openbook

Andrew Ford
profile

Paris Rosemont
poetry

John Gaden
library that made me

Sally Soweol Han
self-portrait

SUMMER 2024

Surfing lessons at Manly,
February 2023.
Photo by Nic Bezzina

Openbook is designed and printed on the traditional and ancestral lands of the Gadigal people of the Eora nation. The State Library of NSW offers our respect to Aboriginal Elders past and present, and extends that respect to other First Nations people. We celebrate the strength and diversity of NSW Aboriginal cultures, languages and stories.

Subdivision plan for Merewether Estate, Ocean Park, Merewether Beach, 1927. Auctioneers Lang, Wood and Co produced this poster to advertise land for sale along Merewether Beach, Newcastle, on Awabakal Country. They pitched the area as offering commanding views and opportunities for surf bathing. In 1935 another attraction would open, the Merewether Ocean Baths.

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The rhythm of life

Phillipa McGuinness
Editor, Openbook

Have you ever been tormented by an earworm? One of those tunes that gets stuck in your head, on repeat. Someone once told me that the best way to get rid of one was to sing the opening line of 'Somewhere Over the Rainbow' — apparently it has something to do with the one-octave leap of the first notes. You may need to test this technique given what I'm about to share, for which I apologise in advance.

Visiting scholar Liz Giuffre's wonderful article about the ABC-led mass singalongs that happened in many primary schools across the nation from the late 1950s to the early 2010s seemed to remind many of my colleagues of one song in particular: 'The Flying Purple People Eater'. Lots of other, better songs have embedded in my brain thanks to various *Let's Sing!* songbooks and broadcasts, but that particular one will never, ever leave.

Music in all its mystery and wonder, and sometimes cringe-worthiness, is our theme. This issue avoids Christmas carols — we do have a wonderful Bûche de Noël recipe — but we have my colleague Meredith Lawn's illuminating story about an influential musical household on Sydney's North Shore. Meredith has also uncovered some surprising musical instruments held here in the Library. I profile ABC broadcaster and composer Andrew Ford whose new book, *The Shortest History of Music*, would make a great stocking-stuffer. My colleague Richard Gray's celebration of the 60th anniversary of the film *Mary Poppins*, drawing from PL Travers' papers in the Library's collection, hits all the right notes. Barnaby Smith's account of Eugene Goossens' time in Sydney is tinged with a sense of what might have been, just as his piece on pop and rock gig posters that have been acquired by the Library reminds us of a once-thriving live music scene.

Like the Library itself, *Openbook* has something for everyone. Especially readers. In a nod to the possibilities of summer reading, we doubled the review pages in this issue — every single review is written by a Library staff member. Holiday time also means more space in the day to go for a swim and our photo essay provides plenty of inspiration for that. And one unmissable activity, rain, hail or shine, will be the Library's new *PIX* exhibition, which curator Margot Riley writes about evocatively here.

If you're inspired by Sam Twyford-Moore's superb essay about book clubs and your New Year's resolution is to read more, we have you covered. The Library's Book Club, led by Roanna Gonsalves and the *Secret Life of Books* podcast duo Jonty Claypole and Sophie Gee, will be launching at the end of January. Friends will be receiving details of this book club, which is exclusively for Friends, soon. A Friends membership makes a wonderful Christmas gift.

With so much on offer, I have no doubt that in this issue of *Openbook* you'll find that we're singing your song.

Quiz answers from page 83 **1.** Mexico and Central America **2.** Donner means thunder and Blitzen means lightning in German **3.** The Sunnyboys **4.** Iota **5.** (a) the brain **6.** (John) Rebus in the books by Ian Rankin (also a TV series) **7.** Aristotle **8.** University of Bologna, established in 1088 **9.** Dame Maggie Smith (*The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*, *Harry Potter*, *Downton Abbey*) **10.** Nauru (its people are Nauruan) **11.** Tin **12.** Chile **13.** George **14.** *Porgy and Bess* **15.** Nambucca Heads in 1961 **16.** Badde Manors **17.** Korea **18.** Pamela **19.** A dulcitone **20.** (a) 1938

Illustrations by Rosie Handley

An extraordinary year

It's hard to believe that this new issue of *Openbook* marks one year since I started in the role of State Librarian. I have had such an extraordinary and inspiring year in this unique place. There have been so many highlights that it is hard to single out a few.

Leading this Library is a great pleasure. Every day I am reminded of the essential service we offer. Day after day, night after night, I can observe the Mitchell Library and Marie Bashir Reading Rooms packed with hardworking students and scholars filling their brains with new knowledge. Formats and library spaces may evolve but the fundamentals stay the same. Libraries provide safe, essential and free community access to information, literature, literacy, and quiet spaces for learning and study.

I've learned that students refer to this place as 'the State'. During one memorable week in October, ahead of the first HSC exam, we put on a unique study break for students — free snacks and activities on the steps of the Mitchell Library, including the opportunity to take a selfie with a blessing of unicorns. It was a simple gesture that really resonated with the scholars of tomorrow.

