Alicia Markova and Julian Braunsweg, to tour ballet in the UK and abroad. Renamed English National Ballet in 1989.
4 Dame Beryl Grey, DBE (b 1927-), English dancer, teacher, ballet director.



or seven dancers including Lynn Seymour and Robert North, from London Contemporary Dance, and they did a modern work. Maina Gielgud, who had been performing contemporary solo work with percussion with Béjart in Paris, was available as were two dancers from the Tokyo Ballet and two from Russia, including Andre Prokovsky, who danced Russian repertoire. Margot elected to work with David Wall, Royal Ballet principal dancer. They all selected pieces representing their particular expertise. I was pleased it was agreed to present this with an orchestra (in Australia it would have been with taped music), which I offered to get together.

We set up a company, *Arts Management Production Services*, comprising myself, Carole, and Paul Sarony who booked venues for shows going to the provinces. He had a long relationship with venues and managers and could execute a reasonable and fair deal. We booked a tour including Cardiff, Leeds, Birmingham and Southampton; all out of London dates, and one-night stands. As orchestra fixer I called on the services of freelance players who worked for our programs as the International Ballet Orchestra. Knowing they were all good sight readers, we did not need to rehearse long hours. We needed to accommodate the dance requirement, so had to work with the dancers who had limited availability. It was a juggle, but we managed to coincide venue and dancers' availability to book performances. A special approach to rehearsals with the dancers was necessary. The musicians travelled from London in the morning for a three hour afternoon rehearsal with the performance starting at 7.30pm. In most cases Margot did not want to rehearse before a performance but her music was known to the conductor and it was standard repertoire for the musicians. All they needed to know was the tempi and we quickly topped and tailed her pieces. For others, like Maina, there was complex percussion to play and Robert and Lynn's material needed to be rehearsed. We generally played to packed houses, it was tremendously successful. Those people who said it would never work, came and loved it.

I played as well and kept that operation alive for the remainder of my time in England. When it came to selecting the orchestras, I found I was drawing on understanding how people work together. I would ring a principal player—say clarinet—and then I would know the second clarinettist who usually worked with this person and from that you knew there would be one or two who worked very well together, with a good, tight sound, and they seemed to understand each other. I would ring a section leader who had done previous dates and would suggest others to work with. Eventually it started to fall in with the same people most of the time, certainly key players like the orchestra leader, the principal wind players and anyone who had a solo, like trumpets and oboes. We had very good orchestras and they all felt comfortable working with each other, although they did not work with each other regularly, they turned up as if they were an already established orchestra and fitted in beautifully wherever we were.

We had the same problem experienced all over the world; the theatre pits being inadequate for an orchestra of about forty to fifty players, depending on what ballets we were doing. However, they all accommodated well and we always gave good performances artistically. I was paying the right money and for any one clarinet there would have been thirty options, and there might have been ten of them available, so you could have booked anyone. I found myself waiting to see if certain players were available and go with their colleagues. It tended to work and consequently the atmosphere and morale in the orchestra, even though it came together in five minutes, was as if they had been together for ten years in many cases. It was good to be playing with them because I could see the results of my work. Sometimes it could have been better. Other times it was magnificent and I could quietly consider my choices for next time.

I was on an unrealized learning curve. It was not until I was back in Australia that I understood I had developed these skills. No-one had taught me and there is nothing magical about it, just common sense, understanding people and providing the opportunity for them to do what they do best and not putting anything in their way. I was quite happy in England until the Conservative politician, Enoch Powell, began to stir up racism and there was a view that there were too many Indians coming into England and they were flooding the place. India was a Commonwealth country so its citizens had a right of entry, but Australians and Canadians had certain restrictions; they were there under the sufferance of the British Government. I did not have a working permit. I was there because I was married to a lady with a working permit. There was a kerfuffle about quotas and I think the English were agitating because they were concerned that these immigrants, although British subjects, were straining welfare and hospital services. There was evidence this was happening; going to a hospital to have a baby was not an option unless it was an emergency. Hospital beds were full. There were too many people entitled to the public health system who were not born there. As a consequence, in about 1978 the Home Office started cracking down on Australians and Canadians. I did not get asked to leave and did not want to be in that position because I did not want that mark on my name. I knew I could not fight it. Carole was doing good work with the British Council. We were running Fonteyn shows, with two more contracted, so we decided I would come back, find a place to live and an income and she would follow. I came back in 1978 as other doors were opening for me there. As I was leaving, I was told my name was on the list for Philharmonia Orchestra work in the next season, so that was disappointing. I would have loved to work with that great orchestra.

In England my style of management had to be quick with no time for forward planning. I was used to working with things that were planned but fluid and unsettled until the eleventh hour and it was something I was comfortable with. I had been used to making decisions that

affected us personally because if anything did not work financially, it came out of our pocket. The first night of the Fonteyn galas we did not know whether it would be successful or not. I had engaged an orchestra from London, the cost being about £4,000, which was two or three year's income in those days. I realized how frightening the responsibility was. If it failed we would have to pay the theatre, the dancers and the orchestra unless we declared ourselves insolvent and none of us wanted that. That reality made me very careful about quick decisions. Over the next couple of years I acquired the capacity to make critical decisions fast that did not affect the end result, even if the end result was not good. I learnt to build in contingencies, an entirely different style of management than most established organizations have. It is more entrepreneurial than anything else.

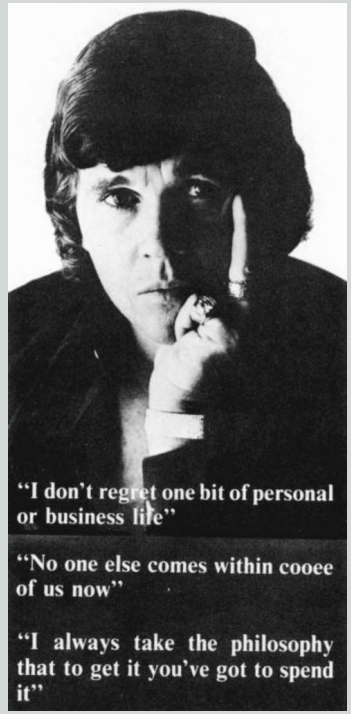
Back Home in Australia with Some New Skills

I came back to Australia in late1978 with substantial experience and was approached by entrepreneur Michael Edgley[1] of *Edgley International* to put together his orchestral needs in Australia. Michael and his team of directors, including Andrew Guild[2], had a clear understanding of what would make money and what could fail; they rarely made a bad decision when it came to those issues. They researched the marketplace to see what it would sustain and had very good publicists with effective connections and a network to get things into the press, crucial to the success of a show. I felt comfortable in this environment.

The first show was a combination of the Kirov and Bolshoi Ballet companies, known for this tour as the Tchaikovsky Ballet Company. *Edgleys* had a good relationship with the Russian government, so they could tour companies from Russia not normally given permission to travel. My introduction to the *Edgley* show style was in Perth, greeting the company and two conductors. There was a principal maestro, who conducted opening nights, and a second conductor who did most of the preparation work and some performances. The tour visited capital cities in southern Australia, plus Brisbane and Auckland, New Zealand. We did not take an Australian orchestra but I fixed an orchestra in Auckland. This huge company, forty or fifty *corps de ballet* dancers, arrived in typical, extravagant *Edgley* fashion, which was key to his success. People loved it and he gave them exactly what they wanted to see. He also mixed that with excellence and dazzling technique from dancers.

Andrew Guild and I watched dancers coming off the plane, struggling with bags. They did not queue up at the carousel like other passengers; this was obviously prearranged with Customs. One slim, lithe, tall, attractive dancer struggled with an old-fashioned suitcase bulging at the seams. I thought they must carry their own costumes, but Andrew explained these were personal items, probably potatoes! Apparently they did not believe that potatoes, their staple diet, were available. They were taken to billets and not permitted to go out and meet the general public. Their billets or apartments were well-controlled by Russian authorities.

There was always a senior KGB agent travelling with a company, clearly to look out for potential defections, particularly with ballet since they were high profile people. One never knew who the KGB agent was, it was very covert. The principal conductor was standoffish, polite and did not speak English. An interpreter was available but he was unwilling to enter into a conversation.



'Michael Edgley: Australia's Greatest Showman', *Theatre Australia*, February 1982

1 Michael Edgley MBE (1943-), joined his father Eric in the family's theatrical management business at age 19. When his father died in 1967, Michael took over the company. His first show as entrepreneur toured Australia in 1968 and the highly successful and renowned Moscow Circus became synonymous with the *Edgley* brand and style.

2 Andrew Guild (1947-) was a child actor, playing Artful Dodger in *Oliver!* in 1961. He worked for *Garnet H Carroll Productions* as a Management trainee before joining *Edgleys* in 1967. He learnt to speak Russian and was the Executive Producer for most of the *Edgley* shows from Russia. *Edgley International* brought the Bolshoi Ballet, Marcel Marceau, Folk Dance Ensembles, Torvill and Dean and Fonteyn Ballet tours to Australia for many years. More recently the company has been involved in Australian film projects and international tours outside of Australia.

The other was gregarious, very friendly, almost a peasant but well-educated and very sound musically. He wanted to know everything about Australia and Australians and was especially interested in the musicians. He was interested in the lifestyle and I doubt he had ever been out of Russia.

After playing Melbourne, we were at the Regent Theatre, Sydney. There had been an industrial problem between some of the stagehands and *Edgleys*. I do not know what the issues were, but the relevant union was involved as we approached opening night, which is always when industrial matters come to a head. I was called by Alan Nash, the Sydney secretary of the Musicians' Union, advising there was no problem with the conditions under which the musicians were employed, since they were employed by me. Edgley gave me a sum of money quoted to him beforehand and I took the risk if it cost more. I had been used to dealing this way in England. There was no coming back for a second bite of the cherry. You had to be correct with Michael. He gave you the information to make decisions but once these were made, I took the risk. All the industrial negotiations were mine. Alan wanted to be on site in case the stage workers (members of the theatrical union[3]) stopped the show. He wanted to make sure the musicians were paid although he did not want to destroy another union's action on behalf of its members. Negotiations continued right up until after the moment of curtain up. Alan advised the players should go into the pit, tune up and stand by. I thought there would be a strike. The second conductor, who had very little English but could communicate, was obviously excited and was grinning broadly. When I acknowledged there was a dispute between the theatre employees, management and the promoter, he said he wanted to see a strike, obviously not something he had experienced at home. He was very excited to think there was industrial action and workers were going to take control. He wanted to see how it would work out. Grievances were settled and we started half an hour late with apologies to the audience but it made his night, he came beaming from the pit. The performance had been very successful, albeit late.

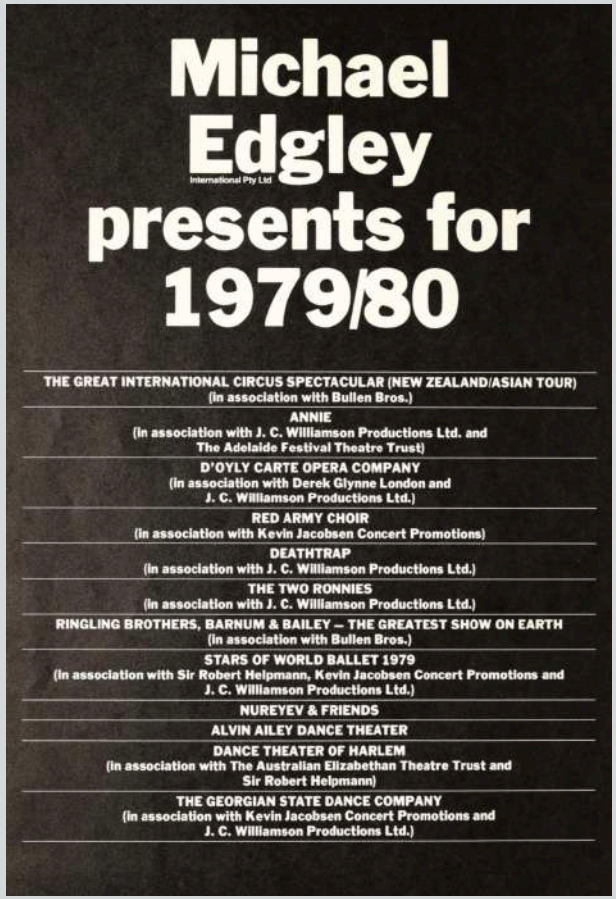
New Zealand

I had to engage an orchestra in Auckland and get them ready to play. We had little rehearsal time and only two days before the company came in. I was not free, for financial reasons, to conclude booking the players until closer to the performances. I had them holding the date but had no rehearsal venue. This was my responsibility but I could not do that until I got to Auckland. I advised *Edgleys* I would go a week before to make sure it came together. They asked me to take the principal conductor who was conducting the rehearsals there. He had very high artistic and

3 The Australian Theatrical & Amusement Employees' Association (1910-1993), merged with the Media Entertainment Arts Alliance (MEAA).

musical standards and no tolerance for people who did not match it. Fortunately the players in Auckland were very good so artistically there were no problems.

We had been through four or five weeks in Australia and the conductor had never spoken to anyone outside the company. He wore a badge indicating he was a KGB major. I was designated to travel with him to New Zealand. He did not say a word because he had no English. Our hotel was near the rehearsal venue. When we arrived he gestured to indicate meeting at 6pm in his room. The score of the ballet was sitting closed on his desk and it seemed there would be no talk of music. From the refrigerator he brought out six rashers of uncooked bacon and cut them into little slivers. He had a bottle of vodka and some cheese onto which he put the bacon. He handed me one with a glass of vodka, did the same for himself and we commenced to drink. Again he said nothing. By the time we had drunk three quarters of that bottle he began to smile. I was not sure I could handle this - I was used to drinking but as the bottle emptied I hoped that would be it. We finished the first bottle and he replaced it with another. He cut more raw bacon and by then I had gotten over the notion that I did not want to eat raw bacon. Anything to soak up the alcohol. We went through the second bottle.



We had a 10am rehearsal the next morning. At 7pm I was barely able to walk or think. He was very friendly and smiling as he patted me on the back and pushed me out the door after shaking my hand. Next morning, at 9 am, he was the same, demure—as if he had never had a drink in his life. I had the worst hangover imaginable; fortunately I did not have to play. I took him to the rehearsal and he functioned perfectly. The orchestra loved it, but from that point on we were old friends although we never spoke in English but at the end of the season he shook my hand. I must have done something right. He certainly did not want to drink on his own, but was prepared to drink because he had brought two bottles of strong, Russian vodka, Stolichnaya; beautiful vodka for the first four or five. After that, who knows!

The *Edgley* Management Style

That was my first date for *Edgleys*. It worked artistically, everyone got paid, and the company left in good spirits knowing you can buy potatoes in Australia. *Edgleys* had an old fashioned management style; agreements were made on a handshake rather than contracts. I was

fixing events in every state with contacts who knew the freelance musicians available. We could put together a good orchestra of forty-five to fifty people in each capital city, without much problem. Occasionally there would be one instrument which was hard to get, but I would tour that from Sydney. We were paying good money; not over the top, but regular and better than the Trust Orchestras were earning. They were paid cash at the end of the season; there were no cheques. There was little documentation required. I kept paperwork for ten years for the benefit of payroll taxes so there would be adequate proof.

The *Edgley* Melbourne office was very busy with three or four shows coming in. I fixed orchestras for the D'Oyly Carte Opera, a co-production involving negotiations with their London manager and the musical director of D'Oyly Carte's Orchestra at Sadler's Wells. I was sent to England to meet them and view the setup for the orchestra, so that everyone was comfortable with arrangements.[4]

The Two Ronnies, Ronnie Corbett and Ronnie Barker, were also visiting Australia[5]. I looked after the orchestra for that, so I was busy. My desk was next to Simon Wincer, who was producing the movie *The Man from Snowy River*[6], another big *Edgley* project. Andrew Guild, very much the hands-on person, was second-in-command.

Michael Edgley was rarely in the office; he was touring the world somewhere, so most conversations were by phone. Andrew's desk always amazed me: there was nothing on it except a small balancing toy. Complex negotiations were done on the telephone and he rarely took notes. He was very thorough and accurate in his agreements, never missed anything and would always spot in advance something that should not be there or an industrial problem likely to arise as a result of agreements. He filed a D'Oyly Carte memorandum of mine in the wastepaper basket after reading it. He did not see the need for paper, it was about trust and responsibility; an amazing style of management. We could do a whole contract in the car between the airport and the theatre. He would agree matters on the basis of a considered costing and make compromises where necessary. It was good for me to see a successful organization making money, and paying everyone properly, operating on the skill of individual people. There were no reams of paper such as when I worked in the public service before returning to the Trust. It showed me there was a way to manage orchestral resources and music efficiently, with great flexibility and still guarantee a successful financial outcome if you did the right things at the right time and you

4 See Appendix 1: *Commercial Promotions for Large Orchestras and Jazz Ensembles Booked by Warwick D Ross*
5 *The Two Ronnies*, with Ronnie Barker and Ronnie Corbett, a BBC TV comedy sketch show created by Bill Cotton in 1971, which ran successfully on television till 1987. It was also screened in Australia on ABC TV. *The Two Ronnies* also toured a stage show based on the television formula, which toured Australia 1979 and 1983.
6 *The Man from Snowy River* film, 1982, based on Banjo Paterson's poem, directed by George T. Miller. The cast included Kirk Douglas, Jack Thompson, Tom Burlinson, Sigrid Thorton, Terence Donovan and Chris Haywood. Most Popular Film award, Montreal Film Festival 1982. Produced by Geoff Burrowes, Michael Edgley and Simon Wincer.

trusted the people working with you. Edgley picked good people for his team. They included General Manager, Jim Cranfield, who was outstanding. They could handle all industrial problems at court level, if necessary, but at the same time could do the nitty-gritty of negotiating box office sales.

There was a willingness to be hands-on. I remember waiting in a Melbourne theatre with Andrew Guild close to a rehearsal time. The theatre staff had not arrived to set up the pit so Andrew suggested we do it and within ten minutes, under my guidance, we had set up chairs, stands etc. Hands-on. He had employed me to look after the Orchestras and he could see I knew what was required. That went all the way up the track to things like budgets. On another occasion, Michael was in New York, negotiating with artists, and I received a 3am call. Regardless of the time, he wanted a costing for an orchestra, something in the region of $40,000. I was half asleep but he called back 30 minutes later to confirm the budget we discussed and agreed a fee for the musicians. He expected me to know all of the relevant answers. He did not want detail, just the bottom line. Having been engaged by Michael Edgley to put orchestras together for their touring shows, I had a very busy two or three years from 1979 to 1981 with these shows.

I came back to Australia with a completely different attitude to music and life, and a different understanding of how the music industry works well with players working together. Probably it was only natural I should fall into orchestra management; I was not looking for it. I put my hat in the ring for freelance work, which came from people in Sydney and Melbourne. Then the Sydney Symphony contacted me. They had work for a bassist which kept me going for about eighteen months. I had a job; it was not permanent but it was income. Carole came home and we bought a place in North Sydney, mostly with profit from the Fonteyn entrepreneurial activity. Carole took a publicity job with the Australian Opera and was there for about a year. Soon after, our marriage splintered and we separated in about 1980. She returned to England and subsequently became administrator for what had been the New London Ballet, by then a national ballet company, London Festival Ballet (and subsequently, **English National Ballet**). She was magnificent in her capacity to work and deal with people efficiently. These were great skills. She was a fundraiser with the personality to attract people to help and had a life-long commitment to ballet, so it was a good job for her.

Exploring Recording Techniques

I was working on a casual basis with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra and wondering about my future. I wanted involvement in record production, at first as a producer, but then I wanted more control. I enrolled in the School of Audio Engineering, which had opened in Sydney in 1976, and did a diploma in audio engineering for the next year, exploring recording techniques,

how and what microphones to use and what effects can be achieved. With my background as a performer and the little experience I had performing for recordings, I was successful in getting good results. I was interested in remote recording outside of the studio, and began to research and design a mobile recording truck. The only trucks existing were ABC outside broadcast units, as they were called, but these were broadcast facilities. I was more interested in a forty-eight track truck for record production on-site; recording a live concert and mixing it later for vinyl release. I went into incredible depth on the acoustics needed in the monitoring environment: designing the truck, its contents and the acoustics of the room. With all this information, I became fascinated with acoustic outcome, not from a scientific point of view but from a results point of view. I found there were incredible outcomes with the simplest of materials. Some people would spend thousands of dollars in a professional studio to get the same effect as using a simple piece of cardboard or plastic positioned with a microphone in a certain way. I became more interested in the recording process than the mobile recording process and found there was a lot of capital investment for this van; it was commercially nonviable, which is probably why they did not exist. It would be over $60,000 for the van to start with and you would be lucky to return $10,000 a year. I set up a recording studio at home, recording small things; a couple of commercial jingles, which paid some of the costs, and things people in Sydney were not getting an opportunity to air. I recorded work of the Ensemble de la Reine, with cellist Catherine Finnis and John Gray, double bass, playing early music, which had not been of interest to others. Things have changed magnificently since then but none of this sort of music was of interest to anyone.

Analogue 8 Track Recording Studio Equipment and control room.

***Zoomerangs* at Taronga Zoo, Sydney**

In January 1981 I was invited to play in a newly formed orchestra set up by Taronga Zoo in Sydney. The driving force of this orchestra came from one of the curators, Ted Smith, an Englishman, who also conducted and played the bassoon. I was very keen to experiment with the recording medium, especially the recording of animals and the mix down of multiple sounds after my introduction to the Zoo. During the course of rehearsals and performances, I discussed with Ted the concept of recording sounds of animals and performing those sounds as part of a concert involving jazz improvisation. Such concerts could be performed at Taronga Zoo in the early evening and be attended by supporters of the Zoo and jazz lovers. This idea developed to include readings of relevant poetry and at the end of the performance the animal in question would be brought to the audience, by Zoo employees, and the audience could examine the animal at close quarters and ask questions. The musicians involved were extremely experienced jazz players and were very comfortable with improvised music, which in fact was the core of the music concert supplemented by the sounds of animals. This very successful concert concept led to the presentation of several live performances between 1981 and 1983 using recorded sounds of selected species of animals situated at the Zoo. The concerts were presented to an almost full capacity audience.

It was a heady time during which I made contact with Robert Ingram who had been with the Trust Sydney Orchestra in my absence. He was a level-headed and worthwhile adviser on orchestras and a fixer. He fixed most of the recording sessions in Sydney requiring strings and orchestral sounds. We did a lot of work together, both in the studio where I played bass in his recordings and he worked for me as leader of the orchestras we put together. I was doing the same thing as I did in England, finding the key player and then who would sit next to him. If you took the time and effort, you ended up with a very good orchestra.

By 1984 most of my income was from playing in the recording studio, both my own things to a lesser degree, but more importantly from other work in the main Sydney studios. By then the Sydney Symphony Orchestra work had dried up. Bill Motzing[7] was a major film music composer, very good at putting down film tracks and working to a film stage, matching the music to the sound. He had done a lot of Australian films by then. He came from America with connections in

7 William Edward Motzing (1937-2014), American born composer, conductor, arranger and trombonist who composed over 30 soundtracks for Australian films and television series, including *Newsfront* (1978) and *Young Einstein* (1988), for which he received an AFI Award for best original score. He arranged and conducted many of Australia's chart topping hits including Peter Allen's *I Still Call Australia Home*. From 1971 to 2011 he was a jazz lecturer then Director of Jazz Studies at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music.

Robert Ingram and Stephen Hague, first violins, Elizabethan Sydney Orchestra.

Hollywood; getting scores from the USA to Australia to be recorded for American films and that was where the work was coming from. Very often we were recording the composer, Jerry Goldsmith[8], and it was lucrative for many Australian musicians. American locals discovered this work was going offshore and placed an embargo on it. Almost overnight all recordings dried up. Any studio sending work to Australia would be blacklisted. The American unions were obeyed. All those sessions went back to Los Angeles, probably where they belonged but they had been in Australia because the quality of the musicians was good, and they were probably not as expensive as the west coast. The session system died instantly and there were people out of work. There was a great body of players and they all turned to people like me for shows.

At the same time *Edgleys* decided to stop bringing shows in. There was an Easter Saturday rehearsal for a stage show at the Capitol Theatre, Sydney. It had a set to be erected with scaffolding, and there was a rigger whose wage bill was $2,500 for one day's work including all of the penalties he was entitled to. The award for working on Easter Saturday gave him double time and a half plus extra time for doing this and that and safety money. This was the worst kind of labour relationship imaginable: when one person earns that much money on a day when they are not even in charge of a team. Imagine what the senior people were earning. He was one of many, so there would have been at least ten people on that: it was probably a $20,000 day just to set up for a show. One of the *Edgley* directors announced their decision not to do more shows. Penalty rates like that would kill their business and they were happy to tour the Moscow Circus all over the world rather than mount expensive productions in Australia. There were other reasons, but this was a deciding factor for the directors. You could not negotiate because it was an enforceable union award entitlement.

I returned to London in July 1985 having enrolled in the 12th International Course for Studio Engineers presented by the Associated Professional Recording Studio (APRS) organisation. The course focussed on emerging digital audio engineering technology and was held at the University of Surrey.

8 Jerry Goldsmith (1929-2004), innovative and influential American composer and conductor of film and television scores, including the *Star Trek* franchise. He received an Academy Award for his original score for the 1976 film, *The Omen.*

Pitched to professional studio personnel, many of the commercial recording studios in England, South Africa, Europe, India, Asia, South America and Australia sent their senior staff. There were 42 attendees with impressive credentials and audio achievements, all of which was most stimulating to me.

The eight day live-in course started with an intensive one day introduction to digital recording in general. The following seven days were devoted to hands on involvement using the latest digital technology techniques and equipment and included signal processing, digital editing and CD production.

The first successful digital recording, (*Brothers in Arms* by *Dire Straits*), was produced on the new *Sony* 24 Track digital recorder and released, in the United Kingdom five months before the APRS course, in the new Compact Disc format. This commercial success had demonstrated to the audio industry the highly impressive capability of digital sound and the production direction most studios should follow for the next twenty years.

The course instructors were sourced from the audio research and manufacturing firms, including *Sony, Bruel & Kjaer, Neve* and *Calrec,* along with prominent music producers. I considered it to be the best introduction to digital recording I could have had.

Whilst in England, after the APRS course, I took the opportunity to undertake a detailed study of ambisonics surround sound production. This concept had extended the quadrophonic sound experiments of the 1970's and had been developed by *Calrec Audio* of Hebden Bridge in Yorkshire. I was interested to understand the four-dimensional nature of the ambisonic soundfield microphone, its remote control capability and post recording production features. The surround sound production technique was used by *Nimbus Records* in Monmouth U.K. for their production of classical music CDs.

The completion of both these programs put me in a position to create digital recordings of high quality when I returned to Australia.

Back to the Trust — Orchestral administration

By 1985 I found myself with no playing work and other work drying up. Carole rang after talking with the Trust's new CEO, Kathleen Norris[1]. Her husband, Patrick Veitch, was working at the opera company.

Kathleen Norris, caricature by John Senczuk

Apparently the Trust needed someone to run the Sydney and the Melbourne Orchestras. I was aware the Orchestras still existed but that was about all I knew! Recordings were my main interest. The Trust Orchestras were not recording as far as I knew, although they did subsequently. I knew they were playing for the opera and ballet but my musical interests were symphonic, chamber music and recordings. I had been to a couple of performances when Carole was with the opera company before we separated. I was interviewed by Kathleen; a meeting set up very quickly and informally. She asked me a few cursory questions about my background which she knew, presumably from Carole. The job was to look after the two orchestras as Senior Orchestral Manager, a title I did not like. She gave me a copy of the recently produced *Tribe Report* (Study into the Future Development of Orchestras in Australia)[2], saying I would need to read it if I took the job. She advised that the Trust wanted to protect the Orchestras as well as maintain its position by achieving a high standard of orchestral management, for which it had been criticized in the Report. She asked me to recommend what should be done in the light of the Report's recommendations.

The 'Tribe Report'

Before this, I was not aware of the Tribe Committee Inquiry into the future development of orchestras in Australia, commissioned by the Australia Council. My views in relation to freelance orchestras had not been canvassed and I doubt *Edgleys*' views had been canvassed. They had taken over the role of Williamsons, but the Report's focus was on the resources of the subsidized sector including Australian Opera and Australian Ballet. If the committee had been briefed to go sideways, they would have found a wealth of information and influences on the Trust Orchestra and as it subsequently emerged, substantial influences in terms of extra players because that was where they all were. I understood quickly that the Trust was not happy with the Committee's process. It had submitted details but felt the report contained gross errors of fact and of inference in relation to the Trust's management of the Orchestras. This created a whole set of issues

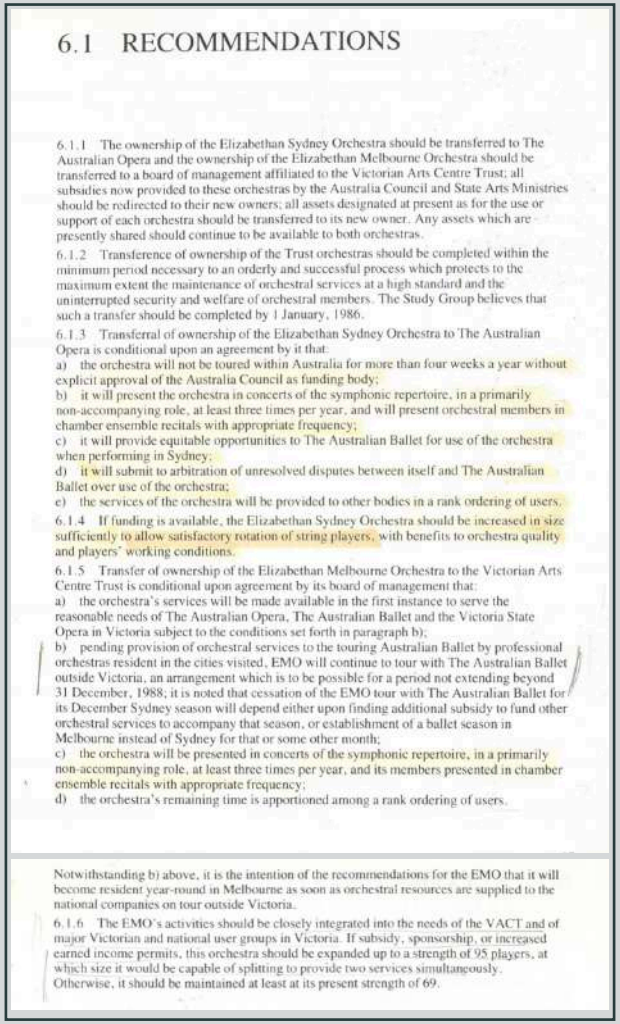
1 Kathleen Norris: Appointed in June 1984, had worked for seventeen years in arts and events management in the United States of America before she came to Australia with her husband, Patrick Veitch.
2 Ken Tribe (1914-2010), lawyer; Artistic Director, then President, *Musica Viva* (1966-1973); inaugural member then Chairman, Music Board, Australia Council (1974-77); Commissioner, ABC (1973-1983); committee member, Deaf Society of NSW assisting the initiation of the Theatre of the Deaf; Chair, judging panel Melbourne International Chamber Competition 1989; served on advisory councils for arts training institutions and supporter of Australian Music Centre, Australian Chamber Orchestra and the *Goldner Quartet*, among many others.

for the Trust to deal with. *The Tribe Report* articulated communication was fundamental and needed to be addressed. It recognized if Trust management could not achieve communication, probably new management was necessary. This was not an administrative function, which was really all the Trust could provide. The Orchestras were artistic bodies but were referred to, and administered as, service organizations for the user companies. Those terms set the scene for the way people viewed the Orchestras and the Trust was criticized highly for allowing them to develop along those lines and yet those terms came from the funding body, the Australia Council. *The Tribe Report* clearly states that public funds were given to the Orchestra to serve the Ballet and the Opera, ie the Orchestra was a service industry[3]. The Australian Ballet and Australia Opera were referred to as 'user companies'; a further step back from the creative, musical identity. Significantly, the Report proposed the Orchestras be independent from the Trust, and the Opera Company wanted to have control over its own orchestra. The Board had discussed the draft *Tribe Report* and decided to appoint a Senior Orchestral Manager.

On January 6th, 1986, I sent Kathleen a response to the proposed job title. I felt it was inappropriate for several reasons and thought it should be Administrator of Orchestras, so that it did not align with one particular Orchestra. This was critical from the musicians' point of view. In my brief reading of the Report I could see a huge minefield to negotiate and the only way I would do it was if my position was recognized as being responsible for the two Orchestras and their managements. Administrator of Orchestras was a very clear statement of what I would be doing. I was concerned about the presence of William Reid, the Trust's Director of Music. I understood he had inherited responsibility for the Orchestras' administration, but had devolved it without much supervision to the individual orchestral managers. I considered my responsibilities should include, 'the creation of job descriptions for all orchestral staff and their implementation.' There had been no job descriptions, resulting in dis-organization. 'The implementation of artistic and Trust policies.' I did not know if they existed but I knew there had to be policies governing these two groups of sixty-nine players in two states with line managements. I would take responsibility for 'Orchestra personnel, managers, assistants and staff in all administrative matters.' There was a logical line of management but it had never been articulated and no-one knew, especially the person at the end of the line. A clear line of management needed to be in place.

I could also see the need to run both orchestral offices. There were no schedules and very little forward planning, something *The Tribe Report* raised. I needed to control the expenditure of monies allocated to the orchestras, not because of any sense of mismanagement but there was no risk management or a proper audit trail. I would have to deal with wage negotiation with staff and players. Players were bound by union rules including proficiency loadings which

3 *Tribe Report* pp 101.



6.1 RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1.1 The ownership of the Elizabethan Sydney Orchestra should be transferred to The Australian Opera and the ownership of the Elizabethan Melbourne Orchestra should be transferred to a board of management affiliated to the Victorian Arts Centre Trust; all subsidies now provided to these orchestras by the Australia Council and State Arts Ministries should be redirected to their new owners; all assets designated at present as for the use or support of each orchestra should be transferred to its new owner. Any assets which are presently shared should continue to be available to both orchestras.

6.1.2 Transference of ownership of the Trust orchestras should be completed within the minimum period necessary to an orderly and successful process which protects to the maximum extent the maintenance of orchestral services at a high standard and the uninterrupted security and welfare of orchestral members. The Study Group believes that such a transfer should be completed by 1 January, 1986.

6.1.3 Transferral of ownership of the Elizabethan Sydney Orchestra to The Australian Opera is conditional upon an agreement by it that:

a) the orchestra will not be toured within Australia for more than four weeks a year without explicit approval of the Australia Council as funding body;

b) it will present the orchestra in concerts of the symphonic repertoire, in a primarily non-accompanying role, at least three times per year, and will present orchestral members in chamber ensemble recitals with appropriate frequency;

c) it will provide equitable opportunities to The Australian Ballet for use of the orchestra when performing in Sydney;

d) it will submit to arbitration of unresolved disputes between itself and The Australian Ballet over use of the orchestra;

e) the services of the orchestra will be provided to other bodies in a rank ordering of users.

6.1.4 If funding is available, the Elizabethan Sydney Orchestra should be increased in size sufficiently to allow satisfactory rotation of string players, with benefits to orchestra quality and players' working conditions.

6.1.5 Transfer of ownership of the Elizabethan Melbourne Orchestra to the Victorian Arts Centre Trust is conditional upon agreement by its board of management that:

a) the orchestra's services will be made available in the first instance to serve the reasonable needs of The Australian Opera, The Australian Ballet and the Victoria State Opera in Victoria subject to the conditions set forth in paragraph b);

b) pending provision of orchestral services to the touring Australian Ballet by professional orchestras resident in the cities visited, EMO will continue to tour with The Australian Ballet outside Victoria, an arrangement which is to be possible for a period not extending beyond 31 December, 1988; it is noted that cessation of the EMO tour with The Australian Ballet for its December Sydney season will depend either upon finding additional subsidy to fund other orchestral services to accompany that season, or establishment of a ballet season in Melbourne instead of Sydney for that or some other month;

c) the orchestra will be presented in concerts of the symphonic repertoire, in a primarily non-accompanying role, at least three times per year, and its members presented in chamber ensemble recitals with appropriate frequency;

d) the orchestra's remaining time is apportioned among a rank ordering of users.

Notwithstanding b) above, it is the intention of the recommendations for the EMO that it will become resident year-round in Melbourne as soon as orchestral resources are supplied to the national companies on tour outside Victoria.

6.1.6 The EMO's activities should be closely integrated into the needs of the VACT and of major Victorian and national user groups in Victoria. If subsidy, sponsorship, or increased earned income permits, this orchestra should be expanded up to a strength of 95 players, at which size it would be capable of splitting to provide two services simultaneously. Otherwise, it should be maintained at least at its present strength of 69.

The Tribe Report

could be negotiated if you were an exceptionally good player. It was up to the artistic director to decide what you might negotiate. It was out of the hands of management and information rarely came back until Bill Reid advised the orchestral manager to pay extra. I recommended undertaking effective union liaison, which was non-existent. There was no system of regular meetings; communication was usually in reaction to a complaint from a user company, and these were not dealt with in a structured way.

The public image of the Orchestra and management needed to be addressed. There was a perception this was a pit orchestra, and the management was a bit shambolic and haphazard. Investigating new areas of orchestra involvement to widen the scope of available players for extra positions was necessary as it was struggling to find good players to fill positions when someone wanted leave. There were other general administrative areas to be dealt with, the day-to-day things which everyone takes for granted: pay-slips, the signing of releases for a recording, copyright release, and where such documents are generated. There was no office or storage; there was no system.

***The Tribe Report*—Addressing the Issues**

Taking on this job, I inherited a number of serious issues, not only to do with the low morale of the musicians but funding questions related to the Australia Council's view of the Trust and its need for more money to improve the quality. I admit I was unaware of quite what I was taking on. It seemed likely the Melbourne Orchestra would be handed over to an independent management body first and the musicians were confused. Their view about staying or going fluctuated over time. In 1985 there was a big downturn in the whole music scene and the Australian Opera was announcing it might have to become part-time from 1987 unless it received assurance of adequate funding, which had a knock-on effect on the Elizabethan Sydney Orchestra. When I came back to the Trust my modus operandi in the music industry had been very different. With government funding you are accountable for public money so working methods were different, but I did have knowledge and skills to draw on when negotiating with the Australian Ballet and Australian Opera over all the thorny issues that had been sitting there for years, and was able to come up with immediate responses. With large sums of money and government grants involved, you had to be sure advice given was correct but for operational issues I could answer on the spot. It enabled communication with the union and user companies to be more efficient and reliable and at meetings generally we came away with satisfactory outcomes, including identification of next steps.

There was going to be a problem negotiating my way with Bill Reid, setting a standard for the orchestras and having the orchestral managements know it was to me they came for decisions,

support or criticism. The first thing was to meet with management staff and hear what they had to say. I asked how they worked and ran rehearsals. I went into nitty-gritty issues such as number of rehearsals, setting up and moving the orchestra, who looked after the instruments. Things I knew to be relevant and of interest to the musicians, even if they were not interested in the Trust management. Kathleen Norris did not need to know about getting a specialist to move cellos and basses but I wanted to know how it worked. The offices at the back of theatres or in the East Melbourne church hall were dis-organized and lacking basic resources. Once I asked for a Trust letterhead in the Melbourne office and none could be found. This was housekeeping and once you got it right, you could say the facility was in place and should be used in a managerial way. Such as a rostering form for a player to fill in what they wanted and why. This is submitted, taken to the user company for discussion and maybe negotiation. A paper trail is created rather than verbal agreements which could come as a surprise to the conductor who may have agreed after a performance without taking into account the impact of an absence or replacement on the rest of the section. Documentation was needed and was pulled together within six months. I was not popular with the orchestral managers but they came to accept it as necessary.

In Melbourne there was Peter Narroway, in Sydney, John Miller. Peter was a willing and capable manager, efficient and happy to give me all the information I needed. He sent monthly reports on how things are going. When we came to the point of transferring the orchestra and negotiating with the musicians, the Trust and the unions, I was in Melbourne for a day or two every fortnight. In Sydney it was a different matter; like pulling teeth with John Miller. It took time to get simple information from him. For the first few weeks I had daily meetings realizing he was protecting his turf and wanted to retain complete control over decisions. One of these was rostering, a big problem with the Opera Company. I obliged an unwilling John to come to my office, away from distractions at the Opera House. A weekly written report on the orchestra seemed the only way to focus on the issues. Eventually, after about a year, he was giving detailed and accurate verbal reports.

It took time to get the management functioning as management, reporting on policies to a senior authority. They existed. Bill Reid and others had set them up; whether they were good policies or not was not the issue; it was whether they were being enacted, followed and working. For issues relating to user companies, the ballet or opera, these had to be addressed immediately and fixed. When I finally had rapport with the managers, I asked about real issues confronting the musicians (not pit size or suitable chairs), but conflicts in relationships with the user companies. It was a fact-finding quest.

Based in an office at the Trust headquarters in Dowling Street, I had a good secretary, space to meet with the management and access to the rest of the building's facilities. The Sydney

orchestral management was in two small dressing rooms in the back of the pit in the Opera House. Inadequate from a management point of view but they survived. There was the orchestral manager, an assistant manager and a secretary, who printed schedules, received communications from musicians, generally things like doctors' certificates. Peter, the assistant, did the physical setting up of the pit and moving instruments to the rehearsal studio. He rostered with John to be on site for performances. With so many calls a week they split that up. John signed off on the pays each week and I discovered later there were arrangements he made with musicians about rostering that did not go past his desk. Bill Reid never knew and the companies did not find out until the conductor was on the podium and found a new clarinet player in position. They were not happy about that.

The Australian Chamber Orchestra Early Days

There were still musicians in the orchestras with whom I had played between 1967 and 1972. They did not know me as an administrator and I had been out of the country for a while, during which time the Australian Chamber Orchestra began under Trust administration in 1974 and gave its first concerts in 1975. An initiative assisted by the administrator of the orchestras, Ken Mackenzie-Forbes, it was driven by musicians, John Painter and Nathan Waks. Members of the Elizabethan Sydney Orchestra and the Robert Pikler Chamber Orchestra joined the Australian Chamber Orchestra. It had a management committee including John and Nathan, and the Trust gave administrative assistance. It was providing work opportunities for musicians outside the ABC and Trust orchestras. They were aiming for a very high standard of music making, although they implemented the early decision not to appoint a musical director. To establish anything that has any musical worth, you must have a clear way forward in terms of artistic

Carl Pini and the Australian Chamber Orchestra, *Trust News*, September 1988.

standards before you start. Otherwise, if you do not self-destruct, the critics and the public will destroy you.

Concertmaster Robert Ingram, the leader, was brought in with Nathan Waks, cello, Winifred Durie, viola, and Brecon Carter, violin, to help raise the standards of the Trust Sydney Orchestra. It was clearly a good move. All were excellent players and useful in providing assistance and guidance to younger players. They were now members of the Chamber Orchestra, along with Carl Pini, violin, back from London and a member of the Sydney String Quartet, sitting next to Bob on the front desk. Carl left the orchestra subsequently. **Today it is a very different ensemble.** Its first concert on 21st November 1975 was conducted by Robert Pikler and Georg Tintner. Tours to Brisbane, Canberra, Melbourne and regional areas were undertaken through ***Musica Viva***. Donald MacDonald[4] was involved in assisting its development.

Caricature of Noel Ferrier—*Trust News*, September 1988.

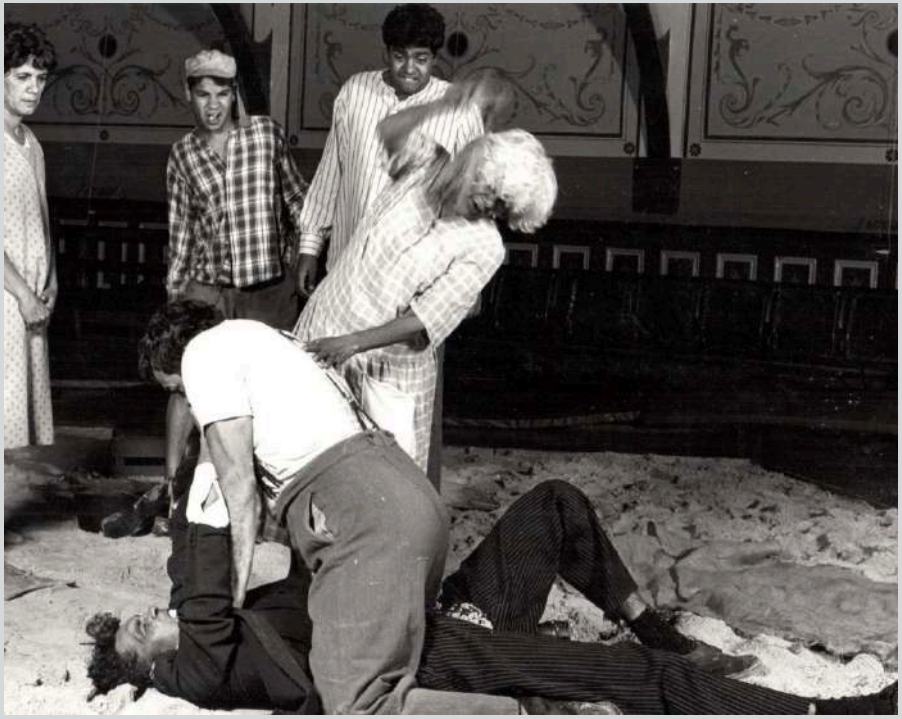
Trust Colleagues

When I began work in early 1986, Andrew Briger was the Trust Chairman, the Company Secretary was Don Grace and staff included Jeff Kovel, actor Wendy Blacklock and comedian, actor and producer, Noel Ferrier, who was head of musical theatre. The NSW Theatre of the Deaf, directed by Patrick Mitchell, was based there. Roger Taylor was head of technical facilities, Michael James ran the costume department and Carole Long[5] was Manager of the membership department. There were Trust representatives and offices in Perth, Melbourne, Brisbane and Adelaide (**1986 *Annual Report***). It was a very vibrant place. Heads of Departments met weekly with Kathleen, downstairs at a big boardroom table. I attended one or two Trust Board meetings as an observer, and delivered a paper to one meeting when Andrew Briger wanted to hear my views on the orchestra transfers. Kathleen kept all of the managers away from the Board.

Pam Andrews, in the entrepreneurial section, was an outstanding super-efficient manager and put together the basics of an entrepreneurial show with Jeff Kovel and subsequently John Woodland. I had a fair bit to do with those people informally and more formally later when I started Australian Orchestral Enterprises[6]. David Martin, the son of Lloyd Martin, General Manager of the Opera House, was publicity officer. He had an almost impossible task: The Trust was under attack, it seemed, from everyone. This was the first time I saw how maligned the Trust was in the public eye, yet they were doing a great deal with a very competent staff.