But of course our Library is not like others. It is particularly special because of the depth of our collections and wonderful spaces that are like nowhere else. We recently launched the Library's five-year strategy; it harnesses what makes 'the State' special and provides a blueprint for growth. All of my colleagues have an extraordinary sense of focus and purpose. In fact, the Library is the most purpose-filled institution I've ever worked for, and that carries across the state with the 364 public libraries we support. This year I've been fortunate enough to visit many of them, from Coffs Harbour to Eden and witness firsthand the great work our colleagues across the library network do, together of course with our Public Libraries team .

The new Strategic Plan 2025–30 gives us an opportunity to articulate our strengths, and to design a plan that will enable us to meet our aspirations and fulfil our potential. The plan is not vague; everything we pledge to do must be achievable. It is arranged around five pillars that I am excited to share here: The collection is at the heart of what we do. Growth of readers and visitors is crucial. Enhanced visitor experience is paramount. The Library must be strong, sustainable and inclusive. Finally, our strategy states that we can amplify what we do through partnerships and collaboration. Developed entirely from the ground up, the strategy provides a framework for what will not only be possible for us into the future, but necessary.

Another sign of the dynamism of this institution, and our growing partnerships, is the upcoming launch of the full 2025 program of exhibitions, events, performances, creative commissions, fellowships, family programs, a new Friends book club and much more. Revealing all this to the world is a reminder of all the Library has to offer. Of course, the beautiful spaces within the Library are a major drawcard. But, as our strategy says, the collection is at the heart of what we do. Our commitment to sharing it — and the ideas, research, engagement and collaborative possibilities it inspires — underpin everything we offer.

No doubt like many readers, I am looking forward to some holiday time over summer. I head to England to visit my brother, a writer who lives in Oxford, and I plan to make the most of its magnificent libraries and museums. But on my return I will squeeze in time to indulge my passion for swimming in Sydney. I might event try some new swimming spots, including those in our gorgeous photo essay.

As we move towards the Library's 200th anniversary in 2026, I truly believe that the world is our oyster.

Dr Caroline Butler-Bowdon

State Librarian

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Illustration by Sally Soweol Han

Sally Soweol Han

Whenever anyone asks me what made me want to become an illustrator, I immediately think of one of my dear friends. I worked at a company in Sydney for a long time, and there was a lovely person with whom I quickly became very close. A couple of years ago, while walking to work together one morning with coffee in hand, we shared our childhood dreams. I realised that I had never told anyone that I wanted to draw professionally but mentioned to her that I thought it was too late to pursue my dream, even though I was only in my late twenties. (I now realise I wasn't really old at all!) She disagreed and strongly encouraged me to start drawing.

Her words sparked something within me.

Funnily enough, that ordinary day became a turning point in my life. But I didn't have anyone to ask for advice on where to begin, or what skills I needed to possess to become an illustrator, especially for picture books. I had no formal art education back then and felt like I was starting from scratch, knowing nothing at all. What I did was simple: I changed my full-time job to a casual one so I could spend extra hours dedicating myself to drawing and focusing on creating portfolio pieces. I did this over the next five years, and took a one-year course in graphic design and illustration at TAFE Design Centre Enmore to learn digital skills and understand the program tools. I taught myself traditional drawing and painting skills. My hope was that one day all this effort would pay off and I'd make it as a picture book illustrator.

Being recognised by the Children's Book Council of Australia in 2023 was an incredible honour, especially as an aspiring illustrator and lover of picture books. [Sally won the CBCA Award for New Illustrator, for her work on *Tiny Wonders*.] I find great joy in crafting picture books for children and their families because it allows me to engage with the boundless curiosity and imagination of young minds. There's something magical about capturing a child's imagination and helping them see the world in new and meaningful ways. I enjoy the challenge of conveying creative ideas through illustrations and stories, with the hope that my work can spark joy, curiosity, wonder and a love of reading in people of all ages. And evoke dynamic emotions at the same time. It's a privilege to be part of a child's journey into the world of visual storytelling.

I've just finished working on a picture book called *The Colours of Home*, to be published next year. The story explores nature in both Australia and Korea — with maybe a touch of cultural differences — through the colours that the protagonist, Bomi, sees and experiences. It's about finding comfort and peace in a new home after moving from one place to another.

This theme resonates with me personally, as I moved from Sydney to Korea two years ago, having grown up in Sydney from about the age of 13. Although my transition was smoother because I had always hoped to live and experience life in the country where I was born, I can relate to Bomi's journey. If I had moved to a busy, bustling city, I might have found it more challenging to adapt. However, I live in Geoje Island, the second-largest island in Korea. It's beautiful — surrounded by nature — and the environment here reminds me of the colours in Sydney, with its lush green trees and deep turquoise sea. My inspiration comes from the world around me and the experiences I encounter in daily life. These aren't limited to my immediate surroundings but can arise from anything — a scene in a drama or movie, a lyric in a song, children passing by during a walk, or even a picture I randomly find on the internet. My imagination expands from these moments, fuelling my creative process.

Sally Soweol Han is the author of *Tiny Wonders* (2022) and *Nightsong* (2023), both published by UQP. Her next book, *The Colours of Home*, will be published by Thames & Hudson Australia in March 2025.

Take MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

Who knew that the artist Conrad Martens was also a musician? The Library has a flute and a bugle that were once owned and played by the renowned landscape painter. Born in London in 1801, Martens came to Australia in 1835 and made it his home for the rest of his life. His watercolours and oils are well represented in the Library's painting collections. Following his death in 1878, Martens' flute and bugle were passed down to his elder daughter, Rebecca. Sir William Dixson purchased them in 1917 and they were part of his bequest to the Library in 1952.