Jeff Kovel had looked after the Sydney side of *Edgleys* and was first rate. Patrick was innovative and creative with the **Theatre of the Deaf**, particularly in relation to schools' programs. Entrepreneurial activities were often in conjunction with **Pat Condon and Michael Edgley** as

4 Donald McDonald, AO, AC (born 1938), Australian arts administrator, held executive positions with Sydney Theatre Company, *Musica Viva* and The Australian Opera (1986-1996). Was Chairman of the ABC 1996-2006, and Director of the Australian Classification Board 2007-2012.
5 Carole Long was Membership Manager 1973-1988. She died after a short illness in 1989.
6 See Chapter 7.



No Sugar by Jack Davis, Western Australia Theatre Company 1990 with Lynette Narkle, Kelton Pell, John Moore, Morton Hansen, Ernie Dingo and Dot Collard. Photo: Gary Summerfield.

co-partners, who, if the Trust had not been efficient, would have stopped collaborating. There were many shared promotions including the Dance Theatre of Harlem (**1980 *Annual Report***) for which I had put together an orchestra. The relationship with the Trust was first rate in terms of their efficiency. Once in the job I could see these people under attack all the time. It seemed whatever you did was wrong and criticized. Many arts administrators had worked for the Trust in their early careers; maybe it was a case of the children having a go at their parents when they had the muscle and the power to do so.

The staff was under stress to meet budgets and make a success of shows. The Entrepreneurial Department had successful visits by Count Basie and Ella Fitzgerald.

Ella Fitzgerald

The Theatre of the Deaf was expanding into educational areas and Wendy Blacklock was building indigenous work in the Australian Content Department. Jack Davis's play, *No Sugar,* toured around Australia and overseas (***Trust News*** December 1988).

It was a vibrant and flourishing activity which became independent, as **Performing Lines**, when the Trust went into provisional liquidation.

There was a large Trust membership of nearly 10,000. Although I had less dealings with this department, I felt that members, although they joined primarily to get access to tickets and especially to first nights, needed the message they were members to support what the Trust did. Support can include attendance, talking positively about the Trust in your community and counteracting negative views, as well as donating. Even $5 a year from each member would have been very helpful.

Don Grace was company secretary and financial controller. He helped me understand the budget set for the orchestras, which was a complex document. I was thrown in the deep end when I started and had to draft a budget for the next funding period. This had to be delivered annually in October and there was no negotiation with the Australia Council. I learnt to read balance sheets and financial reports but Don showed me a way through the minefield of figures

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and how to put a draft budget together until arriving at the final document. My annual report included recommendations and requests for increases in establishment funding, which were always there for extra players. The acquittal of the existing grant was a nightmare. The Australia Council wanted to know about every penny, chapter and verse about over-spends for extra instruments, allowances and additional penalty rates musicians were entitled to. I would have to cite the award modification, including the action in the Industrial Commission that produced it and provide the industrial document, put together by William (Bill) Parlour, our industrial advocate. It was labour and time consuming: a huge amount of paperwork which I did every day to keep on top of it. Some 20% of my time was spent acquitting the Australia Council grant. With no computer or e-mail, I had something better: Ann Robinson, the secretary, who was wonderfully efficient. I came to rely on her; when we did a budget we would use last year's figures, analyze how they broke down for Melbourne and Sydney, explain fluctuations and include the coming year's anticipated increase. Ann would give me a spreadsheet the next day. Computers do not do that.

I do not think the Trust understood the implications of *The Tribe Report*, what it meant to transfer sixty-nine people in both Melbourne and Sydney, whose Trust employment would cease at the end of the year. Tribe had put together recommendations to be met by the user companies, the new managers of the orchestra, whoever they were going to be, and the Australia Council. He had been very polite, but the expectation was these things had to be done, otherwise transfer could not happen. These orchestras were part and parcel of the whole orchestral scene in Australia. The report involved a bigger picture than just the Trust, which had only been involved in the music industry through entrepreneurial activities, not in anything like the huge recording industry in relation to film-making, or the ABC Orchestras in every state. Kathleen Norris was dismayed at what was before her. The report was a hard read, with many cross-references and views, including those of individual players. Some were not representative of the orchestra, even

if they claimed to be. I knew some of the players with strong views, such as Peter King, Philip Mendel and Richard Runnels. They were prepared to make statements and agitate for transfer.

There was merit in some of the recommendations but whether the Trust deserved it or not was not my place to decide. Kathleen wanted to know how to keep the orchestras and what it would entail. This was not easy to answer because reasons both ways had to be considered. I had to be diplomatic because she was the CEO and I assumed she had Board support for decision-making processes. To advise her in opposition to Tribe's recommendation would be not a good thing to put to the Trust directors without clear understanding. There were several issues; the need for the orchestras to fulfill the expectations of the opera and ballet companies; to develop as artistic bodies of good repute and good quality; and to progress forward in terms of establishment of players, adequate rostering and good work conditions.

Good Management needs Good Communication

There was the need for the orchestras to have good management, of which the report was most critical of the Trust. There were clear indications it considered the management inadequate. Communication had lapsed between orchestras and management, notwithstanding the orchestral committees, union stewards and a group of Trust Board directors who met with members of the orchestra to discuss issues. Effective day to day communication was not happening. It generally had to wait for one of those forums and many petty things never got to the table. Petty things, if not resolved, fester and become major issues and this had happened in both orchestras. Again, because of lack of strong artistic direction, this was one of the major criticisms in the report. I do not think anyone could have disputed the findings. Rather than ask the Trust 'to get their act together', it was recommended the orchestras be moved to new management with a proper structure. It is speculative as to whether they should have stayed with the Trust, which was having problems with funding.

Ultimately, funding problems were threatening the very existence of the Trust as it carried a debt of some $70,000, which the Australia Council should have paid years before, and was now impossible to recoup. The report also recommended the Trust transfer the musical instruments used by the members of the orchestra but they did not belong to the players. They had been bought by the Trust Ladies' Committee[7] through fundraising and donated to the orchestra. There was considerable fiscal value on those instruments but *The Tribe Report* did not consider or investigate that issue. There were questions the Trust CEO had to come to terms with and understand before they could mount a proper response. Having read the report, I interviewed the orchestral managers. The players were not communicating, nor were the orchestral managers.

7 Social, fund-raising group for many years organized by Shirley Hay.

They would say one thing and go back on their word, making management stance on an issue uncertain and unreliable. There was not a friendly relationship with the Musicians' Union and in industrial issues you need a relationship where you can at least talk.

There were a lot of personal issues involved. When people did not get something they would take it personally. It had gone long past the point of being able to discuss and agree or disagree on issues. It was about personal animosity and communication, especially from the Sydney Orchestra. Regardless of the *Edgley* style, this was a time when agreements had to be in writing; disputes needed to be identified and policies put in place. Rostering was done between the orchestral manager and the player and it often did not go to the Orchestra. Soon after my arrival there was a file note: 'Horn player going off for the entire Ballet season.' No reason given or any discussion in writing as to who had agreed this or whether the information had been communicated to the relevant user company or other players in the section.

From these discussions, I derived some twenty points of management which should have been done yesterday and certainly tomorrow! These became my goals:

- Raise the standards of managerial efficiency, musical performance and discipline.
- Improve orchestral morale.
- Personalize the relationship between orchestral manager and players.
- Provide a good line of communication between myself, the players and the managers of the orchestras.
- Make immediate decisions.
- Management to stand firm on their decisions.
- Take responsibility for all policy decisions.
- Provide good, friendly communication with the Musicians' Union.
- Treat musicians as individuals, not payroll numbers.
- Arrange and confirm all bookings and appointments by phone with immediate written follow-up.
- Advise all conditions at time of booking with no grey areas.
- Post rosters and changes well in advance.
- Address the roster problem.
- Revise the casual player system of engagement.
- Fight for better wages.
- Do not rely on the Union for improvements.
- Improve conditions of employment to attract principal players.
- Encourage the Ballet Company to engage better conductors.
- Establish a working environment of no surprises from any source.
- Open the management to frank, friendly and confidential communication with all the players and try to find some solution to the pit problem.

After I drafted the management requirements for Kathleen, there was a requirement to try and place the orchestras in a public arena outside of opera; to treat the musicians as individuals,

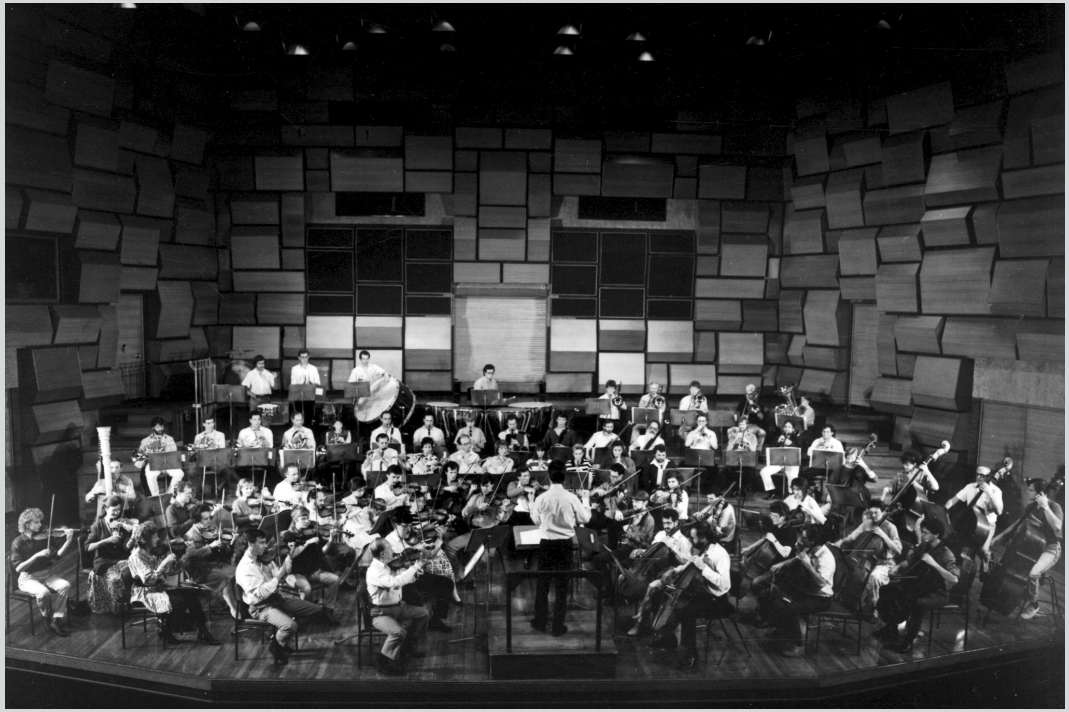
not payroll numbers. The orchestras were losing identity, swamped by the needs of the internationally profiled Australian Opera and Australian Ballet. They were required to meet a high standard without recognition. Tribe recommended there should be at least three concerts given by the orchestras in the public domain outside of opera or ballet. He was critical of the Trust for not doing this. One of the big problems was that few people knew the orchestras.

Sydney Trust Opera/Ballet Orchestra

The Sydney Symphony Orchestra members were named in concert programs and recognized. Audiences knew who the leader or principal cellist was and expected to see and hear them at a concert. With opera you go for the singers; Donald Smith singing Mario in *Tosca* or Dame Joan Sutherland singing Lucia. Occasionally for the ballet, a musician like Maurice Stead played a solo, or a harpist had a solo which may mean the player was identified, but it was brief and they could not be seen in the pit where everyone was dressed in black. Finding a name in the program was difficult because the orchestra were in small print and often both Sydney and Melbourne Orchestras were listed in the season program even if they were not playing that performance.

The presentation of the orchestras did not exist, save for the fact they played for ballet and opera. One objective of concerts is to give players opportunity to play music they do not normally play, and might enjoy while raising standards with challenges to meet and boost morale. For an audience, it is a great opportunity to identify with individual players.

There was an issue with dress code; I felt strongly about presentation and was worried about the time coming when we would no longer wear dinner suits in the pit. The notion of dressing up in the pit was changing and many players, unless with the Sydney or Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, where you had to wear tails, were resistant to bow ties and wanted to wear black skivvies. For me, looking good impacted on the way the orchestras presented and the audience received them, especially for platform concerts and events such as simulcasts. The Sydney Orchestra accompanied the Australian Opera for a simulcast of ***Lucia di Lammermoor*** in early 1986, and there were other simulcasts organized by the Australian Opera and the *ABC*, with the broadcaster in charge of the production. We had to schedule in such a way as not to interfere with the running of the season and to be careful we were rostering to get the right people at the right time. I would give a direction to John Miller to solve problems with players who wanted leave at such a time. Whatever negotiation took place, I did not know the terms but it was generally solved because simulcasts carried extra money, so very few people would be unavailable.



Elizabethan Philharmonic Orchestra—1987

Getting Out of the Pit

The Sydney Orchestra presented some concerts in early March 1986 which were seen as morale boosters for the musicians but there were issues. Not everyone was convinced they needed to do concerts; to get out of the pit to keep their balance correct. There were some who wanted to do a concert out of the city, and others who did not want to travel large instruments for one-off concerts. They would suggest changes to the repertoire to avoid taking all the percussion instruments, for example. These were problems to be solved. There was money to pay for these with Australia Council funding, but scheduling them, often at the end of a season before the beginning of the rehearsals for the next, was tricky. It was about the only time there was a spare day, at the end of an opera season before the ballet started. Often the ballet would be rehearsing on the tail end of the opera or vice versa, but there was always a Friday or Saturday night for a concert and on some occasions the user companies would reschedule or drop a couple of their calls.

It was getting the enthusiasm of the orchestra which was the hardest and this usually came from the conductor, in this case William Reid. For these March 1986 concerts, the soloist selected was a high profile pianist, Pamela Page[8], but I wanted the program to focus on the Sydney Orchestra and less on conductor and soloist without offending them. The centre-fold of the program contained the list of players, the first thing readers saw, and in big font. On the left hand side, the conductor and soloist were featured. Normally, it would have been the reverse. There was a welcome from the Trust chairman; it was time for the public to understand the Trust was proud of this orchestra. They had put on concerts before but they had never made that statement. On the right hand side was the program and music notes, while on the reverse there were six photographs of players with instruments taken in rehearsal; not posed but showing them in action, working in their environment. In the centre was the name of the orchestra and the concert, *Great Romantic Classics*.

This program was presented in two big Sydney population areas where potentially there would be good audiences: the Sutherland Entertainment Centre and the City of Willoughby's Chatswood Civic Centre (now The Concourse). Possibly 95% of the audience had never seen these musicians before, nor understood what a timpanist did. On this occasion it was Jack Purden, concentrating and playing his drums on the move, depending on the music. Perhaps for the first time audience members saw how a French horn or piccolo was played. Sadly, the musicians did not seem to think this was special or unusual but it needed to be done, capitalized on, and developed. I think Bill Reid had run his course and was worn out. In the early days there were quite strong statements coming from him on a regular basis about what needed to be done, but nearly twenty years later nothing had been done. He retired in July 1986.

Clockwise from top left: Geoffrey Chard (Voss), Gregory Tomlinson (Harry), Anne-Maree McDonald (Belle) and Marilyn Richardson (Laura) in the Australian Opera's production of *Voss*—1986

In 1986 there were two contemporary Australian works in the orchestras' repertoire; a short Carl Vine work for a ballet *Triple Bill* and Richard Meale's *Voss* for the Opera Company.[9] *Voss* was a

8 Pamela Page (b.1934), Australian pianist, studied Trinity College of Music, London, has given many recitals and broadcasts including duet programs with husband, pianist Max Olding. Was Senior Lecturer at Faculty of Music, University of Queensland. Their son is violist Dene Olding.

9 Carl Vine AO (b.1954), pianist, composer, Artistic Director Musica Viva since 2000 and Huntington Estate Music Festival since 2006. In 2005 received Don Banks Award for outstanding contribution to Australian Music. Currently Senior Lecturer in Composition, Conservatorium of Sydney.
Richard Meale (1932-2009), Australian composer .His opera *Voss*, with libretto by David Malouf (b.1934), was based on Patrick White's novel *Voss* (1957) and commissioned by the Australian Opera who premiered the work at the Adelaide Festival in 1986.

significant work for the orchestra that year and many players enjoyed being part of it. When such works come in, some welcome them as a breath of fresh air, a change from Gilbert and Sullivan or the standard Mozart and Wagner opera repertoire. With ballet there is more contemporary music but it favours the dance rather than the music. The opera favours the music, so with a contemporary work like *Voss*, it is about the music. A contemporary ballet often moves the tempi around to the point where it is unmusical, making players dislike ballet music.

There can be a dichotomy in an orchestra when people have to play works as part of their job, while others are enthusiastic and approach the music with enjoyment. Looking back at the names of players in the Trust orchestras, I realize seating order can work against the strength of sections. I believe you seat people in order of what is required of the section which does not necessarily mean the best player will be on the front desk. In London orchestras, often there is a fabulous player on the back desk of the firsts because that is where strength is needed. That philosophy was not apparent in Australia at the time. It is not the individual players at all, it is how they are galvanized, put together and presented, which determines how well they do. They could probably go to the next level if given the objective to get a high quality sound, outside of the pit, in recording situations. This is artistic direction, 'fine-tuning', which is very difficult to distinguish when listening to them in the Sydney Opera House pit. Being encumbered with a pit should not kill the quality of the orchestra that plays in it.

In April 1986 the Australia Council put in place an implementation committee to transfer the Melbourne orchestra to the Victorian Arts Centre Trust by 1st January 1987. The committee met in May in Melbourne and included John Bates, George Fairfax, the head of the VACT, representatives of the musicians' committee, the leader, myself, and others. The Victorian Arts Minister was in attendance. The agenda was to discuss what was going to happen and how. While no real decisions were made, industrial issues were noted and left to John and me. The Melbourne Orchestra's Musicians' Association voted thirty-three to eight in favour of transfer. The Trust was disappointed the musicians had gone directly to the Australia Council with their view, having hoped for a confidential ballot of musicians to see if the view was actually different.

The Trust was also anxious to continue negotiations for the sale of instrument assets at their present value, hoping the new orchestra management would purchase the instruments. This did not happen and there was little enthusiasm overall from the musicians who thought they could have new ones from a new management. There were no classic instruments, no old violins or special items of merit. Given promises of great support from the Arts Centre, there was expectation from the Melbourne players that they would be looked after. There were political reasons for these promises, but some interpreted this to mean new instruments, especially as some of the Trust instruments in use were old or not well maintained. In the case of the timpani,

which involved major cost, Sydney timpanist, David Clarence, wanted to use these. There were Wagner horns only used for his works and possibly some Richard Strauss orchestral works. The only organization with a reason to own these was the Opera Company who might use them once every five years. There was disinterest, although the instruments were in good condition. The Trust wanted everything documented and I had them assessed and valued in relation to the market.

Transfer Concerns

As I worked towards the transfers, my immediate concern was that an orchestra should not become an exclusive opera orchestra, or managed by the Opera, because it would lose its identity. Set up to play opera and ballet, they were not necessarily to be identified as opera or ballet orchestras. I feared Melbourne would become a ballet orchestra and Sydney an opera orchestra, which was not good for the players. Orchestras should do a variety of work and be structured so that people are rostered off for periods of time. Players should be fully employed for the year with a constant salary, a maximum of six months in the pit and some time playing chamber music or recordings. When that happens, you remain fresh. If you become an opera orchestra player, that is all you do, so your capacity to develop as a chamber musician is limited, unless you work away from the orchestra. The musical awareness learnt in other genres of music is contributory to core work. All those experiences help musical maturity when playing opera. Time away from the pit works perfectly well in places like New York and London because they are seasonal. At the end of a season, musicians have time to go to summer schools or chamber music festivals and come back refreshed and revived. I was concerned the orchestras would become specialized; a reason to stay with the Trust, who always believed and hoped the orchestras would be broad-based to cover a range of music, including stage productions. Although this did not happen due to lack of funds and artistic direction, it was Trust policy. I thought the Trust should not lose the orchestras with that intention, but I had to willingly revise my position when I saw Melbourne going to a management that understood and had plans on the table to diversify the activities.

***Melba ATN 7 TV* – Sydney Orchestra**

In 1986 the Sydney Orchestra made recordings for the *ATN-7 TV* series *Melba* based on the life of Australian operatic soprano Nellie Melba, which was shown on air in 1988. Extracts from eight operas were recorded in four sessions and paid at commercial rates. On average, players received $268 for this. It was one of my philosophies that touched on the artistic side. I believed the orchestra had to develop a reliable list of people who could be used as extras and the only way to do that was to have a commercial relationship with these people. The orchestra itself

A scene for the *ATN-7* mini-series *Melba*. Photo courtesy Oliver Sullivan Productions.

could and should find commercial opportunities when it came to enhance not only their financial returns but also artistic returns. This session was offered in the light of my previous experience with the recording industry. I could have fixed a freelance orchestra, but the producers, with advice from *Kennedy-Miller*, wanted an orchestra with a name.[10] I convinced them there was an orchestra with expertise that would be perfect; they could use the name although some players were not members of the orchestra. I put an orchestra together, basically freelance, led by Robert Ingram, with many people from the Sydney Orchestra; an extra date for them. If they complained about doing extra work, I advised they did not have to, but when they realized they would lose a session fee that complaint disappeared. Yvonne Kenny[11] sang Melba. It was

10 *Kennedy-Miller Australia*, founded by George Miller and Byron Kennedy in 1978 in Sydney as producer of Australian film and television. Since 2009 called Kennedy Miller Mitchell also producing video games.
11 Yvonne Kenny (b.1950-), Australian soprano, opera singer.

a successful recording financially and artistically. The orchestra played incredibly well. Having experienced opera people in the orchestra made a great deal of difference. Having someone like the respected Ingram leading, brought quality to the recording and there was no compromise at all. This was the first time I found extra work for them; it was disappointing they did not think such experiences were necessary. As a musician I find this hard to comprehend.

Robert Ingram and Ronald Thomas

The music producer hoped to use the orchestra again but there was a growing disciplinary problem stemming from a lack of musical artistic direction and it seemed essential the next step be to appoint a strong artistic director and a concertmaster. Ingram was able to solve disciplinary problems such as shuffling and making noise when they should not; unintentional disruption, not being properly disciplined as a session musician. In a live recording session with a singer, you have to stop any noise related to things like page turning. Robert was able to negotiate that. At the time we did not know what the future would bring; I could make no promises of availability so that was the only occasion we had an association with *Kennedy-Miller*. I negotiated with Ingram to be concertmaster and Ronald Thomas to be artistic director for the Sydney Orchestra, but knew it was dependent on offering adequate funds and attractive conditions. I wanted Ingram to be involved as he had been a successful adviser in the past and could have helped the orchestra understand the musical issues and outcomes of transfer. He was tactful, experienced and highly respected as a player. He could also step in and play difficult works when necessary. I could not get Ingram interested. Having been involved in the past, he recognized the orchestra was not going to listen. Ronald and I worked together in England where he was conductor of the Bournemouth Sinfonietta, a member of the Academy of St Martin in the Fields and started the *London Virtuosi*, a group of key players, who all played standing: the first time this had been done. They very successfully played baroque and Mozart, to an incredibly high standard. When he arrived back in Australia looking for work, I suggested the Trust. He had several recordings: in the 1980s *Gramophone UK* judged his recording as the best Beethoven Violin Concerto on CD at the time. In London it was a best seller for a long time. He would have been invaluable, particularly with his wealth of experience. He agreed on condition he continue playing. The first thing I arranged was for him to play the Mendelsohn Concerto with the Melbourne Orchestra. Then he joined the Sydney Orchestra; once again they were negative and did not want to know. At the same time Ronald did not want to let the impetus go from London.

I was looking at the Soloists of Australia, which Ron had assembled and directed, with the idea of managing them. This was all part of my philosophy that an orchestral division of the Trust, if it lost the two orchestras, might have another role and help the two orchestras or at


The Solists of Australia in concert.

least the Sydney Orchestra if it developed work for good freelance players I knew were sitting doing nothing. These were players who had opted out of the Sydney Symphony and other orchestras and were making recordings. The Soloists comprised of concertmasters of ABC Orchestras; friends and colleagues of Ron's during his long career, including Robert Ingram, Barbara Gilby from the Tasmanian Orchestra, Robert Cooper from the South Australian Orchestra, Berian Evans, viola player from Western Australia, John Gray, double bass and Cathy Finnis, cello; the cream of Australia's players. The group released its first recording in December 1986. The following year, they performed Vivaldi, Mozart and Bach concerti with an ensemble of about ten in the Concert Hall during the Perth Festival. The morning after the evening concert they recorded the program, without an audience, in the concert venue. This was recorded by *Chandos* with whom Ronald had a relationship from London. Their two recordings, *The Soloists of Australia, Volume 1 and Volume 2*, are excellent and benchmarks of some of Australia's best players at that time. Ron came back to Sydney and that was the last of it. There were too many people involved, with other major concerns, to get them together and they were all in different states. Ronald was not a very good organizer in terms of juggling dates. He wanted me to do that. David Blenkinsop was looking after them in Western Australia and he wanted me to find opportunities in the eastern states. I also tried to organize tours to America and Europe for the Soloists in 1988 but it was impossible to get the players together.

Whilst Ron was with the Trust orchestra I thought it of benefit to him, and good for the orchestra, to have such a high profile music director. I could not find funding and player availability was restricted substantially by their work schedules elsewhere, which had to be their first consideration. After a year Ron returned to London, and revived his solo career. He came back to Australia some years later. Both Ingram and Thomas would have been very good for the Sydney Orchestra but I doubt the orchestra was capable of taking that kind of direction. They really wanted a conductor. We canvassed them for their views and the strong voices wanted a conductor who specialized in opera because that is what they played. It made it very difficult to

do anything with the orchestra and it was not my place to intervene artistically. It would have affected the smoothness of the transfer. It was hard enough building the relationship we needed to affect their transfer with industrial security.

I was always invited to ballet and opera opening nights. I could not accept every invitation although I was interested to see how the orchestras worked. I would have had to have kept my mouth shut if I found something I did not like. Mostly I attended concerts or events in the Domain where there were complex, behind the scenes, management requirements and these were my responsibility. These events, presented as part of the annual Sydney Festival, were expertly organized by the Festival's Operations Manager/Executive Producer, John Moulton[12]. He had been the Production Manager for the Helpmann/Nureyev *Don Quixote* film in 1973 and it was a pleasure to work with him for the orchestra's Domain concerts.

I saw many performances and some rehearsals, but basically, I had two jobs; to improve management quality, policies and managers' performance, all of which was achievable, even with John Miller; and to negotiate the potential transfer of the two orchestras, involving many industrial issues. I arrived at the office about 8am and did not leave until 7 or 8pm, so missed a lot of performances. I kept such a routine during that time or I would not have covered the ground. As we moved closer to the transfers, negotiations with the musicians, both through their representative committees and one-on-one, were increasing, especially in Melbourne, where I gave time privately to every musician in the orchestra to hear and help them deal with concerns. This took an enormous amount of time.

In 1986 Trust attention was focused on what to do with the Dowling Street building; to renovate or sell. There were issues with asbestos as well as financial issues. The premises were dilapidated and it was a difficult building to work in, although because of its position and size, it was a property asset for the Trust. Entrepreneurial activities included a co-production and tour of *The Pirates of Penzance* with the Victorian State Opera and the Elizabethan Melbourne Orchestra and *Edgleys' Torvill and Dean*[13] tour. To accompany the Netherlands Dance Theatre in 1986 in Melbourne, the Australian Philharmonic Orchestra came together with casual players I had been using. It was run by conductor Paul Coppens[14]. When I left *Edgleys* he kept those contacts and established the Melbourne Philharmonic Orchestra. He had used that name with an orchestra

12 John Robert Moulton (1942-2014), born New Zealand, moved to Australia in 1961, joined Australian Ballet in 1962 where he became Stage Director. After 11 years with the company, he was appointed Deputy Technical Manager at the Sydney Opera House and was Stage Director for many years for the House's New Year's Eve events as well as working with Sydney Festival Director Stephen Hall for events in the Domain. As Deputy Director Australian Bicentennial Special Events NSW, he masterminded and organized Australia Day 1988 on Sydney Harbour. He managed many large scale cultural events before becoming General Manager of Sydney's Capitol Theatre.

13 Jayne Torvill and Christopher Dean, English ice skaters who became world famous at the 1984 Winter Olympics with their free-dance interpretation of Ravel's *Bolero* which earned them a gold medal. They toured an ice skating/dance presentation to Australia and elsewhere after winning the world professional championships five times.

14 Paul Coppens, born in the Netherlands, emigrated to Australia in 1955. Studied conducting at Graz Music University, Austria. Founded the Melbourne Chamber Orchestra in 1973 and the Melbourne Philharmonic Orchestra in 1975. Between 1974 and 1999 was Music Director/Assistant Conductor/Administrator of Orchestras with *Edgleys* and conducted the Rudolph Nureyev 1991 Australian tour and the 1992 Stars of the Bolshoi Ballet tour.

I worked with a couple of times on my return from England. It was a group of freelancers from Melbourne. They picked up the tail end of what was going on in live performance for orchestras, although most of it had died.

Trust Entrepreneurial Projects

In July 1986, other developments for the Trust included the opening of the ***Halftix*** booth in Martin Place, Sydney. José Calarco ran what became a very successful venture. It no longer exists but it gave access to performing arts events at discount prices which had never been done in Australia. José's reports were always positive and he was selling tickets. *Lennon, the musical*, opened at Sydney's Enmore Theatre in October 1986. There was also *Las Vegas on Ice* and *Sugar Babies*.

These were Kathleen Norris's projects; her ideas which she negotiated mostly in America. She often asked my view on orchestral resources but I was not close to the actual running of events. I saw rehearsals of *Lennon* and thought she made some fundamentally bad decisions as to where and when to put such shows on and how much money to budget. She exceeded what could have been considered realistic budgets and put the Trust at great risk. They were glitzy Disney type shows and not what the Trust had been associated with in the past nor probably should have been involved with. This was the forte of *Edgleys*, Pat Condon or Cameron Mackintosh[15] if they thought shows were worthy.

Kathleen's view of what the Trust should do was at odds with its previous role. The entrepreneurial department had been successfully 'commercial' for years. Comparing *Lennon* with Count Basie: even though a different genre of music, Basie was a substantial show with orchestra, a fabulous show. It had all the panache and style one would expect of a Trust production. *Sugar Babies* and *Las Vegas on Ice* were like going to the fair at the weekend. I think they were unsuitable productions and the imprimatur of the Trust probably did not help ticket sales because it was the wrong market. I do not think the 10,000 members rallied to these. The decision to proceed should have been after proper investigation into the Trust members' market. I had my own problems but was aware of tension in the air. One of Kathleen's objectives was to go outside the traditional Trust market and build new ones. So *Lennon*, and especially *Sugar Babies* and *Las Vegas on Ice*, would appeal to the people who want to see shows in clubs and are prepared to pay for that environment. Perhaps she was looking to cross-fertilize, bring that market and maybe introduce them to ballet or opera. Kathleen, a Canadian, was influenced by the North American entertainment scene, which succeeds because they have a much bigger audience. She misjudged the Australian market completely.

Garry McDonald as 'Mo' in *Sugar Babies*—Don McMurdo 1987.

15 Sir Cameron Mackintosh (b.1946), British theatrical producer and theatre owner. Notable for his association with many commercially successful musicals including *Les Miserables*, *Phantom of the Opera*, *Mary Poppins*, *Miss Saigon* and *Cats*.

So, her attention was elsewhere. She wanted to pass the whole thing over, this Pandora's Box, for me to deal with.

Pre-Orchestral Transfer

By mid-1986, we had passed the point where *The Tribe Report* could be contested and we could find a way to keep the orchestras. Melbourne had demonstrated there was a way forward that would probably work and most people, musicians, new management, union and even the Trust in some ways, were on side with that. There was no reason why the Sydney Orchestra could not reach that point, which it was a long way from, if it was properly managed and we dealt with the issues. I wanted to concentrate on building the orchestra's profile and help with the infrastructure it needed. The issues of extra players, rostering and advance notice of scheduling from the user companies, needed to be addressed and consolidated in an industrial award which gave protection when these things were not upheld. We had to address the issue of standards, the right to dismiss and the conditions under which that would happen. The Musicians' Union had finally come to the understanding that you have to replace people sometimes. They started to waive their objection to overseas players coming in when there was no local available. It was always a thorny question but things were going in the right direction.

I was instructed to prepare for the transfers but firstly to get the managements to a point where they were respectable and represented the Trust as a good manager. I was given freedom to make some decisions. There would be an industrial issue for the transfers: we were dealing with people's lives and income. I wanted to be involved in the process, especially as there were some negotiations on the ground that Bill Parlour would not be involved in. I had a clear brief to get management functioning properly and if I saw a way to prevent one of the transfers, I should not hinder it but seek to change the minds of all involved. That was more likely with the Sydney Orchestra than Melbourne. There was confusion amongst Sydney players about who should manage them. It became clear the Opera Company wanted to manage the orchestra, which half the players did not want, so there was enough to suspend action until another management model was found. This did not happen, but it was why the Melbourne Orchestra transfer went ahead before Sydney. I proceeded industrially on the basis they were both going to transfer. We knew the Melbourne Orchestra was almost 99.9% likely to transfer to the Victorian Arts Centre Trust.

The Sydney Orchestra had a big question mark over it, but would probably transfer. Industrial conditions and conditions of employment had to be settled for both orchestras with the authority of the Industrial Commission. At the end of the day that meant a new award, which was the best thing we did for the Trust Orchestras because in the first years of my tenure there

were all manner of notions about what would happen when an orchestra transferred from the Trust. An opera conductor wanted to let them go and start again. This was a way to solve some of the problems of inadequate performance from some players. By and large, the orchestra played well, but occasionally there was a glitch, hence the view to start again. One of the orchestra leaders wanted everyone to re-audition and not be appointed unless they were at a certain standard. That was ridiculous; these were players who had been there a long time, many of them founder members and due long service leave. Morally it would have been wrong, and from a good management point of view, to get good quality playing, you need to have them on side by standing by them.

I believed the entitlements given by the Trust must transfer with players. What happens afterwards is up to the new management, the Industrial Commission and the players. That had not been discussed and there were rumours flying around about losing entitlements. No-one could say yes or no, except the union would fight those issues, but fighting it is not the answer. By then the negotiations with the orchestra and the **Victorian Arts Centre Trust** (VACT) were well advanced. We were liaising with John Bates, VACT industrial officer; a good negotiator, and an even better listener. Strong, but flexible, he was a very effective person in the industrial forum. He was well-known and respected by the Commission with a reputation for being fair and standing his ground. He and Bill Parlour, who represented the **Theatre Proprietors' Association**[16], were quite a formidable team. Bill gave me advice when I asked. John and I decided to work together for both orchestras, not just Melbourne, and that was where his flexibility really came in. We started negotiations with the Musicians' Union Federal Secretary and copied those negotiations to the Sydney secretary, Alan Nash, who was talking with the Sydney Orchestra. We came to a common agreement that on transfer no-one would lose their job. We felt if we could have such an understanding between union and employers, we could take that to the Commission for endorsement since there was no conflict.

It took time because there were views that we could improve things or could do things differently. John and I agreed to stick to this. At the time, the dismissal process for musicians was not covered by an industrial agreement which was the big problem. They were working under the *Musicians' General Award*. There was a dispute resolution clause but it would not have covered the intricacies of a permanent employee in an Opera Ballet Orchestra. The dismissal process generally had been left to Bill Reid to decide, after informal discussion with the leader and section leader and maybe the union representative. Very few people were dismissed and when they were, it was a summary dismissal on grounds of something like drunkenness or assault, not musical incompetence.

16 Theatre Proprietors and Entrepreneurs Association created in 1976. Peak industry body until 1989, now called Live Performance Australia, based in Melbourne. **https://liveperformance.com.au**

Preparing the New *Opera and Ballet Award*

The end result was that we won the right to prepare a new award, which is quite unusual, and we did it working with the Musicians' Union representatives, mostly in Melbourne. We spent hours writing a completely new *Opera Ballet Award*. To get it endorsed, it had to go before a full bench of the Industrial Commission. Fortunately, this was in the days of the *Prices and Incomes Accord*[17]. The government philosophy under the then Prime Minister, Bob Hawke, was to be in accord with employers and to negotiate terms, then have it consolidated by the Commission. To our amazement, and with a great sense of achievement, everything was approved without alteration. We walked away with a new award which still stands, with some modifications. With this, we were guaranteed no-one would be affected adversely by the transfers.

As part of the transfer process, Don Grace prepared a form letter asking the Melbourne Orchestra musicians to resign by 31st July 1986, effective from 31st December 1986, so they could be employed by the Victorian management on 1st January 1987 without any loss of entitlements, benefits or superannuation. In August, the Musicians' Union objected to the letter being distributed unless accompanied by a letter from VACT offering re-employment. For its part, the VACT was not prepared to give that guarantee until it received a guarantee of adequate funding from the Australia Council; an impasse while VACT reassessed its financial package. The Australia Council was determined the change should go ahead but not prepared to offer additional financial assistance.

The Trust Board agreed if all else failed it would continue to manage the Melbourne Orchestra at this crucial point. We were a bit like the meat in the sandwich. To make the transfer effective, the Trust had to accept resignations to prevent redundancies. These had to be linked with the time and date of new employment so entitlements were not affected. We put into the award that on transfer, entitlements were maintained so if a player resigned, long service leave finished then. When it came down to the nitty-gritty of what transferring really meant, no-one had thought about this, including the Australia Council and the user companies. According to industrial law in Australia, once you have finished your employment, entitlements finish. There had to be a special arrangement with the Commission which became part of the award negotiation. We succeeded in all of those problems. What remained was for the Australia Council to release the purse; a problem for VACT. We could do nothing about that but were ready to undertake continued management. However, the Melbourne musicians, although a majority had voted to transfer, all agreed if that fell through, they wanted to continue with the Trust and thanked me for that offer.

The agreement the Trust had with the VACT was probably enough to put pressure, along with union and award conditions, on the Australia Council to guarantee the money. We had no

17 *The Prices and Incomes Accord* in 1983 was an agreement between the Australian Council of Trade Unions and the Australian Labor Party Government whereby unions agreed to restrict wage demands and the government pledged to minimize inflation.

further involvement on the money side but it did go smoothly at the end of the day. Until people sign on the dotted line, particularly in industrial issues, no matter what you say can be changed and if you get the wrong people you do not know it is going to change until you get before the Commission and then suddenly it comes out left of field. This was the strength of John Bates: his word was trusted. It was hard to get him to give his word – he would often say, 'I have a problem with that. I cannot agree to that now. There is a problem, nothing to do directly with it but something associated', and that would send us into another two months of negotiation. When he finally said 'Yes', the union was always happy. If we agreed with him then the union was happy because we were the only employers. In fact, the only respondent was the Trust, so from a legal point of view it was the Trust who had all the say. John had no right to go into the Commission unless we gave him that right because he was not a respondent to the award as they did not have employees. The ball was in our court and if we had positive outcomes acceptable to the Commission, then we had an agreement.

There were many issues, little hiccoughs, toward the transfer, so the process took time. Once we came to the understanding we were transferring, it happened. Whatever stood in the way we had to remove and as long as the union saw consolidation they could not do anything about it.

Sydney Opera House Trust

In July 1986 the Sydney Opera House Trust met with the Elizabethan Sydney Orchestra Committee to consider the possibility of taking over the management of the orchestra. There was also a meeting arranged between the orchestra and Dr Richard Letts[18], Director of the Music Board, Australia Council. The Trust had not been informed, I found out by chance. The Opera House might have been a good manager but the idea did not go further. At this time the transfer of the Melbourne Orchestra was well advanced and *The Tribe Report* had recommended the Sydney Orchestra transfer to the Australian Opera. While some players were keen, one of the big problems with the opera was over-rehearsing and punishing schedules. For example, on the same day as an opening night of a Verdi work, the orchestra rehearsed another work, followed by another opening night with rehearsals for another work in the repertoire during the day. Four works in two days was difficult. The orchestra was not malicious, it really tried, but this was unreasonable. The new award clarified rehearsal and opening night arrangements to limit this in the future. The Opera Company appeared to have no conscience about such schedules or delivering them at the eleventh hour, always with excuses such as conductors being delayed overseas. Possibly these were legitimate reasons, but *The Tribe Report* noted the orchestra had no room to negotiate.

18 Dr Richard Letts, AM, born Sydney 1935, is founder and Director of the Music Trust, founder and former Executive Director of the Music Council of Australia and Past President of the International Music Council. **http://musictrust.com.au/**

The musicians were not convinced things would change and knew the opera was against rostering. The Opera Company required one player continuously in the chair, so the first trumpet must always be present. That is possible with a symphony orchestra but working conditions in a pit are different, added to the pressures of an opera season; rehearsing and playing for weeks on end. As a principal you have pressure from the conductor, your peers and touring schedules. You need relief. There is a good argument for rostering but the opera was not prepared to listen and there was no forum to discuss it. The players could see the Melbourne transfer going ahead with an independent management in VACT. Perhaps they thought the Sydney Opera House Trust could do the same. The shame of that issue is they did not feel they could come to the Trust management and discuss the notion of a transfer to the Opera House.

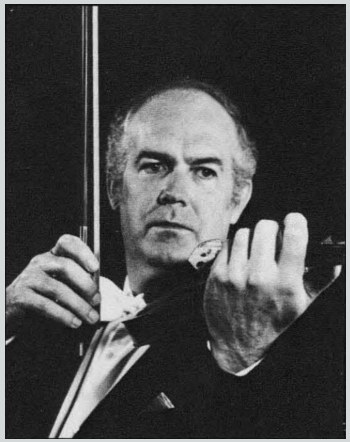
There was little faith in the Trust, they believed they were on their own. At the same time the Trust was not happy when musicians went directly to the Australia Council over issues. I made recommendations to the Sydney Opera House Trust to improve the Opera Theatre pit. I had come up with some acoustic views arising from experience in the studio industry and underpinned with objective approaches, including having them checked by an authorized acoustician appointed by the Opera House. Without my knowledge, whilst I was advocating this, challenging enough in itself, the orchestra I represented sent a letter negating some of the things I was saying. They may have known better but never took the opportunity to put these on the table and discuss them with the view of presenting a united approach. That kind of responsible management was not achievable with the Sydney group. The Melbourne group facilitated success with the award because we did it together.

By October 1986, the Trust's response to the transfer of the orchestras, as recommended in *The Tribe Report*, was back in the Australia Council's court to work out the process. The Trust had no response from the Australia Council by December 1986 and I arranged a meeting with Richard Letts to ascertain the situation, particularly for planning and scheduling for 1987. He was very committed and believed in the transfer for musical reasons, which I respected, although I disagreed. He may not have understood what was going on in the minds of 120 odd players in Melbourne and Sydney or the reality of the way the user companies provided information to the orchestras. One reason for requesting a meeting was to air the issues of programming and advance scheduling.

When I arrived at the Trust in early 1986, I was horrified to find the Ballet Company had not given us repertoire or rehearsal dates for the year. It was February and they had a mid-year season in Sydney. Usually the ballet came in a week or two before the opera finished and there would be a double-up. The issue was to make sure we did not go over the call quota, otherwise players would be in overtime whilst rehearsing a ballet or clashing with opera calls. Three call days were just not possible. We needed information and it was not forthcoming.

The Opera Company was better at advising next year's repertoire, but that was about as much as you got; rehearsal times and with whom was not forthcoming until the eleventh hour. There was no reason, as both companies had to plan well in advance to get soloists; they had to book ahead two years' minimum, maybe three or four, to get some singers and dancers, which meant they had planned the program. They also knew, if they were doing *Der Rosenkavalier* with Edward Downes, he would want at least ten rehearsals. They would be budgeting ten to fifteen rehearsals, depending on the conductor and his availability. That would have helped. I met Noel Pelly[19], the Ballet administrator after Peter Bahen, and David Agler, principal conductor for the Opera. Both were understanding and genuinely concerned. Noel gave me assurance they would look into advance scheduling and give at least one year's notice but did not know when this could happen. David Agler argued they needed flexibility because of last minute cast and other changes. I understood, but advance notice was integral to the success of the orchestras' annual planning. In the end he agreed it could be done. I almost had acceptance that we would get notice but no direction. I considered the Australia Council needed to be aware of the issue and look at grant conditions.

After more discussion with David and Noel they agreed. By the end of 1986 I had next year's schedule in advance for the first time ever! That was a mark that went on the wall. We were able to plan properly and for the first time could address the issue of rostering, previously affected by schedule changes. Players would make plans on the schedule to be away and could not be blamed for schedule changes. We had to be dealing fairly if we were to ask for these things, so for the first time we were in a position to insist on having rostering established in advance and having it adhered to, subject to illness. In terms of willing to work and willing not to work, we could get that out in the open and take it to the user company informally. I would advise a certain player would be unavailable and check if this presented problems. We no longer had to face criticism, such as Dame Peggy van Praagh's oboe player issue, and had the opportunity to deal with objections on both sides in advance. For the first time we were in a position to manage, a great step forward.


Ronald Thomas

Ronald Thomas, Artistic Director, Sydney Orchestra

Ronald Thomas was appointed artistic director of the Sydney Orchestra effective from November 20th 1986. Finding a way to solve the absence of artistic direction had been on my list for some time. It was very difficult because the profile of the job was not high. This is not to blame the orchestra, but its status in the community was virtually nil and we tried to improve that with concerts. Early on, I knew what we were looking for but had to be realistic. You could not expect

19 Noel Pelly (1926-2003), Arts Administrator, trained as a lawyer. His association with the Australian Ballet spanned the company's first 40 years—as publicist with the AETT in 1961, then with the company from 1966, administrator from 1983 to 1991 and Board member 1995 to 2000.

someone like Sir Charles Mackerras[20] to take the job with his other international commitments. He was the kind of person needed but was out of our league. I knew the artistic director must have a high profile in the Australian and international music scene, be a non-opera conductor to avoid conflicts of interest and maintain the impartiality of our management of the orchestra. The Trust management would have to negotiate for its artistic director to conduct an opera occasionally as director of the orchestra, not the opera. The artistic director's conditions of employment must have a clause preventing him from negotiating employment with user companies. To achieve the high profile necessary, he must maintain his involvement as an active artist and his hours of work with the Trust must be structured accordingly to allow this. Ronald was a major, recognized, musician/soloist, experienced in leading orchestras. The job had been sitting on the books for a long time but no-one had come forward. I approached him and he accepted. I thought someone like Ron would not get bored or disengaged like Bill Reid had become because he did not have the hands-on opportunity to work with them. Ronald had other interests which kept him going musically but he was available. We wanted guidance. His experience of guiding musicians through problems and developing high standards, would be useful. I had experienced him as a leader and how he brought rehearsals together to a very high standard, with his techniques of playing and musical communication.