Conrad Martens' flute, c 1809–14

This beautiful wooden flute, featuring six silver keys and ivory rings, was made by William Henry Potter of Johnson's Court, Fleet Street, London. William learned the trade from his father, Richard Potter, whose innovations to the German flute of the day were much admired by Mozart. William Potter followed his father's style of manufacture, including using 'Potter's patent pewter plugs' on the keys, as in this example.

Conrad Martens' keyed bugle, c 1835*

The addition of keys to the standard bugle was patented by Joseph Haliday of Dublin in 1810, allowing coverage of the full chromatic scale. A short double-coiled model such as this one appeared around 1835. It is made of copper with six flat brass lever-keys. The circular crook near the mouthpiece changes the bugle's pitch from C to B-flat. The keyed bugle was used by bands in England and America until the 1850s and was a precursor of the modern flugelhorn.

*On display in The Objects Gallery

Cobb & Co coach driver's bugle, c 1854*

This bugle belonged to William McGregor. He used it while driving a Cobb & Co horse-drawn stagecoach between the Victorian goldfields of Bendigo and McIvor Creek at Heathcote in the 1850s. Cobb & Co's success came from the innovation of having change stations every 10–15 miles to take on fresh horses and so maintain high speeds. The driver would sound his bugle one mile out from the change station to alert the groom, who would have a fresh team of horses harnessed and ready by the time the coach arrived. McGregor's bugle is said to have once been owned by politician Sir Henry Parkes. Purchased by Sir William Dixson in 1911, it was part of his 1952 bequest to the Library.

*On display in The Objects Gallery

JA Delany's 1882

This conductor's baton trimmings, including a one end, served a commemorative rather than practical purpose — confirmed by the inscribed plaque 'J. A. D. Sydney Sept. 30 1882'. The initials stand for John Albert Delany, the distinguished Sydney choir director, organist and composer. On 8–10 September 1882, Delany directed a large choir and orchestra for the dedication ceremony of the new St Mary's Cathedral in Sydney. He composed his *Triduum March* for the occasion. In recognition of his contribution to the three-day celebration, Delany was presented with the baton at a special concert on 30 September 1882. His sister Eva donated the baton to the Library in 1928, to join other items from Delany's career such as original music manuscripts and concert programs.

Evelyn Grieg's dulcitone, c 1920

It looks like a small piano but does it sound like one? The answer is no — it sounds more like a glockenspiel or celesta (think *Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy* from Tchaikovsky's *The Nutcracker*). The dulcitone, or tuning fork piano, was invented by Thomas Machell of Glasgow between 1860 and 1880. It was marketed as a portable piano that never needs tuning. When a key is pressed, a felt-covered hammer inside the wooden case strikes a metal tuning fork rather than a string. The Library's dulcitone was made by Thomas Machell & Sons. In the 1920s and 1930s it was owned by pianist Evelyn Grieg, who used it for recitals around Sydney and on the radio. The dancer Jean Garling acquired it in 1947, celebrating with a champagne musical soirée. Garling generously left her entire estate to the Library, including the dulcitone.

ESSAY

WORDS **Sam Twyford-Moore**

BOOK CLUBBING

Talking about a book with friends — and wine, or tea — is still very much a thing.

Why do we feel the need to take a perfectly pleasant solitary act and turn it into a communal one?

I admit that this was the question on my mind when I received the commission to investigate the concept of book clubs with the suggestion that I step foot into a few. You could imagine it as a spy-like assignment: infiltrate a set of existing book clubs, uncover their internal operations, and, perhaps, expose whether they are fronts for Big Fiction.

Contemporary book clubs, indeed, commonly focus on reading novels. Even as book sales struggle, book clubs seem as popular as ever. Their origins are more serious than we might think. It's thought that they date back to study groups in the seventeenth century, where American settler women would come together to make sense of the Bible (the practice continues today, with Helen Garner's rumoured membership in an elite book group, which tackled the Old Testament, confirmed by *The Age*). Women would also play the central role in converting the book club to a secular activity, moving from the Bible to concentrate on the consumption of an artistic work — the novel — during the late nineteenth century, at a time when reading fiction was seen as central to self-development. Savvy booksellers stepped in in the early twentieth century, with marketeers coming up with the idea of 'book-of-the-month' reading groups to push new titles.

The convenors of the new Library Book Club, starting on 30 January, 2025. From left, Jonty Claypole, Sophie Gee and Roanna Gonsalves. Photo by Joy Lai

If you're reading this, you'll likely be the sort of person at high risk of joining a book club. Membership seems unavoidable at times. I found myself signed up to one in Melbourne when I briefly lived there. There was little choice to act otherwise in an official 'City of Literature'. This particular group was made up mostly of writers and editors, and so the tussle for picking a book became competitive, given everyone had a vested professional interest. As a result, there wasn't a great sense of fun in it. Reading for most of us, after all, was work.