Although when Ronald was appointed there were press articles about attempts to get the orchestra out of the pit and the problems of the Opera House pit, Andrew McKinnon, the Trust's publicist, was realistic about what would interest the media. Without a profile, the orchestra story was difficult to 'sell'. The media needed special hounding for which we had no resources, so brochures were the main method of promotion. Ronald was a high-profile international soloist coming into a job *The Tribe Report* had made public. So that was a story of interest but there was nothing contentious about the orchestra's concerts. I found it very difficult to get any profile for the orchestra in the public domain. The orchestra took umbrage at my appointment of Ronald, rejecting it on July 23rd 1987 at a meeting with myself and Kathleen Norris. They listed concerns critical of just about everything he was trying to do, including, 'The ballet music for *Swan Lake* was seen as a major let-down of the orchestra in that Mr Thomas had promised more readable music parts. [He] had failed to follow through and advise the orchestra of a result.' It was really quite small stuff but for them it was important because they had a lot of trouble with the quality of music from the Ballet Company and it was the artistic director's role to seek good, workable, parts. 'Mr Thomas had not upgraded the standard of dress as he had undertaken to do.' An artistic director had to deal with that by talking about visual image matching musical image. 'The expected outside concerts have not eventuated nor had there been any feedback.'

20 Sir Charles Mackerras, AC, CH, CBE (1925-2010), Australian conductor, authority on operas of Janacek and Mozart and Gilbert & Sullivan. Was the first Australian chief conductor of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra and had long associations with English National Opera and Welsh National Opera.

Ronald was not a good communicator with the orchestra but they were prepared to be scathingly critical without any discussion. It was *fait accompli* as far as they were concerned. They considered he was unavailable because he was too busy with the Sydney String Quartet. They thought they should have someone available whenever they needed him. They also did not understand the user companies not wanting anyone to control the orchestras. The Opera Company was on record saying they had their own musical director who would influence the orchestra, which meant if a decision arose favouring the orchestra in a concert rather than favouring the Opera in an opera, it was certainly going to go opera's way and the whole notion of building orchestra confidence in public and giving opportunities outside opera would disappear. These were constant issues of concern. I wished they had brought the issues to the table long before.

We had to let Ronald go after this vote of no confidence. There was no point in trying to dissuade them because I was flying in the face of *The Tribe Report* and the Opera's situation where they did not want an independent and they were the major user and influence. The Ballet appeared not to care as long as there was an orchestra in the pit but the Opera wanted to mould it to the sound they were comfortable with. I was facing a long negotiation with the Musicians' Union to improve conditions and to strengthen our management position so if the orchestra transferred, it would do so with strong management in place. There were other more important things and we had been without a music director for ten years. It was not a desirable thing to do but it was not high on the agenda. If the orchestra had not have been transferring, the most important thing would have been to find a satisfactory musical director.

Much time had been spent on cleaning up the management and we had achieved most of that by the end of 1986. We had a line of reporting, open communication with everyone, and had achieved most of Tribe's recommendations. We had come to the view that the deciding factor for future stability would rest on the industrial agreement. The VACT had been advocating all along that we must address the industrial issues on transfer. There was no question of a new award at that stage. It had been evolving but there had been many discussions in Victoria about conditions in the award, all related to things like rostering and entitlements; what could be consolidated as a right, dismissal for inappropriate playing, too many calls, access to communication with the user companies, scheduling. If put into an award, they would be binding and contractual. We had willing people prepared to agree to reasonable conditions in the Ballet and Opera, but were concerned as to the future if those people changed and others decided to act differently. There was also the aspect of transferring rights and making sure they were protected by industrial agreement because we had to dismiss them on 31st December and the Victorian Arts Centre Trust had to employ them on 1st January, but there were issues. We addressed these on an

industrial level and had agreements with the union but it had not reached the Commission or come into the awards as yet. There were still the logistics of getting it into the award and VACT realized this was going to take some time.

We did not finish the award for another eighteen months. So the focus for me was industrial issues and progressing the award. I wanted to involve Sydney musicians in discussions but they were not forthcoming or very interested. We had some meetings in Melbourne where the Sydney representative began to see how far we had gone with these issues, similar to those the Sydney Orchestra would have to address and be concerned about. While they began to see what was necessary, I was working in isolation from the orchestra.

The Melbourne Orchestra Becomes the State Orchestra of Victoria

The Melbourne Orchestra transfer was completed by the end of 1986 and from January 1st 1987 they were managed by VACT. The orchestra was renamed the State Orchestra of Victoria. Right up until the time of transfer many little things had not been discussed. The big things were in place: the award was underway, also where they would go, but there were many imagined issues and fears about the new management's expectations including touring. Many were personal worries, so when they had the opportunity to talk in confidence to the administrator one-on-one, things came out that would never have emerged through the committee. It was necessary to reassure the players and when they were all wrapped up and finished, it was an orchestra that felt it had control of its future and players knew where they were going. It made the transfer of the Melbourne Orchestra much smoother than in Sydney. Right up until the end there was a strong anti-Trust campaign from the Sydney Orchestra. The Melbourne Orchestra was the opposite. At the eleventh hour of transfer, the Melbourne Orchestra got together and thanked the Trust for all they had done and wished the Trust well. They were genuinely thankful but that did not happen in Sydney.

At the same time, the Trust was resisting the handing over of the Sydney Orchestra to a user. One of the issues it felt important was to do with the possible enlargement of the Opera Theatre pit. The orchestra was on holiday, with rehearsals commencing on 29th December 1986 for the summer season of opera. There were five players on sick leave with stress related illnesses, a big issue. There was also an increasing problem necessitating an investigation by the management into the question of Repetitive Strain Injury (RSI). By the end of 1986 the Trust had experienced a disastrous trading year, losing nearly $2 million (all its assets) and there was a general downturn in box office sales. The Trust was only receiving a small fraction of its revenue, 7%, from state and federal governments because the orchestras were supported separately through earmarked funds. The Australia Council had put constraints and conditions on the Trust to ensure grants were

used specifically for the orchestras. Although the orchestras' grant was not always adequate, it was not threatened. Transfer did not threaten the grant; it would go with whoever was managing.

In January 1987, the Russian violinist, George Ermolenko, who had sought asylum in Australia in the mid-1970s, was appointed Sydney Orchestra concertmaster. There had been trouble filling that position, and others, for some time. There was a mixed reception to Ermolenko and one could never quite work out whether they were personal or artistic or probably both. He enjoyed massive support from some members and complete opposition from others. He functioned well as a leader and player, but his communication may have been a problem. This was probably an artistic issue and I was careful not to go down any artistic paths and give opinions. I did not get involved in artistic decisions. I chaired the audition panel but had no voting right. I had my hands full with growing health problems faced by the musicians and in early 1987 a health and safety officer was elected by the orchestra.

Sydney Opera House Conditions/RSI

There were concerns including the Opera House air-conditioning and Opera Theatre pit. I met with the Sydney Opera House, Opera Australia and the Trust to initiate an in-depth investigation into the general working environment, undertaken by the Occupational Health Department of the Royal South Sydney Hospital. There was a hearing study as well. Band aid attempts to make the pit manageable and useable were creating more problems than they were solving. The orchestra began putting screens in front of instruments and whilst that might be comfortable for the person sitting in front of a trombone player, the trombonist playing into that screen was getting a first reflection back at loud volume and high sound pressure level. The potential for damaging ears over a long period, even though it would not be noticeable in the short term, was quite high. This was a problem to be addressed and nipped in the bud. I had discussed issues informally with some auditory experts and wanted the musicians to run tests with them so they could understand what acoustic adjustments might be made to the pit. The musicians were complaining about chairs they were sitting on and back problems, and there were Repetitive Strain Injuries (RSI) developing.

No matter how good a player you are, you can be affected by stress if you are not sitting properly. Maurice Stead and Gordon Bennett, two leaders, had serious RSI problems. Gordon was under a workers' compensation guidance program and we had worked out a program of taking him off seasons completely so he could return when a strong leader was needed. He was still able to play but had to be carefully used. Maurice Stead had RSI late in his career with the Melbourne Orchestra. It had become worse and although he was no longer playing with the Trust, it affected him and he needed to seek compensation under the *Workers' Compensation Act*. It took many

years to go through the court with test after test but that was the first that came to mind and I had concern for him. It was clear there was a growing RSI problem which would get out of control and affect the orchestra in the long term if we did not take steps. It is always difficult to distinguish what is a genuine claim, because some people believe they have RSI but it is just strain, and with rest will be okay, but we had to go through the process of finding out, not ignoring it and dealing with it. In those days industrial health was not the issue it became. The other thing was the ergonomics of the seats. It was clear we had to do something about the seats people sat on for long periods of time. Bad enough acoustically in the pit but if seats caused problems in the lower back, there will be problems, which was partly Gordon's RSI problem. His lower back caused RSI in the arm and shoulder. All of those things are solvable if the right steps are taken, and given the respite needed, but we had to have a policy. It had to be administrated by someone artistic who could say a player could not play anymore because their playing was affecting the music. That is an artistic decision to follow up on a medical decision. We did not have anyone to take that position.

The Carl Pini Quartet—Carl Pini, Gordon Bennett, Barbara Wooley and John Gould.

Also important was rostering, at a time where it could be used to give respite to people suffering from RSI, other injuries or serious ailments like seating postures. The other issue was not enough available extra and casual players to provide relief to those who needed it or to bring the orchestral establishment up to a requirement to satisfy opera, maintain and improve standards. The bottom line was money. You could not attract players of higher calibre without offering good fees, so there needed to be efforts made to do that. This was not the orchestra's job and the Australia Council was not funding the Trust to do it. As far as changing the pit itself, that has been a constant issue since the Opera House opened and was not something the orchestra management could do anything about. The Opera House had taken it on notice and was attempting to do something. By the end of 1987 we succeeded in communicating effectively with the Opera House so the matter was clearly on the table.

Trust Industrial Relations Officer

In 1986, concurrently with my role as Administrator of the orchestras, I became the Trust Industrial Relations Officer with responsibility for the negotiation and maintenance of three federal industrial awards covering Trust employees. This began with the orchestras. Once I had talked with John Bates and understood our legal position, Kathleen wanted us to take the upper hand in these negotiations. She considered I should look after industrial relations for everything, so suddenly my job description grew. It mostly related to the musicians with a few matters related to theatre stage crews. We did not have many employees and Bill Parlour was involved as the Trust's industrial representative. There was not much to do except for the musicians with whom I was already negotiating the transfer and I had my finger on the pulse of what was needed.

It was a difficult time personally. My marriage to Carole McPhee had ended and I was disappointed with this circumstance, but one cannot point any blame: both sides are involved when a marriage disintegrates. It is a unit but it did not work as such. I was upset, particularly since I had such respect for the person professionally. My mother had died in the early 1980s, affecting how I viewed the future. I was moving through a phase of not playing, which was also a problem. I had come back from a very vibrant musical activity and slowly like a wedge it had diminished until I went to the Trust and was not playing at all. I got a job playing on Friday/Saturday nights at Manly Leagues' Club for about a year during those first few years at the Trust. It took my mind off work issues and did not impinge on the job hours. But it was a reminder that if I stopped playing I would lose something important since there was no person in my life to focus my personal activity. My solution was to work more hours.

There was plenty of work to do rather than going home to an empty house. It was a constant reminder that I was not playing anymore and was unlikely to play again. That problem remained until I started legal studies, which came about because I needed to make life more interesting and perhaps change direction. I felt I was doing a good job—only history will tell—but it was gruelling and no-one thanks you at the end of the day. All the people in Melbourne were grateful for what I managed to do. In Sydney there was only one person in the entire orchestra who sent me a thank you note for the work done on the award and guaranteeing continuation of employment; one out of sixty-seven people. We fixed those problems and the management, and at the time of transfer both Melbourne and Sydney had very efficient managements. Although the new people in Sydney did not keep that management, it was there and the orchestra transferred with a schedule in advance; they had rostering under control and both the Opera and the orchestra were happy with the rostering outcome. We had achieved a lot but there was flack all the time, particularly from the orchestra, criticizing the Trust management, meaning me, over silly things not properly thought through. I never responded; I took the view it was not worth

arguing about and would not descend to that level. At the end of the day, after nearly four years, I wanted to say 'enough.' I do not mind thinking about it now because I have mellowed a bit.

The Sydney Orchestra

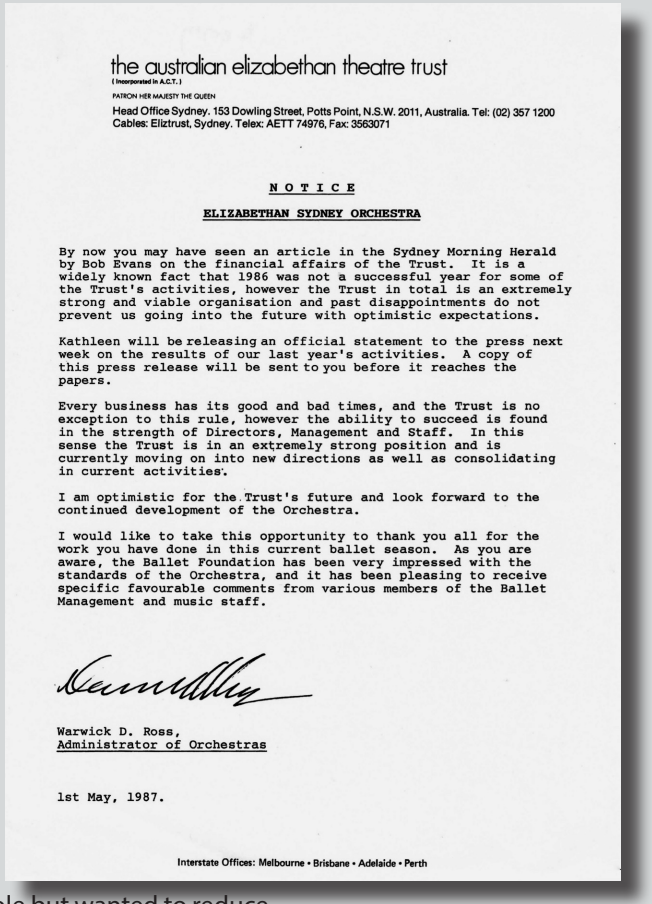
In January 1987 the Sydney Orchestra came back from holidays, met and voted to support the Trust as its future manager. The vote was forty-one to the Trust, transfer to the Opera Company fifteen and eight informal votes or abstentions. The orchestra wrote to Richard Letts asking the Australia Council to recognize its feeling on the matter of transfer given that the Musicians' Union and the Australian Ballet supported this view and morale was generally good. We were waiting for the Australia Council's next move. The Trust Board was concerned with the financial consequences of losing the Sydney Orchestra. No-one wanted it to go, particularly because it was the basis of Australia Council funding to the Trust. I had no communication with the directors, only attending one or two board meetings at the CEO's request to observe and clarify issues needing some expert view. I was aware of the problem the Trust was facing if the Sydney Orchestra transferred and the problem fiscally of effecting that transfer. There were cash flow problems and the need to have clarification well in advance of the next year's commitment. The Australia Council only ever gave us about three months' notice for the following year. That was a real problem, almost as bad as the user companies not supplying annual schedules.

There were still many matters up in the air needing to be resolved as the Melbourne Orchestra settled in with its new management. The Sydney Orchestra objected quite vocally to the possibility of transferring to the Opera Company. The Australian Ballet felt it would threaten access to the orchestra and even those musicians who wanted to be governed by the Opera, still feared the company would take advantage with over-rehearsing and poor scheduling, affecting their rostering right which was being examined and put on an equitable basis. While there was some progress through the Trust, I think the musicians still wanted to go to another entity. Financially that posed a problem as the Trust had bankrolled a shortfall of about $70,000, never recouped from the Australia Council. The Trust had solved this initial shortfall problem by retrenching a couple of positions; subsequently reinstated when more money came from the Australia Council. There was a surplus the Trust had built up for contingencies and there was a question mark on how that would be spent or disbursed to the new managers, if at all. These were the issues occupying the Chief Executive Officer and Directors, substantial enough, considering the financial position of the Trust following the CEO initiated entrepreneurial activities which had failed. There were serious financial concerns which I was not directly involved in, although they would impact on effective transfer.

Financial Pressures

The Trust had developed an association with the Chalwin Estate, having presented concerts at Vivian Chalwin's house at Beauty Point on Sydney Harbour in the late 1960s. Chalwin, a great music lover, died in 1980, leaving an unworkable will, which promised money to the Trust to continue musical initiatives he had started. It was to prove a complicated and long-winded saga. The Trust was dealing also with tax deductible donations for arts organizations with changes in relation to the Income Tax Assessment Act.

The Trust had financial difficulty, struggling with the failure of *Lennon*, which lost over $1 million in a single week. In March 1987, the Trust resolved to sell the Dowling Street property. There was a lot of press coverage about the Trust having a bad time. I put out a notice to the Sydney Orchestra on 1st May 1987 following Bob Evans' article in the *Sydney Morning Herald* on the financial affairs of the Trust. It was widely known that 1986 was an unsuccessful year but I wanted to assure the musicians that the Trust was strong and viable, and past disappointments should not prevent us going forward optimistically. I wanted to encourage, thank them and get through without panic, especially to ensure we did not lose good players. There will always be speculative and subjective views that take over and become real, a bit like Chinese whispers. An orchestra without clear direction or access to proper information is prone to that. Things have changed now with the improvement in communication through electronic access. I hoped to help them understand their future was not in jeopardy but this was difficult without an artistic policy and director. I could not take on that role but wanted to reduce uncertainty which would impact on the work. In May 1987, the Australia Council advised the Sydney Orchestra could stay with the Trust, having dropped the idea of it transferring. A review period of three years was proposed, with the requirement of six monthly reports on progress. The reality was that the Trust had responded to the Tribe recommendations. We analyzed whether the Trust would contest the findings and decided against it. It was not worth causing more turmoil, so we were working toward a successful outcome. I doubt the Australia Council could have done anything but support our moving in the right direction, maybe not what everyone wanted but a good direction to be moving in. We managed to improve our relationship with the Sydney Orchestra. There had been attempts at better communication and while people were a bit slow



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N O T I C E

ELIZABETHAN SYDNEY ORCHESTRA

By now you may have seen an article in the Sydney Morning Herald by Bob Evans on the financial affairs of the Trust. It is a widely known fact that 1986 was not a successful year for some of the Trust's activities, however the Trust in total is an extremely strong and viable organisation and past disappointments do not prevent us going into the future with optimistic expectations.

Kathleen will be releasing an official statement to the press next week on the results of our last year's activities. A copy of this press release will be sent to you before it reaches the papers.

Every business has its good and bad times, and the Trust is no exception to this rule, however the ability to succeed is found in the strength of Directors, Management and Staff. In this sense the Trust is in an extremely strong position and is currently moving on into new directions as well as consolidating in current activities.

I am optimistic for the Trust's future and look forward to the continued development of the Orchestra.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you all for the work you have done in this current ballet season. As you are aware, the Ballet Foundation has been very impressed with the standards of the Orchestra, and it has been pleasing to receive specific favourable comments from various members of the Ballet Management and music staff.

Warwick D. Ross,
Administrator of Orchestras

1st May, 1987.

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to take it up, the mechanism was there, and it was only a matter of time and perseverance before we got to a point where the orchestra would transfer to whatever manager it was going to have. There were still problems that abounded outside of transfer and the next task was to stabilize the Sydney Orchestra and work out its artistic directorship.

There was a successful Opera House *Mostly Mozart* concert on 5th January 1987 before the summer opera season, and performances in the Domain and Parramatta Park as I began to try to find supplementary sources of income. There were already problems of workload but these sources of income would be events outside the pit in a different environment, so might be psychologically acceptable. We had some rostering capacity so it seemed possible for players to come out of the orchestra without affecting user companies' needs and make a little bit of extra money. *The Melba* recordings provided extra money and soon after we achieved wage parity. So we started to rectify financial disadvantage for players. Having extra work meant I could attract people like Robert Ingram and others to work alongside Trust musicians and develop understanding and awareness of players in the field who could join the Trust Orchestra on a casual basis when need arose. There were plenty of good musicians available but they needed constant work to stop them disappearing overseas or to other states in search of work. Anyone, if they did not have a family and roots in Sydney, would go to an area where there was more work. I did not want some of those players to go, so I set up Australian Orchestral Enterprises, which had nothing to do with the Sydney or Melbourne Orchestras, which would fund itself from a series of concerts. In 1987 we presented a substantial number of events; profitable financially, providing work for up to sixty musicians and some commercial musical activity to help the Trust.

David Helfgott at the Sydney Town Hall

Partly to celebrate the twentieth birthday of the Sydney Orchestra (which began on 8th May 1967), we presented a Sydney Town Hall concert on 25th May 1987 with a celebratory reception in the *Carvery* afterwards. Pianist David Helfgott[21] was the soloist, John Hopkins, director of the Sydney Conservatorium of Music, was the conductor. We needed something to really lift the Orchestra's game and public profile. The Town Hall was traditionally the main venue for concerts. I wanted to attract a new audience for the Orchestra. David Helfgott had given a fantastic solo recital at Scots College, Sydney, in 1986. Although always eccentric, having experienced early mental problems, he had recovered sufficiently in the mid-1980s and musically he had delivered a fantastic performance. I made contact with Gillian, his wife. This would be his first concert with an orchestra since his recovery. The Orchestra needed to be approached carefully. John Hopkins

21 David Helfgott (born 1947-), Australian concert pianist whose story inspired the film *Shine* starring Geoffrey Rush.
John Raymond Hopkins AM OBE (1927-2013), British born Australian conductor and administrator. Moved to Australia in 1963. Was Federal Director of Music, ABC, 1963-1973, Dean, School of Music, Victorian College of the Arts, 1973-1986 and Director of Sydney Conservatorium of Music, 1986-1991.

David Helfgott (*seated*) with Ronald Thomas, Artistic Director , Elizabethan Sydney Orchestra and John Hopkins, conductor.

had a very good reputation, deservedly so, with a wide repertoire and proven experience beginning with the BBC in England. He could learn something overnight and conduct it the next day, including ballet, opera, symphony, chamber music. Musicians will always make comments about conductors but John was well respected in the musical community. The issue was whether he and David could work together. Gillian, who was looking after David literally and physically, was great. David would focus briefly before running around accosting people in an affable way; just being David is the only way to describe it. Gillian kept him on track, so it seemed as though we could proceed. Wanting to show off David's capacities as well as giving the Orchestra

The Elizabethan Sydney Orchestra, Conductor John Hopkins, Pianist David Helfgott in concert at the Sydney Town Hall 25 May 1987.

an enjoyable challenge, we suggested two popular and substantial piano works, one in each half. That way the audience would see two aspects of David. Tchaikovsky's *Concerto No.1* would be the substantial work, and David was very happy to play Rachmaninov's popular *Variations on a Theme of Paganini*, although it was a huge workload. John suggested eight folk songs, written for orchestra, by Anatoly Lyadov. It became an all-Russian program and we did Glinka's Overture from *Ruslan and Lyudmila*.

Recording the Concert

This was a big opportunity for the orchestra. I felt they would rise to it if someone like John led and guided them properly. The energy David brings to the piano cannot be disputed. The moment he walks into the room, it is full of energy. I had come across **Michael Stavrou**, a very unusual recording engineer, who planned the mixing techniques and oversaw the *Melba* series recording which I produced. For the studio recording, Yvonne Kenny, singing the role of Melba, was positioned high on a dais above the top of the Orchestra. Michael wanted a particular effect from her sound and did something quite amazing. He blew a sheet like a sail and put it behind her and then a mic in front of her so as to get the reflection from the sheet back into the same mic to enhance the sound. Mike was well known for doing such things, albeit somewhat eccentrically. We had an eccentric pianist, so why not an eccentric engineer to record this concert? I had my own equipment, a collection of historic microphones, including an old valve microphone which was the first microphone *Neumann* made. It is a U47 run off a valve system, designed and built for a big, wide orchestra.

With my microphones and Mike's flexibility and imagination, we had the capacity to make something quite different about this sound. The mic sat in the middle of the wind section; the only microphone we had there. We recorded everything; wind, brass, percussion, through that microphone. For the strings, we had clusters of KM84s, small diaphragm microphones for high end. We had little clusters of three, tied together with a bit of tape, slung over the top of the cello, violin and viola sections. That in itself was different, quite unique. Digital recording had just come

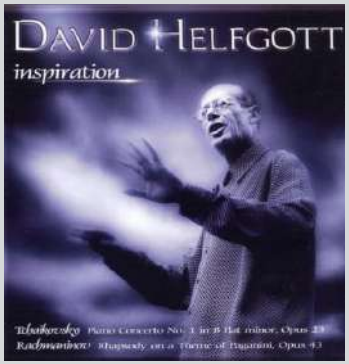
in; 1985 was the year Compact Discs first came out commercially. *Dire Straits* in England had released their first CD. This new process with fantastic sound coming from digital recordings had set the audio world on its heels. Mike Stavrou was on top of this: while everyone else was doing analogue, Mike did it with two F1s which were like VHS tapes used in early videos. They were recorded on that in digital format.

My aim was to make this recording experience different as a positive advance for the orchestra, as the Trust's first stereo recording in Australia by *Columbia* of *Lola Montez*[22] had been in 1958. Here was another first and a great project for the orchestra if done well and promoted in the wider sphere. Mike had been in London and was a protégé of George Martin, the Beatles' producer. Martin started Air Studios in London and Mike was the house studio recordist for about ten years, recording every pop singer including Cilla Black. He was also the key engineer for an offshore studio. He specialized in recording orchestras with several award-winning recordings of the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. He subsequently made a recording with Yvonne Kenny and the Australian Chamber Orchestra. He was more than just an eccentric engineer; he was experienced with orchestral sound and knew how to capture it. He was also innovative applying new technologies and invented a digital mixing console, a completely different concept to any other, and successful all over the world. As producer, I knew this would be a good relationship: Mike, the orchestra and David Helfgott. We used my microphones to give a unique sound. No-one had been using those sort of microphones for a long time; the ABC used them when they first came out. Everyone was moving into digital and there were pros and cons to this approach. In this particular instance one microphone, which recorded the majority of the orchestra, created a warm, beautiful sound which you do not get nowadays.

We did some minimum publicity through Andrew McKinnon. He had something to work on with David and got the message out to the media. He arranged for David to appear on television that day. I think it was Ray Martin's evening show at 6pm. The concert was at 8pm but David agreed (most performers would not), to appear on TV beforehand. He behaved as he normally behaves, catching the imagination of everyone watching. He played stunningly. We had sold the concert reasonably well and were looking for a healthy, maybe half full, house, the capacity being about 1900. We were not opening the section behind the orchestra or some of the upper stalls. At 7.45pm David was ready when front of house advised they could not get everyone in. There was a queue to buy tickets down to the Regent Theatre, a block away. They were selling tickets as fast as they could. Some latecomers had to sit behind the stage for this successful, sold-out concert, a great thing for the orchestra.

22 **This is a link to a sound file**, narrated by Antony Jeffrey, from a CD collection produced by Warwick Ross for the Trust's 50th anniversary in 2004. There are some details of the origins of the production of *Lola Montez* which was directed by George Carden, with Musical Direction by Leo Packer, together with the hit song, 'Be My Saturday Girl' sung by Eric Thornton and Jane Martin, from the original cast recording.

Immediately afterwards, we were 'breaking down' the audio material and doing post-production notes knowing Mike had captured a good recording. The aftermath was interesting: at the outset of rehearsals the orchestra was not altogether positive about this concert or convinced they should be working with someone like Helfgott. This was not the unanimous view but there were players who approached the concert lacking positivity. This was where John Hopkins did such a good job: when he got them playing at the final rehearsal, he made them committed to the music and some even said they had not thought it would be so good. Mike and I did post-editing on the tapes in the recording studio. David had missed some notes in three or four bars in the first movement of the Tchaikovsky, so he re-recorded these in Billy Hyde's studio in the basement of the Trust Dowling Street building. We mixed these into the original soundtrack so we could supplement the gaps of sound with these notes and it worked. We worked on this at *EMI*'s mixing studios, running it time and time again to get the sequences right. It was a difficult edit, not so much of putting the notes in, but making them sound the same because he had played the concert on a *Bosendorfer* Imperial Grand, and we had done the overdub on a *Yamaha* seven foot grand. With Mike's skill with equalization he managed to make the sound of those two or three notes match what was there. Someone was walking by at *EMI* and stopped to listen. We told him who was playing and he advised that *Sony* Music would be very interested.



Fast Forward 20 Years!

Twenty years later, in about 1999, the Helfgotts asked if the Trust still had the tape as they wished to publicly release a recording of the concert. By this time, the Trust did not have an orchestra and had been dormant for about a decade. I rang the chairman, Lloyd Waddy, and advised that if the tapes could be found in storage, the Trust could sell the copyright to the Helfgotts. This was done for $10,000; they were only interested in the two concerti (the rest we still have), and *Sony* produced and released a CD in London called *Inspiration* which marks Helfgott's return to the concert stage after his illness. Twenty years down the track, the Elizabethan Theatre Orchestra was enshrined in a very good recording.

The Elizabethan Philharmonic Orchestra

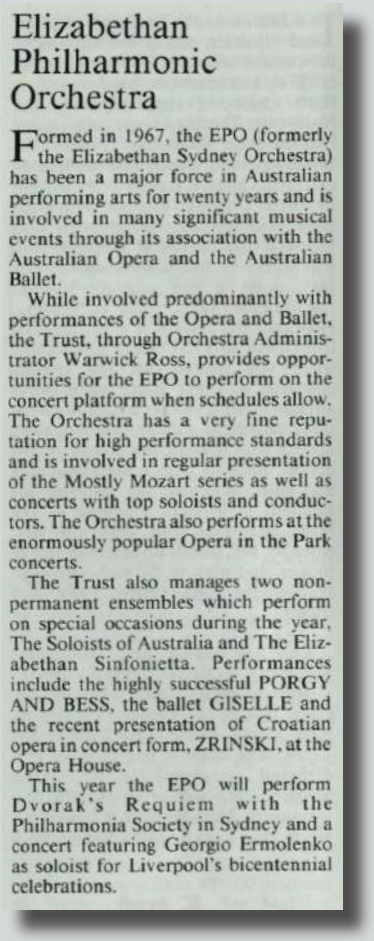
On 10th August 1987 the Trust Board agreed with the Orchestra Council's recommendation that the Sydney Orchestra be renamed the Elizabethan Philharmonic Orchestra effective from 5th November 1987, which coincided with an orchestral concert with Ronald Thomas in Brisbane. In September the orchestra advised the new name was not acceptable, all part of a breakdown in communication and lack of confidence in Ronald Thomas. At one of the moments when the

orchestra was free between opera and ballet, there was an opportunity to expose the orchestra to another audience. I talked to Diana Sharpe at the Opera House *Bennelong Program* for young people and offered the orchestra, conducted by Richard Gill[23], for a November 1987 *Babies' Prom*. It was tremendously successful. Young children sat on the floor with instruments spread out, very informal. Richard, in his usual manner, did a fine job communicating to that young age. It was a departure from standard work the musicians did in that same building every day, and for the first time they did not have to worry about the pit; we were out in one of the studios.

From this experience, I sought to develop an educational activity to give performances, locally and regionally, to schoolchildren in different age groups. We would present repertoire written for a children's audience such as Britten's *The Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra*, Prokofiev's *Peter and the Wolf*, Saint-Saëns' *The Carnival of the Animals*, Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition* and Mozart's *Piano Concerto No. 20* (the *Elvira Madigan* Theme); pieces that were identifiable and they would understand, with the object of getting them interested in classical music. These works all required skilled players. Although there were discussions with the Department of Education and we sought potential venues, it never proceeded. Again, it was an attempt to try and find work.

By late 1987 we did not have to worry about user agreements and relationships. The VACT did a reasonably good job of solving problems to wider benefit because such precedents flowed on to help the solution in Sydney as well. With David Agler, principal conductor for the Opera, the attitude had begun to change. There was less confrontation between the management of the orchestra and the Opera Company. Advance scheduling, including making sure the rehearsal requirements were reasonable and realistically practical, were treated as serious matters. Russell Mitchell, the Opera Company administrator, and David, took a serious, committed interest and attitude to helping solve problems and seeking answers towards a position where we could all work together. With the transfer of Melbourne and the new management, we had another arm to assist us and as we were both saying the same things, it was logical the opera and ballet would start listening. Noel Pelly, at the Ballet, was very open to hearing about problems, especially with conductors, that had been articulated by both orchestras for years, sometimes justifiably so. Those matters were now on the table for discussion.

We started to get things addressed and found we could reach mutual understanding on industrial matters. We did not need to go to the Commission as the Opera and Ballet companies had no legal or formal say, but we always sought it and involved them in discussions, making sure they were comfortable with, or would accept the rationale for, anything we did. Things were discussed properly and widely, well worked through and put before the Industrial Commission in an acceptable way and within the guidelines with no surprises. 1987 was a year of consolidation.



Elizabethan Philharmonic Orchestra

Formed in 1967, the EPO (formerly the Elizabethan Sydney Orchestra) has been a major force in Australian performing arts for twenty years and is involved in many significant musical events through its association with the Australian Opera and the Australian Ballet.

While involved predominantly with performances of the Opera and Ballet, the Trust, through Orchestra Administrator Warwick Ross, provides opportunities for the EPO to perform on the concert platform when schedules allow. The Orchestra has a very fine reputation for high performance standards and is involved in regular presentation of the Mostly Mozart series as well as concerts with top soloists and conductors. The Orchestra also performs at the enormously popular Opera in the Park concerts.

The Trust also manages two non-permanent ensembles which perform on special occasions during the year, The Soloists of Australia and The Elizabethan Sinfonietta. Performances include the highly successful PORGY AND BESS, the ballet GISELLE and the recent presentation of Croatian opera in concert form, ZRINSKI, at the Opera House.

This year the EPO will perform Dvorak's Requiem with the Philharmonia Society in Sydney and a concert featuring Georgio Ermolenko as soloist for Liverpool's bicentennial celebrations.

23 Richard Gill AO (1941-2018), conductor, teacher, leading advocate of music education. Has received many awards in recognition of his contribution to Australian music, including the Don Banks Music Award 2006, a MOST Achievement Award 2018, and an Arts Leadership Award 2018.

Even though the Melbourne transfer was complete and we no longer had formal responsibility, we were still working hand in hand with the new management. In effect, we were doing the same things we had been doing the previous year, although the VACT was taking responsibility and making decisions. When it came to the working operation of the orchestra, the conditions and players were bound by the award which we were amending, a process which continued until 1989. Although discussions began in 1986 it was not until 1987 that there was major action through the Commission to get a $30 increase under the Anomalies Conference to achieve a metal trades' catch-up and the rectification of the Australian Broadcasting parity shift. This was the first time we had opportunity to argue our case formally in the industrial forum and seek an outcome. We had consensus with the Musicians' Union. There was no real dispute, although there had to be a formal dispute to go before the Commission. Proceedings were slow and had to be formalized before the Commission. This was now all being run in Melbourne and involved a great deal of travelling for me.

Towards a New Award

John Bates would look at the existing Award, talk to the musicians and investigate their concerns. He would then contact me about what clauses merited changing. We began with meetings at the Victorian Arts Centre Trust, which initially I chaired until the Melbourne orchestra transferred. Subsequently, John chaired meetings and I was a guest along with two members from the Sydney Orchestra, who did not always turn up. There were several members of the Victorian Orchestra, a Victorian state government representative, an Australia Council delegate and either the union state or federal secretary or both. Around a big conference table issues were thrashed out right down to the nitty-gritty of rights that had been avoided or ignored or not brought in line with other similar rights in the ABC Orchestras. We had detailed conversations, generally finding a resolution. With agreement on issues, we would seek an amendment of the award. The union or John would create a dispute formally, a set of words to go into the award would be drafted. This needed care as we were in a difficult industrial situation.

It was a period of prices and wages accord where we could not exceed certain principles. We could only get movement if it fitted a guideline and then we could seek a hearing before a Commissioner; this process continued for three years. I addressed the Commission in October 1989 and remember my feelings of representing the orchestra rather than management. We had to ensure, on transfer to a new management, that employment entitlements remained; that musicians would not be disadvantaged because of a transfer. This was a critical issue. Most of the Sydney musicians were not aware of this although I knew at least one major opera conductor considered all the players should be let go. While not a serious possibility, it would have meant, at

the time of transfer, we would have given formal notice of finishing employment. Those people would lose entitlements and their job. It is irrelevant whether you think it was justified or not. The fact is they had an agreement enshrined in a legal document and covered by an award accepted by everyone and that should have been maintained although it did not actually appear in the award. I argued to Commissioner Fogarty that continuity of the musicians' employment should be deemed not to have been broken by reason of transmission. The transfer of employment to a new manager, even though the Trust was no longer legally responsible, it having complied with the notice conditions, would ensure continuity of employment and the transfer of long service leave and other benefits. We unanimously sought an informal conference with the Commissioner after the hearing to see the reaction and where that would go.

The outcome was that it went into the award. This took a lot of work and negotiation with the union to get to that point. I wrote to the Australia Council to say we would be seeking a term, in a legal sense, protecting the musicians' employment; a Tribe recommendation anyway, and that the best way would be through their industrial award. Three years it took to get that into the award. Whilst this was going on, I was under constant attack from members of the orchestra on a variety of matters and it began to affect me. By the end of 1989 I was worn out by a barrage of innuendo. Unfortunately, they were personal, often unspoken implications and inferences that my actions, and those of the Trust, caused all their problems. They considered there were people at the Trust who did not like the orchestra.

After three years of it, I was disheartened to say the least. When I walked out of that Commission, I felt we had just achieved something for those players that they knew nothing about, which would protect their livelihood on transfer, and in spite of the flack over many silly things which would be resolved on transfer anyway. There seemed to be no joy in my working day. I always sought 8.30am meetings with the orchestra manager to bring myself up to date with what was going on and rarely left the office before 7pm. I often did not leave till 11pm if there was a performance with the need to liaise with orchestral management afterwards. I often worked Saturdays because of performances, as it was useful to be present in case of a problem. Sunday was my only day off. Given what we achieved in that moment in 1989 after years of work on their behalf, I felt the musicians were very ungrateful. When I left the Trust in 1990, I confess I was pleased to turn my back on the whole thing and completely change direction.

Orchestral Enterprises* and *OZ Bop

However, during 1987 my primary focus was on the award; a full time job involving a lot of communication and travel to Melbourne, but I managed *Orchestral Enterprises*, organizing other activities apart from the classical orchestras. One of these was a big band created by Sydney

Oz Bop with Trish O'Connor.

jazz player, Dave Ellis, a colleague, friend and fellow double bassist. A reliable player, creative and very artistic. He made his living as a recording musician but was always interested in big sound orchestras. He put together a commercially driven band to play jazz/ cabaret music with a singer, Trish O'Connor. Most of the musicians were people he worked with in studios; all good players and some 'names' among them. He got together ten players; two trumpets, a trombone, two saxophones, guitar, bass, drums and Trish. He named the band *Oz Bop* (Oz was the attempt to make it Australian) and his idea was to do arrangements and maybe some new compositions. They had an exceptionally good arranger, saxophonist Don Reid. The sound of the band was sophisticated and up-to-date in terms of jazz, like those big bands in America of the last fifty years such as Count Basie. It was disciplined; they played well together and provided great entertainment.

The publicity launch for *Oz Bop* and the show, *That Swing Thing*, was presented on 14th April 1987 at the Regent Hotel. There was good press coverage and I hoped to sell *Oz Bop* around the traps as it was contracted to my department.

Hayman Island Resort

Kathleen Norris did a deal with *Ansett Airlines* for the band to open the Hayman Island Resort, in the Whitsundays, Queensland. This new Resort was beautifully set up; luxurious, five star. The facilities for the band were good, the room was much better than the average cabaret room on the mainland and streets ahead of the average RSL club. But there were no guests and the overheads for the band were very high. Dave was wearing those. We were not taking financial responsibility; he was doing it for a fee. It lasted a couple of weeks and had to be pulled, bringing about the demise of the band because the musicians had to find employment. It was an attempt at something really good and could have been excellent but circumstances and a lack of understanding of the venue conspired. The resort could not provide the audience. It was not until about a year later they managed to make Hayman Island work. Our role was to put in cabaret entertainment with the band as backing and Kathleen's idea was to bring in cabaret entertainers to do shows every weekend. It would have worked had there been an audience but on the island there were no passers-by; they have to come to the island and stay. There were not many guests. It was too early; wrong timing. Later, we went to look at the Country Music Festival in Tamworth as Kathleen thought she might do something with country music and wanted my views.

In mid-1987 my department was approached by the Victorian Arts Centre Trust to engage an orchestra for Australian Ballet performances in December, a season traditionally done by the Melbourne Orchestra, which was not available. I was contracted to provide an orchestra as a commercial activity. This was basically the Elizabethan Sinfonietta Players I had been building and involved about sixty freelance players. I negotiated with VACT as the employer on behalf of the Ballet, managed by Sue Nattrass. It was a full ballet orchestra and a good commercial opportunity for the Trust. Such things often came up when you least expected them. This is one of the reasons to keep a body of players on the 'books'. They were all booked at the eleventh hour and this can be stressful, but this freelance ensemble consisted of good players and had a high standard.

During 1986-87, the Trust accounts were computerized. Near the end of 1987, it was admitted the year had been one of extraordinary difficulty for Trust management. The origins of the problems from 1986 had forced a reactive position and senior management took the adverse results of that year very personally. There was a great deal of personal stress and disappointment

but also determination not to repeat it in 1988; the Entrepreneurial Department would take on only a few, non-risky, projects. The challenge for 1988 was to locate new premises and move. Sorting out if there would be any money from the Chalwin Estate continued for years with the hope that there could be a Chalwin Music Centre with two rehearsal rooms, including an orchestral sized one. When it did come, it was used much later for concert activity at the Independent Theatre.

The Trust accountant settled with the Australia Council how monies were disbursed but a grant condition meant orchestra funds were paid to a bank account other than the Trust's operational account. Rigorous and strong accounting requirements were applied; you could not hide a dollar anywhere. The Australia Council was working towards providing the Trust with funds for specified activities such as the Australian Content Department and orchestras, indicating the Trust had to find its running costs from elsewhere. By 1987 the Trust was receiving only $30,000 for overheads so the loss on entrepreneurial activities had a big impact. The Trust had managed to keep itself afloat with donations received from the general public under its tax deductibility status. Membership was quite high and a source of income. Unless the Trust provided a specific service to the orchestra, none of the grant went to the Trust. When I began other musical projects at the Trust, the Trust paid for these, so my aim was to make a profit and be self-funding, which was the case. The Elizabethan Philharmonic Orchestra had expressed concern over financial independence, based on the unfounded belief that the Trust had access to orchestra funds. They were also concerned about the Trust's uncertain future.

Theatre Proprietors and Entrepreneurs Association

By December 1987 the overdraft with the bank had increased to over $1.5 million. With the recognition that the future of the Trust was not as an entrepreneur, a big fundraising appeal was initiated to maintain other activities. Potential donors were invited to become founding members of the Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust donor fund. The Orchestras had limited possibilities for securing sponsorship and earning additional income, leaving a projected shortfall for 1988. One bright moment was my membership of the *Musicians' General Award* Subcommittee of the Theatre Proprietors and Entrepreneurs Association. This organization was very important as the peak body representing all arts companies. It was run by the astute William Parlour, a very good industrial advocate and overseer of arts industrial awards. By 1987 I was well and truly entrenched in negotiations with the unions over the *Opera Ballet Award* to the point where even Bill needed to be briefed when anything came up. I was on the ground and running with it along with John Bates. I was under the *Musicians' General Award* category and John was on the *Theatrical Employees and Managers' Awards* category. The object was to get people involved, especially in

the industrial area, who were active and working at the time, which was why I was invited to join. At that time Kathleen had not addressed this issue or taken any initiative to intervene in the status quo. Bill recognized the amount of work I was doing with John and that we should have a voice together in the association.

Kathleen Norris had always been very positive publicly about what she was doing for the Trust. I am not sure she understood there was a financial problem. Even with the loss on *Lennon* she was determined to move on and promote *Sugar Babies*. She was always looking for ways to solve the problem but she never recognized or articulated problems to us. She held regular weekly meetings with heads of department at which we submitted thorough, written reports on what we had done and the financial implications as well as success in relation to objectives. Reports were done the day before and discussed and questioned at the meeting. We usually came away thinking things would work out as everyone tried to make the best of projects. Kathleen did not address negative rumours, her style of management was to look for new things all the time.

Errol Chadwick, a management consultant, was brought in to look at Trust management and assess the situation. He reported to the Board in October 1987. He held 'a team effectiveness (management by objectives) meeting' with John Woodland (Entrepreneurial Manager), Mark Benvau (Trust finance control) and myself to define roles, agree on performance objectives, define appropriate structure for division heads and create a natural working team. He was very skilled at what he did, guiding and helping managements to focus on what they are supposed to do and not let peripherals get in the way. I do not think he understood the problems with the Elizabethan Sydney Orchestra, or the Elizabethan Philharmonic, as it was then. He was of the view that management was management and employees did what they were told within reason, otherwise they were dismissed. Management must manage in such a way that employees will do what they are told and that means negotiating industrially, talking to people and reaching workplace agreements. This approach was completely alien to the members of the orchestra in the Opera House pit. The commercial orchestra activity was no trouble at all. He set benchmarks, targets, objectives, realities, did SWOT analyses[24] on all projects to help reach a management decision, make sure it was funded and then do it. This was good advice which he took us through to help working together within the organization.

He proposed a structure for the CEO's team with a Performing Arts Subsidized Department that I would head, to include Australian Content, Theatre of the Deaf and the orchestra, John Woodland would head Performing Arts Unsubsidized and the other departments were finance, marketing, including fundraising, membership, educational lobbying, and business activities, hires, costumes, supply and *Halftix*. He wanted all senior managers to have appropriate understanding

24 SWOT - Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats.

of each other's responsibilities and commitment to Trust objectives. I was very interested in the Theatre of the Deaf and saw some of their schools' performances. In implementing it there would need to be consensus with director, Patrick Mitchell, and Wendy Blacklock. Wendy had a clear, efficient vision to run Australian Content. Errol was referring to managerial reporting, having one person reporting to the CEO and to the directors, which is a clean method of communication so others can get on with projects. He was not looking to lose any positions and or change anyone's role, rather to tighten up the style of reporting and the chain of responsibility and to remove the possibility of one person reporting to two different bosses.

Kathleen Norris Resigns

Kathleen Norris resigned at a Board meeting on December 14th 1987 effective immediately. Stan Coonan, a senior management consultant from *Dewbury's*, was brought in as Acting CEO. My office at the Trust was diagonally opposite Kathleen's and I came in one day to work and there was a new person there, which was the first time most of us had heard this news. We were advised there would be a group of efficiency experts holding meetings with staff to analyze what and how we did our work. We recognized this as a restructure. I was not worried as I still had the same objectives; to transfer ESO and develop freelance activities in the department. The Entrepreneurial Department was more concerned about continuation and risk taking. Stan Coonan advised us the Trust had serious financial problems but he was very purposeful in trying to raise staff morale. Errol Chadwick had drafted plans for us to go forward in our various departments but Stan advised that some of these plans would not eventuate. Mark Benvau, the director of finance, resigned in October 1987, so the team had already changed. Stan advised that the Trust had to keep going with the orchestra and complete the transfer. He was happy for the other initiatives we had started, outside the Elizabethan Sydney Orchestra, to continue. I did not hear much more until the building was sold and we moved to Regent Street. I was given a small orchestra room. Accounts, membership, Australian Content and the Theatre of the Deaf also moved there. I worked on transferring the orchestra; apart from reporting on progress, I was left pretty much on my own to do the job and to develop Australian Orchestral Enterprises. It stayed that way until the transfer of the Sydney Orchestra in January 1990.

The Artistic Directorship Question

On 21st December 1987, a week after Kathleen Norris' departure, I presented a discussion paper on the artistic direction of the Philharmonic Orchestra: the need for an artistic policy and director. I also prepared a confidential questionnaire to orchestral members asking what they thought an Artistic Director should be and how to achieve it. It was one area I thought needed

considerable discussion, despite procrastination. Some thought it should be the concertmaster, for others it could not be a player because they cannot make independently informed decisions, which could lead to favouritism. Others thought it had to be a conductor or one who did not conduct opera or ballet so there was a real independence. Others thought it had to be an opera conductor because this was the main work. They were not interested in having a ballet conductor because there was little respect for ballet conductors, which was completely unjustified. The orchestras had worked with some very good ballet conductors including John Lanchbery. At one stage it was suggested an academic, a PhD with music knowledge, would be appropriate. There were many different views. All of these needed to be aired and discussed in the right forum. Unfortunately, we could never get a meeting with everyone present. The other issue was that user companies had varying degrees of interest and some had very strong views.

The Opera Company had the strong view that the Opera artistic director should make all the decisions pertaining to the orchestra it used. The Ballet did not want the Opera making all decisions on the orchestra they needed. There were many agendas to cope with. At the end of the day, though, most people thought it would be a conductor. The other issue arose in relation to the pending transfer and conditions of transfer to a new owner who had not been identified at the time. You do not want to put in place someone who a new owner would have to take on and not want. We could not offer tenure to any potential candidate because we knew we were transferring. If we had not been transferring it would have been done differently. The questionnaire resulted in the appointment of John Grundy[25] who became Artistic Adviser or Artistic Director to the orchestra. He was in the role at the time of transfer and was accepted by most of the people so it was probably a very good compromise.

25 John Grundy (1947-), pianist, Music Director for the Sydney based orchestra 1988-1995, also Music Director Sydney Philharmonia Choirs 1988-1991. In 2006 founded the Sheffield Music Academy in the UK.

New Directions – Australian Orchestral Enterprises

My job with the Sydney Orchestra, the awards and building new opportunities for the casual players, was time-consuming and narrowly focused; it did not expand sideways much. More involvement in outside activities might have been good for me, a bit of a saviour from the stresses and personal problems I was experiencing on a daily basis.

I was working long hours; doing paperwork, answering queries, memorandums, making sure everyone was informed, while being aware you were being looked over because you were in an organization accused of not communicating. I made sure everything was written down. Most of it was minor communication designed to get to the next stage but at the time it was important because often the musicians would declare they did not know something. This was often because they did not read the communications. I had to have meetings with the orchestra; necessary for operational reasons in relation to rostering. The last thing you want to do is put rostering forward which was going to impact on the players without their knowledge and the only way to do that was to call meetings but these were poorly attended; of sixty-nine people you would be lucky to get five attendees. They may have had better attendance for their own meetings but we were never copied into the results of their internal discussions. We were not getting the voice of the orchestra, just the loudest one or two.

By late 1987, I was Trust Industrial Relations Officer and heading up *Australian Orchestral Enterprises*. Stan Coonan reviewed the situation in the clear light of day and in March 1988 we had final agreement for the opera ballet award. I agreed to two basic responsibilities; a supervisory role over the management of the Elizabethan Philharmonic Orchestra and an active, hands-on role with *Orchestral Enterprises*. Along the way I would look after the relevant awards industrially and any other award issues for the Trust. For the Elizabethan Philharmonic my clear responsibility was concert planning for 1988 and 1989 and negotiations associated with the scheduling of the activities for 1989 which meant user agreement contracts with the EPO, the transfer of new management negotiations, continuation of the Opera Ballet award, and supervision of the EPO management. An administrator, responsible to me, and for the orchestral manager, an assistant orchestral manager and related staff, would be appointed. My secretary, Ann, would be still my responsibility. I was not involved in the selection process which appointed Bruce Applebaum[1]. Unfortunately he started on the eve of the next annual grant application submission, so he was thrown in at the deep end. I do not think he had a lot of experience with this. There was about $2.1 million of public money to justify and make the budget in the format the Australia Council

Warwick Ross, Australian Orchestral Enterprises—***Trust News*** December 1988.

1 Bruce Applebaum studied Arts Administration at UTS. He is Co-founder (with Paul Dyer), Managing Director and a Board member of the Australian Brandenburg Orchestra, which celebrated its 30th anniversary in 2019.

would accept and the Trust financial director could deal with. He had a difficult task. I was there to help and supervise, but not to do it. He did a pretty good job in getting that through, after which he had the day to day management and all the problems I had been experiencing. I was very happy to leave the daily running of the orchestra to his administration and to leave the constant niggling and complaining coming from them to management. How he coped I have no idea but he survived.

At the end of 1987 the Chairman said the Trust had one of three options: 'to go into liquidation, appoint an official manager or work with a new structure in conjunction with auditors'. (**1987 *Annual Report*—President's message and Chairman's address**) The Board decided on the latter, with Stan Coonan at the helm. Within a month he noted an underfunded shortfall of around $107,000 for 1988 for the orchestra to remain in a holding position. The Australia Council had concern for the viability of the Trust. Daily costs of operation exceeded income and there was fear of adverse publicity. It appears the Trust was technically insolvent as current liabilities greatly exceeded current assets. Departments were asked to present details of their resources, people and hours worked, which in my department included John Miller, Peter Horn, Patricia Pears and Ann Robinson. In January 1988 the Trust extricated itself from the Hayman Island Resort with a payout of $20,000. Before taking leave to get married in January 1988, I sought to re-establish orchestra standing committees and continue the implementation of *The Tribe Report* by conforming to the Report's recommendations of representation. Morale was at an all-time low. It was a terrible environment to work in. People were down and wondering what to do. Not everyone could focus on solving the problem, they were interested in just removing themselves from it. We were all looking after our own departments. I was an exception. Most of the others were really concerned they would not have any money tomorrow. I knew we had money to run because it was an Australia Council grant and was protected by the manner of its execution, so that was not going to get gobbled up. I was more concerned my initiatives with the freelance orchestras might get damaged but they were profitable. I made sure I budgeted and managed every one of those on a break-even. Even though the profits were not huge they were always net profits I budgeted to, not gross income. I was confident if the Trust disappeared I could go to another space and run this as long as I had a telephone. I could see other administrative staff probably at a loss as to what was going to happen. The Australia Council was being slow with grant payments and decision making, so there were still problems to be addressed in the light of the Trust's overall financial position.

There was no honeymoon, although I took two weeks leave! I met my wife, Patricia Gould, in 1984 on one of the last shows I worked as a musician, a tour of *Camelot* with Richard Harris.[2]

2 This production, directed by Richard Harris who also played King Arthur, toured to Sydney, Adelaide, Melbourne and Perth from September to December 1984. Presented by *Kevin Jacobsen Productions* and Pat Condon.

She was working on the show. We decided to marry in January 1988 and bought a ten hectare property in the Barrington Tops. There was a lot of work to do on that holding. I forgot about orchestras, although I did some recordings. Everyone knew I was not to be disturbed. Stan Coonan would have solved any issues without disturbing me.

"... battered, bloodied and bowed"

In February 1988 the *Bulletin* described the Trust as 'battered, bloodied and bowed'. Noel Ferrier had left and there was a loss of over $1.9 million. The Dowling St building had been sold late in 1987.[3] Membership was approaching 11,000. Trevor Brooks was the Trust marketing director. It was clear John Woodland and the Entrepreneurial staff would be the first to go and probably closely followed by Publicity. John resigned in February 1988 at which point it seemed that all staff cuts had concluded and the Trust could now build staff morale, previously difficult while resignations were being encouraged. There was preparation to recruit a CEO through advertising in early March 1988. My little corner of the floor was guaranteed, wherever that floor was. The Theatre of the Deaf and Australian Content Department found other ways to continue and as valuable units continued to be supported by funding bodies. It was clear things like the costumes and technical items would go, and I remember the unique auction on 15th October 1988 to sell off the 'stuff' in the basement. "Thirty-four years of theatre history under the hammer ... lighting equipment, fancy dress ... costumes, props, thrones, coffins, masks and so on." I bought some things including a Neptune trident, for which I had no use, but they were great to have. They were cheap, just a few dollars here and there. There were big things, but I did not buy anything of substance. The Trust had sole domain over lighting hire in Sydney for a long time as *Rank* at Liverpool had set up in opposition only in the previous few years. Unfortunately, the lamps were pretty old fashioned ones. There were a lot of cables and an enormous amount of props. Wayne Kellett, who was looking after lighting

Trust costumes on parade, *Trust News*, October 1988

3 In 2021 the building at 153 Dowling Street, Kings Cross, houses the offices of the Cancer Council NSW and retains many of its original features. In 2016 there was a celebration to mark the building's 100th year.

equipment and hires at the time, had a good sense of humour and treated it as a bit of fun. There was no depression around it at all. I think they sold most of it. The array of stuff, spread all over the bottom floor of the Trust Dowling Street building, was huge. Anywhere you walked there was something for sale except for many of the costumes. Michael James, who ran this department, intended to run a costume shop independently, which he did for a while. Then Rodney Seaborn bought most of them for his costume hire place and he and Michael worked together for a time. I used some of that great source of costumes for Sinfonietta events and they were great.

There was a Bicentennial dinner in the Grand Ballroom at the Wentworth Hotel on 21st March 1988 which included a tribute, "200 Years of the Theatre in Australia", devised by Judy White with Leonard Teale and Liz Harris. It was a black tie or 'theatrical costume' event. One of the guests was NSW Governor Roland. At this time we were planning for the orchestra to perform with the Sydney Philharmonia Society at the Opera House on 21st May 1988 and with Cillario as guest conductor at the Gough Whitlam Centre, Liverpool, as part of the Liverpool Bicentennial festivities in May. There was also a concert in the Great Hall of Sydney University with new works by Malcolm Williamson[4] and Colin Brumby[5]. My correspondence with Williamson was interesting. He was Master of the Queen's Music at that time and writing from London. He was grateful, gracious and very nice to deal with. He was also quite specific about his musical needs.

Bicentennial Dinner

The Trust is making its own contribution to the Bicentenary Year with a tribute to 200 years of theatre in Australia. Devised by Judy White and presented by leading Australian artists, including Leonard Teale and Liz Harris, who'll be portraying Lola Montez, the tribute will be a highlight of the Trust's Bicentennial Dinner to be held at the Grand Ballroom, Wentworth Hotel, on Monday, March 21. Guests of honour are the Governor, Sir James Rowland, and Lady Rowland. Tickets are $60.00 each and can be reserved by phoning the Trust on 357 1200. Dress is black tie or theatrical costume.

The Elizabethan Sinfonietta

I had hoped the Soloists of Australia or the Elizabethan Sinfonietta would play at the opening of Parliament House, Canberra, on 9th May 1988. Apparently, the government was reluctant to pay as other groups were offering their services free. The Trust tried to raise some corporate sponsorship but was not successful. The 1987 *Babies' Prom* made a profit of over $1500 and from the Australian Ballet season of *Giselle* there was a profit of $18,000. We also recorded a television commercial for *Cherry Films*. This was shot through the orchestra and focussed on the timpani player for an American television advertisement for *Konica* photocopiers which was not seen in Australia. The timpanist had lost his part and someone rushed out to photocopy it and got back just when he had to play. It was a shot of the orchestra playing while he was worrying about what to play and the photocopier had saved the day. The orchestra also played for the Croatian opera, *Zrinsk*i, at the Opera House. There was great support from the ethnic community which subsequently influenced my way of working at the Independent Theatre, getting the community audience to support cultural events.

There was a training program I put together to retrain musicians for work outside of their normal sphere of things if they wanted to stop playing. I put together a proposal to the NSW

4 Malcolm Williamson, AO, CBE (1931-2003), Australian composer, Master of the Queen's Music 1975-2003.
5 Colin Brumby (1933-2018), Australian composer, conductor and teacher.

government for a pilot project but I left the job before it proceeded. I was interested in helping musicians like Maurice Stead who was suffering from RSI, could barely play, and retraining them to do something else. Maurice bought and ran a newsagency in Melbourne for a while. Many were doing other things; like myself, I had been a player and turned to administration. Most people had taken other directions with no formal or adequate training in that discipline and had to find out the hard way. If musicians, particularly older players, did not want to or could not play anymore, training was important, although not flavour of the day until Paul Keating was elected Prime Minister. The New South Wales government did allocate $50,000 for a pilot scheme.

In February 1988 I wrote a letter to the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, with the idea of an exchange program for musicians with opera houses around the world. It was a proposal I thought might work well for the Sydney Orchestra and particularly for younger players who were of an appropriate standard to exchange for six months or a season and come back with skills they did not have when they left. I think my understanding of the English player was such that often when an Australian turns up there is a new approach taken to the playing and it can be very positive for the music scene if they are a good player. Such an initiative would have to involve the orchestral management at the time but nothing came of it. It was an attempt to re-think and change the working environment. Even I was getting downtrodden by the notion of playing in the pit and I was not in the orchestra but I could feel it, day in, day out, a difficult environment.

The demands and pressure of the workload are huge, coupled with not knowing where your future is. Unfortunately, in March 1988, Ann Robinson, administrative secretary for the orchestras, tendered her resignation as she found the working conditions less than attractive. With insecurity concerning the future, she had been looking for another job. She was tired of being treated like a junior by other members of staff and needed more money. She felt she had no choice despite enjoying the work. Ann and I were experienced in what we did and she was a very good secretarial support. She was a thinker, helped people and could predict and troubleshoot problems. I relied on her a great deal. When I was away from Sydney I could be sure if I asked for something it would be done immediately. There were often things I needed in the industrial arena that she took care of straight away with just a phone call. It was a great loss for me but I could see she was becoming frustrated without respect for what she did. She was treated like a typist and people in other departments did not understand her role. Within orchestral management she was seen as my secretary and someone you could order around. She addressed the question of money but there was no money; the budget was pre-set. We were moving to a new era that was unlikely to get money for administrative staff, let alone an increase. She was looking for something to engage her mind more. I think during the transfer to Melbourne and the award, she was motivated, interested, and there was a lot of work with the voluminous documentation I dictated onto a

machine and she turned into documents. She was reliable and fast. I was pleased she obtained a job at a country radio station announcing and running programs.

Crisis Management

In March 1988, the Trust was in crisis management, being attacked from all sides. The Australia Council sought changes to the Trust Board, saying it had been too long entrenched. The Board resisted Australia Council pressure and did not take the issue into the public domain. Trust directors are elected by the members and resisted those with vested interests, regardless of the pressure from the funding source. In 1988 Rodney Seaborn joined the Board and James Strong became Chairman of Directors. Later Rodney's generous involvement saw him step in and save the Trust. I did not meet him until we came into the Independent Theatre in 2000 and there I had a close relationship with him for two or three years. In 1988, the Trust was the only organization eligible to receive tax deductible donations for the arts. Donations were given unconditionally, but donors could nominate their preferred recipient company and although the Trust was not bound to pass it to the named organization, it generally honoured the donor's request, enabling an enormous range of groups, from local choirs, community theatres to the Australian Ballet to receive donations from the general public. (**1988 *Annual Report***, pp 22-25). This was not a money-making activity for the Trust, whose staff processed hundreds of donations every year. The Trust was proposing a 2% levy on donations going through its tax deductible system and there were many protests about it; the Australian Opera being one of the most vocal. The Trust was carrying the administrative and banking costs of this process and, given financial pressures, was looking to ways to contain costs. Donors were not really concerned but recipient organizations wanted the full donation and once again responded negatively to the Trust's actions. When other 'commissions' (an artist has to pay an agent 33% to sell work), are considered, a 2% levy was very reasonable. It did seem that many wanted the Trust to close. The balance had shifted as the Australia Council became the national body overseeing the arts.

The Trust was a tall poppy that everyone had to cut down. There was fuel for this view; information in the public domain about the struggling arts, the Trust's supposedly taking money from donors when money is flowing in, the orchestras not being appropriately run. There was enough press coverage to draw a picture for many that this was an outdated organization. It was hard to counteract. The Board was an experienced group, who knew the business world very well and were prepared to give up their time. The arts community was not in a good frame of mind. Overall the economy was not flourishing, sponsorship was very difficult to find. Organizations such as the Bond Corporation[6] were in trouble: excess spending and corporate wastage was

6 Established by Alan Bond in 1974, he and the company were bankrupted by 1992.

beginning to take its toll. Wendy Blacklock was looking for corporate money for projects without much success and I found it very difficult to get a chance to put your case to the corporates. The world was changing.

One of my tasks was a re-evaluation of the Trust owned musical instruments as assets. The new orchestra management did not want them and it became necessary to sell them. A general market value is easy enough to obtain but for an individual instrument, depending on its make and whether it has been regularly played and maintained, is not so easy. I obtained assessments from instrument dealers to understand the possible range of value. Tommy Sparkes, a specialist in wind instruments, provided estimates based on the history of each instrument. I considered the book value of the instrument and came up with a likely sale value. We would have preferred to sell them all to one organization such as the Orchestra's new owners. Some of the instruments were being played, such as the timpani and contrabassoon. I considered it appropriate to offer the 64 instruments out to tender. In February 1990 I hired a space at the Wharf, Hickson Road, The Rocks, Sydney, where Graeme Murphy's Sydney Dance Company was based. We set them out on the floor and invited people to tender. Information was sent out to musicians. We received 34 acceptable offers, totalling about $37,000. Nineteen received no offer at all and 11 received unacceptable offers. These instruments were given some maintenance and repair work, which I costed and recommended to the Trust management. Ultimately, they were sold but the process took the whole year.

Music Management Consultant

I resigned, effective from March 31st 1988, becoming the Trust's Music Management Consultant. Bruce Applebaum became the orchestra's temporary administrator. In April the Australian Opera advised it was not interested in taking over the Sydney Orchestra, and the Australia Council advised the Trust it had breached its grant conditions by not providing audited financial statements by 31st March. Grant payments were suspended until accounts were received; the grant was paid on a monthly basis after that. I had limited time to develop my department as Bruce learnt the job. My responsibilities for the orchestra had been concert planning negotiations and scheduling for 1989; user company agreements and contracts for EPO with the Ballet and Opera and negotiations of transfer to new management plus the Opera Ballet award and general supervision of the EPO management. Most of this was delegated to Bruce. It seems the Australia Council took advantage of this changeover to further criticize and penalize the Trust through the grant payments.

One of the issues to be discussed about the disposal of the orchestra was the reserve the Trust had of $436,000. The cost to disband was estimated at $525,000 and we did not believe

the Australia Council would allow an offset against the reserve for termination payments. There was a great fear at this time that the orchestra's position, or the Trust's position if the orchestra went, would be even worse because none of this was clarified. Later, the Trust sought legal advice on this but these were issues to be considered. If the orchestra was disbanded each member would require holiday and long service leave accrued plus termination payment of twelve weeks, making disbandment costs substantial. I did not have any personal involvement in discussions with the Australia Council but was having to address daily the 'What happens if?' scenario. In the award we wanted to transfer them with full entitlement. If that is the case, where is this entitlement coming from or is it going to be a credit the Australia Council will accept that it pays when it is due? I had to analyze what those amounts were, who would or would not transfer, who was eligible for long service leave that might be taken up soon, involving a cash flow issue, and who was there with entitlements that may never be taken up. With sixty-nine people and many of them long-serving, in excess of five years, there were substantial entitlements to long service leave. With every document, I was constantly adding up bottom line figures. I held on to the notion that if the Trust had a reserve it would have to be used for the benefit of the transfer rights and entitlements. It could not go to the user company nor should it go back to the Australia Council as unspent monies because it had been allocated against entitlements. It was $70,000 short if you looked at the past history where the Trust had been owed this money. I thought in the final transfer it would be the most difficult issue; something for the user company or the new owners of the orchestra to negotiate with the Australia Council, not us.

Adam Salzer, a NIDA graduate, was Artistic Director of the NSW Theatre of the Deaf in 1975-76 on a Director's Development Grant from the Australia Council. He directed the group's production of *King Lear*, presented by the AETT at the Seymour Centre, Sydney, in November 1976.

There was a Masked Ball at the *Intercontinental Hotel* on December 31st, for which we provided an Orchestra in costume. I was discussing a proposal with the Callaway Trust in Western Australia, *Musica Viva* and the Trust for sponsorship to develop commercial recordings. We performed in a *Kleenex* television commercial at the Opera House; all events I felt were tests to see if we could make a go of *Australian Orchestral Enterprises*. My motive was to give work to casual players so they would be available to work with the Sydney Orchestra as extras and give a guarantee of high quality performance. I hoped to regenerate the freelance industry after the demise of recording sessions.

Adam Salzer, New Trust CEO

In June 1988 the Board appointed a new CEO, Adam Salzer. (***Trust News*** 1988.) Given the situation, he needed to hit the ground running and had clear ideas about communication between the orchestra administration and the Opera. He cut back entrepreneurial activity and saw the Music Management Department as having potential for a high profile and quality image for the Trust. He came in to solve difficult problems. Not only was the Trust in financial difficulty;

it had no resources and had to improve its image. Adam was a very positive publicist whose view was to find and promote good ideas and projects. He changed the Trust logo to a theatrical image, focussing on 'The Trust' rather than the long title involving Elizabethan (was that Shakespearean or to do with Queen Elizabeth?). While he did not drop the reference to our patron and Australian and theatre, he focused on 'The Trust', which was quite effective. He devised and developed the concept of an Arts Card and how the Trust could build it into its activities. Cardholders would have access to events and commercial products, including wine, free or at reduced prices.

'Among the many exciting new benefits available to holders of The Arts Australia Card is the chance to become a VIP Member and be in the running for a free trip to New York and Broadway. All you have to do send written invitations to five people encouraging them to become members of The Trust. If you have not received details of this great opportunity call your Trust office today.'—*Trust News*, December 1988

Adam saw the need for an amicable transfer of the Elizabethan Philharmonic, so the job was to transfer it smoothly with as few ruffled feathers as possible, and once the transfer was done, to develop the positives related to Orchestral Enterprises' projects. We had done a couple of dates, the opera, *Zrinski*, and the *Konica* commercial with a profit on the books. Most arts organizations did not show a profit, subsidy was to cover costs. We were operating independently without grants and Adam could see the potential. He asked what I could make of the Orchestral Department after transfer. I believed there would be work available through organizations like *Edgleys*. There were possible commercials and people were approaching me with ideas, which I encouraged.

Music 'To Suit The Occasion'

We promoted the Elizabethan Sinfonietta with a small brochure offering **music 'to suit the occasion'**. One of these events in 1988 was an enjoyable Bicentennial Ball at Castle Hill RSL Club with a Viennese theme. The Trust costume department provided appropriate costumes and we played Strauss waltzes and polkas. In the past, no doubt the club had hired big dance bands but I was happy to advise the repertoire was well within the orchestra's ability. The program was a selection of music from my *Edgley* and London days. The RSL manager was delighted with the idea of a costumed orchestra. A young conductor, Henryk Pisarek[7] was engaged. I explained the music was rather specialized to play for a ball. Some of the waltzes people may not know and they were fast. The tempo changes were traditional. The organizer wanted these but suggested we be prepared for it to be more like a concert if people did not dance. Many sat and listened and loved it. Some knew how to dance Viennese waltzes, others danced to the dance band when we took a break. We played four or five different sets through the night while a regular house band played contemporary dance music. My view was endorsed that audiences can be found in the most unlikely places if you take the music to them; they loved the music and the atmosphere was superb.

The Sinfonietta also presented a concert in early 1988 for the Perth Festival. Unfortunately, the demands of the presenter were difficult: no air-conditioning in the height of summer, they

7 Henryk Pisarek, conductor and teacher (Sydney Conservatorium of Music). Artistic Director of Ku-ring-gai Philharmonic Orchestra (1995), Penrith Symphony Orchestra (2002-2007), East West Orchestra and has been Chief Conductor and Artistic Director of the Sydney Youth Orchestra. Received 2003 The Orchestras of Australia (TOAN) Network Award for services to community orchestras.

Maestro Jackson and the Sinfonietta rehearsing *The Rite of Spring.*

requested a very long program, the stage management was inadequate and payment was late. The performers expressed great unhappiness about such experiences and were subsequently released from an Adelaide Festival engagement. I was preparing many quotes to try and get work flowing. There was a lot of interest and we demonstrated that we were capable of providing a useful resource to people like Michael Edgley, resulting in the orchestra accompanying Stefan Milenkovich[8], then a ten year old violin prodigy from Serbia, in Brisbane and Sydney. Not everything eventuated, but we had a pretty healthy year in 1988-89.

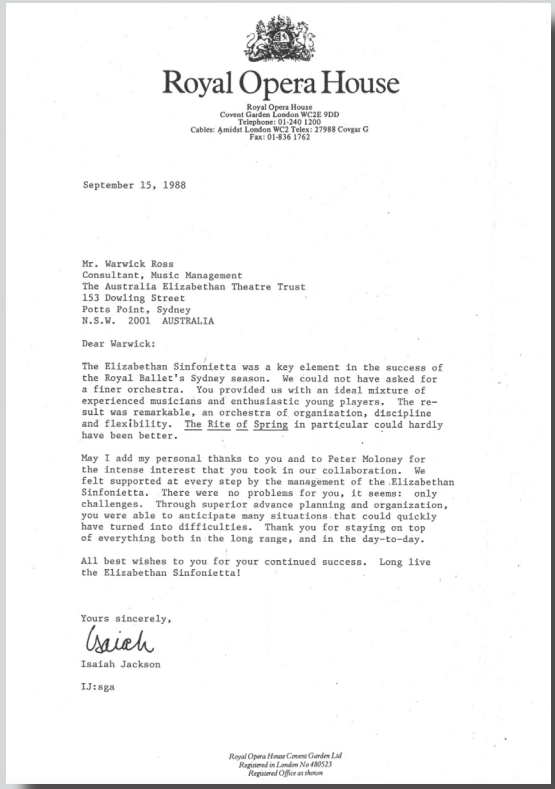
Providing the Elizabethan Sinfonietta for Royal Ballet performances at the Sydney Entertainment Centre in July 1988 was very successful.[9] This season was prestigious and financially viable. Sixty-two players were required for performances in the Entertainment Centre, which was a huge barn, but the program drew a large audience. It was entirely commercial; Pat Condon and Michael Edgley were behind it. We fielded an orchestra of good players, many of whom had worked in the Entertainment Centre with people like Tommy Tycho[10] and were used to its barn-like environment. There was a triple bill to prepare; the hardest work musically was *The Rite of Spring*. Isaiah Jackson, an African-American who worked with the company in London, was an exacting conductor. We rehearsed at the Showground and had two three hour calls on *The Rite of Spring*. This was a work you would expect to do at least seven or eight calls for. With *Edgleys* there was no money for excessive rehearsals and they advised the Ballet that the orchestra had a reputation for bringing things together quickly on minimum rehearsal. They were session players used to such expectations. Four or five calls were scheduled. At the end of the second call I asked the conductor if there were any problems, knowing he would have assessed the players. His response was that the orchestra was 'amazing—like a New York session orchestra', meaning it

8 Stefan Milenkovich (b. 1977 in Belgrade, Serbia), child prodigy who subsequently studied at the Julliard School in America and pursues an international career as a classical violinist.

9 The company toured to three Australian cities, the repertoire was *Manon, Swan Lake* and a triple bill of David Bintley's *Still Life at the Penguin Café*, Frederick Ashton's *Rhapsody* and Kenneth Macmillan's *Rite of Spring*.

10 Tommy Tycho AM, MBE (1928-2013), Hungarian born Australian pianist, conductor, composer, arranger.

read fast, delivered and maintained high standard for the duration. From a musical point of view it was very successful. The orchestra was in full view, in front of a built-up stage. We were well paid and the conductor was delighted. Later, I received a letter of commendation from the Royal Opera House signed by Jackson saying it was a splendid occasion with absolutely no problem arising from the orchestra.



Royal Opera House

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September 15, 1988

Mr. Warwick Ross
Consultant, Music Management
The Australia Elizabethan Theatre Trust
153 Dowling Street
Potts Point, Sydney
N.S.W. 2001 AUSTRALIA

Dear Warwick:

The Elizabethan Sinfonietta was a key element in the success of the Royal Ballet's Sydney season. We could not have asked for a finer orchestra. You provided us with an ideal mixture of experienced musicians and enthusiastic young players. The result was remarkable, an orchestra of organization, discipline and flexibility. The Rite of Spring in particular could hardly have been better.

May I add my personal thanks to you and to Peter Moloney for the intense interest that you took in our collaboration. We felt supported at every step by the management of the Elizabethan Sinfonietta. There were no problems for you, it seems; only challenges. Through superior advance planning and organization, you were able to anticipate many situations that could quickly have turned into difficulties. Thank you for staying on top of everything both in the long range, and in the day-to-day.

All best wishes to you for your continued success. Long live the Elizabethan Sinfonietta!

Yours sincerely,

Isaiah

Isaiah Jackson

IJ:sga

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It was refreshing. I had access to these people working through the Sinfonietta; play well and be well paid. With something challenging, like *The Rite of Spring*, the music was good quality because there were good players. For example, of the two trumpet players with our orchestra for *Aida* in 1988-89, the principal had come from the Sands Orchestra in Las Vegas, backing people like Frank Sinatra. He had then specialized in classical music and came to Australia. The person sitting next to him had been principal trumpet in the London Philharmonic for fourteen years and retired to Australia. With such players, inevitably there was a fantastic sound. They inspired and raised the standard of other brass players around them. I paid everyone within a week, if not on the night. The reputation was that the Trust was reliable. You did not have to wait for, or argue about, money. It was always what was agreed. I also made a policy of advising

We used the new Trust logo and felt that the Trust's battered image seemed to have taken a turn for the better. We hoped the music industry might accept the Trust as a leader, an innovator in music activity which I sought to develop and coordinate on a national scale. We needed an impressive face and efficient high quality administrative support staff to win and retain confidence. Peter Maloney was the casual orchestra manager and things looked positive and hopeful. I considered that many of the individual players represented the Sydney music industry. They lived locally and, five players, who were leaders or concertmasters, collectively controlled the orchestral scene including recording sessions; the lifeblood of the Sydney music scene. Outside of the Sydney Symphony and the Opera Ballet Orchestras, the Tommy Tycho and Bobby Limb[11] orchestras for television channels and the occasional big Entertainment Centre spectaculars, were all fixed: those orchestras and musicians all came via these people. Although good friends, they were highly competitive: their livelihood depended on how many recording sessions they got in a week. They had no interest in the politics of it; they wanted good available players who would turn up on time. If a player did not play well, he was not used again. It was very like London; no animosities, no politics.

11 Robert 'Bobby' Limb, AO, OBE (1924-1999), Popular Australian musician and entertainer on radio, television and theatre, especially during the 1960s and 1970s.

upfront the entire conditions of the date, which generally was not done in Australia. Even when you came into the Opera Ballet Orchestra or the Symphony Orchestra there would be a contract but it would refer you to the award or to employment conditions in the ABC or the Trust and you had to go searching. I set out all the details in one letter, even down to the nitty-gritty of how to get there, where to park, what to wear. The consequence was that when people came into the orchestra they knew exactly where they were. We always did the seating in advance so when a player was booked they knew where they would sit in the orchestra. To make sure there were no objections, the concertmaster and I would work this out before booking anyone. When they came in, they knew exactly where they were, what to do and what the conditions were. This gave the Trust credibility as an organization providing work. Had we continued and managed to get some help through sponsorship funding, we would have probably made something of this. The time was right for the orchestra and musicians, but not the Trust. After I left, the players went back to freelance work and potential dates were lost.

At this time, the Trust's Australian Content department featured at *World Expo 1988* in Brisbane with Jack Davis's plays, *Barungin* and *Honey Spot*, with Indigenous actors. These subsequently toured overseas; a great achievement for Wendy Blacklock's department as there were many challenges keeping the company together. They received a very good response.

Also at this time, Adam was considering the possibility of establishing boards of the Trust in each state aiming to get more support from other state governments and to keep the national image of the Trust alive.

Transferring the Sydney Orchestra

By 1988 everything was ready to transfer the Sydney orchestra. The Trust was no longer aspiring to maintain ownership. At the same time, since 85% of Australia Council funding to the Trust went to the orchestra, there was concern about loss of prestige and purpose. The Melbourne situation had demonstrated what could be done in a united way. They maintained communication with the Trust and found willing, worthy owners who were prepared to, and did, fight for them in an industrial forum where it was hard to improve conditions substantially and change the award. By the time they transferred, that job was almost complete. It had been demonstrated that an orchestra could transfer to a better situation. We had to do the same with Sydney. The big problem was how and to whom; even the orchestra had voted against transfer and the Australian Opera blew hot and cold on whether they wanted to take on the responsibility. Firstly, the management of the orchestra had to be brought into line. It was running on its own agenda and making its own decisions. It was difficult because there was a constant fight between the Ballet, the Opera and the orchestra, and within those three every individual would have, and

express, a different view. A volatile situation. An early vote to stay with the Trust was not really the voice of the entire orchestra although it may have been of the majority. This was something needing unanimous support as in Melbourne where there was unanimous support for the new managers.

In Sydney we needed a management which would allow the orchestra to function properly and maintain constant communication with the Ballet and Opera. I had to go to the Australia Council early in 1988 to advise the funding was inadequate; the budget could not be trimmed further and it was impossible for the orchestra to exist on the current level of funding. There was also serious litigation pending against the Melbourne Orchestra in relation to harpist, Susan Smith. She had been warned about her proficiency, she transferred to the Victorian Orchestra management (VACT), resigned and began claiming compensation for cancellation of her proficiency loading. This was a matter for the new owners because she transferred from us with all her employment entitlements. Such issues were a constant reminder of communication problems.

Once agreement was reached that the Sydney Orchestra would transfer, the players were concerned about their jobs and security of entitlements, particularly as I moved sideways at the Trust to develop *Australian Orchestral Enterprises* and deal with the award which did not come into place until 1989. There were discussions with the companies using the orchestra with little bush-fires to put out all the time. I had a meeting with senior administrative staff at the Australian Opera and was told that the Company's perception of our decision to transfer ownership was that the Trust was prepared to dump the orchestra. That was not the view of the directors. The Trust would protect the interests of the musicians up until the day after transfer when the new owner would have the responsibility. We had that enshrined into their industrial award. We also agreed we would not do anything about artistic direction if they were going to transfer. It would be wrong to appoint a permanent artistic director but we should have people helping where they could. I saw the need to delegate the day-to-day management of the orchestra to someone who would look after the interests of the Opera, Ballet and the orchestra.

There were three important issues in the transfer of the Sydney Orchestra. One was industrial relations which I was looking after. Another was the relationship with the Opera and the Ballet, which was improving. The Opera was willing to talk and provide things the orchestra had wanted for years, like advanced scheduling. The other one was rostering and communication; the most problematic, which remained until the end. The Opera would insist they have the same principal players of key instruments for the whole season. A quite justifiable request, but the orchestra insisted this was not the Opera's business. If a player provided was a member of the orchestra, they were adequate to do the job; it was not up to the Opera to determine that. In the process

to bring outside players in, the orchestra was asked to give recommendations in advance as to who should be off or on, but they constantly failed to provide the information in an adequate time frame. It is not easy to book casual players; they are not waiting around for the phone to ring. They might be available for eight of the ten calls for which they are needed, but could not do the other two. Their availability could fluctuate until they were contracted to do the work. The orchestral management needed advance notice about player requirements for different repertoire and which players would be off and when, before a replacement could be contracted. This problem continued up until the day of transfer and was virtually a full time job for the orchestral management. I thought it wise for me to step sideways, with someone else in that role given the work involved in the transfer. We also needed to negotiate an agreement between the new owners and the Trust and there was not much lead time. In fact, it seemed almost impossible to transfer them by the target date of December 31st 1989. Although the new management had established a board of management, there was no proposal from them in relation to entitlements. We needed to see that entitlements transferring remained intact, that superannuation would be stable and the books would show things like long service leave entitlements. We had to ensure money was there to cover entitlements. We were holding surpluses for this but had to be sure there were legal documents in place to protect those entitlements. When lawyers are involved in such documentation, it takes time, impossible to do in a few months.


Maestro Guiseppe Raffa

In August/September 1989 the ***Trust News*** reported on a major project, the *Aida* trip to Tokyo following the success of the 1988 Sydney performance. This was negotiated through *Kevin Jacobsen Pty Limited.*[12] We had been engaged to provide the orchestra at the Sydney Football Stadium for the International Opera Festival. *Jacobsens* knew of me through *Edgleys,* so they were happy for me to be the recommended source for an orchestra. Incredibly tense negotiations began in April 1989 for the Japanese performances. We submitted a quote. They wanted a big orchestra, 116 in the pit plus another 16 stage trumpets for the fanfare. The focus was the conductor, Giuseppe Raffa[13], who had a wild shock of black hair. A typical Italian conductor with a very good pedigree, he had worked with Italian singers and opera; he knew his stuff. He spoke English and was the driving force behind the whole thing; maybe even the main investor in the Festival. We had established a good rapport over the Sydney season and he trusted my judgement. He was happy for me to get the players and leave the rest to him. The contracting, however, had a big question mark over it. With further research, I discovered the Festival was in litigation with one of the companies they were using and there was a dispute over payment from a previous occasion. This was an international company with no Australian legal presence, in litigation over

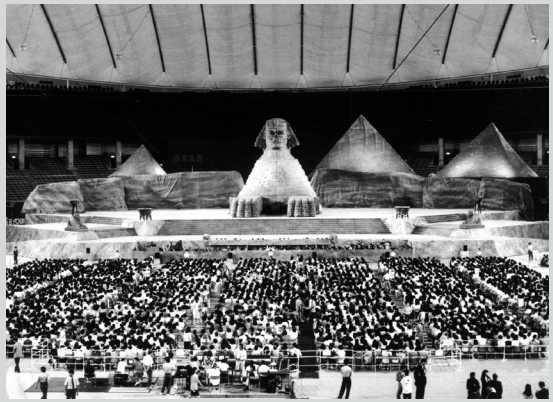
12 Kevin Jacobsen OAM (1937-), entertainment entrepreneur, former member of 1960s band with his brother, Col Joye and the Joy Boys. Presented many international artists in Australia including Barbra Streisand, *The Bee Gees*, The Three Tenors and Olivia Newton-John.
13 Giuseppe Raffa (1959-), Italian conductor of large scale opera performances around the world.

Guiseppe Raffa, conductor, with Warwick Ross, during rehearsal in the Tokyo Dome.

an employment issue. *Jacobsens* would not contract for the overseas tour. We had contracted through them for the Australian dates but they were not interested; were simply acting as an agent. To take 116 players out of Australia to Tokyo, I needed good security. The budget was over $100,000. We came to an agreement that I would contract International Opera Festival with tight controls over the way funds were dispersed. I drafted an agreement having discussed details with the conductor, and insisted on a deposit of over $50,000, to be followed by a further payment of $30,000 by particular dates. If the television recording was done, a further payment was due by a stated date. We were to go to Tokyo for the first rehearsal on 8th July, for three rehearsals and three performances. I planned to ensure we had $60,000 in the bank in Australia so we could afford to return home if there was a disaster. *Qantas*, as our official carrier, generously offered to

freight all the instruments and provided air tickets; a great sponsorship. We maintained full control over the movement of the orchestra from their home base in Australia until they returned. Peter Maloney and I loaded the instrument containers travelling in the hold while some instruments were players' hand luggage. We had full control over freight, ticketing and an aircraft. The International Opera Festival had no rights over the travel. We received a deposit of about $60,000 up front before we stepped off Australian soil. On the first day of rehearsal, three days before the opening night, another payment was due and another two payments were due before we opened. We did not have to make any threats but it was clear that if they defaulted, we could be on the flight back to Sydney before the opening. It was touch and go all the way because this negotiation was not easy. We were competing against American and Canadian orchestras for the date. Raffa wanted the Australian one because he felt it was an orchestra he could work with and did not budge from this position. We had an in-principle agreement but, of course, the problem was getting people to put this into writing. We did not get agreement of the details until May 1st for travel on July 6th. It was stressful. I had to book 116 players to be away for a week and their availability was subject to offering them firm dates. They all wanted to go but had to live and would take other work if this did not happen. I had the problem of holding players without contracts until the main contract was in place. By May 15th everything was agreed. There was pressure for the organizers as they had to market the performances. The closer we got to the date, the more unlikely it was they could get another orchestra from elsewhere, but it was a tense time. James Waites, writing in the *Trust News* in August/September 1989, observed about this trip that, "The Orchestra is a reflection of the aggressive spirit shown by an increasingly more professional Trust these days", and certainly this orchestra represented the Trust very well. It was of the highest artistic quality and the administration was forceful about its rights and viable income. It did seem to be an entirely different approach from the Trust in the past which was essential for the survival of the department. We made a profit, the musicians profited and it was artistically satisfying. The Tokyo Dome, referred to as the Big Egg, has an egg shaped dome which spirals open at the top. It seats 55,000. It is a sporting arena but for *Aida* there was a similar set up to Sydney, with a stage across one end and the orchestra in front with the audience in a circle in the stands. There was a huge attendance, it sold very well for the three performances. I rarely had the opportunity to sit in on the performance; there was much to manage backstage. We looked after all arrangements including providing a briefing sheet for the musicians with a summary of the schedule as well as advice how to behave in Japan and customs to be aware of. There were 93 instruments carried onto the plane; valued at $954,000. The Trust covered the insurance and instrument owners felt comfortable, particularly as there were a couple of famous Italian instruments; a valuable *Guarneri* played by the leader; and some A (Arthur) E (Edward) Smith

violins. This was detailed on the International Carnet which has to be prepared for customs when travelling overseas. I had known about this from tours with Fonteyn in England when we went into Europe. Crossing borders without a carnet, which has to contain serial numbers, make, and value of items, such as musical instruments, can create serious problems. The information needed to be correct for both Australian and Japanese Customs, particularly as we had our own special flight and were not subject to standard customs procedures. When we departed Australia, Customs had the information but did not carry out an inspection or document the process. After landing, we were greeted by our Japanese hosts who wanted to get us onto coaches and into the city. Through an interpreter, Kevin (an Australian travelling with me who spoke Japanese), I explained we needed Japanese Customs to stamp forms allowing the instruments in so that on exit we would not be faced with export duty or import duty when we landed back in Australia. An hour later we were still talking; I had held up the buses and our hosts were getting nervous, a little bit angry. Kevin understood the traditional, hierarchical ways of negotiation in Japan. He suggested he and Peter Maloney talk to the Customs official, while I (as the senior Australian official), and the senior Japanese Customs officer, stayed in the background. He also advised the necessity of taking gifts. We had a dozen bottles of *Chivas Regal* scotch and a box of toy koala bears for such moments. With two bottles of *Chivas* he began some very formal negotiations with a great deal of bowing. We had reached the senior level of Import Customs clearance at Narita Airport, Tokyo. One bottle of scotch was presented and politely accepted. There was much talk of 'understanding' and satisfying requirements with documentation. Subsequently, I sat down with the head officer and another bottle of scotch was presented. Eventually he signed the carnet and the buses took us to the hotel. I was very grateful for my earlier experience of international travel with musicians and instruments; a large import duty fee on return to Australia would have ruined the experience. We used all our scotch supply as polite gifts as we negotiated ways through rehearsals and other issues. We learnt not to be a bull at the gate. It ensured that everyone paid attention to their little list of what they could or could not do in Japan. The importance of body language: 'Scratching the head is a way of hiding confusion or embarrassment'; travelling on the train: 'Unless you want the experience, do not do it at five o'clock as there are official pushers to



1. *Aida* in Tokyo, orchestral rehearsal.
2. The audience entering the Tokyo Dome.
3. Just before the overture!

push you into the train,' and so on. There were many positives from this tour for the Trust. We were there during an international Musicians' Union convention. The Australian representative attending was the Sydney secretary with whom I had been negotiating for five years on the Opera Ballet award. We met, along with his Japanese counterpart, and he advised that word was coming back from the convention of an Australian orchestra of the highest repute playing for *Aida* in the Big Egg, which he considered was an excellent ambassador for Australia. People were impressed by the rehearsals as we had not performed at that stage. It went well and was managed smoothly because we had all the control.

On our return, negotiations began for a return trip and a recording of *Aida*, as well as *Carmen* at the Sydney Football Stadium. I was offered an attractive job with the International Opera Festival; double my salary plus expenses but it meant living in Los Angeles and negotiating with Canadian and American Musicians' Unions for a performance in San Francisco and later in Italy. Being aware of the company's reputation and disputes with the union in Canada, I was wary. For Tokyo, dancers had come from Canada and only accommodation and fares were paid before the performances, so the dancers had no money until after the performances. I did not want to work for a management who acted that way, so declined the offer. Regrettably, a few months later the Trust ceased to operate and with it ceased *Australian Orchestral Enterprises* and the possibility for *Carmen*. The timing for this orchestra and the freelance initiative was good but not so for the Trust. We needed financial support, something the Trust could not provide and I was not inclined to approach funding bodies for support. We had good years in 1988 and 1989, brought in a lot of income and balanced the books. We were the only department to deliver a profit, of $50,000 from orchestral activities, to the Trust in the last year of its operation. This was mostly from the production of *Aida*.