Despite being literary professionals, some of us were truly awful readers. If I was being generous, I would say we were simply poor time managers. I remember showing up one night to find a fellow member supine on the host's couch, ambitiously trying to finish a 300-page book before dinner was served in half an hour. I drifted past him to greet our friends working hard in the kitchen. In fact, I remember the meals better than any of the books. The arrangement was that the host was in charge of cooking for the guests. This was the early 2010s and we were in the first peak of the Yotam Ottolenghi era; what was served was almost exclusively taken from the pages of *Plenty*, to the point that it might have made more sense if we were an Ottolenghi supper club.

Why not? A cookbook club *could* work. Book clubs take radically different forms. They don't need to be private, invite-only affairs. They can be hosted by libraries, community centres and bookshops. A Western Sydney Book Club was started by poet and novelist Omar Sakr in early 2022. This open event is hosted in partnership with the not-for-profit Arts &


LIBRARY COUNCIL
NSW
NEVER LOOK DESPERATE
RACHEL MATTHEWS

If you're reading this, you'll likely be the sort of person at high risk of joining a book club.

Cultural Exchange (ACE) in Parramatta, on the land of the Dharug people. A small group — with some repeat attendance — meets around a table in ACE's offices, cinnamon tea brewing, to be served hot with baklava. The monthly event runs as a facilitated session, with a different writer tapped to lead the discussion of that month's chosen work. For the meeting I attend, in June this year, the set book is Wiradjuri writer Jeanine Leane's poetry collection *Gawimarra: Gathering*. The moderator is Gamilaroi poet Luke Patterson.

A few of us are already waiting when Luke bounds into the room to take his seat at the head of the table, pulling out a copy of Leane's slim book and his own thick notebook, filled with possible interpretations and potential questions for the group. It's a chilly night and the tea and conversation are equally warming. Luke acts as guide, walking us through the many complexities of Leane's work, tying in his own family history and experiences as a First Nations poet. The room is primarily populated by women — echoing the history of book clubs, reflecting most memberships today — and they are mainly English teachers from the local area, all demonstrating a commitment to, and passion for, their chosen field of teaching. The turnout is beyond heartening; the future success of students in the nearby catchments feels bright indeed.

Choosing a poetry collection as the book to be discussed sets up readers for success; it would be near impossible not to finish the book before the event. I seem to remain the poor time manager, cutting it close, but this, at least, leads to me reading the last of Leane's powerful poems down by the Paramatta River, as the sun sets and the riverside streetlights turn on, illuminating both page and water. The book is filled with references to rivers, and when I read her acknowledgments, I learn Leane wrote some of the poems at various writers' residencies on Dharug country, the very land on which I stand. It is the perfect reflection before joining a gathering.

Sakr and ACE set a very high benchmark for what a book club can be in the 21st century. Still, my assignment was not finished, and my newfound book club addiction was growing.

Let's be honest: brevity is a boon in the modern book club world. Author Laura Jean McKay cleverly threw away the traditional longform-focused format to start a short story club in its place. Writing for *The Guardian* in 2023, she explained that her group covered 'one published short story, one hour, once a month (or so)'. In addition to short story clubs then, there must surely be clubs dedicated to personal essays, comic strips, photograph captions, music lyrics. Why not a sentence club, a clause club, a single word club? The shorter the better.

It's not only the text that can be truncated; the form of the book club can be too. When I put out a call on social media, asking if anyone would be willing to have me visit their book club, I received more replies than I could answer, including from the 'Head of Vision & Impact' at a 'Happiness College', who wanted to invite me to a group he hosts on WhatsApp, reading 'Self Help' titles, followed by conversations with discussion prompts, polls and questionnaires. Sensing the social disconnection that being in a phone chat group would engender, I helped myself by declining the invitation, but at least its existence indicated that there are a variety of approaches to group reading.

I wanted, instead, to get to the assumed ideal of the book club: a group of friends, drinking wine, eating cheese varieties, while riffing on a new-ish book. Via backchannels, I am introduced to the members of one such group, who meet monthly in inner Sydney. They kindly extend an invite to sit in on their next meeting.

I meet two of the group's members, John Lam-Po-Tang and David Meagher, at a pub in Surry Hills, 20 minutes before the group will convene at a

Booker Prize–winning *The Seven Moons of Maali Almeida* was under discussion when Sam Twyford-Moore visited an inner-city book club. Photo by John Lam-Po-Tang

nearby restaurant. John is a psychiatrist and David an experienced journalist, with a recently published memoir. (I wonder if David, like me, questions the priority of novels over non-fiction in book clubs.) John explains that membership waxes and wanes, venues are rotated, and that the group started meeting in 2018 after a social discussion around Hanya Yanagihara's *A Little Life* — the book that could well have birthed a million book clubs around the globe — which propelled them to keep reading and talking with each other.

Inspired by that bestselling weepie, the group have largely confined their reading to LGBT-themed works. John emails me a list of every book they've read and it's an enviable archive, which includes heavy hitters of the queer canon: EM Forster, Alan Hollinghurst, Jeanette Winterson, James Baldwin, alongside locals Christos Tsiolkas and Peter Polites. Like most book clubs, members take turns in choosing the book in question; only one book, to remain nameless, was so bad as to cancel a meeting.