The Elizabethan Sinfonietta playing under the Sydney Opera House Concert Hall 'doughnuts' for the *Mr Donut* Concert.

Another musical event we were involved with was the *Mr Donut* Twentieth Anniversary Concert at the Sydney Opera House. *Mr Donut* was a Japanese company with many franchise holders in Australia who came together for a big convention of 2,000 delegates talking doughnuts. This private event was very appropriately held in the Concert Hall where there were huge acoustic doughnut type rings suspended above the stage to help the sound quality. Takashi Asahina, conductor of the Osaka Philharmonic Orchestra, was invited to Australia to conduct an orchestra with a program of western and Japanese music, including his arrangements of folk music. He made me a gift of the score for these pieces when he left. The orchestra played very well as usual. There were three Japanese soloists including Japan's foremost *shakuhachi* player, a *fue* (flute) player and a *koto* (long zither) player. I had never heard these instruments before. They were very effective and the western sound he had arranged behind them was quite beautiful and successful.

Conductor Takashi Asahina in action with the Elizabethan Sinfonietta.

As well as the orchestra, we hired organist David Drury[14]. After a couple of rehearsals, we gave two or three performances for the convention, which took place over a couple of days. The musicians were comfortable with the music and the conductor. It appeared to be well-received but it was difficult to know with Japanese audiences, particularly in this corporate situation, whether they enjoyed the musical message or were just being polite. The Japanese folk song arrangements were superb and the melodies were lovely. The soloists played authentically, but also matched the western sound. The orchestra had a great sense of satisfaction and musical achievement; an interesting experience for them. We have a western tradition where the orchestra goes on stage, sits and tunes briefly. Then the leader/concertmaster stands in front and formally tunes the orchestra as an assurance they are ready and in tune. A formal routine. He sits, the conductor comes on. The Japanese had taken over the Opera House staff and had two personnel alongside each Opera House staff member: over-management. The Japanese were there to do as they were told. There was no initiative to be taken. As manager of the orchestra I was given the running sheet for the day down to the last second. It was well-orchestrated and they were adamant about sticking to it. In the arts anything can happen and it does. To get sixty-odd people on stage is a big ask, especially when the organizers do not speak English. The orchestra had been briefed but the Japanese manager had not noted the leader's tuning up before the conductor entered. So while the orchestra was waiting quietly for its leader, the Japanese crew was about to send the conductor on stage. The principal Japanese stage manager did not speak English and was confused and annoyed when I said the leader must go first. I had to stand in front of the conductor hoping not to cause a diplomatic incident. He was friendly, affable and used to working with western orchestras, so he knew the procedure, but was not prepared to intervene against the organization. Everyone had their role: his was to conduct the orchestra. I got the leader on stage, followed by the conductor, and all was well. The audience was not aware of what was happening backstage and in retrospect it was funny, but it was taken very seriously. Afterwards there was a meeting and no doubt someone's head rolled.

At the end of 1989 we had a gross income of $527,000. None of the costs were supported by public monies. From the income, 65% went to musicians' salaries, 26% to administrative overheads, 6% to production costs and 3% to publicity and promotion. The focus was getting the show up and running and paying musicians to keep them available. It showed we could go forward but we needed better publicity resources which I hoped might be possible through sponsorship. I wrote to some 100 of the top 200 companies registered in Sydney with a call to help. The response was encouraging but we needed an experienced fundraiser to find out how these people might help us. I was prepared to be completely flexible on what we could offer

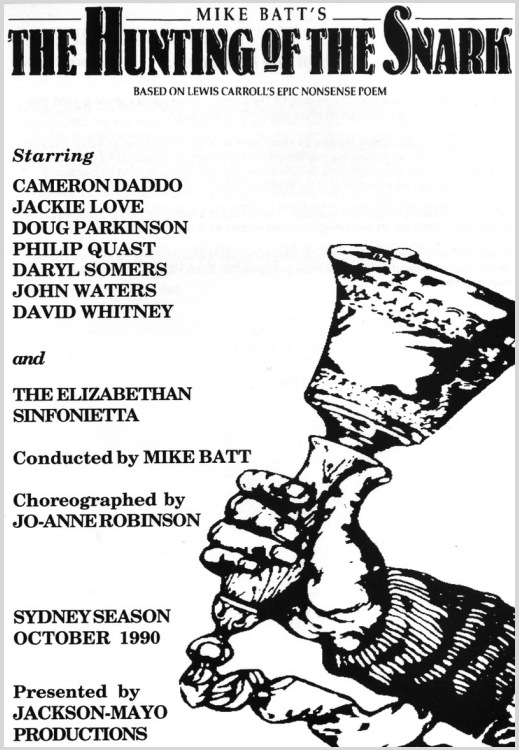
14 David Drury (1961-), Australian musician, former organist St James Church, Sydney, has released four solo recordings. Since 1992 Director of Music, St Paul's College, University of Sydney.

but a fundraiser was not something the Trust could cover. We all know now it takes years to get proper funding support from the corporate and private sector. We continued responding to any possible engagements, trying to capitalize on what we had already achieved, but we were coming to the end of the award negotiation and the transfer of the Elizabethan Philharmonic Orchestra, with little time to generate new work.

The Elizabethan Philharmonic Orchestra finally transferred on 31st December 1989, eventually becoming the Opera Australia Orchestra. I remember being very physically and emotionally tired. There was a sense of relief that I would no longer lose sleep over it and a weight lifted from my shoulders. There were other positive challenges ahead. The Trust was based in Regent Street, Chippendale, a two-story L-shape complex, with three different buildings and a central courtyard parking area. The main building, facing Regent Street, was an old Victorian house, accommodating the Finance department and Director's office. There was a stand-alone rectangular building, housing the Membership department and Australian Content until it moved to the main block. Opposite, making the other end of the L-shape, was a two-story building with a big room at the top, which I occupied. Initially it housed the Sydney Orchestra files and material. After its transfer, I worked there on *Orchestral Enterprises* and the Shakespeare Project. There was storage underneath where everything from Dowling Street had been placed; some forty years of Trust history, part of the archive we have today. There was also a small boardroom and kitchen. The boardroom was used frequently: where many good and bad decisions were made by the Directors. The decision to go into administration was made there, but it was also the room where we put together Bell Shakespeare. This building had been occupied by Neville Wran[15], and although quite modest compared with the Dowling Street building, it was properly equipped.

The last date for the orchestra was *The Hunting of the Snark* in 1990. Mike Batt, an English conductor/writer/composer and arranger, had taken the Lewis Carroll story and set it to music for a large orchestra of about 74 players, which included a rhythm section consisting of a rock 'n roll style guitarist, a drummer and bass. He had written, very successfully, a 1980s rock guitar sound into a classical score, doing what the Japanese had done with the *Mr Donut* program, putting two unrelated musical forces together. There was a very good guitarist from Melbourne who did the Sydney dates, sitting with a highly disciplined classical orchestra, being free and open with his solos. Musically, there were some tremendously interesting moments for lateral thinkers. If only interested in classical music, this was not for you, but if you were open to the story and could open your ears to a sound rather than a genre of music, this was a great show. We had two or three rehearsals and it came together very quickly. It was performed by the Elizabethan Sinfonietta at the Hills Centre and later in Melbourne without our involvement. There was no formal ending of

15 Labor Premier NSW 1976-1986.



this orchestra; we just did not book them anymore. Even today, we could find a similar orchestra that would do exactly the same thing. The feature of the Sinfonietta was its consistency. The calibre of the players was such that everything would be consistent. Their capacity to bring something up very fast on one or two calls was high given their individual skill level. I would love to see someone take that concept, run with it and make something from it, but it does require commitment. It is not the sort of thing you would do only for the money, nor could you do it with subsidy, if there were too many questions as to why material was presented.

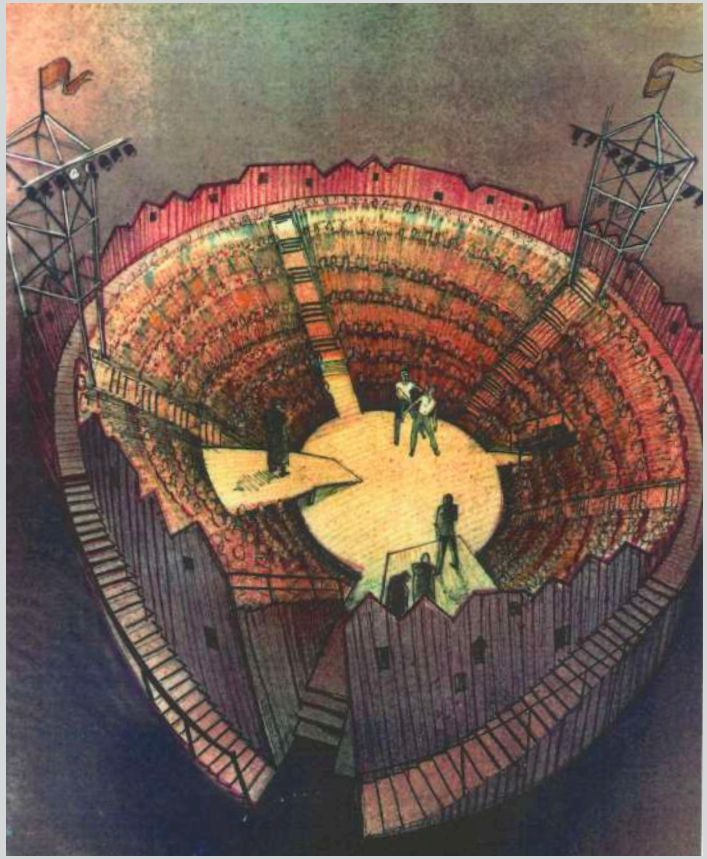
Also, I had been working on a retraining program for musicians, to be run at the National Institute of Dramatic Art as a NIDA initiative. It had support from the ABC and the Sydney Symphony Orchestra. It had always been our policy to sit younger players next to more experienced players in the orchestra as a way of creating a feeling of youthful exuberance at the same time as control and

maturity. We were always thinking of ways to help musicians develop within and outside the orchestra, but I did not have anything further to do with it as I had a new demander of my time: I began to study law. I was not proud of my school academic record. My father had been a musician but at the end of his life wanted one of his sons to take up law. My brother George is a fine pure mathematician. Having been a loose cannon, I felt it was time to rectify the mistakes of my youth and do some study. Working at the Trust with the Elizabethan Sinfonietta, it was important to have legal documents in place for industrial advocacy and I learnt the necessity to negotiate and make agreements in writing. I had learnt a non-written agreement was as important and enforceable, although harder to do so. I was developing musical activity which required contracting and dealing with people who were notorious in contracting in a way favourable to them at the expense of others. I knew I had to understand the law involved. In the first year of developing the Sinfonietta, the Trust was pulling back on expenses and the last thing I could do was to go to the Trust lawyer for draft contracts for eight or nine different shows. It seemed I should become skilled in this, prompting me to begin part-time study. I was accepted into the part-time law course at University of Technology, Sydney, in mid-1989. By then I was about to wrap up my involvement with the Trust, so this was an opportunity to put more time into study. It took me nine years part-time. By the time I had completed three semesters, the signs were clear at the Trust that there was no future there for me. During the second semester I began contract law and realized what a minefield I had been walking through, a vindication of my decision to study law. Study began at 6pm three nights a week, plus assignments. It was one of the hardest things I ever took on, but one of the most rewarding. It was really satisfying when I finished the course and had beaten the natural attrition list. One professor, a barrister from London, had a senior position in the law school and gave an introductory welcome to students. There were about 220 new students, all working full or part-time, mostly mature age. He made a very sobering statement to the effect that by the time the course was finished (if we finished), we will have done one or all of three things: changed your relationship, moved home, changed your job. All three happened to me.

Bell Shakespeare Company

In 1989, an arts benefactor, Tony Gilbert[1], approached the Trust with the idea of supporting a project involving the works of Shakespeare. Well-known Australian actor/director John Bell was known to Tony from student days at Sydney University, where Tony had seen John's performances, particularly in **Shakespearean roles**. He had money and the willingness to support a project through an organization such as the Trust following Nimrod Theatre's financial woes and demise[2]. Adam Salzer asked if I would be prepared to do some work setting up a Shakespeare company. It was agreed I would do the administration with John directing. At that time there was no company name, it was just a Shakespeare Project, to play in the round like at the Globe Theatre. John, who had worked with the Royal Shakespeare Company, the Old Tote Theatre Company and Nimrod Theatre, wanted it simple and portable.

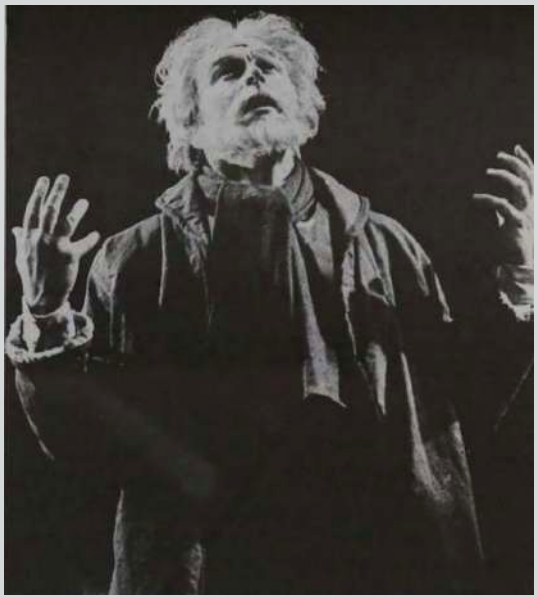
I was charged with finding out how to construct a traveling portable theatre and its cost. I met with circus people and looked at tiered seating in the round put up and down whenever circuses came to town. I visited one circus west of Sydney to talk about problems and material. Their seating was more basic than the comfort and safety we wanted. I could see an industrial or worker's compensation issue in the wings if seating was not safe. This portable, possible, concept theatre was called the Wills Theatre. With John's input, I prepared a budget based on a speculative outcome for two productions within a very short time frame. The idea was to do *Hamlet* and *Merchant of Venice*. We talked at length about the real costs of what he wanted as well as looking at costs for the seating. The setup figure was just under $1 million. We knew to get



An artist's impression of tent theatre-in-the-round.

1 Tony Gilbert, AM (1923-2009), businessman and philanthropist. Was a Board member of Nimrod Theatre for 12 years and then for Bell Shakespeare (1991-2004). A major benefactor of Bell Shakespeare and the University of Sydney. ('Gentleman with a love for theatre', obituary by John Bell, *The Australian* 1 May 2009.)

2 Nimrod Theatre Company, Sydney, founded in 1970 by John Bell, Richard Wherrett and Ken Horler, produced mostly Australian work until its demise in 1988. Originally located in Nimrod St, Kings Cross, the company moved in 1974 to Belvoir St, Surry Hills, where the venue became known as Belvoir St Theatre, now occupied by Company B. (*See How It Runs, Nimrod and the New Wave* by Julian Meyrick, published by Currency Press, Sydney, 2002.)



John Bell as King Lear, Nimrod Theatre, Sydney, 1984, (reproduced in *Trust News*, June/July 1990).

safe, touring seating, particularly for the audience sitting ten rows high, would be difficult and expensive; without serious patronage it could not be done.

For the first production, we went to the Hordern Pavilion at Sydney Showground. It had seating available in a quasi-globe setup in an empty pavilion with a stage. It was problematic as John wanted changes in the set to achieve certain effects and did not want to be confined by a small stage, but it worked. Tony Gilbert was very happy and funded the company to get underway. Our 1990 news release was dated April 23rd, Shakespeare's birthday. (***Front Row***—formerly *Trust News*—June 1990.) The company was not called Bell Shakespeare at that stage. The intention was that it be financed completely from the private sector with shareholders and donors. There were many appeal dinners and lunches. With John at the helm, we met with a major English offshore bank. They came forward with a substantial offer of assistance, giving the project credibility. At the dinners, John recited and a couple of musicians played music of the period. He would wander round the tables and everyone would be asked to donate before they left.

The first performances took place in January 1991 during the Sydney Festival. It was very hot in the Hordern Pavilion but they were good productions and enjoyable. At the opening night there was quite a buzz for ***Hamlet***. By then it had the imprimatur of Bell Shakespeare Company. It was John's company and he was free to do what he wanted. A perfect example of setting up a company; first find your Artistic Director, everything else follows; the money, administration, programming. The plan was to have twelve actors with a backstage crew presenting two touring productions a year. John was quoted as saying, 'If the Trust establishes this company successfully, it will change the attitude of every actor in Australia towards the Trust.'

Adam Salzer was the company's Executive Producer, and once it was set up, my job was done. A new board of management was established, of which Tony Gilbert was a member, and **Bell Shakespeare** became independent very quickly. There was a terrific response from individuals and supporters, but unfortunately, initially, the arts industry was somewhat cool about the project, another tall poppy syndrome moment in Australia, perhaps. Regardless, the Company celebrated its 30th anniversary in 2020 and attracts audiences for its excellent productions which tour around Australia.

In discussing how to 'sell Shakespeare', a marketing expert was brought in to advise. He listened as good ideas went around the table; such as appealing to the audience's academic side, higher intellect, sense of history. He stood up with an object in his hand, saying "it was very

simple. We would mount a campaign and this year it is for a 'can' of Shakespeare and that's what we're going to give 'em, a can of Shakespeare." So there we were, back to a consumer driven package, all higher thoughts pushed aside!

I left the Trust in 1990 not long before the first season of the Bell Shakespeare in January 1991. My abiding memory and overall impression was I had come from a war zone where everyone was fighting in corners and no one was really heading in the right direction. There were advisers showing directions, like Ken Tribe, and it was a grueling experience. I had the responsibility of sorting the orchestras out. It was grueling to do so because I was under personal attack, as would anyone have been who took on this challenge. This was balanced by the fact I could do something I had wanted to do for a long time; run a freelance orchestra, and take on unusual dates involving challenges no-one else wanted. Having an orchestra of colleagues, the Elizabethan Sinfonietta, who stood with me artistically and administratively with full support, was the other side of the coin. The players were important as people and they contributed (and those still around continue this), to the musical fabric of Australia in a way most people will never understand. They supply the background support for the young Richard Tognettis[3] coming forward. They have given those people substance to work on, they are not lost at sea anymore. There is guidance and help and they have given it because of their demonstrated capacity to show what is possible outside of the employment orchestras. The musical fabric of any country is the people involved in it working outside the normal established groups. In England, besides four London orchestras, nearby in Guildford there is an amateur orchestra, and a Brighton Orchestra; dependent on this vast pool of players vying for positions in London orchestras. They provide the standards upon which that orchestral or musical community rests its future.

In the arts, there has to be something to take away that is more than a good reading of Shakespeare or a good performance of a symphony. There has to be something else available to all and I am proud to be part of that.

John Polson as Hamlet, 1991.

3 Richard Tognetti, AO (1965-) Australian violinist and conductor, studied at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music. Artistic Director and Leader of the Australian Chamber Orchestra.

Legal Possibilities

By 1990, although immersed in my second semester of law studies at university, I was unemployed, with no savings; living off whatever I had earnt at the Trust, which was not a huge salary. A new student of law at my age faces many hurdles and new concepts to come to terms with. The course was designed for mature-aged people but no special favours were given. My colleagues were in full-time employment, most had families, and the lectures were mostly in the evening, to fit people's schedules. This was all new to me: I had never done formal study of this nature. In law there was a lot of information and history to take on board, especially in the first few years. The English background to our Australian law system was huge. I had to learn to focus and cover large quantities of material as quickly as possible. It was challenging and attitude changing. If you wanted to find out the truth about something, you had to research and delve. You could not just skim the surface and take someone else's view. Decisions had to be based on objective and thorough investigation, not individual or textbook views. Everything you read and did had to be challenged. This quickly became a habit. By third year, my objective questioning skills were very useful. I wished I had them previously.

A job with reasonable income which allowed time to study was necessary. The public service seemed ideal. I applied for a position in the Sydney Registry of the Federal Court in Phillip Street. I asked Trust Chairman, Lloyd Waddy[1], QC, to provide a reference. He wrote a wonderful reference about my work at the Trust, particularly during the turmoil of its last days. I think it was one of the reasons I was offered the job. With flexitime in the public service I could finish at 4pm in Phillip Street, get to the University library at 5pm, and lectures from 6pm. I was in charge of the Registry counter. We filed documents for the court and interviewed people declaring personal bankruptcy. We also took in documentation from companies requesting insolvency. As it was relevant to my legal studies, I found it interesting. I was nominated for, and became a Justice of the Peace, New South Wales, but I found it difficult to live on a small salary. My wife and I had a daughter, Frances, in 1992. Since her pregnancy, my wife had not worked. I needed to finish the law course as quickly as possible. Despite liking the Federal Court work, I found a better paid position in the Department of Education, Employment and Training in Maitland. We had just bought and moved to a property in Halton, in the Barrington Tops, not far from Maitland. This relieved the burden of renting in Sydney, but meant commuting by train to Sydney three days a week for my studies. Between 1993 and 1994 I progressed up the grades in DEET which led to work in the Newcastle office, and subsequently, the Sydney area office, just around the corner

1 Wing Commander The Hon Lloyd Waddy, AM RFD QC (RAAFR Retired), (born Sydney, 1939). Justice of the Family Court of Australia 1998-2009. Fellow of St Paul's College, University of Sydney 1971-2019. Foundation Director Australia-Britain Society, established 1971. He joined the Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust Board of Directors in 1973, was appointed Chairman in 1993, continuing in the role to the present day.

from UTS. We came back to Sydney but my wife had been suffering from postnatal depression and communication between us had all but disintegrated; the only thing holding us together was our lovely daughter. I had to finish the law course and enter the legal profession.

Once I finished the degree, I had to do six months full-time at the College of Law before practising as a solicitor, and there was a fee which was seemingly beyond my means in the circumstances. We sold the Halton property and bought another in Maitland closer to transport. I took a position at Newcastle University Conservatorium looking after publicity and teaching double bass. I was also looking after a new *Stuart & Sons* piano. Wayne Stuart had received a TAFE grant to develop a concert grand using his unique approach. As he needed a research environment, the Conservatorium took it on as a research project. Wayne came to the university with two pianos and developed his business there. I was to look after whatever he needed and help with the university's relationship with the project. This was in 1995; a significant meeting which was to play an important part in a later Trust decision.

I was coming to the end of my law studies and decided to seek Articles of Clerkship. They had been abandoned in New South Wales but still existed in Victoria. I had one subject, Copyright Law, left to complete my studies and could do it in Victoria. UTS was amenable and gave me approval to do this externally at Deakin University. I received my degree in 1998 and found a job with a

Wayne Stuart building one of his pianos.

small legal firm specializing in employment and copyright law, areas with which I was familiar and interested in. I got my Articles which were to run for twelve months and began work in 1998. It was an intense, busy job, dealing with copyright, general complaint areas and employment. Because of my maturity, I was soon dealing with clients and advising them, under supervision, and writing up documentation to aid those clients. It was stimulating and interesting but the money was not good and regardless of my age, an articled clerk could not earn more than a junior employee.

I envisaged work in the legal profession in Melbourne, specializing in copyright or employment law. One of our partners had run a successful High Court case establishing Contractors' Law in Australia. I was comfortable with this: having been a contractor in England and Australia. Through work at the Trust, I understood the relationships between contractors and employers. I completed Articles on March 1st 1999 and was formally admitted to practice as a barrister and solicitor of the Supreme Court of Victoria. The firm was assisting me in finding a position and arranged a couple of interviews with placement agencies specializing in that area of law.

Shortly before this, I received a call from the Helfgotts, having tracked me down as the last known person associated with the Elizabethan Sydney Orchestra concert on May 25th 1987[2]. They were seeking access to the recording. I contacted Lloyd Waddy who agreed the tapes should be made available and suggested I broker the deal on the Trust's behalf. The whole thing was put to bed and resolved before I left the articles in Melbourne. I was looking for possible legal employment when the Trust Chairman, Lloyd Waddy, rang to advise me of a recent development of the Trust. He had been astounded to receive a call from a solicitor seeking to know if the Trust still existed. It had been in provisional administration, having not been able to recover from debts created in the late 1980s, but was never liquidated. Directors Lloyd Waddy and Brian Larking had worked hard for a year to save it from liquidation. Together with Dr Rodney Seaborn[3] and Lady Potter[4], they pledged $10,000 each, and received $2,500 each from Deputy Chair Frank Hooke and James Strong. An approach was made to the Supreme Court, supported by the provisional Liquidator. Justice Gummow allowed the Trust to come out of Provisional Liquidation and resume trading. Lloyd Waddy became Chair, working with his secretary until they managed to get back to a balance of almost $300,000. Other Board members who contributed to the Trust's progress in the 1990s were Judy White, Bradley D. Cooper and Gregory K. Burton.

Director and Chairman, Lloyd Waddy, was also the honorary executive with files and furniture floor to ceiling in a Pitt Street office. A secretary dealt with statutory requirements to keep the

2 See Chapter Six.
3 Dr Rodney Seaborn, (1912-2008) AO, OBE, eminent Sydney psychiatrist and generous patron of the arts through the Seaborn, Broughton & Walford Foundation.
4 Sir William Ian Potter (1902-1994) and Lady Primrose Potter (b.1931), philanthropists and great supporters of the arts over many years. Sir Ian had a close and long association with the Trust from 1954 until his death.

figures before the Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC) and prepare annual audits, but otherwise the Trust was inactive except for services like superannuation, membership (supporters rather than beneficiaries of events), and *Halftix*. When Lloyd responded in the affirmative, the solicitor advised that the Trust was a beneficiary of the late Nerissa Johnson's estate; 50% of approximately $12 million, " to be used by the Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust for the provision of overseas scholarships divided as nearly as may be equally between singers and between other musicians and conductors."[5] Apart from that, there were no conditions as to how the money was spent, invested or distributed. During Lloyd's call to me, he suggested I might be involved. He seemed to sense my situation and said, 'You don't want to be a lawyer.'! Soon after, Lloyd and I met in Sydney and had deep discussions over the best and most innovative way forward with the scholarships from the $6m to honour the bequest. These centred on no age or sex limitations, but awards to Australians, of excellence or potential excellence, who would bring advantages to other Australians on their return. One of our examples was Dame Joan Sutherland: Australian, helping Australians and excellent! "If she applied for a scholarship to learn yodelling she would be hard to resist!" I returned to Melbourne to think how the Trust could provide a scholarship program and honour the will. I prepared a proposal paper for Board discussion, which considered using the funds for scholarships to study music overseas, how some of the monies should be invested, how income should be disbursed, who should be the recipients and how it should be administered. The Board agreed wholeheartedly with my approach and invited me to become General Manager of the Trust and run the program.

5 Extract from the last Will & Testament of Nerissa Johnson.

AETT General Manager 1999

I re-joined the Trust on March 10th 1999. Having been given the green light for our overseas music scholarship proposal, I had responsibility for collecting the money from the estate and setting up an office. The Trust's small space in Pitt Street was inadequate for what we were embarking on. There was not much money for alternative premises. At this stage the Johnson estate had not been disbursed: the money was still in shares and stocks and it would take time to be realized. The lawyers were naturally very cautious. They had another problem: if they did not make a dispersion to beneficiaries before 29th June there would be tax applied to the estate of $1 million, thereby reducing the amount we would receive. The estate was split between the Trust and the National Gallery of Australia in Canberra, with $6.1 million to go to each party. The Trust and solicitors being based in Sydney, it fell to us to deal with more administrative work to comply with requirements to get the money.

The sticking point was that the executors and solicitors were not disposed to allocate the funds before June in case there was a tax liability which they would have no funds to cover. Our legal advisers said there would be no tax liability if it was dispersed by 29th June. The only way we could get the money was to provide a guarantee to the estate that should there be a tax liability, we would meet it. The National Gallery was prepared to do this because it was in everyone's interest and both parties put up the guarantee. Our big problem was asking our bank, after ten years of virtual inactivity, to underwrite a guarantee of $1 million. This took some negotiation; I was in daily contact with their relationships manager. Eventually they understood what we would receive and were convinced it would happen. Over several months, while the bank was apparently positive and prepared to help, there was very little action. On 29th June the bank gave us the guarantee. It was cliff hanging stuff. We offered the guarantee to the executors and they disbursed the estate immediately. There was no tax liability; the guarantee was never called on and we had $6.1 million in the bank.

Investing the Johnson Bequest

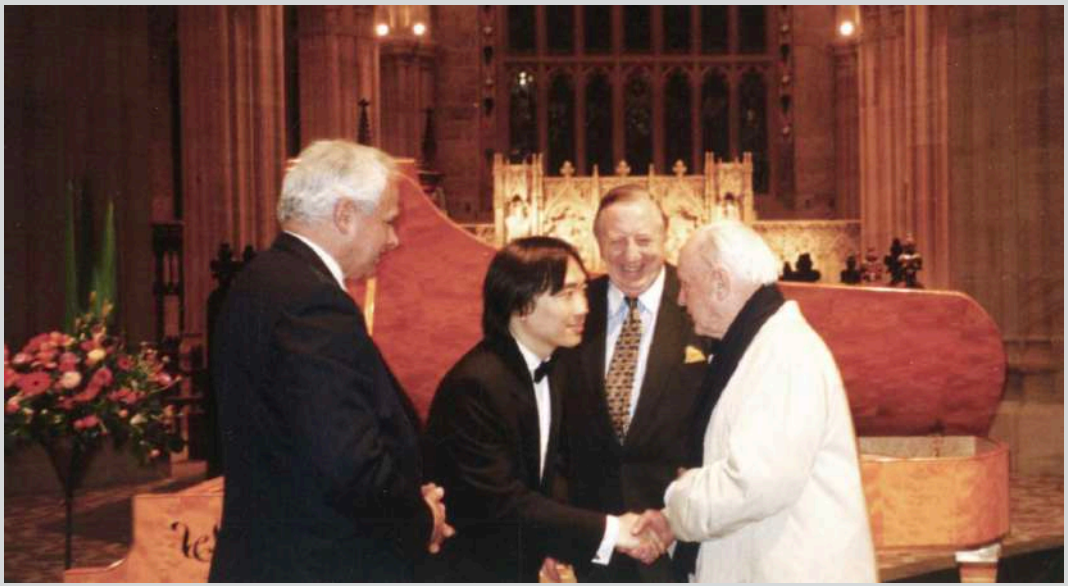
The Johnson bequest money was initially invested with *Permanent Trustee, Credit Suisse, Maple-Brown Abbott* and *GK Newman* in the share market with global issues impacting. I dealt with the managers of the bequest investments, handling negotiations and reports. The Trust Board made decisions on the information I gave them and, with probably one exception in 2013, all the investments were brokered and negotiated through me and a consultant, Geoffrey Newman, employed by the Trust. The one exception was the opportunity to take advantage of a flourishing new investment with *Magellan Global Fund*. Trust Director James Bell introduced the

Board to Hamish Douglass at *Magellan* and an investment of $1 million was made with very good results. The nitty-gritty of the documentation came through the Trust under my supervision. I received monthly reports on the managers from Geoffrey Newman. Originally there were four managers. As things changed in those early days, overseas stocks were doing very well while Australian stocks were not. We had a good mix of overseas investments offsetting the low returns of the Australian, so we maintained overall a high income level. As that changed, the *Credit Suisse* investment was redeemed and the others were supervised by Geoffrey Newman, who supplied us with excellent information so we had the capacity to make investment decisions on a monthly basis.

There were a couple of changes made in the fifteen years of the investment program, the reason being the investments the Trust decided on were basically no risk blue chip investments with lower returns but greater stability. The policy was always to look at a ten year period. Unlike other investors, who were in it for quick turnover and fast, high profits, we were interested in stability and continual profits. When the Global Financial Crisis (GFC) hit in 2007-2008, it was a good policy and we were able to ride through that storm. On paper, we lost nearly half a million dollars, but as there were no liquidated assets, we were able to claw it back when things got better. Early on it was difficult to predict income from investments, but now it is a little easier. We prepare an annual budget, two or three months in advance of the next year, finalized by November. Our trading year is January to December. We do cash flow analysis on a quarterly basis to inform directors as to where the money is going, where the costs are. I prepare monthly reports to the Board with a chart of expenditure so they can check against the budget for any blowouts to be addressed. Generally our expenditure stays on budget now. There is not much high risk and the investments are designed to not have a high risk element.

My legal training and understanding of taxation law helped me greatly in briefing our solicitors and keeping the momentum going. This was the training and skill I brought back to the Trust; as well as being able to write contracts. Lloyd Waddy was a director of the **Seaborn Broughton Walford Foundation**. Dr Rodney Seaborn had bought and refurbished the Independent Theatre[1] in the late 1990s to bring it back to operational with renewed fire precautions. Rodney had hoped theatre activities would develop but his initial season a few years' earlier had been disastrous and he lost money because he had underwritten it. The theatre was not bringing in a return. His personal wish was to own a hospital, a hotel and a theatre (he did all three in his lifetime), but he was not prepared to lose too much money. Lloyd suggested the Trust become a tenant in the

1 The Independent Theatre Dramatic Society was founded by actor/director Doris Fitton (1897-1985), in 1930. Initially it rehearsed and performed in the St James' Hall and then the Savoy cinema in Bligh St, Sydney. In 1938 the company leased the old Criterion at 269 Miller St, North Sydney, and in September 1939 the venue was renamed the Independent Theatre and became the company's permanent home, run under Fitton's direction until 1977 when ill health forced her retirement. The company produced many plays, providing experience and employment for actors, directors, designers and production workers as well as educational and training activities. Fitton's autobiography, *Not Without Heat and Dust*, was published in 1981.



Warwick Ross, William Chen, Lloyd Waddy and Dr Rodney Seaborn in front of a *Stuart & Sons* piano.

theatre[2]. We rented a derelict room at the front, an old shop facing Miller Street, with its own entrance. We put in a new floor, security, an access door to the theatre, and wired the electricity.

We started the first scholarship activities in 2000. There was no formal relationship with the theatre, although I thought it likely to be very good for music. Rodney had bought second-hand cloth seats which absorbed a lot of sound. The floor was carpeted, also absorbing sound. The auditorium floor was raked up to the level of the balcony balustrade, which was good, but the absorbent materials did not help the acoustics. There was no real diffusion. The walls were flat and parallel and there were potential problems with standing waves and acoustic issues. There was a large proscenium arch at the end of the seating with another four or five seats flat on the floor in front of it. The stage was nearly two metres high, creating sightline problems for those sitting closest to it. The stage was a cavity open at the top with no fly tower due to height restrictions on the building, but there was a big gabled ceiling above the stage which trapped sound. Despite these issues, I could see it was potentially a good room for music.

2 Prior to this, the Trust had rented a room across the lane from the Stables Theatre in a house owned by Dr Rodney Seaborn. To save money, The Trust then moved to a vacant suite in the Bank of New South Wales "TRUST" building on the corner of King and Castlereagh Streets, before Lloyd Waddy moved The Trust's files and furniture to an even cheaper, smaller, office in Pitt Street.

Chalwin Estate and Concert Series

The Trust had received $200,000 from the Chalwin Estate, enough to give motivation for musical activity, so we initiated and presented the Chalwin Concert Series at the Independent in 1999. We had a concert including Schubert's *Trout* Quintet and Octet using a trestle stage erected in front of the proscenium arch. My aim was to test the room and see what worked if musicians were not playing on the stage. The players were the Sydney String Quartet led by Ronald Thomas, plus prominent wind players, Mark Walton, clarinet, Tony Buddle, French horn, and Gordon Skinner, bassoon. I played double bass and Gerard Willems, piano. We called the group the New Trust Players. There was a good result musically and acoustically. I hoped for more opportunities to develop music programs but with no idea about the way forward. Rodney Seaborn was not interested, as his focus was on theatre. I had put working as a musician behind me when going to Melbourne to finish law and take articles. However, while in Melbourne, I had played, unpaid, in a chamber orchestra, *Concertante Strings*, which gave four or five concerts a year, led by a violinist and former member of the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra. At the Independent my interest in playing revived. I played a couple of dates with the Sydney String Quartet, but had no desire to perform as a professional.

The New Trust Players performing a Chalwin concert at the Independent Theatre in 2003.

Awarding Scholarships

The **scholarship program** began to take a lot of my time; it was decided to award a large number of scholarships in the first few years to get the program going and test the water. We did not seek to just give money to people. Overall, they received the value of the scholarship awarded but we undertook to pay fees and costs on behalf of the scholar directly to the training institution. There were some living costs we could not manage but where possible we paid accommodation costs directly to the provider. We would otherwise be giving money to young people with little management skills and experience with the ways of the world who may find themselves vulnerable to sharp movers.

Gerard Willems in front of the *Stuart & Sons* piano he played to record the *32 Beethoven Piano Sonatas*.

If they were not skilled with budgeting, they may not plan expenditure and could run out of money. Our control over administration of funds tended to work well. We built rapport with institutions and people abroad and were able to get informal feedback on the scholars from their institutions which helped us understand how the money was helping and the likely return. The program application had a requirement the recipient demonstrate what they would return to Australia. We were looking for more than just an improved player.

Gerard Willems was a good example. His scholarship request was to meet Loretta Goldberg in America, a specialist in early piano music. He was already established, as Head of the Sydney Conservatorium Piano Department, and academically well advanced in early music. He wanted to hear how the exponents played it. We suggested he apply for more money and awarded him a Queen Elizabeth scholarship. He went to America, met Andreas Staier[3] in Europe and Trevor Pinnock[4] in England, spending time with great early music exponents. He looked at curricula being taught at the conservatoria and universities these musicians were associated with, and at the original halls where this music was played. He gained a thorough understanding of the early piano music genre and on his return was in a perfect position to write an undergraduate course in Australia for early piano music. He went a step further, becoming a champion of the *Stuart & Sons* piano we had supported, and Gerard was the first Australian to record the 32 Beethoven sonatas; another benefit for Australia as these recordings are authoritative contributions to that genre.

Between 1999 and 2006, eighty scholarships were awarded. There was no age limit or closing date, applications could be made at any time. We set a timetable with successful scholars from

3 Andreas Staier (b. 1955), German pianist and harpsichordist.
4 Trevor Pinnock (b.1946), English harpsichordist and conductor. Founder of the English Concert.

day one, which involved communication. Rather than have an applicant filling in a form, we wanted to know the person applying would use the money properly. The best way to understand what they were going to do was to know their aspirations from the beginning. I spent time talking informally with applicants. We wanted to know the what, with whom, when and return to Australia, expressed in the applicant's own words. This encouraged people to think about it; some could not answer these questions and their application did not go any further. Successful ones were pleased to talk about what they wanted to achieve. They were asked to think why they were seeking to work with a particular teacher and how their technique would benefit. We could evaluate whether the assistance was going to be worth it or not and if the budget and project were appropriate. Before putting recommendations to the directors, I worked this through with an applicant. They were given a form to present budgetary details to ensure all aspects were covered. We spent time on this to ensure realistic daily expenses, such as public transport fares, were included. I encouraged fact finding rather than guess work so applicants understood what was involved. We looked at what could be paid directly, confirmed the fees and sent cheques directly to teachers or institutions. The pressure was off the applicant having to deal with payments. Our scholars were able to go away with enough money, so they did not have to resort to working in a bar to live. We tried to send them off with a budget they understood because they had prepared it.

These eighty scholars were managed on individual merit; everyone was different. The recommendation artistically is very simple. This was not a competition but an award; we wanted people deserving of assistance. In many cases we gave assistance to help a potential player with weak technique who could benefit from a specialist teacher. They had musical capacity, demonstrated musicianship and could be helped. Most competitions and awards are based on technical prowess, but we never compared, even with four or five pianists we considered them on their own merit and on their articulated aspirations. Knowing they were seeking improvement meant they were almost there. They had to demonstrate in a recording that they were worthy, academically and musically, of assistance. We had assessment panels which I chaired. After long discussions with applicants, I understood what they were capable of doing and whether they were consistent. Another panellist was expert in the musical genre (ie for a jazz player we had a jazz expert) and the third panellist was expert in that instrument.

With my experience in the recording industry, I knew a great player could be damaged by a bad recording and advised applicants to record in a studio. We only needed two contrasting short pieces, to show musicianship and capacity on the instrument. We were not looking for dazzling technique; if technique is perfect, our assistance was probably not needed. I advised them to consider the recording as a critical part of the application and to spend a bit of money if

necessary. If they presented a cassette tape dubbed over and re-recorded with a print-through from a previous recording not wiped properly, it said something about their musical integrity and raised a question as to whether they were prepared to do the best they could. Modern technology has made it possible to record well. Panel members, who never met or knew who else was assessing, were given copies of the recording. We do not publicize panellists' names. It is a small industry here. All I needed was someone to advise what they thought musically. People considered to be experts in their field and experienced enough to give an opinion were selected. They were not always the same people, it was whoever was available at the time but it was important we did not get into a dialogue, with people competing or negotiating against each other. They fed back to me what they thought. They were given the material and the study program. We asked, from their listening to the recording, if they considered the applicant capable of benefiting from their proposed program, in both dealing with the workload and capitalizing on the experience. If the response was positive, most got scholarships.

Scholarship Recipients

This is the same process we continue to use. We have had 100% success with those scholars who went away to study. One person did not take up the grant because he decided to become a priest. The great thing about this program is that such hard work has been done in getting the application up, the applicants are fully focused when they leave and are clear as to what they want to achieve, which is half the battle when you go to study. They have already asked the question as to what they want to take away from the teacher and can work towards that. **Fiona Chatwin**, a Melbourne based singer, had been performing new, classical music in Chapel Street Theatre, South Yarra, Melbourne and her focus and interest was in that genre. She was a postgraduate, ready to do good work at a senior level and applied to do a new music course for soprano voices in San Diego, America. It was the only university in the United States offering that genre of music. It is the leading course, so those who are interested go straight there and around San Diego are many musicians involved in that kind of music, including composers. In my spirit of keeping in touch with the institution, I received feedback. She had one year's assistance from us and stayed there to do a Ph.D. She is now considered a colleague rather than student because she is creating new directions for others to learn from. Two short operas have been written for her by Americans and performed. She married a composer there and directs **Villa Musica in San Diego**, an educational project offering the community free access to lessons to sing this sort of music. She has had great take-up from the community and is considered the leader in the field. A wonderful return for Australia—she does not need to be back here. It is an example of getting a person on track, directed. We have many such success stories.

The scholarship program is not limited to one award as others are. If you can prove your worth, you can apply for another project. If there is money available, and your plans are worthy, it is possible to be funded more than once. A young Sydney violinist, Alexandra Osborne, who had just left school, and been successful in a competition in New Zealand, was advised to study further in America. The family was not able to afford such an expense. Her parents managed to find enough money for her to audition for the Juilliard School in New York and hoped we could help. We do not want to send people off to set them up for disasters. No point in sending someone needing $60,000 a year with only $30,000 and knowing we cannot help them with the full period of study. We were concerned about misleading her by giving money without knowing how she could sustain the study. She auditioned and was offered full fee paid scholarships to the Julliard, the Manhattan School and the Curtis Institute of Music, which is one of the hardest institutions in the world to get in. Generally, they take one international violinist a year. If you are in that select group, it can lead to a place in the Philadelphia Orchestra. After communicating with specialist teachers in these institutions, she decided to go to Curtis and we agreed to fund her first year. Fees were covered; she needed accommodation, which was available on-campus and reasonably cost effective. She did her first year, unable to work without a Green Card as a student, but she was doing very well and achieving high outcomes. We decided then to fund her for three years and she achieved her undergraduate degree. During her time at Curtis, the Dean, pianist Gary Graffman, mentored her and started getting her concerts in Cleveland, outside Boston and in New York. She made her US debut in 2004 playing the Bruch *Violin Concerto No.1*, conducted by Tsung Yeh. In 2005 she played at the AETT Jubilee Concert at the Independent Theatre. She is now Acting Assistant Concertmaster for the National Symphony Orchestra of America. Another good return for Australia.

We also helped another young pianist, **Andrea Lam**, a number of times. She went to Yale University for a postgraduate performance course without an undergraduate degree. She excelled, was advised to do one year of academic study and was awarded an undergraduate degree to consolidate her Master's degree. We helped fund this process. She lives and works as a musician in New York. Curtis and Yale are two great musical institutions but very expensive to attend. Both musicians got in on their merit and had fee scholarships but needed assistance to stay there while studying. Their second applications were considered on their merit. We looked at the projects, they did another audition, we appraised them, assessed the outcomes and objectives.

To date over one hundred scholars have been helped but we do not disclose the amounts they receive. We do not spend the corpus of the estate which is invested, using only the investment returns for scholarships. For a number of years we did not award scholarships, having

got the momentum going earlier to understand the potential and the need. In 2008, eight years after initiating the scholarships, the global financial crisis hit. Like everyone else, our investment returns went into negative. Without income we decided not to give assistance until there was a financially healthy position again. By 2015 we were back on our feet and producing enough income to give scholarships again. We also have an exchange rate problem. If the Australian dollar is weak, people with scholarships have trouble as the money is paid in Australian dollars. If the dollar falls in value, scholars' expenses increase. We have not given many scholarships recently for these reasons, but we are looking at a healthy future although it is impossible to predict what is likely to happen.

The philosophy is to keep the corpus intact and only give what we can afford from the income. Mostly the scheme is promoted by word of mouth. Initially, I talked about the program with Deans of music institutions around Australia, following up visits with pamphlets and information. This was before computers took over administration and noticeboards still informed students and staff of scholarships and events. Now, teachers tend to know where opportunities are and seek them as well. The music world is quite small and it does not take long to find out what is on offer. Without a closing date, we assess at any time. Our only inhibition is lack of available funds. Discussions on application procedure and projects can take place at any time, and applications can be submitted when ready, not to a deadline.

Queen Elizabeth Scholars

The Trust is very proud of its association with Queen Elizabeth, our Foundation Patron in 1954. When we decided to support exceptional musicians with special awards, we decided to honour both the Trust and the musicians by naming such scholarships the Queen Elizabeth Scholarships. The chairman, Lloyd Waddy, applied to the Queen for permission. Only two scholars have received the Queen Elizabeth Scholarship to date: pianist Gerard Willems and singer **Lisa Roberts-Scott**. What distinguishes them from other scholars is the sort of people they are. We do not look for a Queen Elizabeth scholar, the scholar finds us. It is someone who fulfills all the requirements of a suitable program of study, returns to Australia, and is a leader of colleagues and younger people, especially in the future. Gerard Willems is a great, genuine, encourager and supporter of young players and of many concepts of music which go beyond his performance requirements. He is a leader who influences others through his position, as does the mezzo-soprano, Lisa Roberts-Scott. She went to Osimo, Italy, to study for one year with two Americans who had a school of vocal teaching seeking a return to a natural style of singing. Over the years an operatic style has developed which is pressured, puts stress on the body and results in a wide vibrato on some occasions, particularly for tenors. This school of thought goes back to the 1920s and 1930s, the

Enrico Caruso days when singing was more natural and relaxed and there was no vocal tension and singers had full control of their bodies. Lisa would describe her approach as teaching singing as one speaks. Her aim is to turn speech into singing, since people are not so tense when they speak. Everything is more relaxed. She became interested in this approach and stayed in Italy for eight years. She returned to Australia with the reputation as a superb teacher of this style of vocal training, in a position to rectify damaged voices. Young people who had taken roles too early had, under the pressure of performance, wrecked their voices. She can undo damage with this natural style. She wants to contribute this capability to those who are interested. When she came back, we converted her scholarship to a Queen Elizabeth Scholarship to develop this teaching phase. We made her an Artist-in-Residence at the Independent Theatre for a year. She took not only operatic students, but students from across the vocal range. There were rock and roll, jazz, calypso and classical singers, all with voice problems, all wanting correction which she gave. At the end of her residency, she gave a concert with these people who sang their genre. The singing was consistent right throughout: relaxed, forceful, good sound and quality. There are not many people like her here and it is not a trendy thing to do, but it is valuable because it has saved some people from disaster. She received the Queen Elizabeth Scholarship because of her desire to help. She lives in Hobart where she runs *Revolve Arts Singing Studio*, providing a resource to anyone who seeks her help.

I respect the scholars and keep in touch wherever possible. There is a sort of alumni feeling about it. One day, three pianists were at the Independent for different reasons. They were comparing notes and discovered they had studied with the same teacher while on scholarships. There was a natural camaraderie straight away for that trio. Some offer help for others which is there if needed, although there is no formal arrangement. We require in the year of their scholarship that anything scholars do in the public domain the Trust be acknowledged as the source of funding. It is up to them what they do after that; we do not insist, but on Gerard Willem's website there is mention of his scholarship. He wants other people to know what the Trust does. That is why he is a Queen Elizabeth scholar. Scholarships will continue to be available to help, provided we have the income.

Mentoring: *Australian Music Foundation* and *Arts Global*

We are looking to improve scholarship assistance through mentoring and have been talking with two organizations internationally to aid this; one is the **Australian Music Foundation** chaired by Yvonne Kenny. The Foundation is interested in maintaining a relationship with the Trust to help musicians they also help. Like us, they give scholarship assistance, mostly in the UK but they have interests in Europe and the United States, so there is a circuit emerging. The other

is **Arts Global**, based in the UK with a president in Switzerland. They are interested in assisting solo careers. They try to find concert opportunities, to give public exposure such as Wigmore Hall or Lincoln Centre concerts, to post-studies' scholars as they move up the performance ladder. They seek local people prepared to give money to help them get going and prepare appropriate recordings so they have a calling card with potential employers. One of our scholars did this program; young clarinettist, **Som Howie**, who studied with **Andrew Marriner**, Principal Clarinet, London Symphony Orchestra, in 2015. Having finished the initial assistance he had from us, he received our help for this mentoring program. We hope this will be the future; we want to do more than just see them through their final studies. We would like to see them capitalize appropriately on any opportunities that might be there. This clarinettist is an excellent player who will have a career as an orchestral musician if he desires but he has a particular bent towards solo and chamber music playing and is working with a teacher in Europe developing this stream of his playing. He has become a soloist and made a recording which will be his calling card. He played the Mozart *Clarinet Concerto* in 2014 in England and Europe. Had he not been helped in this direction, he probably would have gone into an orchestral job, and become a great asset for that orchestra. He would have had a great career and he still may do that. At least he has explored something realistically available to him but unlikely without the help and guidance of this program. In 2014 I went to Europe to talk to music colleges about Australian students going there and the response was very positive. There may well be an opportunity to forge relationships with conservatoriums in the north of Italy, Bologna and Florence, which needs to be explored.

Trust Membership today

When I came back to the Trust in 1999, my involvement beyond the Johnson Estate was mostly administrative. *Halftix* came to the end of its life with the Trust and ownership passed to another party in May 1999. Statutory reporting was a responsibility: we had to file annual financial statements with *Australian Securities and Investments Commission* (*ASIC*) and make sure our tax deductibility status continued, having just benefited from $6 million. I was reporting and keeping the records current. The Trust still had members, but with a diminished involvement as it could no longer offer discounted seats and first night events which had been the big attractions in the heady 1960s and 1970s. It was not presenting productions, nor did it have formal relationships with producers.

Today, membership has dwindled to about 500 from 10,000 or more thirty or forty years ago. In 1989 Adam Salzer and Bill Cottam devised a way of increasing membership and raising funds by offering life membership to donors. Most of the current members are life members. A handful continue to give annual donations for which we are most grateful. They are consistent:

it has been mostly the same people for the past twenty years and they send the same amounts each year. They are seriously committed to supporting the Trust and continue to invest in it. They are welcome at any concerts we are involved with. We issue invitations and sometimes offer discounted access. Many are very elderly but some attend our AGMs. Lately these have included a short concert by one of our scholars.

The Trust's superannuation scheme was handed over to the *AMP* but for some time we still had the files and there were enquiries coming in from superannuation holders, especially from the orchestras, about their entitlement at the time of transfer. None of these records were computerized, so it meant searching through hard copies; the room when I arrived was full of superannuation boxes eventually given to the *AMP*.

The Independent Theatre, North Sydney

In 1988 I was aware of the problems the Trust was facing and the many attempts to save it, one of which was taking on the Independent Theatre and refurbishing it. I became involved having developed a strong relationship with Martin Benge, a senior audio executive from *EMI*. Previously, head engineer at *EMI* Studios, Sydney, he worked in London. When he returned to Australia, we agreed there was a need for a sound recording studio in the mid-1980s. The film industry had folded up, so sound stages had not developed. By late 1989 I was looking for a place to record large orchestral sounds and maybe even some film soundtracks.

Next-door to the Independent there was a big warehouse owned by *Australia Post*, previously a sorting area, then a warehouse and truck parking area. It was a perfect site for a recording studio. At the same time, the Trust was looking at the development project for the Independent and had entered into an agreement with *Roncord Pty Ltd*, a wholly owned subsidiary of the Trust,

to refurbish. They had advice from Australia's foremost heritage architect, Clive Lucas, about building a second floor and were going to take over the squash courts next door on the opposite side to *Australia Post* and turn it into a five star hotel training centre for the hospitality industry, plus a five star residence on top of the Independent Theatre. It was to be financed by a developer and the Trust would have access rights to the theatre. Adam Saltzer saw this as a way to lead the Trust out of its financial problems. Had it succeeded, it had the potential to return good revenue to the Trust. Martin agreed the warehouse could be a studio and thought *EMI* would be interested in collaborating to build it. In the adjoining wall of the theatre we could connect electronically to the proposed studio and record events in the Independent. *EMI* and the Trust could use the studio and share revenue. There was an in-principle agreement to proceed on that basis. We had agreement with *EMI* London with the potential to create a major sound stage, but the detail and legal issues involved considerable negotiation.

The deal with the developers involved restoration of the Independent Theatre in return for the air space over the top for the hotel. The Trust would refurbish it acoustically correctly to be a recording venue for large and small groups and next door would be a big sound stage for film. *EMI* would probably put most of their equipment there as they were looking to move from Pitt Street. The timing was right. Unfortunately, as developers, *Roncord* were entirely dependent on North Sydney Council approving the right to build the necessary height above the theatre (the air space we were selling), and the access to the squash courts next door. The Council refused approval and the project, along with *Roncord*, died. They went into liquidation. We could not proceed with *EMI* because there was no possibility the Trust could fund anything like this. There was no further discussion and soon *Australia Post* sold the building which was turned into apartments. Ironically, *Australia Post* was prepared to give it to us at a peppercorn rate so it would not have cost very much. In the end it became a commercial property. At that time, when we were in Regent Street, Adam was looking at a lot of things like that.

General Manager: *AETT Management Pty Ltd* and *Independent (Sydney) Pty Ltd*

In 2001, concurrent with my position as General Manager of the Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust, I became General Manager of *AETT Management Pty Ltd*. In 2004 I was appointed the General Manager of the *Independent (Sydney) Pty Ltd*. Remembering well the results of the Kathleen Norris administration and what had happened to the Trust financially, we did not want to jeopardize the wonderful scholarship program. We did not know what directions we might take but were concerned that if we did anything in the public domain it should be separate from the Trust so any losses incurred would not impact on the Trust's ability to run the scholarship program. We established *AETT Management Pty Ltd* as a commercial company to put on concerts

and promotional events, including those presented by Trust scholars. Within about a year after the Trust took up the office at the Independent, Rodney Seaborn decided not to continue its management and gave it to the **Ensemble Theatre** at Milsons Point. Established by Hayes Gordon in 1958, it is Australia's longest continuously running professional theatre company. In 1999, the then director, Sandra Bates, undertook to present productions at the Independent without paying rent in return for managing and maintaining the theatre appropriately. None of the eight plays presented there in 2000 were commercially successful. Although the Ensemble had the benefit of a rent free venue, they had their own theatre at Milsons Point and the Independent was attractive if they made a profit and built new audiences. They did not continue there, but during their time of residence the building was painted a depressing combination of colours. They wanted blackouts in the theatre so painted it dark. Rodney was faced with the difficulty of managing it. By then we had presented a Chalwin concert and the theatre seemed to be suitable for music. We were building the scholarship program with the likelihood of scholars wanting to perform before they went to study. This was a condition of the program; if we asked them to, they would give a concert and we paid them a negotiated fee before they went. It seemed the Independent would be the venue for this, albeit very moderate in terms of acoustic quality. It would mean we would not have to pay a huge hire fee for the Sydney Town Hall or Opera House, neither of which the Trust could afford.

The Independent stage set for a corporate video presentation.

Working with the Corporate World

So we took over management of the theatre and negotiated with Rodney to have access to the entire venue and to do maintenance. The condition was that if Rodney wanted to sell it, we had the right to make the first offer. We started to develop activities in the theatre as income was needed to help support the huge running costs which were not forthcoming from elsewhere. We set up a management company to negotiate with

the corporate sector for the use of the theatre. Gloria Scott, a former dancer who had worked in real estate and marketing, was employed to work with me. She knew the theatre and business worlds, particularly in North Sydney, having worked for a marketing firm there. She was employed to recommend what we could do. The end result was a business plan we put together, focussing on at least a couple of hundred corporate clients close by who could, and probably would, use the theatre if it was presented to them in the right way. As it turned out, by the time we finished this activity there were 350 corporate clients who used the theatre for activities between 2001 and 2013. When we started we had no track record, we did not know what they would want or what we could offer, so it was a matter of learning as we went. We had no capital to invest in advisers, particularly in the business world where it is expensive, so we decided to have a crack at it ourselves.

Our reasonably good business plan was put to the directors and we started AETT Management running the theatre, for theatrical, musical and corporate use. We found a room on the first floor and named it the Rodney Seaborn Room. It overlooked Miller Street through the trees, into the fascia of the Stanton Library across the road. It had a wonderful atmosphere and was very light. With blinds we could control the light and run video presentations in semi or complete dark and then let in the light for an event. It was suitable for corporate training and we found a couple of insurance companies who became core clients and undertook training modules there for their staff, four or five times a year.

When we began, the very first client had met in the room downstairs, which had been organized by our predecessors. They had access to what was then a small coffee shop, in the annex to the front foyer. It was a pretty good deal for them but it provided no commercial outcome as the hire fee was too low. The going rate for a room like that was $500 to $1000 for a three or four hour session or a half a day. We realized there was probably a market there which we had to find. Gloria was employed to develop this business and she stayed until we sold the building in 2013. She developed relationships with over 300 corporate clients and brought in around $150,000 to $250,000 gross income a year from the corporate sector. While the Seaborn Room worked for training, we found if we put audio-visual into the theatre we could have seminars and conventions and attract a wide range of clients. We had advertising executives, product launches, seminars, and campaigns. The National Broadband Network (NBN)[1] started there with quarterly meetings for two or three years until their program got up. When we began to get on top of electronic and digital aspects, we did a computer link for AGMs to include other states of Australia, which was quite new for most people. We had a two-way interface so they could talk

1 National Broadband Network (NBN), first proposed/announced in 2007 as an Australian national wholesale open-access data network project. Included wired and radio communication components rolled out and operated by NBN Co Ltd and the systematic replacement of existing copper cable telephone networks. The largest infrastructure project in Australian history, fraught with problems and aiming for completion in 2020.

and we could talk to them, and all through a screen on the stage with the presentation in front of it and the executives talking from the theatre to everywhere in the state, taking questions and answers from the floor.

During that time, my learning curve was again enhanced with an understanding of audio-visual presentation and we moved from a very basic, simple camera projecting onto a screen from the front to a back projection, *Barco* projector and camera, with a screen that was 5.8 by 3.6 metres. It covered the entire proscenium arch and we could back project onto it. We got it to a stage eventually where we could do medical presentations with the most intricate charts and graphs; where 300 people in the room could see with ease what was going on. That was quite an investment and a big learning curve in terms of running it technically. I designed it, purchased the equipment and engaged theatre technician, Robin Morgan, to run it. Apart from his theatre sound and light skills, he was also good with computers and could take a client's computer with inadequacies for the presentation they were designing and reprogram it within five minutes to make it work. Robin prevented a lot of disasters from happening with his superb ability. Over those eleven years we had quite a successful outcome, generating revenue not possible from the arts sector. There were peaks and troughs.

We thought we should run a coffee shop for the benefit of corporate clients and have our own in-house catering. We went into a new area of service provision. An Italian friend, who had been putting together coffee shops with Italian coffee, helped set it up. We bought equipment and coffee urns and he stayed a few months, running it for us, while we got it going. We tried it for about 18 months, getting the skills together to present high standard, good quality, food and coffee. At that point in North Sydney there was no passing trade; it is a very dead end of town. We were competitive price-wise and in terms of quality. It was not so much a public venture but supplied the corporates. We found we understood and could deliver corporate catering when needed for the events Gloria brought in. At the end of the day we used outside professional catering staff but Gloria would design a menu, sell it to the corporate organizer, and we could cater finger food and alcohol for 300 people from a small kitchen at the side of the theatre. The theatre had a liquor licence and it became very fashionable for the corporates to have networking occasions after their convention. We could spread 300 people throughout the front foyers of the theatre quite comfortably and they could all network.

Renovated foyer area used for corporate events.

Clients like *Telstra* brought people into Sydney from remote areas to network with each other. It was positive for them and we made reasonable revenue. Some were very lucrative functions which helped cover the enormous cost of the theatre. We developed this between 2001 and 2004. At the time we took on the theatre, the chairman had negotiated with Rodney Seaborn a right to make the first offer to purchase the theatre should it be for sale. Rodney agreed that whatever price was on the table would be offered to the Trust with the first right of refusal. This happened in 2004, by which time the Trust had spent over $600,000 on running the venue. By then we had seemingly growing corporate activity, having built the client base to over 150. The Trust decided to purchase the theatre.

My feeling that it would be a great place for music was becoming even stronger. We were doing sophisticated things with music and audio-visual in the theatre and the results were proving this was a path worth taking. Although it was electronic, it was showing it could work well. The foyer areas were pleasant. Feedback from clients was that they did not want to leave when they finished their business convention, which is quite unusual. With one client who came several times a year, the CEO was usually the last person to leave, networking amongst his colleagues and employees until the last minute. Once purchased, I was given the task of advising the directors on what we might do with the Independent in a positive sense. We did not want to leave it as was. None of us liked the colour scheme but could see there was potential for development in the corporate area and music and our scholarship program was well underway. We had some twenty or thirty scholars by then, many coming back and wanting to give concerts, so it looked as if there would be a market there. Once we took over the management, we moved upstairs with space for Gloria Scott to work. Two of us were employed full time. The rest were casual staff. We built a good team of loyal casual employees with whom we negotiated directly and even those from a very good hospitality agency we engaged by name. We offered regular work; probably two or three dates a week, and had a good relationship with staff.

The Pursuit of Excellence

The core value of the scholarship program is excellence. We are looking for excellent players seeking excellence, who want to attend excellent teaching establishments. It would be inconsistent and hypocritical to offer a less than excellent venue for concerts. I recommended investigation into refurbishing the theatre as an acoustically interesting space for music. I had presented enough Chalwin concerts for audiences of around 150 to realize this could be a great 300 seat chamber music room. We had seen what the corporates could do with sophisticated electronic presentations. The Board approved engaging an appropriate consultant to identify issues and come up with a plan. Another huge learning curve. I had taken the approach that

it was not the audience I was concerned about, it was putting musicians into a superb playing environment. I had experience playing there and knew enough about acoustics from my audio training to understand it was about the design of the room and the stage area.

I found the Conservatorium had successfully finished two small studios using a consultant acoustician, Barry McGregor. I approached him, asking what might be possible. He identified we needed to deal with the stage end as well as the general acoustic of the room but major structural changes would not be necessary. The work would be internal. This was encouraging.

The directors decided to approach Clive Lucas and his company, *Clive Lucas, Stapleton and Partners*[2]. Involved when Rodney owned the theatre, Lucas was the ideal person to approach having prepared the heritage plan for North Sydney Council, commissioned by the state government for the area, including the theatre. He had done an investigation some years earlier of the theatre and when the Trust had been looking to develop it with the five star hotel, had drawn up draft plans, so he had an understanding of the building. This was a heritage building; it had been a tram shed in 1885 then used as an ammunition dump. It was not until 1911, when the façade was built, that it functioned as a theatre. It had not been classified at that time as a heritage building, but for North Sydney Council it was a building 'of significant historical interest'.

Our problem, when looking at the big picture, was the large proscenium arch and high stage which had been raked for vaudeville. There were no seats close to the stage; the audience stood and could see the vaudeville actors anywhere on the stage. That in itself would have been an aspect worth keeping if it had been under a heritage ruling. Heritage buildings were just beginning to be of interest in New South Wales and there was an initiative by the state and federal governments to provide restoration funds. We were not interested in the heritage issues but did not want to do anything to destroy what was there. The big problem was the stage which was completely unsuitable for performance; its height and big proscenium arch created a cavernous trap for sound.

Independent Theatre auditorium

Clive Lucas stood in the auditorium, looked at the arch and made a very simple statement about keeping the façade and the turret dome, a cupola on the front of the building over the Seaborn Room, and gutting the rest. He suggested sealing off the stage from the rest of the building and working everything

2 Clive Lucas, OBE (b. 1943), founding partner of *Clive Lucas, Stapleton and Partners* established in 1970 and now known as *Lucas, Stapleton and Johnson*, specializing in architectural restoration. Lucas was chair of the Historic Houses Trust NSW 1988-1992 and a member of the National Trust (NSW) Board 1992-1998 and 2013-to present.

in front. There had been raked seats but in front of those seats were about four rows of flat seats where you could put a stage from wall to wall. He identified the façade to be of historical interest and needing to be preserved. As an acoustician, I knew we could have the perfect cube in which to build an acoustics sphere. There would only be standard acoustic issues any acoustician has to cover in developing a room. We did not have to be drawn down by the stage, so the concept changed.

Clive was invited to run this as a restoration of the theatre. He costed it and we put work out to tender. The first stage involved painting the theatre and foyer areas, capitalizing on features that were staying and making them part of the venue's ambiance. There were little columns with flutes that went up to the ceiling like Greek columns. At the ceiling corners there were curved continuations of those columns. Clive specified the flutes be painted in gold and the rest an off white heritage colour, and that the rest of the column and the wall around it should be a light, pale heritage colour. We started with the painting, progressing slowly because we did not want to make any mistakes. There was a lot of money on the table for this. We started in 2006 by painting the Seaborn Room and the foyers. As you can imagine, mine was no longer a 9 to 5 job.

It was a great time consumer and I had no staff. I was doing all the paperwork and follow up, with the assistance of the architect. The corporate activity continued so we needed to do renovations in a time when we would have downtime to a minimum. I rented a flat next door and had two minutes' walk to get to work. I was at the theatre from 6am to 11pm most days; particularly if there were corporate events. The painting was approved after Clive had given us a colour spec to instantly transform the front of the building. There was a psychological hit there and we could also see what it would look like eventually. The only time we could do this was during the Christmas holiday in 2006. We found a painter prepared to work on Christmas Eve and Boxing Day, who worked through to New Year's Eve, came back after New Year's Day and finished it within a week. I had to be there all that time to let them in.

The front of the building looked fantastic and when the corporates saw it they went crazy; it was everything they wanted. They wanted something different than a five star hotel or the modern and predictable office. This was old but in good condition, clean and very atmospheric. There was a bar in the middle of the area we had done up which was a great place, so we had an uptake in our usage, which encouraged us to move forward.

Project Manager

The long term plan was a full internal renovation in the theatre, so we did more planning and more tendering. I took responsibility for this activity, by default becoming project manager, something I had never done before. Another big learning curve, but I was guided well by a

Board of Directors with personal experience of such projects who knew what was involved. Their role was to ensure it was done properly given the large amount of money being spent. With Clive Lucas was Sean Johnson, the project manager for our job, responsible for the drawings, submissions to Council, development application and getting the paperwork together. I did the legwork in delivering the Development Application (DA) to Council and dealing with questions and responses. Sean dealt with technical issues and once the DA was finally approved, became responsible for turning the plans into tenders for the work to be done. It moved reasonably quickly. When we drafted the DA, Sean knew exactly what North Sydney Council would want to see, so we avoided revisions on apparent minor points which could have delayed decisions. He did thorough document preparation, which he talked through with me, and applied his knowledge of Council procedures. It was like going into a court action with a barrow full of paper on a trolley. The plans had to be of different colours and sizes with multiple copies for different services such as the Water Board. Clive's company knew exactly what was required. When I trundled into Council with the application, it was a voluminous document but everything required was there.

Fire Protection Plan

Council was concerned about fire safety for 300 people in an old building predominantly made of wood and had responsibility to protect the community from harm. We engaged an expensive consultant who did a Fire Modelling Program on the building. We had an old building not compliant with current building codes but allowed to stand because it had been there for a long time. A Fire Protection Plan must show the building will comply with minimum requirements for getting people off site if there is a fire. There is a timetable for that: a certain distance they can walk from their seat to a street access door; all timing issues. Smoke is also an issue. This beautiful rectangular acoustic box was a perfect container for smoke which causes damage in a major fire. Smoke inhalation results in humans collapsing and being trampled on the way out. Without control over smoke extraction, there is a serious problem. This old building had none of that in place. The consultant took measurements, looked at the egress points, at natural windows, where air could get in and out, where smoke could be trapped. He put it into a computer program which gave percentages of times it would take to fill the space with smoke and reduce visibility to zero. He could calculate precisely how long it would take to become very dangerous for those trying to get out. It is only a few minutes. He calculated how long it took for a person from the furthest seat to get to the nearest door, and within that time-frame where they would be when they collapsed from smoke inhalation. With that, he could do a computer analogy of corrective issues to be addressed.

We were committed to preserving the culture of the building and its design so we had to add rather than change. He proposed putting a huge grille on either side of the proscenium arch to suck smoke from the auditorium at a rate commensurate with the speed needed to clear the smoke to get 300 people out. From the grille high on the proscenium arch there had to be ducting half a metre to a metre wide which went up into the ceiling with an extractor to the outside. There had to be a fan on top of the ceiling outside on the roof to pull this air out. This was a minor aspect of his fire modelling recommendation. There were also recommendations about the seating. The fire modelling document became part of the DA submission to Council.

When Rodney Seaborn bought the theatre he acquired second hand heavily padded fabric seats. The only non-fabric substance was the metal arm between seats. We contacted the *CSIRO* in Canberra to do a fire test on the seats and sent a block of three seats and two individual seats. They were placed in a controlled area, one was ignited and the time was measured as to how quickly it would smoulder, burn and the fire move to other seats depending on where it started. It was an eye-opener to realize how quickly fire would take hold on those seats. Since you cannot predict circumstances of a fire starting, you have to plan for the worst case scenario. The Trust had experience of two major fires in its lifetime: Her Majesty's Theatre and the Botany storage facility and was very aware of the dangers of inappropriate fire protection. There was to be no compromise on the fire issue. From an acoustic point of view, the immediate removal of the seats was good as they were absorbing too much sound.

After our first development application, Sean and I were obliged to meet with the fire officer. There was good communication and understanding of technical requirements and we were confident we would cope with requirements since the DA would be conditional on these. After work is completed and before the public can use it, the work has to be checked and certified. We nominated the Council as the certifying party; a recommendation from the architects and born out of experience. North Sydney Council has a reputation for being difficult with developments, particularly in the commercial area. The bottom line was that we did not have much trouble with the application, nor did it take long. We were ready to go within two or three months of its lodgment. We had a lot of meetings. I went back to the acousticians and we designed a seat with an acoustic wooden back. The floor carpet was removed and the sound bouncing off the floor and backs of the seats made an instant and obvious change; it was a good thing to do. We put in American designed fire resistant seats. We sent some to *CSIRO* to do the same tests. It took eleven minutes for them to start to burn from smouldering. It was reassuring to have good fire retardant seats that were comfortable and good acoustically.

Everything we did needed careful scrutiny and an expert's view before we did it. I made constant reference back to the architects before action was taken. The budget did not blow out


New fire retardant seats *in situ.*

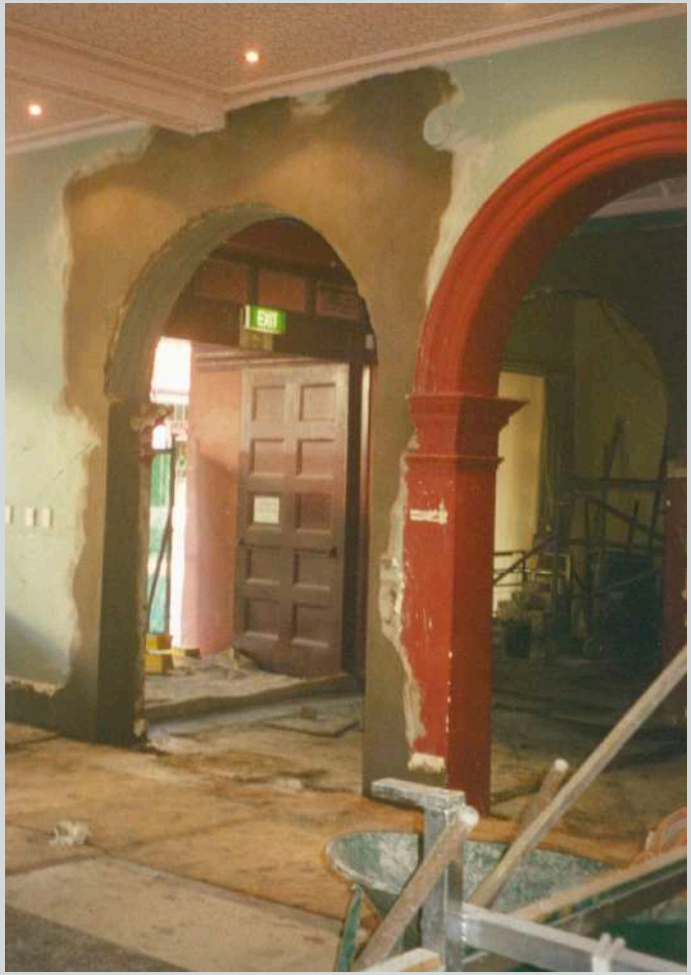
as we made sure the tenders were based on fixed quotes, which kept the tenderers focussed. We kept payments scheduled so that the last one was substantial when everything was completed. We relied heavily on our architects who had enormous experience with all the areas of concern. They knew many of the tenderers and their track records. They could identify the cowboys among them and who was likely to do the job they said they would do. They were able to help us substantially in making the right decisions in selecting tenderers. We prepared the budget on the basis of what the tenders came in at. There were a couple of things we extended. When we wanted to change something, we went back to the architects for options. We instructed tenderers not to put themselves in a position of not being able to fulfil their contract because they had under-quoted. When we had the final quotes, given the vast experience of Lucas and his team, we had a good understanding of the cost which went to the Board for decisions on spending. It cost about $1.5 million. Once approval came from the directors, there was no question of the budget blowing out unless we moved the goalposts.

In the front foyer we were planning to take two walls down and put in big arches to open it up. There had been two shops, one our former office, with a wall separating it from the entrance. The other shop, the coffee shop, had one arch with a wall on either side of it, leaving a narrow corridor and dingy entrance coming off the street through two old thick wooden heritage doors. We wanted to open it up with glass doors and a double door cavity to limit outside noise. It became obvious the walls had to be taken down. Clive designed a pillar and an arch appropriate to the period (1910) for the space. This was budgeted for, but the foundations revealed the wall was supporting the Seaborn Room above; it was a structural support in the building. We had to underpin the foundations before we took the wall down. Initially an unbudgeted amount, it was something we had to wear.

We did not proceed on the basis we only had a certain amount of money to spend; there was enough contingency for such things. The integrity of the building was essential. The process was successful, the arches were put in, and the foyer was very light and open. We also installed large mirrors on the side walls and when standing in that foyer there is a sense it is bigger than it really is. The mirrors were the full length of the wall and fitted within the arched cavities Clive had designed. The wall had an architecturally balanced view to it. Clive was very aware of keeping the style of the building and he put small architrave trims on the wall which balanced the arches.

In those architrave trims we put mirrors which were quoted at $20,000 to $30,000. I found five mirrors for $3,500 and they are still there with superb effect. At the point of being ready to go, we approved the winning tender. This particular firm had an experienced young foreman, Mick, who was always on site and in control of subcontractors. He was a good communicator and supervised the general quality control of the work on site, whether it came from his team or subcontractors. We had everything timetabled so each trade could follow on without getting in the way of, or impacting on, work underway or completed. My job was to work out the sequence of events.

In January 2007, the auditorium closed, the seats and carpet were removed so the hole in the floor for the stage could be made and the structural work to underpin the new stage area completed. *Jands* were supplying the stage, custom designed for us, which needed to be installed by the end of January. We had built corporate interest with bookings from February. Not wanting to lose income, we needed to be operational in February, so we had a month. This meant careful organization on the part of the builder, good control by his foreman over subcontractors, subcontractors coming on site at the appropriate time in sequence, doing their job and finishing it as scheduled. It felt like we became policemen, making sure materials were to hand and the work was done to timetable. The unknown was an old building; what would be found when a wall or floor was taken away. The builders were generally successful; I do not think they ever let us down, but I had to be there all the time to let tradespeople in with deliveries and to start work. Getting access to the place was not easy. We had an easement right across the property next door but to bring in big trucks with building materials needed careful planning. Early mornings were the best time, so I was often there at 5am. We had concurrent activities involving several trades, electrical, building, painting, and they were accessing different parts of the building at the same time. They also needed advice on access to facilities, water, light switches, which were very well hidden. The electrical panel was complex; with thirty or forty unmarked switches, which I had to know.



Work underway on the foyer arches.

With the foreman I planned how we could reopen the theatre for use in early February. Much of the work was done concurrently which cut the timetable down substantially. They had finished structural work in the foyer, the seats and body carpet were out of the theatre.

Body carpet used to be made and laid in strips of about 600 mm wide and joined together. This is before wide broadloom carpet was made in the 1950s. Body carpet had been put under the seats in long strips. I asked for it be taken out carefully in case of re-use. There were large, long strips from the theatre and we needed to carpet the foyer entrance wooden floor. The carpet was dark red and blue, with a small pattern similar to spearheads which needed to be lined up otherwise it would look silly. For the foyer we needed a 12 metre stretch by 6 metre depth. There was a small corner area in the front foyer where the old theatre bar had been. Underneath was sealed off plumbing pipes, cemented over the top. The young, but experienced, carpet layer, who commuted every day from Bathurst, managed to match the pattern perfectly and no joins could be seen. Within three days he had finished the work except for the corner where it was difficult to match the carpet. We put a small stage there for a piano, creating a performance area. When finished, it looked as if new carpet had been laid. He was a very impressive young tradesman who knew how to make things work with second-hand materials. He was used to fixing things with whatever was in the 'shed' since the hardware store was a long drive away!

Happily, we finished the structural work and painting within the timetable although the last few weeks were hectic. A hardwood floor was laid for the stage and all the electrics, including lighting in the theatre, were renewed. This was done early in the process. There were thirty or forty lamps above the old stage on an old wiring system, there probably since the 1920s, and a potential fire hazard. For the theatre lighting we wanted a system with a room dedicated to the lighting patch points where plugs and therefore lamps could be changed quickly. *Jands* provided this lighting system, but it had to be installed. Rather than try to salvage anything, we removed everything and started again. Previously, lighting rigs needed a ladder or cherry-picker, to change a lamp over the stage.

New lighting grid.

We wanted lighting in front of the proscenium arch, where our main performing area for music would be. We did not want angled theatrical lighting but mostly down-lights to avoid shadows on music stands. We wanted theatrical use for the stage to be possible, so the rig had to have stage lighting. A grid was designed to be winched up and down with flexibility to add to it later. On the grid we put seventy-five lamps, with another sixty-five possible for behind the proscenium arch. I wanted 140 points to finish in this room where we could move the cable and manage

each light. The electrician engaged had been working on heritage buildings and the work he did was astounding. He organized 150-odd circuits from the stage, laid cables along the floor of the ceiling, through the back wall and into a dedicated room behind the theatre control box. All the lamps were in an orange-coloured conduit and laid perfectly row upon row so they were all accessible and labelled. The electrics box was on top of the theatre roof. Everything was perfect; the moment we switched one on, it worked.

We were ready to go by February except for some minor things like the smoke extractor. We had Council approval to operate, but the electrician engaged to deal with the smoke extractor was not experienced enough. The electrical system has an essential component monitored by the fire brigade. If there is a fire or an alarm, the system shuts down all mechanical equipment, like air-conditioners, lifts, that might feed a fire or start another and pulls the power away from them. The smoke extractor has to do the opposite and turn on automatically when it goes into fire mode. The electrician had to rewire the panel to accommodate this, but we could not get it to work properly. It was very old and complex technology. We finally found someone who went back to the original plans for the electrics, and they found that over the years, minor modifications and changes had been made which were not documented. This became a big problem, preventing us from getting a fire safety certificate to operate. It became the last thing we had to manage and it took over our lives. We had a serious discussion with the builder; the electrician was paid out and some thousands of dollars later, it was fixed, including the problems inherent in the old system. Knowledge of the way electrics had been set up in the past was necessary as we were imposing new technology on old technology and that does not always work. It all worked eventually and we received certification to operate.

In three months we had undertaken a major renovation. I did not know what was involved until it was underway; I came to understand the key to this was communication. I had to talk to workmen to encourage their understanding and preparedness to undertake the work to the best of their ability and within the time-frame. At the back of the auditorium there was a fascia wall forming the front of the balcony with a stucco effect on the front. Clive Lucas wanted the points of it gilded, an intricate task. There was a team of four ladies who specialized in this and they treated it as a work of art - it was like watching Picasso working and they loved it. The result is evidence of a labour of love and commitment. There was all manner of people working on the site, with diverse interests, responsibilities and agendas. Many thought the building very beautiful and were proud of their work. The plasterers were very proud of the arches, for which they used plaster moulds, and they are quite stunning, not the sort of thing you would expect in a modern building and it looks like a late Victorian, early Edwardian, design.

Detailed work on the auditorium arches.

I learnt to be firm and strong with argument supporting my overview. It was a great satisfaction that it was done and on budget: $1.5 million. We had to make the building suitable for 'dignified access' for the disabled. Until the renovation, a wheelchair could get into the foyer but needed help to negotiate stairs into the auditorium and seating levels. A wheelchair could not remain in the auditorium, so the occupant had to get into a seat. We could not put a lift in to provide access to the second floor but we replaced steps into the theatre with a ramp from the foyer, taking advantage of the opportunity to put in a wooden floor; a reflective surface, to enhance the acoustic. For the blind we put tactile indicators, dots and stripes in the floor, along the side passage so that someone with a stick could feel them. We installed two disabled toilets just outside the main auditorium doors at stage level. For those unable to get out of their wheelchair into a seat, we removed seats at both ends of the front row which gave four places for wheelchairs with easy access and compliance with fire regulations. We had a dedicated usher looking after a wheelchair patron when they came in and out. At the front door we had tactile indicators in Braille on the wall, and a special buzzer for blind people, which was wired to the box office who could provide help when the theatre was open.

The Independent auditorium and stage post-renovation.

Maintaining the Cupola

One of the most exciting things we did in the renovation was to maintain the design nature of the cupola above the Seaborn Room. It had been built, with sloping walls, around 1910. One wall faced onto Miller Street with walls on either side of it. The back wall faced the back of the theatre roof with a door for access into the cupola. The walls had dormers with fake window casements as seen in manses and religious domiciles next to churches in England, often made of stained glass. These dormers had rotted over the years and had not been maintained. The cladding was an aluminium substance made by *Wunderlich* in 1910. The architects, with their experience and understanding, had found out exactly when it was made, what it was made from and that it was not repairable. When it rained, water came pouring into the Seaborn Room, having leaked down the insides of those slopes and gathered in the ceiling before running down the wall. The first problem was to close off the ceiling which was done reasonably quickly but was not a permanent solution. Around this, what they call a box gutter, was a flat walkway to get onto the roof and enter the cupola. The pigeon population has taken over North Sydney for centuries, and their contribution to the theatre was well and truly evident when we bought it. The box gutter was encased in pigeon excrement, hard like cement, which had covered up the drainage points. This raised the whole issue of what to do with the cupola. It came to a pyramid-like point with a ten metre high flagpole on top. Getting to the top end of it would have been a nightmare because you could not build anything substantial on the gutter. We did not have a heritage order on us so we could have saved a lot of money by pulling it out, but that was not the feeling of the Board of Directors or my chosen direction since this was something fundamental to the theatre look and its heritage. We found a place in Adelaide prepared to make appropriate sheeting against weather and commissioned them to undertake the work. We had a wonderful maintenance person who had been with us for all the time we were at the theatre and was someone who did home renovations. He was very good at old buildings with a 'can do' attitude. He designed a way in which he could get scaffolding up to clean it but he could not get up to the flagpole. We decided to leave the flagpole there and just paint it. The way he painted it was quite innovative. He got onto the top of the scaffolding, which was the base of the flagpole. With a big broom and his paintbrush on the end of it, he went to the top of the flagpole and painted from the top down.

The dormers were a major restoration job and we decided not to put them back, but kept them on site in a container at the back of the theatre in case someone in the future chose to have a go and do them up. I went into the cupola and was astounded. Inside there was a wooden structure of four huge oak beams, nearly a foot square, in old measurements, and 2 to 3 metres long. The four of them went from the corner at an angle, and met at the top and were dovetailed into each other. As a piece of masonry it was astounding; apparently this would have been what

they used on the hull of a sailing ship. They were intact and undamaged. They had crossbeams joining them, again thick pieces of oak, and structurally they were standing on their own with the design of the pyramid supporting each one and tongue and grooved at the top and then they were joined across with these structures. This would have been put up between 1905 and 1910. Each one would have weighed a great deal. They could only be removed with a crane. We decided this structure must be kept intact as it was intended to be.

There was a financial issue to do this which led to Rodney Seaborn donating $100,000 towards a $200,000 bill, which was incredibly generous. He remained supportive all his life of things the Trust was doing and theatres were his love. We finished the major renovation in accordance with the DA in February 2007. When we finished I realized there was still one unsolved problem. All the way through we had been doing acoustic tests of the room with an acoustic firm advising us. I made suggestions of what I hoped to achieve musically and they came up with the detail.

Acoustics, Finding the Right Sound

The Wigmore Hall in London was our benchmark because our acousticians had worked installing the air-conditioning there and they dealt with acoustic issues arising from the installation. In comparison to the Wigmore, our only difference was reverberation time. At the Wigmore it was a little longer; we could not get it as long which meant we had a dry sound but there were other ways to deal with that. In addressing reverb you need cavity; the only way is to raise the roof or move the walls out or move the back wall to get bigger air mass in the room, which was impractical. We had to live with the existing reverb time but it is important for music. To the audience it is acceptable, it feels good, but to the musician it is a fraction dry; you would like a little bit more life around you. The way to get that was to do something to give an early reflection time. When a sound hits a substance it bounces back and the speed with which it takes to decay once it is bounced off that substance is a measurement called the early decay of the initial sound. If you can extend early decay it is like reverb. Add it to the existing reverb and it will give the psycho-impression of long reverb time. This did not happen by default; we knew we were after the Wigmore Hall sound. When we got to that point and considering materials for the floor, we factored in a long early response decay time and used wood in thickness to deliver that. When we put the hole in the floor to put in the movable stage, in front of it was another couple of metres of floor which we filled in but we

Work in preparation for the new raised pit.

made that a mass. We needed a mass of substance, so placed three different layers of floor of 25 mm each packed together. Normally, a floor is about 25 mm. We had a 75 mm thickness which gave us a great solid mass to deal with the base end of the sound spectrum; it also ended up reflecting longer, creating an early reverb time. We started to increase our early decay time but it still was not there. We had a measurable figure on the table of what we had to achieve, and we had finished the renovation and still had that problem to solve. We also had an open proscenium arch with a cloth curtain which was potentially absorbing sound and doing all the things we did not want to happen there. We could not take Clive Lucas's original suggestion of building a brick wall in front of it. I started to research and thought of one big shell across the proscenium arch. I brought into it the new factor of the standing wave, and knew we were now looking at multiple shells. I found sources around the world where shell technology had been used to enhance a particular room in different ways with different types of shells.

Clive prepared a plan to dig a hole in the floor of the theatre where the seats had been in front of the old stage. We would leave the old stage there and put a platform over the hole. The width of the building was 12 metres, the platform was about 8 metres. It had 2 metres on either side of the wall to this platform which would be mechanically operated so it could go up and down, sink down to the level of the floor where it would become a small pit, 4.8 metres deep. It was the size of a small Mozart orchestra pit. You could do Bach or a *Messiah* with a small orchestra which was attractive. That came by virtue of one of our directors seeing an original plan where there was no mechanism to raise it. It was going to be 600 mm above the floor because that was the perfect level for sight anywhere in the theatre if you wanted to see a player on the stage. He suggested a lift to drop the platform down to create a small orchestra pit. That is how it is used now. On either side there was a platform 600 mm high and this raised pit would come from floor level up to 600 mm and then down the front of it were panels designed to fit into each other which came off. Behind it, in front of the existing stage, were other panels put on to match the wood flow of the floor. The front of the existing stage was clad with a hardwood which was the same wood as the raising platform. All this wood was designed acoustically to have certain properties to enhance the acoustic environment on stage.

We found we had a great acoustic sound. There was one thing that concerned me, in relation to the concept of an area where the musicians would feel comfortable to play: one of the big problems every building suffers from is ground bound noise, vibration coming through the ground and through the building. A truck or bus rolls by or if near a train line, the ground shakes, the building foundations absorb that energy, pass it through the walls and into any floor that is attached to those walls. We had a situation with buses going by in Miller Street all the time. Our side walls were hard on the ground. Buses were only about 20 metres away so vibration was

coming into the theatre. You do not hear it or feel it but it is there and creates mud in the acoustic which I wanted to eliminate. The demountable sinking stage, and the two bits on the side, were designed and made to float free of the building, like a standard recording studio floor. It was not attached to the walls and floated on little rubber pads. With the floor finished and floating free of the building, from the first moment you played, it was fabulous, an effortless sound. Musicians did not have to push their instruments and could play very lightly and the sound would boom out across the floor.

The acoustic was better than most recording studios. This meant players could play as if in a studio recording room without extra effort. The sound of the instrument will be what the musician does without forcing it. No fighting with airborne noise coming in because we had attenuated that with the design of the wall. No fighting with ground bound vibration because the floor floats free. All the musician had to worry about was the natural acoustics across the room and they are the easiest thing to tune. **We had created a space to play which was near perfect for a player** and all we had to do was cover the walls. We then had the room itself to deal with. Along the southern brick wall, adjoining the flats next door, was the old warehouse turned into an apartment building. There was a double cavity wall there giving us a gap between our wall and the next one with the exception of close to the stage. I visited the resident of the flat next to that and listened to sound happening on stage to see if there was noise transfer. There was not, so there was something like a double cavity shell on that side. On the northern side, it was not so easy, as it was a freestanding wall with a laneway, and the wall had been designed with eight or nine half-moon windows along the top. They are architecturally important heritage windows but they were letting sound in and out. We needed that sound controlled and reflected into the room. The windows were inoperable and sheets of tin had been put over the outside and painted. Behind the tin we found glass. That was great because we could apply the basic acoustic design of having layered gaps and substance. Potentially we could build three layers with gaps of air in between each layer. On the inside, designed to reflect, and on the outside to absorb, we put acoustic panels. So the outside ones absorbed the sound coming in but if it got through it hit the glass and attenuated by over half. By the time sound got through to the final inside panel it was gone; the second attenuation through the glass would have taken it away completely. On the inside we had panels which were reflected and we were able to tune them to the same outcome acoustically as the wall. There was also a big double door in the middle of the wall opening outwards. We bricked it up and had a double shell again. We returned that to the same density and acoustic outcome as the walls. We then had a wall that was as good as possible acoustically in stopping the outside noise from coming in but dealing with the inside noise in a clever, controlled and acoustic manner. It was fine for the audience; wherever you sat in a 300

seat room of that size you are going to hear very well. The trick was to get the playing area, and the musicians to a place where they were not overplaying and were completely relaxed to give their best performance.

The Standing Wave

In the stage area the biggest concern was the standing wave. A standing wave is when a low frequency note is played and it goes to a wall parallel with the wall opposite it. It hits the wall and returns to the other wall and as it does it crosses itself and causes little nodes of imperfection. Low frequency includes the bottom end of the double bass and other bass instruments. A sign wave, which has a rise and a dip comes across a centre level, goes up, comes down across the centre, down below and dips and comes back up again. That is what is called a full sign wave, which is the full length, or one revolution, of a note. The width of this wall is 3.65 metres. One sign wave on the bottom end of a double bass is 9.75 metres long so it gets a third of its way before it hits the wall and then starts coming back and by the time it has done that two or three hundred times, which it can do in an instant, there is 'mud' all over the place as it crosses itself. Only figuratively, but it makes the bottom end sound boomy.

The stage set with the acoustic shells and a *Stuart & Sons* piano.