John, David and I down our Diet Cokes and head over to a Sri Lankan restaurant a few doors away, famous for its hoppers, the boat-like pancakes filled with lentil, cauliflower and chicken curries. The restaurant is themed because the book that John has set for the group is *The Seven Moons of Maali Almeida* by the Sri Lankan author Shehan Karunatilaka. John had read it before, inspired by a trip to Sri Lanka, and has eagerly reread it ahead of the lunch. Like many a book club pick, it has had a prize push it into prominence and so into the hands of mainstream readers, for Karunatilaka's mystical novel won the 2022 Booker Prize. Reading it, it is easy to get a feel for its Booker-friendliness: it appealingly weaves the historical realities of the Sri Lankan civil war with a fantastical afterlife whodunnit.

When I enter the restaurant, there are 10 or 11 of the best-looking middle-aged gay men you have ever seen, silver-haired and straight-backed, poised and ready to get stuck into both lunch and discussion.

Here is the tricky tipping point of every book club meet: can you ignore the reason you have come together and get away with not talking about the book at all?

There is a slight sense that they are on their best behaviour, knowing there is an intrepid interloper among them. Still, the nerves wear off, postures relax, and they eat and catch up over small plates, before John interrupts to say they really should start the discussion. Here is the tricky tipping point of every book club meet: can you ignore the reason you have come together and get away with not talking about the book at all? I'm sure some do.

This is a group unafraid of the deeper end of conversation. It is no spoiler to reveal that Karunatilaka's titular character, Maali Almeida, he of the Seven Moons, is dead; it is the set-up for the entire book, told from Maali's perspective, relayed in the second person, speaking from a time-sensitive purgatory. Maali has to make his way out of there.

The most contentious discussion point kicks off right at the start of the roundtable. Maali Almeida is gay — and struggles with his sexual identity even in death — so a question from a softly spoken man sitting beside me becomes whether this is just another gay trauma story written by a straight man. Like others around the table, I too had looked up whether Karunatilaka was queer midway through reading the book and was surprised to find he was not. The softly spoken reader explains to the others that he is fed up with reading queer stories that obsess over the acronym SODA: Suicide, Overdose, Domestic violence or AIDS. Why did Karunatilaka's novel need to be a story of a gay man punished for his sexuality, when it could have just as easily been a story of political persecution?

There is also a framed question as to whether Karunatilaka got the details of the lives of gay men right. Karunatilaka conducted interviews in the name of authenticity, but this is seen as tokenistic by some in the group. Others make the point that there are common experiences between the Australian and Sri Lankan gay scene in the late 1980s — 'some things we did' — that can be picked up in the book. Most pep up to defend Karunatilaka, arguing that the writer understood their lived experiences,

Co-hosts Sarah Holland-Batt and Julia Gillard holding different editions of Fiona McFarlane's novel *The Sun Walks Down* for the *Podcast of One's Own* book club. Photo by Nick Hilton

conveying them with more authenticity than some of the books they had read by gay authors.

Strong disagreement is natural in a book club; the ultimate discussion generator. What would be the point of consensus? It would be dead air. If you were fearful of expressing dissent, you could avoid it entirely by joining a book club where you don't have to answer for yourself, or even attend. The celebrity book club has been a popular format since Oprah launched a reading group on her daytime television show in 1996 (its political peak coming in 2001 when Jonathan Franzen turned down an invitation to be featured). Since then, others have gotten in on the act. Securing coverage on certain celebrity book clubs is highly coveted by local publishers hoping to boost sales. One industry insider tells me that the *Chat 10 Looks 3* and *Shameless* podcasts are particularly targeted in publicity campaigns. There's money to be made from mass membership.

These disembodied discussions give you no real say, but you can listen in. Instead of a social gathering, you are placed in a parasocial relationship with the host and their guests. You can think they are your friends, but in reality they have no idea you exist. You can now 'hang out' with a certain former Australian prime minister, for example, who recently launched a book club on her popular podcast.

Julia Gillard has recruited the Stella Prize–winning poet Sarah Holland-Batt to be her co-host on the book club episodes of *A Podcast of One's Own* (an initiative of the Australian National University). I sign up simply by reading Anne Enright's *The Wren, The Wren* and downloading their latest episode, listening on a long train ride into Sydney. With the Hawkesbury River gliding by, it is strange, indeed, to hear a former prime minister transform into literary journalist; at the front of the episode, Gillard gives short, punchy updates on the Stella and Miles Franklin awards (teasing that their eventual winner, Alexis Wright, will appear on the show shortly).

It is an incredibly easygoing duet between Gillard and Holland-Batt, parsing together the incredible successes of Enright's enrapturing work. Holland-Batt is the perfect co-host for this particular episode and this particular book, because Enright's novel concerns itself with a lauded fictional Irish poet, Phil McDaragh, his daughter Carmel and his granddaughter Nell. Enright invents Phil's poems, which are scattered throughout the pages of the novel. Holland-Batt, at Gillard's prompting, expertly appraises them. Gillard positions herself as the more 'regular' reader — the friendly dilettante of the pair — imagining the perspective of at-home listeners by questioning if Enright's novel would appeal to everyone. She even criticises the end of the book for leaving the future of the McDaragh family a little too ambiguous.

Would I even have been able to interject and add anything to this discussion if we were sitting around a table in some London pub — Gillard is recording from England, with Holland-Batt on microphone in Australia? I might have remained a listener there too, nursing a beer, dumbfounded by Gillard's unexpected presence. This conversation was one of the better book club discussions I have heard, perhaps because I made no contribution. No matter what you make of Gillard's 'club', the accumulating episodes will be an extraordinary resource for future political and literary historians, able to hear what Australia's first female prime minister thought about contemporary fiction.

Strong disagreement is natural in a book club; the ultimate discussion generator. What would be the point of consensus?

Over the course of three months, I have become a book club crawler, attending different events like a literary raver switching venues throughout the night. Along the way, I gobbled up three books I might not otherwise have gotten around to reading. Perhaps that is the strongest pull of the contemporary book club — the chance to be exposed to writers and work entirely new to you, that may sit outside your comfort zone or your usual reading practice.

During this whole heady exercise, a variation of the old Groucho Marx line bounced around my mind: 'I refuse to join any book club that would have me as a member.' But given the hospitality shown to me and the quality of the books I read, I now want to beg for entry and sing the praises of membership to all those who will listen. A new variation of an old Groucho line has finally presented itself: 'I've got a good mind to join a book club, and beat you over the head with it.'

Sam Twyford-Moore is a writer and cultural critic, and the former festival director and CEO of the Emerging Writers' Festival. He is the author of *The Rapids: Ways of looking at mania* (2018) and *Cast Mates: Australian actors in Hollywood and at home* (2023), both published by NewSouth Publishing. A profile on him appears in *Openbook* Spring 2023.

A MAGAZINE LIKE A NEWSREEL

WORDS **Margot Riley**

Ahead of a new exhibition, *PIX: The magazine that changed everything*, its curator tells the origin story of the trailblazing publication.

On 26 January 1938, a sultry summer day in Sydney, millions lined the streets to witness the pageantry of the 150th anniversary parade marking the founding of the colony of New South Wales. This date also marks the launch of *PIX* magazine, the nation's first pictures-only news weekly and a landmark in Australian publishing.

The weekly pictorial magazine was the brainchild of Sir Hugh Denison, proprietor of Associated Newspapers Ltd (ANL) and Australia's first media emperor. Six months in the planning, its first issue coincided with the greatest commemorative show in Australia's history to that point. An aggressive marketing campaign in the week leading up to the celebrations had whetted the appetites of the steadily growing crowds travelling in to Sydney in search of novelty, excitement and sensationalism.

Opposite: This photograph of dancer Katrin Rosselle, taken 27 June 1939, would go on to become an acclaimed cover image. Photo by Ray Olson

The striking appearance of *PIX* on the city's newsstands did not disappoint. Full-page advertisements had promised a new form of pictorial journalism modelled on magazines such as *Vu* (1928–40) and *Life* (1936–72) that sold in large numbers across Europe and North America. Acclaimed as an entirely new style of publication, these magazines incorporated notable advances in modern magazine layout, and used high-quality rotogravure printing processes to reproduce photographs in crisp detail. Rather than being confronted by columns and columns of words, readers were presented with picture stories linked by minimal text, much like the captioned frames of silent films.

The Sun building, ANL's headquarters, on Sydney's Castlereagh Street was where *PIX* was produced. There, a crack team of experienced editors, writers and photographers were assembled to bring the new magazine to life. Designed for Australian readers by newspaper men who had studied the latest overseas trends, *PIX* set out to shock; it let its pictures tell their own daring stories through careful sequencing and brief, incisive and informative captions. Compared at first to the cinematic newsreel, this concept was soon tweaked to emphasise the added benefits of still imagery. As one advertorial exclaimed, 'Unlike a newsreel, "PIX" stops the action so you can study, examine, learn every detail and return again and again to these fascinating subjects.'

Magazine editors are the original influencers. They must develop a deep understating of their intended audience. *PIX*'s first editor, Tom Gurr, was uniquely suited to take on the task of creating Australia's first news pictorial. The trade monthly *Newspaper News*, in its fulsome announcement on 1 February 1938 of the new magazine's launch, described its editorial formula as one that delivered 'informative entertainment'. Recently transferred from his role as chief subeditor of *The Sun*, Gurr was doubly qualified for the job — in addition to his newspaper training he'd produced more than 2000 newsreels for Cinesound and other film companies. Gurr's highly developed pictorial sense and existing skill in storyboarding and caption writing informed the production of this 'magazine like a newsreel', which became *PIX*'s tagline. Similarly, *PIX* staff journalist Colin Simpson's previous experience working in advertising agencies gave the former *Sun* special writer the perfect background for developing *PIX*'s new style of layouts and captioning.

PIX's trademark was its emphasis on immediacy and the perceived authenticity of its photographs. The magazine's large tabloid size and dynamic layout gave prominence to its pictures. These were variously sourced from a transnational network of picture syndicates and international news agencies, as well as ANL's own stable of 'on the spot' cameramen ready to capture images of local stories and news as it happened.

Re-examining the work of the extraordinary team of *PIX* staff photographers while preparing this exhibition has strengthened my appreciation for their skill in composition — working with professional and amateur models both on location and in the studio — and in creating images to tell a story. The world-class work of many *PIX* photographers deserves to be as well known as the work of later Australian photographers such as Max Dupain and David Moore, who were influenced by this earlier generation.