At a rock concert, sometimes, that is what is happening if you hear this real boom coming out of the speaker stack. In rooms where jazz musicians play in a corner and put the bass player in a corner, it is going vertically across the corner, backwards and forwards and this big boomy bass sound comes out. Okay if you like that sort of sound but it is not clean and does not help ensemble playing. Other players who have to play with it, like a flute player or a wispy top end of a violin, find it difficult and it can kill their performance. Psychologically they will give up because you cannot fight it. We had a wonderful floor floating free but two walls with right angled corners. The natural thing for a bass sound is to collect in the corner and stay there, and it builds up as more sound comes in and becomes a real mess of disorganized sound. We had two problems: the standing wave with its nodes in the middle and those nodes where the wave crosses each other is like a little deep point every now and then. You do not hear it, but you can feel it in the cleanliness if the bottom end of that group is not good, and then in the corner the bass builds up, enhancing that.

To remove the problem we needed to put a convex curve in the corner from wall to wall, so the sound cannot hit a parallel wall. It has to hit a curve. If we had it concave and then convex, we would have tremendous control of a sound hitting there. We were looking for a shell to go into each corner of that room. That sector of the stage is in front of the proscenium arch. There had been two doors on either side to get backstage which we bricked up. The idea was to have that shell standing across the right angle corner in front of where the doors once were, but there was the stage between those two ends and that we could not do anything with. We thought, with several more shells across the proscenium arch, we could manipulate them and turn them to tune the direction of the sound that hits them. If they were from floor to ceiling in front of the proscenium arch, we would stop the sound disappearing into the stage cavity. It would also mean we had built a sound shell in which to place the musicians. It gives them a near perfect environment on the sides and the back of their playing, and that is what we came up with in the design. I had not seen anything like it in Australia, although sound shells existed and *Musica Viva* used them behind small groups. I had not seen anything as big as 2.5 metres high and about 1.5 metres wide.

The Experience of Other Venues

The stage and the walls of the building were finished in 2007 and were ready to open except for fine tuning of the sound. It was a lot better than it had been and was going to work well but we needed to find a solution. I travelled to places where sound shell technology had been used with success, starting with the Hollywood Bowl in America, then the new *Disney Centre*,

Los Angeles, where there is a fabulous hall using sound shell technology to enhance the sound. The Kennedy Centre in Washington has about the worst acoustic imaginable. The Amsterdam Concertgebouw has the small Kleine Zaal, which sits underneath the main hall, and is similar to the area at the Independent; they use circles and semi-circles to create an acoustic environment and keep good control of chamber music by the use of shells.

The Salle Pleyel in Paris, where the *Pleyel* piano was developed, has huge moveable sound shells, probably 5 or 6 metres high. It was interesting to see an operatic production using those; a tremendous sound. It was becoming obvious that if shells are used, large volumes of sound can be brought under control very easily. Different shapes, some convex, some concave, they are all different shapes, all different reasons. The Wigmore Hall has that concept but misses out because it is dead under the seating overhang at the back of the hall and is carpeted, but the sound shell on stage works very well. The King's Place, a new hall in London, is very similar to the Independent Theatre. It is a rectangle, a box with a stage at the end, behind which is a series of convex shells. We had the opportunity to take all this technology on board and develop it reasonably easily for the benefit of the Independent. I attended a Mozart concert in **Carnegie Hall**, sitting at the very back, third level up, just to see. I could understand why such dedication and attention had been given to this 3,000 seater Hall. I heard a small Mozartian orchestra of about 20 or 30 people playing and it was as though I was 2 metres from them and that is the technology of circles and shells.

This quest was exciting and an absorbing experience. The object of my trip was to see the halls, talk to managers and any acoustic or technical people willing to talk and to ask them relevant questions. At the Kleine Zaal I asked about positioning musicians in relation to audience seating. They were very forthcoming and open about the issues and the views were strongly held. When you are committed to a building and it is your life, you get to know it very well and to know what can or cannot be done and if there is someone genuinely interested in knowing, they were prepared to enlighten you. On each visit I went to a concert and afterwards met with staff and inspected the hall with no audience. I spent a fair bit of time in each place, sitting in the foyer and observing the audience.

The Wigmore Hall audience was not anywhere near as satisfied as the King's Place audience and yet Wigmore has the history and reputation. There is nothing wrong with the performances, but there is a difference. The new technology in the King's Place hall attracts a certain audience and they like it; as does the Aurora Orchestra, resident there. Both audiences and musicians are taking ownership of the venue. The foyers are set out in a very artistic way. When I went there they had a foyer art exhibition. Acoustically in the room it was nice and as you came out to the foyer it was a relaxed feeling which enhanced the music you were listening to. At Wigmore, there

is a small narrow lobby at the exit, full of people and then you move straight out onto the street. No ambiance, maybe not essential but a completely different concert experience.

I could see shells are used in different ways but if used properly and cleverly, you can get a very good acoustic. The trick was how we should do it. These were not available 'off the shelf'. They had to be workable and fit our needs. Further investigation led me to a group in America, the ***Wenger Corporation***. They have developed separate shells up to 10 metres high and about 1.5 metres wide. We needed about 1.5 metres wide but only about 2 or 2.5 metres high. If we could get individual shells they could be positioned at different angles and different levels, giving control over the sound. *Wenger* is a supplier of music equipment for schools, such as music stands. I made contact and learnt the founder had a son, a tuba player. He was frustrated with his son's practice, given he could not find anywhere in the house that did not disturb the family while giving him the proper environment to advance his tuba studies. He invented an acoustic room within a room, which was like a container he wheeled into the lounge room. His son went into that room to play. It worked, and he went into manufacturing these. Schools and conservatoria in America started to use them. They were sometimes as big as a half size container, with a small window on a double door outside so you could see someone was in occupation but could not hear a thing. Inside was a near perfect acoustic because of this design. I went to *Wenger* in Minneapolis and met their engineers and designers and discussed what I had seen of sound shells around the world. I showed them what we wanted to achieve at the Independent, and they came up with a concept to make seven shells the height we wanted. They showed me on our floor plan how to use the seven shells. We contracted and raised money. Our supporters contributed about $124,000 for the seven, with some donating the cost of a shell.

The shells were built and shipped to Australia with someone to erect them. They had to be careful because we had a raked floor so we needed to be able to move it from the top to the bottom, up the rake, without changing the gap on the floor and without the shell tipping over. We also needed to be mobile so that one person could move it. They are very heavy. The construction of the shell itself had to do the acoustic job. One shell could do several things: it could reflect the top end and take the bass end through or reflect the bass. We had to compromise so they invented a honeycomb behind the fascia of the shell and behind the honeycomb they put steel. The honeycomb was mounted on a steel base at the back, which was affixed to the structure which had wheels and a handle to pull the shell. They are about 10 metres high, all moveable on a trolley. In front of the honeycomb was the reflective surface which would be tuned to the frequency we wanted. It is like plywood, a light wood. We had taken measurements of the sound in the room and gave them an acoustic specification of what we wanted to deal with at what frequencies and the shells were made accordingly. They arrived in pieces and were put together by the team from America. They looked fantastic.

At about the same time we were working on the Independent's interior and acoustics, the Llewellyn Hall at the Australian National University in Canberra was being renovated (it re-opened in 2008). In seeking the best possible acoustics for chamber music events there, it became another venue in Australia to find movable acoustic shells provided ideal conditions for musicians.

The first concert at the Independent Theatre was a recital by Yvonne Kenny for the Hunter's Hill Music Club in 2007. I could not believe the sound in the audience. It was so clean and beautiful and no matter how soft, wherever you were you could hear it absolutely precisely. Yvonne is a superb artist and singer who can adjust to whatever environment she is in. She came out to sing her first aria and presented it as she would on any stage, projecting to the back. By the time she was halfway through I saw her dynamic diminish and she dropped everything back because she could feel she had full control over her voice. Her dynamic range improved immensely. The hall put her in a position where she could confidently go as soft or as loud as she wanted without having to force, knowing she was getting the effect across. This was vindication of a long road travelled after we finished the renovation. Later, when I played on the stage with an ensemble, everyone realized we were overplaying. We started lightening it up. It took a while to appreciate how to play very softly and still be heard. Rarely have I found a concert hall of that nature anywhere. Studios provide this all the time because they are designed to do so. The capacity to play on stage very quietly with large sounding instruments around you doing the same, and still have an immense impact on the other players and hear the last descant of the first violins, clearly and cleanly, is rare. When we were playing one of those concerts I had some people present who understand these things. They sat up the back and everything was crystal clear and clean right across the spectrum in every instrument.


Yvonne Kenny

We found with one shell in each corner we could stop the standing wave and the bass build up. We have been able to change and move the shells for different circumstances. For a recording with the Parramatta City Band, thirty players were on the front area of the stage, and the big percussion and timpani section were on the upper stage with the shells around them. This resulted in a lovely balance with very little effort. In doing this, we found we could move the shells to different optimum levels and improve aspects of the sound. We recorded the Chopin piano concerti arranged for string quartet and piano with the Sydney String Quartet. The piano was in front of the shell with the lid up, facing the shells on the stage so there was reflection off the shells and at an angle. The quartet was at the end of the piano, again at an angle, with the first violinist, Ronald Thomas, closest to the shell and the cellist on the outside. The bottom notes of the lower instruments are long notes, long sign waves, so best to get them out of corners. We brought the side shells in about half a metre to enhance the bass. We found in the recording

we were losing the crispness and edge of the first violin, so we moved the shells and put about 300-400 mm of gap between each edge of the shells so as to let some of the sound through. Then we angled the shells so they were like a concertina, and we had them opening slowly like a concertina or piano accordion, with a big end and then a little end. At the little end we had the violin. We had the rest set nicely and as we were recording we turned the shell and changed the prominence of the violin sound on the recording. We got it to a point where the balance was good, but suddenly there was presence in the first violin over the top of this huge piano sound at the same time. If you experiment and know what you are doing with those shells and are prepared to take a few experimental moves, the outcome is fantastic. The recording was superb as a result of the shells and the room.

The whole experience of a concert is to do with the performance and the chosen environment in which the performance takes place. We are giving money to musicians to improve their performance, the last thing you want them to do is to go into an area where the performance is negated by the environment. So many times that has been the case in Australia with our theatres and the quality, the best we can do, has been negated by a poor environment. I was determined the Independent would not be like that. I wanted to make sure it was up there in the first ten chamber music rooms in the world. You can change it because you can move the shells and put them anywhere and you can invite some of those problems back again by so doing, but it does not matter, they can always be moved back.

The recording team—John Ducan, Warwick Ross, Michael Stavrov, Tom Ford, Andrei Popa and Trevor Dodderidge.

In the way we had set it up, I think it is one of the top ten chamber music rooms and its greatest feature, apart from the acoustic matters, is its size. Chamber music is generally for an audience of up to 300 people. Initially, it was written to be performed in salons, lounge rooms and small environments for eighty or less people. In the case of Schubert, maybe a few more for his vocal programs, but basically small numbers of people. In the Independent, with its raked seating and now its acoustic capability, you can sit at the back of the gallery and have the experience I had in Carnegie Hall. You can hear everything on stage cleanly and easily and if you can do that up there on stage, the musicians can do it even more and when they know to do it, they give superb performances. Dene Olding, leader of the *Goldner Quartet*, after having been there two or three times to play, commented, as he unpacked his violin, that he really liked the room and considered it a great place to play in. As a player myself, it inspired me to do a little bit more musical

The Sydney String Quartet, leader Ronald Thomas with Gregory Kinda, piano. (Photo: Michael Stavrou)

work. When my management job was finished, I felt the need to practice more, and seek the opportunity to play there. I have played in a number of concerts at the Independent which I have found very rewarding.

I have memories of activities that were really satisfying, such as putting together a freelance orchestra for the Royal Ballet's *The Rite of Spring*[3]. To hear that come together at such a high standard, it was like listening at Covent Garden, or better. Another was the Fonteyn tours. I was not playing in Leeds but stood at the back of the theatre. Fabulous dancers we had revered all of our lives participated: Maina Gielgud doing solo work; Lyn Seymour, the dancer of the day; Robert North, the contemporary dancer of the day; and David Wall, principal dancer with the Royal Ballet. There were two Russians, Andre Prokovsky and Galina Samsova. Fonteyn did the *Romeo and Juliet* love scene with David Wall, not much dancing but tremendous stage presence and acting through her movement. By then she was really beyond doing any difficult things like *Swan Lake* but the sound of the orchestra and the performance on stage, brought tears to my eyes. Later, the curtain rose again and Maina did her contemporary piece with percussion, which was fabulous, riveting.[4] That experience was a highlight along with the Independent Theatre:

3 See Chapter Seven.
4 See Chapter Four.

Ronald Thomas and Warwick Ross, Seaborn Room, Independent Theatre 1999.

after the process of addressing the acoustic and hearing the resultant sound, knowing it is significant and a great enhancer of the experience for both musicians and audiences, is very thrilling.

When it reopened, I was exhausted. I had no staff; I did everything. Gloria Scott was there looking after the corporate activities and was flat-out marketing. They were demanding of management and insistent they wanted immediate answers. I had been project managing, then trying to build interest in the theatre from the musical fraternity. I could not take on the role of theatre manager and build an audience, although I knew that must happen. Previously, there would have been a VIP opening reception and champagne flowing with the Governor-General as special guest. That was the way the Trust originally worked but now we were more concerned with events than appearances. The sound shells were installed and by 2008 the venue was working. There was a finished product, on which a lot of money had been spent. I decided to use the network of people I knew and encourage them to use the theatre on a self-promotion basis. The cost of somewhere like the Opera House is prohibitive for a self-promoter unless you are Oscar Peterson or similar.

We had one of the best chamber rooms in the world and it needed to be used. I began making contacts and people started calling. In the Seaborn Room there were a large variety of activities from spiritual meetings to yoga classes. *Weight Watchers* were regulars on Tuesday nights. I was approached by a City Christian Church pastor who wanted a place to meet on Sunday mornings. Their approach was the application of Christian values in the community rather than the adoration of Christian systems, so they did not need a formal church. Many of the group, including young families, lived locally. The pastor had heard of the venue through North Sydney Council. They wanted space for children to play under supervision while their parents attended services in the theatre and talked together. We negotiated a fee covering all our costs including a technician who helped in relation to the musical aspect of the service. The pastor played the guitar and they sang religious inspired songs. We provided tea and coffee and a person to serve it. They loved the sound of the room which was so natural. Even though they were using electronic instruments they could communicate without amplification. I kept an eye on what was going on by standing up the back and listening. There was a great deal of group support when individuals were dealing with tragedy in their lives. Microphones were not necessary and it was a supportive environment. They used the theatre for four years, staying until we sold it. Buildings often take on the nature of the people in them. They were happy. The children were always happy and well

looked after. Younger members of their congregation, teenagers, were rostered to look after the children and they played and ran videos upstairs.

Peter Cousens approached us when he started his musical theatre company, *Kookaburra*.[5] They wanted rehearsal and performance space, and we gave them a week or so there. We had a set rate of hire but with every event I negotiated to the capacity of the hirer and by and large we struck a suitable deal allowing them to do what they wanted to do. Some things I solicited, other things came by word of mouth or by accident. I was standing outside one day and two people were looking at the building with more than just passing curiosity. They wanted to hold a funeral on a particular day and the nearby Catholic Church was not available. They were committed to a date with little time to find a venue and decided the theatre would be suitable. *White Lady Funeral Services* brought the coffin onto the stage, people sat in the auditorium and a celebrant conducted the service. Later we had a memorial service for someone associated with the theatre during their career. Some 200 attended. Older members of the acting profession had lessons, performed or attended performances at the Independent and many audience members attended from school age; a lot of people remember the Independent as a theatrical venue. We did not allow rock concerts which seem to have a high damage potential. The theatre seats, for example, cost $430 each and we had 300. I was not interested in commercial gain, but rather having the theatre known as a place for successful events, mostly classical or jazz.

5 Peter Cousens (b.1955), Australian actor, musical theatre performer, producer, founded *Kookaburra* in 2006 as a not for profit theatre company dedicated to musical theatre. During its short career the company produced seven musicals, some concerts and cabaret events but was unable to sustain its work and closed in March 2009.

Music Presentations at the Independent

***Stuart & Sons* Pianos**

Jazz pianist Kevin Hunt, one of our scholars, was doing his Master's degree at Sydney University. One of his topics was the comparison of the Australian designed and made ***Stuart & Sons* Piano** and other pianos.

We had two *Stuart* pianos and a *Kawai* piano and on this occasion a *Steinway* brought in for another concert. Kevin had been analyzing the difference between the pianos from a technical point of view. He discussed the pros and cons but was more interested in the comparative difference and invited fellow jazz musicians and one prominent pianist to play the three different pianos and give impressions of what they thought. They included jazz pianists Paul McNamara and Judy Bailey, who could be relied upon to give informed appraisals. It was an interesting date during which he talked about what he had done and where his studies had taken him. He played each piano and demonstrated what he thought he could do better on one than another. When Judy Bailey came we had three *Stuarts* and she quickly identified the one she preferred, giving her reasons. With this piano you heard her style and sound.

Kevin Hunt at the *Stuart* Piano, Seaborn Room, Independent Theatre.

Since the 1950s there has been a jazz venue, *El Rocco*, in Sydney's Kings Cross, where Australian modern jazz was born. In the 1960s the players included drummer Stewie Speer, Judy Bailey, the talented, brilliant young pianists Bryce Rohde and Mike Nock and bassist Lyn Christie. It still operates as a seven nights a week venue from which came the leaders of modern Australian jazz. Bryce went to America and made a career there. He was back in Sydney after we had taken delivery of the *Stuart* piano from the Sydney Festival. By then he was nearly 80 years of age. He had never heard of the *Stuart* and was a pianist who really thought about what he played. It was highly emotive playing, very good technically and he explored everything about pianos to get the most from them. He sat down at the *Stuart* to play and I lost him for at least half an hour as he voiced chords, different inversions

and in different keys. He was not playing any tunes but exploring various registers on the piano. At the end he wished he had such a piano thirty years before, saying he could do things he had never been able to do on any other piano. He was exploring its cleanness. On some pianos you put a cluster of a chord together in such a way that it gets a diffused sound; it is not clean. The *Stuart* delivers cleanness from every note no matter what you do. You can play seconds which are basically dissonant, you can hear the two different notes clearly and that is what Bryce had been doing. **Wayne Stuart** is well aware of such responses and worked with Kevin Hunt during his study, exploring these issues.

The Macassar Ebony *Stuart & Sons* piano commissioned by the Trust (No. 17, 2.3 metres).

The *Stuart* piano is bound closely with the Trust and the Independent. Wayne had developed his piano in Victoria, reaching a point where it needed a big step to move it into final research and production. Newcastle University Conservatorium took on that role, led by the pianist, composer and teacher, Professor Robert Constable, providing him with the resources and capacity to do so. Whilst there, Wayne formed a relationship with a strong supporter of Australian music: Robert Albert who had many years of involvement in the music business, as a publisher of **Albert's Music** in the early part of the twentieth century and then as a studio manager in King Street, Sydney, and also as an arts manager, including for rock group *AC/DC*. Robert backed Wayne and they established a company to take the *Stuart* piano out of its research stage. Wayne moved into premises in Newcastle, and with Robert Albert set up *Piano Australia Pty Limited*. They established a factory and began making pianos. Wayne had already made two pianos housed in the Conservatorium. They were the product of his research; full concert grands with a nine foot or 2.9 metres' length. Not only is the technical design unique, but so is the wood. Wayne specialized in using Australian woods, believing they had a unique sound, and if the wood veneer was used properly it would enhance the sound of the piano. His first two pianos were made of Tasmanian Huon Pine, a fabulous wood which has a long life and grows in protected forests. Apparently, for sailing ships made by convicts in Tasmania, Huon Pine was the preferred wood because it

would survive anything and did not deteriorate in water. Wayne, who is Tasmanian, had this as his preferred wood. With Robert Albert's support and help he continued to make pianos.

During the next fifteen years from the late 1990s, Wayne made over twenty pianos. These are all handmade instruments; it takes a year to make such a piano. I had been involved with Wayne at Newcastle Conservatorium. By 2004 I was at the Trust, we had the Independent, and I became aware again of *Stuart* pianos. Wayne had won an Australia Council grant to take his full concert grand measurements and redesign them for a smaller, seven foot, 2.2 metre, instrument. From a business point of view it seemed the moneymaking aspect of piano manufacture would be in this smaller instrument which would go into recording studios, private homes, small halls and church halls. This is the size of grand pianos in schools and conservatoriums. Full concert grands belong on the concert stage and there are limited opportunities for these, so the business was definitely for smaller ones. While Wayne had won support to redesign his drawings for a smaller instrument, he did not have money to make them. After discussion with the directors, we recommended help for Wayne by providing him with funds to make prototype pianos of this size. Although it was a grant, we had a commercial approach, commissioning the first three pianos, about the equivalent value of the Trust's support. I selected Macassar Ebony wood from New Guinea for one of those pianos. It is hard to obtain but Wayne had enough left for one piano in his store. He also had some Western Red Cedar which was 10,000 years old. It is better than wine. I thought the Macassar Ebony would make a wonderful case and a wonderful sound. It was black but had a little flame through it. He agreed to make one piano from that and the Trust still has that piano. It is still playing very well; the piano Judy Bailey liked most of all.

> *... as soon as I heard [the Stuart piano], I was in heaven. It was so responsive to touch—the clarity, the dynamic range, the lovely articulation. I spent an hour playing it, and another two hours talking to Wayne.*
>
> Gerard Willems
> *The Weekend Australian Magazine*
> 1-2 November 2003 (p.28)

We did not receive the first piano. Rowan Atkinson[1] had heard about an Australian in Newcastle making pianos. He travelled from Brisbane, where he was performing, to meet Wayne. He played the big piano and on the spot bought a 2.2 metre one still on the drawing board. So we got the next three including a Huon Pine and an Macassar Ebony. We gave Wayne the money in advance and he produced four pianos. One went to Rowan Atkinson, the other three to the Independent.

We were recommended to the Sydney Festival as a potential host for its piano which was a *Stuart & Sons* 3 metre concert grand made of Western Red Cedar. It had been in the Sydney Opera House and at another venue. It had been neglected and had deteriorated after being unattended under an air-conditioning duct for a long period of time. The Sydney Festival bought

1 Rowan Atkinson CBE (born 1955), English actor, comedian and screenwriter.

it with funding from the New South Wales government in support of Wayne's initiative. Wayne had been taken on by the Department of Trade as their figurehead and drawcard in an Expo showcasing Australian innovation and scientific research. The piano had gone to an Expo in New York under the auspices of the Department and been successfully received. The Festival had little need for a piano as it did not program solo piano recitals. No-one had taken personal interest in the piano and eventually Wayne was approached to take it back. Wayne suggested the Independent and the Trust. After discussions, the Festival agreed we should take responsibility to care for and insure it. We were at a point where we were wanting to develop the theatre and a concert grand piano was perfect. It also fitted our philosophy to help an Australian innovator move in the profession. For Wayne to have his piano on a Sydney stage where he could show people what it could do, became a good opportunity for all of us. We then had four pianos on site, two in the foyer and two on stage.

We had also met **Ron Overs**, a piano technician who, like Wayne, was questioning the validity of a 150 year old habit of making pianos the same way. He had different approaches to Wayne, but he was looking at ways to improve the quality of the piano. Whereas Wayne was concerned about the entire piano, everything from the smallest piece, to the case, the action, to its technical issues and its look, Ron was more interested in taking an existing case and putting in a worked-over action. He was doing this with *Steinway* and *Kawai* cases, putting in actions he had manufactured or doctored. One of these came up for sale through an associate. This was the other arm of Australian technology. There were not many people in the world pushing the barrier of piano technology; *Fazioli* is about the only one of note in Italy. We bought this piano intending to provide a good environment and opportunity for people to see what an *Overs* piano sounds like. Jazz and classical players like both pianos. The *Overs'* action is considered to be very fast and good to play. The *Stuart* has different technology and delivers different things. What is great is that the instruments are all different.

We had five pianos at the Independent. Since we could not become a piano showroom, we sought homes for two of the 2.2 metre pianos. The Huon Pine went to Japan through Wayne and Robert Albert and the other to Admiralty House in Sydney. We were left with the Macassar Ebony, a wonderful piano. *Stuart* pianos are all different and it is unfair to compare them. Having now equipped ourselves with a good smaller piano for the theatre foyer and the full concert grand for the stage, we were in a position to do two piano works when necessary. We were able to test the appropriateness to do this when Gerard Willems undertook a concert at Government House Ballroom. With one of his talented, advanced students he held a master class on a Beethoven piano concerto. One piano for the solo part and the other to play the orchestral accompaniment. We offered our 2.2 metre, the Macassar Ebony piano, and a full concert *Stuart* was also made

available. The lid was taken off the small piano and pushed towards the bow of the big one. The soloist played the grand. The balance was superb. In fact, the smaller piano was the stronger of the two. We did a similar thing in the Australian Club not long after with two *Stuarts*. Gerard Willems played the solo part with Phillip Shovk[2] playing the orchestral part of Beethoven's *Emperor Concerto*. Again, a superb sound, plenty of power and quality.

I had been developing the use of the theatre and trying to attract people who might be interested in the *Stuart* pianos. They were free to bring in another piano if they wanted, but most were happy to use the *Stuart*. The big problem for the theatre was developing an established audience. *Musica Viva* subsequently brought their audience and at that early stage we needed bookings with a ready-made audience for hirers. I thought ethnic communities would bring their own audiences, so I contacted the Armenian community renowned for their prowess in classical music. They advised they were bringing a piano, violin and 'cello trio from Armenia, the Khachaturian Trio, who had a strong association with the *Khachaturian Society*, based at a museum near the Russian border. The pianist was bringing her daughter, also an accomplished pianist, and given our two pianos, they suggested programming a work for two pianos by Babajanian, a prominent Armenian composer, who wrote interesting but difficult and demanding work for keyboard, a bit like Rachmaninov. Our audience capacity was 300 and their group included about 250 people. They brought their own audience and sold out. The members of the trio were musical leaders in Armenia. The violinist had been a soloist and performed with the *Moscow Virtuosi*, the cellist held a position with the Armenian Philharmonic Orchestra, while the pianist was a Professor at Yerevan State Conservatory. I knew they would be exacting about what they wanted from the room and the *Stuart* piano.

Stuart pianos have extended keyboards, with 14 more keys on a studio grand, such as the Trust's piano, than the usual 88. Most of the extra keys are in the bass although more recent *Stuart* grands have 108 keys extending both to the top and bottom notes. This extended length can create orientation problems for some players familiar with less keys. The *Stuart* also has four pedals, two left and two right. Responses to concert pianos are personal, so while some adjust easily to the *Stuart* keyboard, others don't. Also, the sound is so clean and so open, if your technique is not up to scratch it will expose you. We all know there are ways of getting through a concert with imperfections and you cover them up and the public never see it but on a *Stuart* piano you cannot do that.

The Khachaturian Trio asked to come on the day of the concert to look at the room and the piano. The piano was set at the back of the stage because the forestage was set up for something else earlier in the day. They spoke very little English but communicated musically very clearly. The

2 Phillip Shovk—Winner Hephzibah Menuhin Prize and Best Australian Pianist Prize, 1988 Sydney International Piano Competition. Lecturer in Piano and Accompaniment at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music.

pianist played some difficult pieces while the others listened. During the rehearsal they found the piano to be so good, they stopped talking and just played. The 'cellist had an instrument provided by the Russian government, a famous *Testore* Italian 'cello, and the violinist played a *Stradivarius*. Superb instrumentation matched to a modern piano in a hall that had been revamped. The concert was stunning; the sound superb. They capped it off by having the second piano on stage which the pianist's daughter played. They performed a technically stunning piano duet. They played one work and changed pianos for the fun of it and played another one. They did not speak much English but you could see they were really enjoying it and this was more than just a concert. They were in their element; in their comfort zone with fellow Armenians.

The Trust initiative with the *Stuart* piano was a good one, which artistically we will never regret. It helped Wayne get established. He is an innovator and has made several of these small pianos which are now all over the place. One of our smaller ones was number seventeen. There is one in a concert hall in Wales. Generally in Australia they are in educational institutions; Sydney University Great Hall; New South Wales University and the Conservatorium. Recently Wayne has been revising his view about what metal should be used on the bass strings. He makes everything in the factory, except for the castors. He wound the strings himself and made the metal on top of it. The final covering was a modern kind of material. It is a special composition which allowed for a cleaner bottom sound and when you played an F down the bottom it was just superb. He is always looking for improvement. This was the Henry Royce approach applied to the *Rolls Royce* motorcar, absolute perfectionism, and when something was working he would pull it apart and see if he could make it work better and if not, he would invent something to make it better. Wayne is doing the same thing, always looking to take things to the next stage. This is a most unusual approach to instrument-making from anyone in the world. He is very exacting about what he thinks the piano should be used for. He is interested in initiatives that take the instrument, and use what it has to give, to achieve a musical outcome. Consequently, he is interested in having his pianos used for contemporary music.

A young man from Brazil, Arthur Chimero, had been looking on the internet and found the *Stuart* piano. He is a performer and composer who made contact with Wayne and asked if he could look at the piano and perhaps record some of his music on it. Wayne warmed to the idea because it is exactly what he wants. Arthur had been exploring the bottom end of the piano register and wanted something that would extend further than the existing keyboard, which the *Stuart* did. He also wanted a sound and a cluster of sound he could write for that end. He spent some time with Wayne at the factory where they did some recordings. We invited him to play his music as well as a Beethoven work at the Independent. In the short time he had been in Australia, he had come to terms with what the *Stuart* piano can do and was using it. He had adapted it and adopted it into his approach to composition.

The *Stuart* is also very good with traditional repertoire. Piers Lane playing the Chopin repertoire is superb.[3] It is a major contribution to Australian music. For the Trust to have been part of that, we can be very proud. This is where the Trust is going, quietly doing things to create the musical future for Australians, by Australians, here and internationally. We have gone past the point where sixty years ago we set up an opera company to service the needs of opera. Now we are helping musicians and creators to take their craft to the highest degree and to specialize in new and innovative things like the *Stuart* piano which become part of international musical culture. The technology is such now that it is possible for these experiences to be shared through the internet and other digital means.

***The Long Ride Home* Opera**

With the Independent renovation, we had a decent chamber music room. We had put in a small stage that could be dropped down so small scale opera was also possible. I wanted it to be used to the maximum of its capacity in whatever genre, music or the spoken word. We had access to our scholars who were already doing work which would be perfect in the Independent. One scholar we assisted, Thomas Rimes, was originally organ scholar at St Paul's College, Sydney University. I had come from Melbourne to take the Trust job and was resident as a tutor at St Paul's. He played the organ and conducted the orchestra of Women's College and St Paul's College players. Later, he applied to us for assistance to study conducting in Memphis, USA. He established a relationship with an opera singer in America and developed interest in the genre, subsequently producing operas in Italy. He then became repetiteur for an opera company in Kassel, Germany, where he is now a principal conductor. Soon after 9/11 he approached me having written an opera inspired by that tragic event.[4] It was a small opera, with four or five singers, and a small chorus, which was not mandatory, of about seven or eight voices.

Lisa Roberts, another scholar, was Artist-in-Residence at the Independent Theatre and this was a way to test opera in the space. Lisa and Tom worked together to put it on. Set in a country town in Australia, it is the story of a family whose daughter was working in New York. They believed she was in the towers when the planes hit that day. One of her siblings was on the telephone most of the opera, trying to get information without any success, but she kept on trying. Woven around this theme was the dynamics between country people who were so far removed from the New York tragedy they could barely find a way to understand what was happening. There was conflict between the family and a member of the community over the

3 Piers Lane AO (b.1958), Australian pianist who studied at Queensland Conservatorium of Music. Was named Best Australian Pianist at the inaugural Sydney International Piano Competition in 1977. Since 2007 he has been the Artistic Director of the annual Australian Festival of Chamber Music and, since 2016, of the Sydney International Piano Competition. He plays recitals throughout the world, working extensively in England and Europe.
4 9/11: represents the date 11th September 2001—when a series of terrorist attacks by the Islamic group al Qaeda was made against the United States of America. Nearly 3000 people were killed and more than 6,000 injured when four passenger planes were hijacked and were deliberately crashed into buildings including the twin towered World Trade Centre in New York.

girl who had left for New York and there was play within play going on in this work. It was very cleverly written and about Australians living in the country facing a modern city event which was a huge disaster, having to deal with technology they could barely understand or communicate through. They learn eventually that she is alive and there is great relief, but by this time they have worked through many personal crises and accusations about letting her go to America. We produced its world premiere at the Independent Theatre, and Tom made a recording of the score with piano only. Here was a bringing together of two scholars; Lisa with her voice training, having put together and trained the chorus, while Tom selected the soloists and rehearsed them. He played the piano with a small ensemble, for which he rewrote the score. It was very well done.

The audience we attracted from our database of people. We had been building a growing list of people with every event at the Independent. As part of a bigger plan, we established a ticketing system and encouraged people to buy online rather than through the box office. It began with a small take-up but eventually the majority were buying online, some 75%. We captured their email when they purchased. We started to analyze attendees to identify what they liked and attended. The development of **Pacific Opera** happened in the Independent. We had several operatic productions there, so an opera audience developed. We emailed and sent communications to those people and built an audience. Also there were the natural ones, like St Paul's College, who were very supportive of their alumni. We undertook to mount the production with access to whatever audience we could find. As it turned out, there was an adequate audience. Any proposal that came onto my desk was considered seriously.

***Musica Viva* Coffee Concerts**

I wanted *Musica Viva* because it was key to me that their program should be there, even if it was not their mainstream series. I understand that for something like the *Goldner Quartet* there is a big fee to pay and you need a recital hall with 1500 people to recoup that and *Musica Viva* is not a charity. I had been talking with *Musica Viva* in general and no proposal had come forward until I found out they ran a coffee concert in Melbourne. Apparently it had not gone well but the concept was similar to the Wigmore Hall *Coffee Concerts*, with an hour's music followed by refreshments. Nothing new but they were trying it. We had established a strong catering arm with the theatre, with good suppliers of food, especially cakes. I always did the tasting and could feed back to the wholesaler. Most people who used the theatre commented on the great food; we were confident about putting forward the notion of a coffee concert at the Independent. I suggested we supply food, coffee and tea, served by our staff, and would recoup a percentage of each ticket sold to cover costs for ushers and theatre hire, so for us it was at least a break-even, maybe even a little profit depending on the numbers.

Musica Viva had a lot of loyal, aged subscribers who had attended their concerts at the Opera House or City Recital Hall but could no longer physically do that and they were leaving the subscription lists. *Musica Viva* was concerned they did not lose those people to music so they were looking for ways to keep them. After discussion it was decided to provide coffee at 10am and a concert from 11am to noon. High quality cake, tea and coffee would be included in the ticket price. We knew from experience of our Saturday and Sunday afternoon concerts there is a demographic between seventy and ninety years of age who found the Independent easy to get to and park if they were driving. If they were not driving they could be easily let down and picked up outside the front door. There is a good bus service. We found there was a potential audience, outside of *Musica Viva* and knew they liked a short concert and to get home before dark. Morning was a good time; *Musica Viva* agreed and devised a series of Coffee Concerts. They had five concerts on five Tuesdays a year every other month, starting from February through to November and at each concert they had one of their flagship groups, like *Duo Sol* or the *Goldner Quartet*. It worked very well. I supervised the serving of cake and running of the morning, starting at about 6 am and finishing at 1pm. It was quite intensive. I used to be around to gauge reactions and solicit responses to the cake, particularly if we tried a new one. It was obvious they had strong views. One man admitted he came for the cake over the music! These events quickly sold out so were a success for both organizations. They provided high profile product with good quality players. Not only did the cake and coffee go well for the audience but for the performers the environment was healthy and good. When I heard musicians saying it was easy to play, I knew we had done the acoustic work correctly.

At the opposite end of the spectrum, there were young people starting out who captivated no-one's interest. They were too early for *Musica Viva* and were a little uncontrollable because they had purist ideas. They would have been happy to present a whole program of Ligetti and expect the audience to stay beyond the interval. While acknowledging that there were good musicians in such groups, I knew they needed assistance with repertoire and programming. We did not need to dictate to them or take over their lives but we needed to give them a resource where they could develop ideas and worst case scenario test these ideas on an audience and find out what does and does not work. Talking with these people, I could see they were ready to take direction and if we were genuinely to help them they would do the best they could within their capacity so we did not get to loggerheads about programming; they were always pretty good. There were several groups like that. We knew they had no money or backers and no audience. Audiences need to be encouraged to come through the performers or the program or both. I was working with people to get them to think like that.

We had one young group who started thinking about the presentation and they were very creative, talented and efficient. They had a singer, pianist and bassist and another instrument from time to time and they would present their concert like a stage show. They began to dress in costume and at other times would act out the song through singing. In one case they had a dancer performing. This kind of flexibility in the presentation began to happen and they started to build an audience of people interested in their work. Over several years support started to come for these people. It is expensive to run any venue and one could not expect these people to provide that money nor did they have the money.

Developing Audiences

Our objective was to give opportunity for groups to build an audience, not just any audience but their own particular audience and supporters. We would give them access to the venue without a fee until a certain time when we knew their audience was building. Most people could get an audience of twenty or thirty from our lists and if they added the ten people they knew, there was forty people and it was starting to be healthy. We had a very tight control on our costs and our staff. We did everything essential for proper fire control but we did not go over the top. On the bar we had one person; most other places have three. Our view was not to make money from the bar, just provide a service. If you did that at the Recital Hall it would be disaster; they would expect four or five people behind the bar and they look to it as an income revenue. We were thinking more of the concert. We kept staff to a minimum and the condition was that they had to do the ticketing through our box office which also gave them access to our mailing list, which was good. We could also pre-sell them on our website by putting what was coming up the next month and then we started to link that to our tickets. It became more sophisticated as each month went on. They could buy through our website and the group did not have anything to do, except provide me with an A3 size poster of the group to put in the window and any flyers they cared to produce to go in the racks at the theatre, because people did take those things away. It is about the only print thing that still works in theatres and they all did that. From the box office returns, the first consideration was staff costs. They were things we could not negotiate and we were not over the top. We were just bare minimum staff and we talked that through with the players so they knew exactly what the staff did and why there are fire regulations. All of them agreed at the end of the day when they understood the issues. Everyone was different. Some had already a guaranteed audience and I did not want them to be more advantaged than the others and take the advantage at the expense of the others. So everyone was different but basically the box office provided for the staff first. The next amount went to the artists to pay their basic costs. If there was money left over, a fee for hire hall would be charged but if there was not

enough money we would wear it as a loss of income. It did not really cost us except we had no maintenance costs coming in. It started to work and allowed people to build their own audience.

The Seraphim Trio had been doing successful concerts for over ten years. Every year they did a series of two concert programs in Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide, all in one weekend. The Trio started in Melbourne but the cellist moved to become a member of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra and the other two are still in Melbourne. Twice a year they convened to play chamber music, but there was obviously not any money being made out it. In Victoria and South Australia they had supportive audiences, but in Sydney they were never able to find an audience and they had tried playing in a variety of places. They thought the Independent might be the answer. It gave them a good facility, a good piano, and a good room to play in. It was a sizeable theatre, 300 people, compared with the Melba Hall, University of Melbourne, which accommodates about 150 people. When they gave their first concerts, there were thirty-two or forty payers in the audience. They stayed with us for eight years and we gave them deals like that. I did a special deal where we charged them a percentage of the box office. So if they got a 150 people they paid X for the rental and that was all they had to pay. I think there were about four grades, eighty and up to 150, 200, and the price went up as the figures went up but it was all recoupable from the box office. They stayed with us, coming to the theatre until we left. By the time we left they had probably a stable audience of 120 or 130 people. Although it is not fantastic, I consider it was a success because they had developed a following which could only grow if they continued to provide good quality performances and interesting programs.

So, that was the concept I was trying to achieve, and to get there we would cut the cloth to suit the occasion so every negotiation was different. By 2012 there were about sixty concerts we supported. Others, which were paid like *Musica Viva*, brought it up to over eighty, so in that year we ran eighty concerts, quite an achievement. There were well known chamber groups: the *Fitzroy Ensemble*, the *Goldner Quartet* and Gerard Willems playing Beethoven. There was a tribute concert to Graeme Bell, one of the great Australian jazz musicians. He died, aged 97, in June 2012. When he turned ninety he retired, presenting his last concert at the Independent which we funded and encouraged. That concert, which was recorded, was on a *Stuart* piano which he loved. He played with those left from his original band, including Bob Bernard and Paul Furness. It was sold out. When he died, drummer Laurie Thompson asked to do a memorial event at the Independent and invited the old players to come along. We projected, on a screen right across the proscenium arch, scenes from Graeme's life including old clippings from the 1950s about his touring by bus around Australia with those old musicians, interviews with some of those people, all compiled into a composite which we ran throughout the program. Interspersed in that, members of the band played some of his renowned tunes. It was a tremendous, sold out success and a great tribute to Graeme.

The Idea of North

No-one was interested in reviewing us. We did approach the press on a couple of occasions but it was not mainstream enough for them. We were not the Opera House or *Musica Viva* and had people playing they had probably never even heard of. The best they would have covered would have been Graeme Bell. The Australian media was super cautious. Anything to sell a newspaper was in but anything about developing a person's career was their last interest and our primary interest. There were other successes. *The Idea of North* are our scholars. They received assistance from us at the point when they had been together for about ten years, since their days at University in Canberra. They were singing *acapella* and jazz *acapella* well, but lacked real sophistication. Up against groups like *The Real Group*, which was the leader in the world, and some of the American quartets, particularly on the college circuit, they were respectably considered but did not have the edge those people had. They were self-governing and running their own publicity and had thought through a way to build their audience.

The Idea of North in 2004, (*L-R*) Nick Begbie, Naomi Crellin, Andrew Piper and Trish Delaney-Brown

Whoever you are, you have to be concerned about your audience if you want to survive as a player; Barenboim has to be concerned about his audience just the same as any of these people who have never been heard of. They had reached a point where they knew the way to get to their audience was through new media. *Facebook* and social media had not happened at that time, but the sight of young people walking around with laptops was strong and they had one of those in the group: the tenor, Nick Begbie, who was very interested in new technology. Our scholarship assistance is quite flexible and we want it to go to the end result of improving the musical quality. It did not matter if someone went away and studied something non-musical as long as that study was related to the end result. Nick wanted to explore using technology to get to an audience and the place to do it was not Australia. Also, the group wanted to consider how they could improve their overall style and presentation by looking at other groups acknowledged as benchmarks in the *acapella* world.

With assistance from the Trust, they went to study one-on-one with members of *The Real Group,* in America, and with individual people like the *Manhattan Transfer*. At the same time, Nick studied techniques of using computers to access an audience. When they came back, they had achieved two things. Their performance was far more sophisticated, very American and very

tight. The good things had been enhanced even more and any bad aspects had disappeared. Their approach was completely different and their confidence was at the highest level. They had already started their internet and Nick found he could talk to these people. He was smart, had obviously learned or thought it through to make it personal, before *Facebook* and social media. He could personalize emails to remind attendees they been to a concert before and there was another one coming up. This personal contact built them an audience and very quickly they had a database of over 3,000 people, all of whom had been to their concerts and had expressed an interest in hearing about the next concert. So as they toured around Australia they got the database from Victoria or Melbourne or Perth and sent emails to all of those people in a personal way. The result was sold out performances and they did that at the Independent, our first sell-out. They came pretty much once every year and they had 98-99% capacity every time. This was a combination of the scholarship assistance pointing them in the right direction. They did the rest, developing their IT marketing tools and communication skills and developing their product and consolidating it with concerts. The year after our study they went back to the States and competed in the inter-college competition for *acapella* groups. *Acapella* in America in the college circuit is at the top of anything you can achieve and they wiped the slate clean. They took out the Best Group in the States in the entire college circuit competition. From that point on they just kept going. They had regular tours of Asia, Europe and the US, alongside their Australian program. I think we helped them get to that point. Members have changed; replaced by other interesting musicians who are contributing in their own way.

The Independent was a mechanism to help musicians find their audience. From word go, our objective was to help musicians, singers and conductors, initially by giving them study grants to go overseas and that has not changed but one can do more than that in subtle ways and one of these was buying the Independent, doing it up, giving it as a vehicle for them and encouraging them and giving them access. I think with the Independent we are in chapter one of recordings; it is an area yet to flourish. I produced several recordings there, including one with the Parramatta City Brass Band which turned out very well. I did quite a few impromptu recordings, not commercially released, for people who came in. What it needs now is someone to recognize you can get a good product from there and give the support mechanism for distribution. CDs are slowly dying and new media will determine the direction. All of these are unknowns but one of the best recordings was of the ***New Sydney Wind Quintet*****,** produced by composer/producer **Lyle Chan**, who had been with *ABC Classics*. He liked the room. They did the recording before we had the sound shells in and the result was spectacular. They did it on the stage with no audience. It demonstrates what the room is capable of and with the sound shells it would have been enhanced by another 50%. I believe it is waiting for the right person to come along.

When we were there with *Musica Viva* there was a relationship with *2MBS-FM* who recorded every concert which went to air a week or so later.[5] Some of our own events were recorded by *2MBS-FM*, the result was a recording and they had the opportunity to air play it. You have to be very careful when you record there because there is still outside noise a recording environment can pick up, but if you pick the time of day with the sound shells in place, you can get a studio quality recording. When any young engineer comes in and hears that room they always remark how fabulous it is.

We were on the eve of the Global Financial Crisis (GFC) in 2008 but the theatre returned a sizeable profit, the only profit it has ever made. About $200,000, it came from a corporate source. It was very encouraging. Then we were hit with the impact of global problems: corporates dried up overnight and some went to the wall. *Sun Microsystems* was a major client of ours. It disappeared completely; the Americans just shut down Australia completely as far as I know. We took a dive immediately and in the first quarter of 2009, while we had in the past a sizeable amount of income potential for that quarter, there was virtually nothing. This was part of the global pattern. In addition we were developing the program which clearly was not going to contribute any profit to the building, nor cover the cost of increased maintenance. We were at a stage when we could expect a loss every year on the building. Given the age of the building (a theatre since 1911), we had to take positive action on maintenance.