Key *PIX* photographers included Ray Olson, Ivan Ive, Alec Iverson, Vic Johnston, Norman Herfort and Charles Wakeford. In addition to using their standard-issue, large-format press cameras, *PIX* photographers spent three months in 1937 learning to operate unobtrusive 'mini' cameras in order to secure unsuspected, intimate and unposed images. They also developed new photographic techniques and were trained in the process of 'camera storyisation', or breaking down the 'narrative' of a picture story into its component parts. To do this, they would carefully plan the sequence of pictures they needed to take in order to tell the story, with only a few lines of supporting text. *PIX* also employed numerous staff, predominantly male, to research and write captions.

The margins in *PIX* spreads were kept small so the pictures could span across two pages to create continuity of movement from one image to the next. Initially at least, there was no advertising to break the flow. Pictures in the first issue mimicked the chaotic, eclectic diversity of a newsreel, with subjects ranging from Sydney's Palm Beach to Moscow and Shanghai. There were stories about Hollywood's latest disaster movie *The Hurricane*, Australian-born acrobat Con Colleano, violent deaths, aeroplanes, wrestlers, racehorses, moonlight golf, silhouetted nudes and a risqué fan dancer. Priced at sixpence, the cost of a movie ticket, *PIX* was cheaper than other weeklies and heavily promoted as 'the magazine you've always wanted', with the 'news of the world's current happenings'. It promised to present 'a complete panorama of life' and marketed itself as a magazine for average readers, 'people like us'.

From the very first issue, *PIX* turned its readers into potential writers, models and photographers, offering them the chance to participate in storytelling and picture-making. The back page of every edition had a boxed invitation: 'PHOTOGRAPHERS: *PIX* represents opportunity for you. For unusual pictures which have not appeared elsewhere, *PIX* will pay top rates.' Perhaps just another clever marketing ploy, this call for crowd-sourced content may have also eased the burden on the editorial team, constantly searching for novelty news items.

The day after the launch of *PIX*, ANL reported that the magazine was already being hailed as a success. Copies were sold in their thousands amid a buzz of excitement and comments such as 'Hey look at this', 'What a picture', 'Fancy that in Sydney!' The vivid *PIX* covers could be seen everywhere in the crowd, 'as modern as a high voltage battery, as compelling as a voice on the radio, as piquant as red fingernails'. Readers were exhorted to keep their first issue of *PIX*, 'the magazine that made newspaper history', as a souvenir of a new era in Australian journalism. But public reaction to the new magazine was not without controversy — a regular occurrence throughout the magazine's run.

PIX had confirmed the adage that a picture is worth a thousand words, but its subject matter and presentation caused an outcry among some readers, and media rivals. 'Sun's new baby is vulgar sex publication ... pinching ideas from American papers,' claimed *Truth*, saying the copycat cover of *PIX* — 'the Sun's lewd little relative' — resembled American magazines *Pic* and *Look* too closely. The *Workers' Weekly* decried *PIX*'s choice of Palm Beach, 'the stamping ground of the rich and useless', over Sydney's other natural beauty spots. It also criticised the series of flashlight photos showing two couples 'necking' on the sand and in a limousine for being a 'not-too-brilliant' copy of America's sensationalist journals.

PIX's first lead feature clearly aimed to titillate readers. The Palm Beach story was, in fact, inspired by an article from *Life* in November 1936 which showcased the work of photographer Steve Hannagan, the press agent for Florida's Miami Beach, paid US$25,000 a season to promote the beach resort. As *Life* noted, 'From Thanksgiving to St Patrick's day, US newspapers are full of pictures of pretty girls in bathing suits ... to keep Miami Beach constantly before snowbound Northerners who may then be lured to Florida.' The *PIX* editorial team would have known that Palm Beach would

ASSOCIATED NEWSPAPERS LTD.

PIX

Nº 72

Memo. from THE EDITOR

January 31, 193

MR. JONES
CANADIAN TOUR.

Re Mr. Ralston's letter.

I am astonished at the tone of this communication. We went to the greatest pains to secure from him facts about Palm Beach. We showed him the page on which his picture appears. We printed nothing about him or his wife to which any normal man could take exception.

Mr. Ralston appears to take on to his shoulders, quite unnecessarily, responsibility for all that occurs on the northern beaches. He does not realise that PIX is a factual magazine. The photographs speak for themselves. We do not speak for the photographs. All we said about the Ralstons was that they founded "Australia's Miami", and paid them what we considered a nice tribute for their foresight and judgment. Our attitude to Mr. Ralston was one of friendliness, because he so kindly assisted us in gathering the facts which we published.

What would Mr. Ralston have us do? To say that he never kisses ladies on the beach, that he never drinks beer? It appears that we can make no "correction" about Mr. Ralston because, on his own admission, we have said nothing about him which requires correction.

Newspapers publish stories about rich life in Darlinghurst. In the same issues, but in other columns, they publish portraits of social figures who happen to live in Darlinghurst. Yet nobody connects these people with the activities of other Darlinghurst residents. Perhaps Mr. Ralston might look at the matter from that point of view, and accept my personal assurance that neither I, nor anyone, who has discussed the Palm Beach feature with me has thought for a moment that he was connected with anything which was not right and proper.

I attach a report by our C. Simpson.