Looking after the Building

We did corrective and preventative maintenance where necessary, but there were still areas, for example the guttering on the roof at the back of the theatre, untouched because all resources had gone into the performing area for the corporates. There had been water damage to the backstage door; it was through the back of the theatre substantially. Correcting that was probably about $200,000 to $300,000. Another item was the air-conditioning system in the theatre. It was not functioning as it should have. There were serious problems only to be rectified by replacing the chiller tower compressor and rerouting some of the ducts. We were reliant entirely on corporate income to make a profit unless our music policy changed, and I was not prepared to recommend this to the directors. Only a handful of concerts sold out, not enough to cover yearly maintenance costs; that has to come from the corporate sector. By 2012 we had a serious problem. By then the Trust had invested and lost in the theatre nearly a quarter of a million dollars. To continue would pull the Trust down. Without maintenance the theatre would deteriorate. Then one side of the air conditioning chiller system broke completely. We

5 *2MBS-FM* - Fine Music 102.5, Sydney music radio station operated by Music Broadcasting Society of NSW Cooperative, a community radio launched in December 1974. It is Australia's first fully licensed FM radio station.

were running on half capacity and getting complaints from audiences about it being too cold or too hot, depending on the season. People are very happy to complain about air-conditioning. We were able to troubleshoot most of those things but it was an issue which had to be addressed. To effectively replace it we were looking at between a quarter and a half million dollars. Beyond us. Or we could have done it but it would have flattened us out and more important to us was what we were doing with the music development, our scholars.

At that point, the directors made an almost immediate decision to sell. I had mixed feelings but could see the reality. I did not want to see it deteriorate or pulled down because we could not do maintenance. We did not want audiences staying away because the air-conditioning was uncomfortable. The outcomes were all negative to me. On the other hand, having worked so hard to turn it into a working performance space, it was a worry to me that we would lose the space. We would not lose access to it; we would have access like any other hirer, which was the approach the directors took. They wanted to remain supportive of the buyer. We had not reached the decision to sell but we could not afford to pay for the air-conditioning which had to be done sooner or later. There was recognition of the work put in to make the building significant and its role in the development of young musicians. We were in the first couple of years of this development. If we continued doing programs such as the one in 2012, it had to be worth it.

I am pleased some of those groups are now well known. The rest should be household names in the next ten years and that is really what we wanted, quietly supporting in the background. It was a dilemma for me but I was charged with the responsibility of making sure money the Trust spent was not wasted. I had to come up with a balanced budget every year and we were getting to a point where the Trust was underwriting and supplementing the loss in the Independent. Each year it had to comply with insolvency laws, the directors had to declare they would underwrite whatever losses the *Independent (Sydney) Pty Ltd* would bear and they willingly did that every January in compliance with ASIC requirements but it was clear each year that amount was going to increase. We did find a satisfactory solution but at the time it was a dilemma. We closed 2011 with a question mark over what to do. The directors would not make decisions subjectively. They wanted to see the end of year profit or loss, and make a decision when they understand why that profit or loss had been made.

As the Independent Theatre's role as a music venue developed, there was an increasing financial problem. As the Annual Reports show, in 2010 the Trust registered a loss of $214,000, in 2011 it was $250,000 and in 2012, $438,000. With this loss and potential expenses, the directors could see the folly of continuing. Unfortunately, before this situation was apparent, I had worked on a concept of the theatre providing not only music performance but also being a centre for musical development.

The Small Group Music Performance program

The program was to be called the Small Group Music Performance (SGMP), which included Australian compositions. The aim was to have several areas of expertise reporting to a central source. There was the potential for recordings, more musical events and to build an audience for these. I hoped for the situation where people came because it was an event at the Independent rather than only attending to hear a particular group or person. It was a concept we thought could work well if we had enough to offer. Another area was vocal development for singers. Lisa Roberts had been an artist-in-residence, building an interest in singers attending the Independent and singing there. There were education opportunities. We had a strong relationship with Wenona School next door. In 2010 the Head of Music expressed a desire to work with the theatre so students would have opportunities to experience professional performance standards and appreciate good pianos and acoustics.

Then there were composers. There was no one place where you hear the work of our composers. **The Australian Music Centre** promotes Australian music through scores and recordings but is a collection centre rather than a meeting place. We hoped the Independent might become a meeting place, provide a composers' forum. We also wanted a place for soloists, including our scholars, to develop their talent. All these aspects could be gathered in one place, managed and developed by the Trust with the assistance of experts in various areas. I had put together a vision articulating the details of such an approach. Without the financial imperative to rethink the Independent, this might well have gone ahead and made a great contribution to the Australian music scene. It would not necessarily have been confined to Sydney given the interest of international artists appearing with us. By 2012 there was a financial problem, containable, however, if we changed the use of the theatre and our approach. We had developed it as a music venue which had already shown it would not be profitable for drama. There were technical issues that worked against successful drama presentations. It could only accommodate small casts and minimal scenic effects without a tower. The audience capacity was not attractive to drama promoters. The majority of people thought 1000 seats were necessary to break even on anything.

The Independent stage set for a Wenona School music ensemble concert.

Wenona School

We had stayed focussed throughout the renovations on creating a perfect chamber music venue with 300 seats. We had been wooing the corporate sector to use the venue which had been reasonably successful and a reason why the losses were not greater. They were paying for the running and most of the maintenance of the building, but there was still an ongoing loss. We were fortunate that circumstance pointed us in a certain direction. I was working on a set-up one day when a gentleman walked through the open back doors. We often had such visitors because many people had an association at some time with the Independent, mostly from their schooldays. He had not seen the renovation, was pleased with the transformation and expressed an interest in buying the building if it was for sale. He had been in the market for it when the theatre was sold to Rodney Seaborn. He had other property in the area and wanted to buy it for commercial purposes. He was not interested in running a theatre and most likely would have changed the use of the site. I passed his card on to the directors which led to their thinking we should perhaps sell the Independent rather than run a music program at a loss, even though it was good musically. By 2012 we had planned over 80 concerts. When thinking who might buy it, there was concern that the purchaser would at least honour the work we had done and use it in the way we intended. You cannot dictate to a buyer but you can try to find someone who would appreciate what you were doing. We were in the middle of Wenona School campus with their buildings on three sides of the Independent. Nearly the entire block belonged to the school, except for the theatre and the flats to one side. We thought Sydney's oldest extant theatre, now in great condition, would be rather a jewel for a good school to have on their campus. Wenona School was interested. The negotiations took some time but we never publicly listed the building. Contracts were exchanged by the end of 2012 and the sale finalized in 2013. We moved out in December 2013. It was agreed we would stay on as theatre manager for several months to help Wenona as they took over the operation.

The Trust recouped its renovation costs and from January 1st 2014 had no responsibility for the Independent. We dealt with the intellectual property rights to retain the name with the venue. I had spent time getting the visuals and trademark for the Independent established with a logo and sign, characters which were musically orientated and did not want that to disappear. We did not want to take it with us and suggested they take the name of the Independent. We assigned a licence for them to use the logo and gave them the Independent website, which had built a database of around 3000 people who had attended events and were regular attendees. Attached to the website was a ticketing service facility, from an outsourced party but accessed through our website. There was no money involved, it was just goodwill, and we assigned the relevant rights to them. We hold intellectual property on some of the characters but the sign on the front of **The Independent**, and on the doors throughout the theatre, remains with Wenona.

Wenona sought for the Trust to continue to support ten concerts through the *Easy Access* program which was providing concessional access for musicians to build audiences. It was up to them whether they did it but we were trying to remove the financial burden while they did so. Under our management they could have the space rent free if they did not reach a certain box office target. If they did make the target the rent would be minimal and they took away the profit. So there was an incentive for them to work on building audiences. They did not have marketing budgets but there were things they could do. The access was conditional and if they chose not to do anything they did not get the *Easy Access* next time. Most were conscientious to varying degrees of success depending on the vision of those involved and their understanding of marketing, publicity and resources. Some had friends and parents who could guide and give practical help. Others did not have any access but everyone tried. Had we stayed, the Independent would have been helping the musicians in marketing their material through the website and mailing lists.

We did not know how many groups would want to continue this process and when we lost control over the negotiation, once Wenona decided what prices they were going to charge, we could not be involved anymore. However, the directors decided we did not want to walk away and leave them in the lurch so we agreed to keep this offer open to underwrite the costs of up to ten concerts a year. It was not our intention to put these concerts on, although we left it open to be able to put on a concert to celebrate something like our Diamond Jubilee. For the first year we underwrote the ten concerts which mostly went well enough for them not to have to call on our money. The next year no group came forward so they had sorted out their relationship with Wenona's Independent.

We still have the view that we want to help events at the Independent and to that end we still underwrite the Sydney Independent Opera. If they do not get a certain box office we pay their hire fee. In October 2015 their production of *Tosca* came under that regime. They have built their audience now to a reasonable size, getting between 80 and 120 people, which is nearly half the house, having started with 40. We are able to give them reassurance that if things go horribly bad they will not lose the house.

Alan Rendell, who provided an audience development service for us, was employed as part of our bigger plan to employ a facilitator in each area of the Small Group Music Performance scheme. We started with audience development, the core source of funding. Alan joined a year before we sold. His particular skills included developing and administering websites. He fine-tuned the ticket service as it constantly changed and improved. He was building profiles of tickets buyers and target marketing those people, with their permission. He also put together the printed catalogue of 2012 events. The advance work for this was scheduling dates and planning

marketing support. Alan would attend nearly all performances, meeting and greeting people in the foyer and talking to them about what they wanted. He was the public face of the concert, not necessarily the Trust but the concert. If the *Seraphim Trio* were on he would be in the foyer, talking to people about how good they were and how to book now for the next one. Without hard selling he would move around and get feedback for the players on repertoire. He put the website together which we gave to Wenona, and then devised the new Trust website.

The Present and The Future

At the end of 2012 I submitted my resignation as General Manager of the Trust and the Board refused, saying I could be a consultant retaining the title of General Manager. When I submitted my resignation, I was looking at the financial outcome for the Trust and could see, if the Independent Theatre sale went through, the work I was doing need not continue. At the same time I felt my remuneration was exacerbating the loss. We negotiated that I continue for a couple of days a week to help find and move into new premises and keep the scholarship program going. The scholarship program had been dormant from 2009 to 2013 and the 2008 GFC had affected the income capacity of the funds so there was not a lot of money to give. Most of the scholarship activity involved decisions and administration for one or two scholars and rejecting most of the other applications.

By 2013 things were improving. We were coming out of the red in our investments and there would be money for scholarships again. I thought one or two days a week would probably be sufficient to handle these, plus the new office, meaning the Trust would be liable for a consultancy fee rather than employment obligations. Financially for the Trust it was a good position to be in and no problem to me. I was looking at other interests that could become part of Trust activities but if the Trust was not interested, I would be able to move in that direction.

In the 2014 draft budget we anticipated $87,500 of the gross income going to scholarships. The board makes this decision. I can only recommend but feel we should spend around $100,000 a year in scholarship assistance. Our scholarships are slightly different than others. We do not just give people a cheque. If a scholar goes to the Juilliard Music School, New York, we ask Juilliard to send us the account, we pay it in advance so the scholar knows their fees are paid and they do not have to worry about that. That saves a lot of misunderstandings and allows us to keep track of the scholarship assistance cash flow. A recurrent problem, which has been brought to the directors' attention, is a weak Australian dollar. Most scholars' budgets for a year are done in advance and the rate of exchange can drop substantially after they begin their study. Who wears that? Technically you could say the scholars as they have been given money on the basis of the rate they quoted at the time. That is a bit harsh, especially since we are willing to pay direct for fees whenever it comes in, regardless of the rate of exchange. I believe we should have a contingency for certain circumstances, where we are able to absorb that loss. Small amounts do not make that much difference; a small percentage change does not impact greatly, but more substantial changes need to be considered. My recommendation is that we do not contract to this but take responsibility when something is seriously affected. No one can know what will

happen with the Australian dollar. The main thing is to not stretch resources so far that we do not have the capacity to deal with it, so the annual scholarship amount is considered in this light.

Classical: NEXT

We have taken up a proposal to collaborate with the **Australian Music Foundation** in Australia, the UK and USA. It arose from *Classical: NEXT*, a group of people interested in the money attached to classical music, i.e. the record companies. In 2013 they assembled for a talkfest forum to investigate all the new things happening and how classical music was being affected. They were also examining the demise of the classical music financial model. The record companies included *Nexus, Deutsche Gramophone, Warner*, and *EMI*; all people with an interest in recouping the millions of dollars income lost each year on classical music when it went digital. The first forum was successful in putting out a lot of ideas no-one had thought were going to be relevant. In 2014 I attended the second forum held in the Mak, the Austrian Museum of Applied Arts in Vienna[1], not far from the Opera House. People from all over the world participated as presenters. It was like a trade fair with simultaneous meetings and presentations, and refreshment breaks for networking and displays. Record labels, designers, ensembles, were there talking with clients and potential clients or finding sources of supply. Most important were the presentations. I wanted to know – and still do, where we are going to be in five years' time in selling classical music and how are we going to do it. If you look at the past, there has been a decline, in concert halls there is a declining audience.

One paper noted the youngest people at a Berlin Philharmonic concert were in the orchestra. Traditionally it was aged people playing to young people. Now it is reversed and the audience is declining with natural attrition and not being replaced. Why is that audience not being replaced by younger people, what is stopping them from coming? Young people are conducting their lives differently, but that does not mean to say they are not interested in classical music. In the late 1970s and early 1980s Korea was the largest purchaser of classical music in the world. More records were sold there than anywhere else. No one would have thought the Koreans would outstrip the Germans and Americans in terms of record buying. They were buying European records; *Deutsche Gramophone, EMI* product and New York labels. In the 1980s, when CDs came in, people embraced the new technology which required smaller equipment and gave high fidelity to the sound. That took on for a decade. By the 1990s there was a generation who listened to music this way, especially as the pop music industry was very quick to grab that music portability, no longer relying on dance-halls, films or live concerts except to sell their product. The Phil Collins world tour, *No Jacket Required*, was to sell that album in the 1980s. They spent six million pounds on that tour to sell a CD which returned about sixty million in sales.

1 The Mak, Austrian Museum of Applied Arts/Contemporary Art, Stubenring, Vienna, was founded in 1863 as the Imperial Royal Museum of Art and Industry. Besides a traditional orientation towards arts, crafts and design, it especially focusses on Architecture and contemporary art.

By the 1990s a twenty year old consumed music through headphones on a *Walkman* CD, and knew no other way. At age ten they may have remembered dad's vinyl record collection and big speakers, but it was not the sort of thing you could take to a party; you had to bring the party to it. With the advance of technology came mp3, a medium that would digitize the signal, store it in a capacity the size of your thumb and have in it every pop tune you were ever interested in which you could play back in the train or bus. Into the 2000s and the digital phone took off. The mp3 could be transferred to the phone and you could listen to your favourite pop tune or the Berlin Philharmonic playing a Beethoven symphony anywhere. But where is the revenue for the record companies? That is no longer happening and even the supposed modern format of the CD is almost redundant. You can download music, buy it on line, or on *Spotify*, through all of the search engines, onto a computer, laptop or USB. This convention set out to address these issues; the ageing audience and how to keep it for classical music. How to attract younger audiences and how they want to receive it. Demographics play a part in this. A ninety year old might be happy to use an mp3, on the other hand, you would never ask a twenty year old to put on a vinyl record unless it is cool. The convention invited people who had been at the helm of the heyday of classical music to say what they were doing to save the ship from sinking.

One man, from South Korea, the General Manager of the Daiwan Cultural Foundation, had the job of studying classical music and the market in Korea. He gave us some market statistics. In 2000 the record market was at its peak, but by 2010 had declined by 80%. In Korea there are 178 local cultural art centres. They all have contact with artists and offline they deliver by CD, DVD, *Blueray* discs; the normal way as we understand today but digitally they have several search engines and mobile facilities, the programs SKT, KT, LET. In shops they deliver music digitally as background music as a service and they are within the top ten countries in the world. In this digital environment they produced $211 million worth of revenue in 2013, the year before this conference, whilst their record market had declined by 80%. The record market as we know it, understand and love, is diminishing fast and everyone is getting out.

The Digital Market

The digital market is in huge growth. In 'social media use' statistics, 75% of girls and 60% of boys use social media, ages twelve and thirteen represent 52% of the social media users and ages fourteen to seventeen are the remainder of the social media users. The music industry is looking to social media to get its message across. At the 2014 *Classical: NEXT* Conference it was revealed that there had been a test of teenage interest in classical music. A member of a government initiative from Brazil gave a paper on her research. She arranged with three nightclub owners to have classical music played at a certain time. They kept the nightclub just as it was, drinks

at the bar, kids milling around, plenty of noise, high volume, and then a string quartet would come on in the middle of the night and play. The quartet was briefed not to dumb it down, not to reduce the quality of their performance but were asked not to present formally, so they turned up in jeans and T-shirts. They were not much older than the people in the room listening. It was an amazing success. Right in the middle of all of this hotbed of nightclubbing was a string quartet playing. She said the moment they started playing the whole room went silent until they finished. The performances sold out except for one when Paul McCartney was playing in town at the same time. I asked if it was real or just because it was a novelty. She considered it genuine interest; it was late at night yet patrons were sitting on the floor in front of a cellist playing a Bach suite, mesmerized, enraptured; none of them had heard classical music before. There were many incidents like that.

A common factor seems to be that young people do not want the stuffiness of a concert hall, seated formally and behaving in a particular way. If they do not want to sit still, it does not mean they do not want to hear the music. There were some tests done on people listening that found the attention span is about two seconds on a mobile device and a lot of young people are now switching from program to program and some have two devices going at the same time. They have a talk-back going on during the concert and they are switching between the two, then they will switch away to something else briefly and come back to the concert. They are constantly moving round hand-held devices, telephones mostly. They want access to their music, and for young people it is about access instantly and under their control. Going to a concert at 8pm in Carnegie Hall, which comes out at 10.30pm is not control. They may be on the other side of the country in Los Angeles but they still want to experience the concert. Marketing is showing this audience is there, interested and passionate, but you need it to be on their terms and taking a concert into the nightclub worked because it was on their terms. They were there, they did not have to worry about it; they listened and had a good time. It would not matter whether it is Beethoven or Schoenberg, you will get them.

One person at the conference has devised an electronic program and device, where you can put visual patterns of the music up on a screen on the wall before the music plays. It comes in front of the music, so a big chord that is designed by the composer to shock you or astound you suddenly comes up with a visual screen that looks like that. A soft lyrical line comes up with a wave with gentle promotions. You can hold the device in your hand and play Beethoven 5. With every bar there is a visual. I think this is an English innovation and all those using it are young, under thirty and interested in the technology. The fact that they are listening to Beethoven or Brahms is of no consequence to them; it is music as far as they are concerned. They do not need to hear just pop music, although they can hear their pop music in the same way. This demonstrated

there were mediums for getting classical music to young people and building a young audience and that is where the growth is. With regard to discussion about the ageing audience, there have been many experiments to build interest in contemporary music. Programming familiar pieces with contemporary works just keeps them away or leaving at interval. John Gilhooly, Artistic and Executive Director, gave a paper on the Wigmore Hall model, addressing that question.

In 2013 Wigmore Hall did 400 concerts, taking 160,000 euro and selling 200,000 tickets. The hall has identified that aged patrons will not change so the programs have to be what they want. They present a major concert for the traditional audience at the normal time, 7pm, and at 11pm have a late concert for young people with different music and that tends to work. They use social media to market and find *Twitter* is more popular with the older and *Facebook* is more popular with the young. So concert promotors and venues are finding ways to use the new social media, and technology to get their message to dual audiences, one old, one young. Wigmore Hall is a good example. We need to be part of this. There are no definitive answers that you have to do this or that, but there were plenty of ideas and people implementing them successfully and some not so successfully. What everyone has recognized is that young people should not be written off. They are interested if you find a way to reach them on their terms and once reached, they have the best spending power. Musicians themselves have to be more flexible, to move with this facility, and it was Gilhooly who said he advises any young musician to set up a website at the beginning of their career, otherwise work will not be forthcoming no matter how good they are.

The computer, whether we like it or not, is going to control our revenue and it is going to mean young people have to come to terms with it. There are some very positive and successful initiatives going on using new technology to get classical music across but also education of the musician must be part of this. We are giving money for people to go away and study. This is not undergraduate money. These are people who are really finished; this is just putting the icing on the cake. In the 1930s, if you were Fritz Kreisler or someone like that, you had good tutelage, you got an agent and a record company, you made a record, and you were working with all the orchestras and became famous for what you did for the rest of your life. That model is finished but there are still people like Fritz Kreisler coming out of the education institutions and great players streaming out in their hundreds from institutions. They cannot all teach in schools or privately.

Most of the funds we give are for people to do postgraduate work, who are fine-tuning technique and presentation. We should try to go to the next step. What happens when they finish postgraduate study? They have to come to terms with the new way of getting their message out. Who will help them understand the social media if they do not already know it? Who will help them understand the technology, which is changing so fast even technicians do

not understand it. Who will help them present themselves in a manner that is appealing to young and old audiences? Where are they going to do all this and how? They have spent the last ten, twenty years practising their instruments and are good, but they have not spent any time on these fundamentally critical things which will involve classical musicians in the next decade.

The Mentor Program

I felt we should try to develop what is simplistically called the Mentor Program. It will be much more complex than that, but a mentor program should take a person by the hand and guide them through this minefield of information so they can understand John Gilhooly's advice. Get not just a website but a good website so that you survive and your little trio will still be working in ten years' time. How do you get that, how do you administer it? Once you have it, it is not enough. You still have to administer it, put material on it. What sort of material and to what audience? Someone has to help them, not tell them how. It is logical that you have to show them a way in which this can be done. There should be a mentor program set up which encompasses all of these things. It cannot be done from one organization in one geographical location like the Trust in Sydney, but it can be done if there were representatives in say Sydney, London, Geneva, New York and Tokyo. If there were representatives who would work as a network so when a scholar comes to New York they can pick up assistance from that person or group and be shown how to tap into New York audiences, orchestras or ensembles.

The Australian Music Foundation and Arts Global

The Australian Music Foundation was set up in London some years ago, designed to assist Australian musicians in the UK. I talked with them about this concept and they were interested in joining with us. At the same time, there was another organization called **Arts Global** which had been mentoring but not to the same degree. They were taking a person, grooming them, introducing them to agents, finding a venue for them to play in and getting a concert for them, getting some marketing assistance, and also going to the point of finding some funding to pay the costs of Wigmore Hall or Carnegie Hall, but no further than that. They had about ten people already under their program, not only Australians. The former chair, and one of the key influences on the Australian Music Foundation, lives in Switzerland and travelled to London to attend board meetings. She resigned as Board chair, so my dialogue with her stopped. It revived recently with the appointment, to chair, of Yvonne Kenny, who is dynamic, very interested and keen on the things we are talking about. She is a very good advocate of Australian music and a successful Australian singer. The intention is to try and pursue whatever we can along these lines but it is early days and we have to find funding, probably the most important thing at this stage. It has been decided to continue conferences every year in Europe.

It was good to attend to understand what the issues are, how young we are in addressing those issues and how much further we have to go. Change is very rapid to the next break through. We have to keep an eye on it and that is part of the role of the mentor program. No-one can crystal gaze but there are some interesting developments on the horizon and unlike the doom merchants who said classical music is dead, the orchestras are too young and the aged audiences are disappearing, there are other audiences and classical music will survive because it is what it is. It has substance and these kids in a nightclub could hear a Beethoven quartet or Bach solo cello work, the substance in the music captivated them without them knowing anything about music. They are the great audiences.

Som Howie's Experience


Som Howie, clarinettist

Young Australian musicians are coming forward like clarinettist Som Howie who has moved into the next stage of his career. After a European summer school with his teacher, he returned to audition for the London Philharmonic Orchestra in a program called **Foyle's Future Firsts** where sixteen people are selected and given a tutelage program. They are all potential first players for the wind sections. He has the only clarinet spot sitting in rehearsals behind the first player, having access to the experience of top players. Som has emerged as a potentially fine contributor to music as well as getting himself a decent job. He will need help to take on the workload of electronic material and new technology while practicing and playing his clarinet. He may understand it all but he will not be able to capitalize on it unless someone helps him. He is a perfect example of a need for a follow-on program. He is not an isolated case; there are many like him. I was invited to adjudicate musicians for an award by the Australian Music Foundation, with a finalists' concert in the Wigmore Hall. Among them was an exceptional young guitarist from Canberra, with superb musicianship, very good technique. All she needs is an opportunity to be at the front line of classical guitar playing. If we do not do something no one else is going to do it for them, maybe their agent if they are lucky, but the agent will have vested interests and most likely looks after the income, not the development. Development is the future. They have to be prepared for what is going to happen technologically in another five or ten years.

I am hopeful the Trust and Australian Music Foundation will join forces to do good things in the future. I cannot see myself retiring. Even if I was not working with the Trust, I would want to be involved if possible in helping this program. I have a fair understanding of technology, how fast it changes and why and how it can be harnessed to help performance. The Trust is a national arts body concerned with the arts in Australia. This area has a narrow focus. It is about musicians on the international stage but they are Australian musicians and they equate to artistic excellence being represented in the wider community. That is important and it is an initiative the

Trust should take on. I believe from my experiences and my attendance at the *Classical: NEXT* that young people accessing music want a holistic outcome. They want something to look at, to be affected by the atmosphere as well as the music. They do not want to study the work and hear Beethoven's *Fifth Symphony* in the concert hall and hear how well it is played and how authentic the interpretation is. That is only a small part of their thinking, if they are even interested in that. They will go provided it is an experience. It is not music you appreciate as an audience or as an intellectual, it is using music in your life to achieve outcomes and I think that is probably what will be the underlying theme.

I had a property in the Barrington Tops, about 4 hectares, which was superb land. The neighbour on one side had 324 hectares and the other had 162 hectares. Both had been there for a long time; the one with 324 ha, his family was one of the original families in the area. When I met him he was in his late sixties and had been a traditional farmer but for one thing. The one with the 162 ha acres was an old man in his seventies who had been farming all his life. His concept was to burn the paddock and wait for the reviving grass and then each year there would be a burn to just get rid of it. The neighbour on the other side was the opposite. He would not do anything destructive or add any chemicals to his land. He used to plant by moon cycles and with a cow horn in the ground and they thought he was crazy.

I was there during one of the most amazing droughts ever experienced, no water at all, but we were on the Allyn River, which was a profuse source of very good water. The chap on the 324 ha property was growing *Simmental* cattle and taking these fine animals to market and getting top dollar for them. The cattle that left the other guy's property were poorly and he was getting rid of them to get them off the land, taking whatever he could get for them. So there were two extremes and when you looked at the plots of land they were two extremes as well. I was in the middle of these two elderly people who had vastly different views on how to farm land and both of them with a heritage of farming back to the early days of the settlement. The chap with 324 ha knew I was interested in music and told me about the land that I had. He was proud I was not putting any chemicals on it, because there had not been any chemicals there for at least forty years. We had horses and the grazing was very good. When he was about to plant a lucerne paddock he advised he wanted a blooming plant so he planted it to music. He had a large modern *John Deere* tractor with two speakers on the back and a power unit in it. He asked for some music to plant by. He had been listening to my music and pointed to a couple of things which were mostly Bach, not large orchestral works but lighter string works. I recorded some ninety minutes on cassette, and he put it in his tractor, ploughed the ground and laid the seed down, with the music playing. In the paddock adjourning it, as an experiment he planted the same crop, without music. When it came time to harvest, the one with the music was flourishing. It was astounding.

Maybe there was something else involved and I do not know much about agriculture but I do know I saw both paddocks start from bare soil and this beautiful paddock at harvest time several months later. From that point on he vowed he would always plant with music on the back of his tractor and it was all classical music. I would love some scientific evidence to support that. He was an outstanding pastoralist, perhaps. He was certainly successful and his family believed in organic methods. He gave a field day at the Tocal agricultural college every year where he would discuss his hydroponics and growing tomatoes. The tomatoes he brought with the hydroponics were superb so there must be something in it.

Finding a New Home for the Trust

When the Trust came on the market to find a place to move to at the end of 2013, the question was whether to buy or rent. For once the Trust was in a solid financial position and able to consider purchase. Whatever we purchased was going to be on the eve of the Diamond Jubilee, 60 years of the Trust and should be a space in which we could keep the records and show this was an organization that had survived good and bad times, and had come forward elegantly, ready to face new challenges, whatever they were, in a firm and consolidated manner. An office in the city was not my image of what the Trust would be. We looked at places on the north side, accessible for the chairman Lloyd Waddy. The place we finally took up in Neutral Bay was a mess but had great potential with windows all around it. It sat on top of two companies representing the new things in our society, *Dick Smith* electronics and *Bose* high quality audio. It seemed a good omen. There were two first floor suites available which we gutted completely. With the help of an interior designer we designed a welcoming office space to do the things I hoped for and also prepare for the future. Apart from its handwritten records, the Trust has other treasures such as ***The Tintookies* puppets**. We designed a circular display wall for such items with lights above. There are about twenty or thirty boxes of material relating to the marionettes. We have performance tapes[2] and scripts and could put a show together if we had puppeteers with

Above: The three stars from Peter Scriven's original Tintookies: Panjee Possum, Wilpy Wombat and Krumpy Koala.
Opposite: (*Top*) The Magic Pudding and Bill Barnacle; (*Bottom*) Bunyip Bluegum.

2 **This is a link to a sound file**, narrated by Antony Jeffrey, from a CD collection produced by Warwick Ross for the Trust's 50th anniversary in 2004. It includes an extract from Justin McDonnell's oral history interview which describes Peter Scriven, the company's relationship with the Trust and the presentation of Australian stories through *The Tintookies*. It includes an extract from performance tapes in The Trust Archive of the 1966 production of *The Magic Pudding*.

experience to work them. The puppets need careful maintenance. There are also set models from early opera productions in storage at the **Seaborn, Broughton & Walford Foundation** next door. Much of the Trust archive is in the National Library. We also have material here and in storage which needs to be organized and listed by an experienced archivist, a job yet to be done. In addition we have all the records from our time at the Independent also uncategorized. A treasure trove of theatre history. We receive some research enquiries such as one from the University of Tasmania, on *The Summer of the Seventeenth Doll*[3]: a researcher was looking at the material in the National Library and permission to use and copy it.

With our experience of acoustics we tried to keep the walls from being parallel in that area so we could have a meeting space, give small performances and soirees and invite people to talk about things they may be interested in helping us with. With my knowledge of acoustics and the potential future for online music communication, we wanted a space to be involved in this with minimal upgrade. It needed to be acoustically sound, isolated as best as possible from the rest of the building, and adaptable to be a broadcast studio, or for live communication, including performance. I can see the day when a soloist would go into that small room and play with an orchestra in New York. It would be done electronically and the final visual would be put together and no one would ever know when looking at it that the soloist was not playing in the same location as the orchestra. We also had a *Stuart* piano, and wanted an elegant place to show it. We had a raised floor made that floated, for the piano to sit on. It is an opportunity to show people where we have come from, where we might go and to invite people to talk with us in comfort and share visions for the future. We have a perfect space in the middle to put a large credenza to store files which has been almost completely filled without effort! In addition, there are six offices around the perimeter of the building so we can function administratively. It represents a good investment, bought at a reasonable price. On the Trust balance sheet it is a healthy asset and can be sold as two titles if necessary. To date we have had concerts presented by our scholars before they go to study. We have had Annual General Meetings at which some of our scholars played. It is a friendly atmosphere and provides opportunity for them to show off where they are musically. In one instance, a scholar needed to attract attention from another source of funds and we invited that person who enjoyed the concert. It resulted in a grant of $10,000 for the purchase of an instrument. The space is there for anyone who is interested in helping music.

3 *The Summer of the Seventeenth Doll*, classic Australian play by Ray Lawler, first presented by the Australian Drama Company under the auspices of the Trust in March 1956.

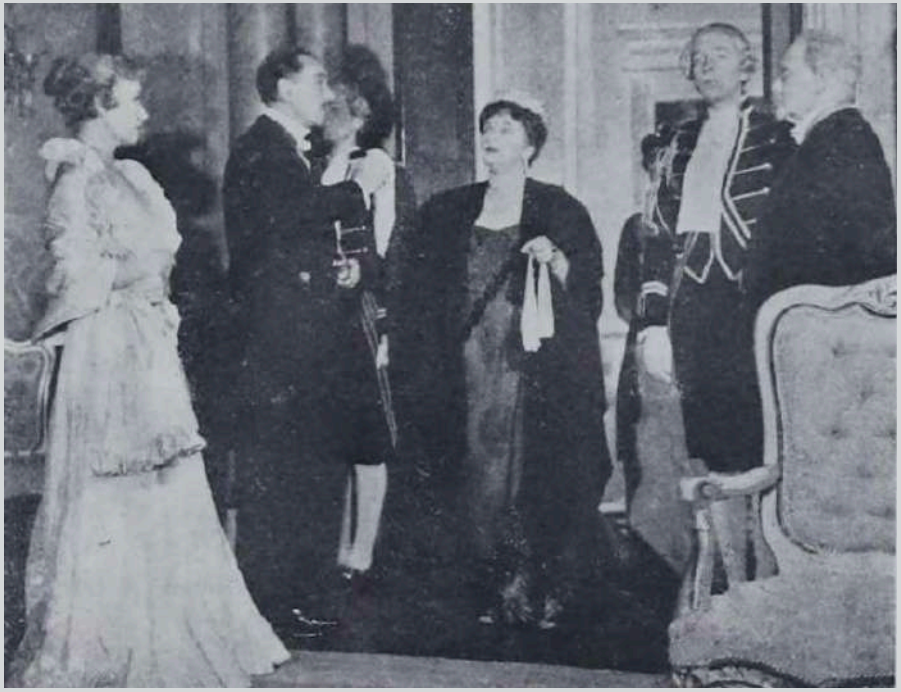
The Trust in 2019

The Trust Board has evolved greatly over the years. Initially a large group of people but today it is much smaller. Two current members, Lloyd Waddy (Chair) and Brian Larking, joined the Board in the mid-1970s and have provided great stability and continuity. Both put personal funds into the Trust to get it back from the Administrator in the 1990s and have been stalwart supporters. We have downsized staff to a consultant two days a week. When extra help is needed, it is called for. When I was a member of the Orchestra, one of the big problems was the Trust was too big. It had a board with directors in every state who focussed on their own state's needs. This was a problem for a national organization and for the Orchestras. To service that governance there were offices with staff appropriate to need. When I came back to the Trust as Administrator of Orchestras there were about thirty-two people working for the Trust. I had my own set of challenges with the Tribe Report and the Orchestras, so just had to get on with it. At that time I needed a secretary to communicate to the two line managements based in different states and they needed people on the ground at the performance point to run the Orchestra and do administration. When I came back to take on the General Manager role, there was no real need for staff given most work was computer based. What is necessary in this organization now is the expert of the day to deal with current matters governed by a very small group of people who are prepared to contribute. We now have a board who are very willing to contribute. The members have specific skills which can be brought to bear on a problem and they all have the understanding, maturity and experience to know not to manage from the boardroom. The chairman lets me make management decisions within the policies they set. I have believed since my days with *Edgleys*, that if you are in charge of something and cannot do it yourself, you are not going to be able to manage it. I am focused now on what I understand best of all, the development of music, helping players and spotting players needing assistance at an early stage and finding a way to help them. I can bring additional skills with my background in audio and law. The governors are very good policymakers.

From the Vienna Conference, I have taken on board new technology. We have to address it. There were several instances of music being stored in the Cloud and accessed through digital devices. The board decided we would move to a Cloud based accounting system and our accountants and auditors selected a system. It is cost effective and limits the need for employees and their management.

2015 Diamond Jubilee Year

In 2015 the Trust celebrated its Diamond Jubilee year, quite a milestone. The Trust was formed in 1954; and incorporated on September 29th. Naturally, it did not do anything immediately



The Sleeping Prince, Elizabethan Theatre, Newtown—1955.

because it had to gather a chief executive officer, funds and an office. This resulted in taking on the Elizabethan Theatre, Newtown, and with the help of the *Garnet H Carroll Organization* they shared the presentation of ***The Sleeping Prince*** by Terence Rattigan on July 27th 1955.

The very first individual promotion the Trust presented was ***Medea*** with the first company it established, the Australian Drama Company. It opened at the Albert Hall, Canberra, on October 5th 1955. In October 2015 at the Trust offices in Neutral Bay, we invited guests to celebrate our 60th anniversary. These included strong supporters of the Trust over the years, both in their own right and as financiers. Some of our scholars played for a musical soiree. The other event was a concert by *Refraction*, which included myself and Ronald Thomas and given in July 2014 at the Independent. We played Beethoven's *Septet* and a Mendelssohn piano work with William Chen. We gave assistance to the *Seraphim Trio* to go and study the Beethoven series of trios, which they performed as part of our Diamond Jubilee. Another thing to mark the Diamond Jubilee was providing funds for the **Geelong Youth Classical Music Competition** in 2015.

The Trust has long term supporters and members and tax deductibility remains in place for their donations. There is a public appeal every year to the members, of which there are about 560 across the country, mostly in New South Wales. The appeal usually results in a small amount of money but it is consistent each year, generally from the same people. In the days when membership numbered 10,000, people were members to gain access to the shows the Trust was involved with and to get access to opening nights, and special events. Those left on our membership list are not young people; they are mostly members who became life members when offered in the late 1980s. There are still a few members from the 1950s. Most people, when you talk about the Trust, are surprised to learn it still exists. We have not actively promoted it. It costs money to publicize and put on events and we prefer to give money to musicians for study.

The Annual General Meetings are small scale events and some attend to show their continuing support for our work. We have a consistent donor who has been giving to us annually for as long as I have been here as General Manager. She recently wrote:

> I have pleasure in enclosing my donation to the Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust. I hope it in some small way enables you to continue with the wonderful tasks carried out by your organization.

That kind of thought comes from many of our members; it is not lip service.

Working for the Trust

Considering the impact the Trust has had on my life is an interesting question. Until I came to the Trust as orchestral administrator in 1986 I had been without a regular income. All my working life until then I had been freelance, without the benefit of a regular income or the knowledge that I would be able to pay monthly bills. When my daughter Frances was born in 1992, I had just left the Trust administration job, which was the first job I had. It could not have been at a worse time because I needed a regular income to look after her. My wife had some part time work as a receptionist but did not have a career. The financial burden was on my shoulders and there was no way to avoid it. That prompted me to put my head down with the legal studies and get back to a regular income. When I returned to the Trust, in 1999, Frances was eight years old. It was very difficult financially getting through that eight years and getting her into schooling. I wanted her to have the maximum opportunity. The Hunter Valley Grammar School was close to home and likely to deliver what was necessary. It was costly and I had difficulty in finding the annual fees plus the costs of the house in Maitland, without a job for 8 years. When the Trust job came up I was relieved. She was getting to a critical time in her education where resources

Participants in the 2018 Geelong Youth Classical Music Competition.

were needed. She had started the piano at six years of age, which she loved. She chose of her own volition to take up the piano and drop dance lessons at which she had excelled. By the time I came back to the Trust and had a regular income, she was ready to do weekly lessons, on top of schoolwork. She did very well and got scholarships along the way for the schooling as well, so she contributed in her own way. She went to university in 2010 and began a combined arts/law degree, then dropped the law component and finished the arts component. In 2012, she decided to take on the piano permanently. I was still at the Trust as an employee. It had provided me with the income to get her to that point: she had a degree and potential as a pianist, if it could be explored. There is not much more I could do and I was grateful for that.

Frances knew about the Trust scholarship program and decided she wanted to study with William Chen[4] in China in 2014. She needed that move because there were aspects of her technical playing which were raw, needed to be processed and guided. William was the right person to do that. I had managed to save up enough funds to cover a little over half of her costs but the rest she had to find from elsewhere. I could not be involved in the scholarship program here because of my vested interest, so Frances wrote directly to the Trust chairman requesting a scholarship. He sent it out for assessment by Gerard Willems. It came back positive and the board approved a scholarship for her. Armed with the Trust scholarship and my funds, she went to China. After a year in Shanghai with William Chen, Frances relocated her study to France to focus on accompaniment. She is undertaking a postgraduate diploma at the University Conservatorium in Lyon. She also receives tuition from a specialist Australian accompanist, David Selig, who teaches accompaniment at the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique et de Danse.


Pianist and Trust scholar, William Chen.

Frances and I have played together and I continue to play the bass whenever I can. My work at the Trust is flexible, not always contained within the two days at the office, but I consider it important I keep informed and involved in the music business which helps me function better as a consultant. I practise because I want to continue playing. I was called at short notice and with no rehearsal, to play the Bach *Brandenburg Concerto No. 6*. I also played in Sydney Independent Opera's *Tosca* performance and for *The Magic Flute*, so there is some work and I enjoy it. My partner, Suzy Borrett, is a violinist, violist and teacher, responsible for most of the good viola players around at the moment and we want to play together. She has played with Ron Thomas in his chamber music group, *Refraction*. Both of us have backgrounds in England. She was a free-lance player there for twenty years, playing the violin mostly, with the Philharmonia Orchestra and other groups. We would like access to friends in Europe to play music with. If the music mentoring program develops, it may be advantageous for me to be in Europe.

4 William Chen, born in China, grew up in Sydney, was an inaugural Trust scholar who undertook his Masters of Performance at the Royal Academy of Music, London. He has performed solo recitals internationally and with the chamber group, *Refraction*, as part of the Trust's Diamond Jubilee celebrations in 2014. He is a Professor of Piano at Shanghai Conservatorium of Music.

I do not like administrative work, but it has to be done and I am not about to build an empire so I do it myself, which takes time. Everything from the Trust's point of view is transparent, legitimate and well documented, which is what you need when managing these funds. Reflecting on my time with the Trust, I had the opportunity and time to grow in the job. I think all of us who have been involved with the Trust have come in relatively inexperienced, certainly not experts in the field which we were thrown into and we have learnt to grow in the job.

Thinking back to the people who set up and developed companies that became independent of the Trust, many like Moffatt Oxenbould, Artistic Director of Opera Australia (1984-1999), started with the Trust as an Opera Company assistant. Along the way he equipped himself with knowledge, experience and capability. I learnt a great deal through managing the Orchestras. Having been a player, I learnt a lot, not all of it good, but necessary for the management of a body of orchestral musicians. There was no textbook, or lecturer to advise what to do in certain situations or when faced with difficult options. We woke up each day to problems which had to be solved. On one occasion we were in the middle of an opera season with Stuart Challender[5] conducting. I remember Charles O'Neill, a tuba player in the Sydney Orchestra, under fire from Opera Company conductors for his standard of playing. He had been given counselling and advice to improve. Charles's partner was a nurse who believed she had terminal cancer. They decided to suicide and gassed themselves to death. Before the morning rehearsal was due to start, I was telephoned and told that he was dead. After going to his house which was closed off by the police, I had to tell the Orchestra 15 minutes before the call. This was something for which I had no training or experience. There is a specialized technique to handle this sort of problem. Like many in the Orchestra of sixty-odd people, I had associated with Charlie O'Neill from day one in the orchestra. We were all colleagues, whether close friends or drinking companions. Stuart advised me to tell the players and he would gauge what to do in relation to the rehearsal. Fifteen minutes into the call he cancelled the rehearsal, suggesting everyone go home for the rest of the day. That was tough learning on the job and I hope not to have to do something like that again.

There were good learning experiences too. The Independent Theatre project was wonderful. I had been an audio engineer and studied the design and development of acoustic areas in preparation for the mobile audio recordings truck. I had been involved in the recording business as player and producer, so knew what the standards were. All of that was brought to bear on the development of the Independent. As a player I knew what musicians like to have on stage and where the acoustic areas were, what the problems were, and how they can be solved. That was

5 Stuart Challender, AO (1947-1991), Australian conductor who studied at Victorian Conservatorium of Music and was director of the Victorian Opera Company. He is remembered particularly for his work with the Australian Opera, the Elizabethan Sydney Orchestra and the Sydney Symphony Orchestra.

not textbook stuff, it was all in the job. Several jobs all brought to bear into one, so in retrospect I think people who have been associated with the Trust have been people who have had the capacity to learn in the job and have gone on to contribute in their own right. When I look back at it, that is the thing the Trust has done for many people in Australia, it has touched the professional careers of most people working in the arts.

Epilogue 2021

The Trust Board has taken great pleasure in encouraging the production of the memoirs of Warwick Ross, as so ably achieved by author Margaret Leask. However, they conclude pre-COVID-19 and it would be wrong to allow that to infer that Warwick was not still in full, if independent, flight in the service of Music and Musicians. Apart from assessing applicants for Trust Scholarships, he continues exploring opportunities for them, introducing them to his many distinguished contacts in Europe, Britain and the United States of America and caring for them whilst overseas, always with the wellbeing of musicians and music in front of mind.

The next new Elizabethan Trust project, which Warwick is investigating, is the possibility of an internet streaming service at the highest video and acoustical level that can be achieved at our existing premises at Neutral Bay, Sydney. This brings into play not only Warwick's undoubted performance skills but also his refined knowledge and experience in design, acoustics, recording, editing, and transmission capabilities, refined when he was transforming, and managing with such success, The Trust's formerly owned 300-seat Independent theatre at North Sydney. On completion, it became one of the top venues for classical and other music performance in Australia.

Post COVID-19 we hope that such a recording studio will be available for all suitable users, many of whom will value access to The Trust's Australian-made *Stuart & Sons* $200,000 2.3 metre grand piano. Splendid facilities will be available for all our current and former scholars, together, we hope, with all those in need of first-class recording facilities.

Digital Recording and Editing Equipment

As an Australian charity supporting and developing all the Arts since 1955, The Trust looks forward to enriching current knowledge of our Arts and performance, and the new studio may provide access for many new ventures. One of them we envisage, in a realm as yet gravely incomplete, is the recording, in high fidelity, of all Australian musical compositions prior to Federation.

In a unique expansion of our current endeavours, we offer widespread co-operation to all with a similar passion. The wherewithal to support Warwick and The Trust in this venture, through Bequests or Tax-Deductable donations, will sustain our volunteers as they have in the past.

Come share a worthy vision for the Arts in Australia.

The Hon Lloyd Waddy AM RFD QC
Chairman, Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust

Appendix A

Commercial Promotions for Large Orchestras and Jazz Ensembles
Booked by Warwick D Ross

Tchaikovsky Ballet (8 March -7 April 1979)—Perth, Adelaide, Newcastle, Brisbane, Melbourne, Sydney, Auckland (New Zealand)

D'Oyly Carte Company [Gilbert and Sullivan] (14 May- 25 August 1979)—Canberra, Sydney, Brisbane, Melbourne, Adelaide

Stars of World Ballet (25 June -14 July 1979)—Adelaide, Sydney, Melbourne

The Two Ronnies [Corbett and Ronnie Barker] (11 June -6 October 1979)—Sydney, Melbourne

Dance Theatre of Harlem (5 July-16 August 1980)—Sydney

Sadlers Wells Royal Ballet (9982)—Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide

Tommy Steele (April 1985)—Sydney

The Hunting of the Snark (1985)—Sydney, Melbourne

Mike Batt (1985)—Sydney, Melbourne

International Opera *Aida* Production (1988-1989)—Sydney, Tokyo (Japan)

Royal Ballet Company, Royal Opera House, Covent Garden (1988)—Sydney, Melbourne