Tom Gurr

EDITOR

Noted

Clockwise from top left:

Editor Tom Gurr's memo responding to John Ralston's complaint about the Palm Beach story

One of many advertisements placed in other publications about *PIX*'s launch success

Tom Gurr, the first editor of *PIX*, photographed in his office soon after the magazine's launch. Photo by Ray Olson.

Journalist Colin Simpson's note about John Ralston's complaint

to Pix. After He may miss out the next two or three issues, but then he'll buy it every week.

Mr Ralston's descriptions of Pix as on a par with American yellow ~~paper~~ journals and a disgrace to a fine British community seem incredible until it is realised that he does not comprehend Pix and so cannot describe it, so he groups it with publications with which Pix has ~~nth~~ nothing in common except unconventionality--which, apparently, Mr Ralston cannot * take*)

C Jin Simpson

be newsworthy for their target audience. Social goings-on there were regularly reported in the 'Palm Beach Letters' column published in *Truth*, and it had been the opening location in the 1937 Cinesound feature film and box-office success *Tall Timbers*.

In a deliberately inflammatory piece of sensationalist reporting, *PIX* stated that 'Palm Beach is to Australia what Miami Florida is in America', describing the seaside suburb '26 miles from Sydney' as the exclusive playground of the city's moneyed smart society. The article quoted exorbitant rental costs and seasonal expenditures of up to £200,000 (around $21.4 million today), with some Palm Beachers staying aboard yachts and luxury cruisers. The five-page picture story illustrates a hedonistic lifestyle, with images of bare-legged dancers, men and women in shorts and sandals, and both sexes wearing figure-hugging swimsuits that seemed to flout bathing costume regulations imposed on city beaches. Palm Beach lacked 'elaborate ballrooms', so partygoers are shown doing their considerable drinking outdoors, with well-stocked bars in the boots of parked cars. And then there are those flashlight pictures of kissing couples.

At least one of the socialites profiled, solicitor John Ralston, president of the Palm Beach Surf Club and one of the popular holiday destination's most prominent residents, was sufficiently outraged by the public disclosure of Palm Beachers behaving badly that he complained directly to Sir Hugh Denison. A string of correspondence preserved in the ANL archive records *PIX* staffers' responses to Ralston's objections:

> I told Mr Ralston in his office that we intended to cover Palm Beach — which is a national resort, not just a place where he happens to figure socially and to own land ... We discussed drinking and love-making at Palm Beach. He said that undoubtedly very heavy drinking went on there ... I told him we had some candid pictures of couples ... Mr Ralston's attitude is quite understandable, however, and is I think to be expected at this stage of 'PIX's' career ... [he] cannot comprehend that anything should be published which is not indirectly blue-pencilled by social censorship ... He will get used to 'PIX'. He may miss out the next two or three issues but then he'll buy it every week.
>
> Colin Simpson, journalist, undated

Above: The cover of the very first edition of *PIX*, 29 January 1938. The Palm Beach story appeared inside.

Opposite: Some of the scenes of revelry at Palm Beach that caused such controversy. Photos by Ray Olson

> I am astonished at the tone of this communication ... We went to the greatest of pains to secure from [Mr Ralston] the facts about Palm Beach ... The photographs speak for themselves. We do not speak for the photographs. All we said about the Ralstons was that they founded 'Australia's Miami'.
>
> Tom Gurr, Editor, to FW Tonkin, Managing Editor
> 31 January 1938

> Mr Ralston's complaint is built upon his own view of 'PIX' ... I am sure that he does not suggest that any of the pictures to which he takes exception are inaccurate as incidents in the life of the community ... 'PIX' is a factual magazine endeavouring to render service, presenting life as it is and as the world knows it is.
>
> FW Tonkin, Managing Editor, to Sir Hugh Denison, ANL owner
> 1st February 1938

> It is generally understood at Palm Beach that certain of the most indecent photographs were specially posed ... Moreover I do suggest that the pictures are in many cases inaccurate and even if accurate, vulgar, repulsive and indecent ... I am considering taking action against Mr Gurr. The whole tenor of his report is grossly offensive and insulting ... In conclusion ... I still cannot regard 'PIX' as being anything other than a vulgar sex and crime publication of the lowest American type.
>
> John Ralston, solicitor, to Sir Hugh Denison, ANL owner
> 18 February 1938

Fortunately for Tom Gurr, Ralston's complaint does not seem to have proceeded any further, nor resulted in any legal action. In contrast, the ANL archive retains a very 'cordial' letter of congratulations about the new publishing venture, received by Sir Hugh the day after *PIX*'s release, from Australian public relations 'pioneer' George Fitzpatrick (1884–1948). Fitzpatrick notes that he himself had suggested to another group that a gravure publication similar to *Look* and *Life* should be printed, but that the others — though they had the money — considered the time was not 'opportune'. Fitzpatrick signs off saying, 'While they were thinking about it you have done it ... May your shadow never grow less — may you continue to go from success to success!'

In the months that followed the launch, ANL continued to promote its new title, placing large display advertisements in all the Sydney dailies and Sunday papers, with a sprinkling of smaller ads in many regional publications across the

nation. The advertising campaign that followed the release of *PIX*'s controversial first issue was maintained until the magazine's circulation and viability were established. The advertorials placed in ANL-owned papers, and the outraged reports from rival papers (some of which, hypocritically, also carried promotional advertising for *PIX*), would have helped drive sales among readers curious to find out what the fuss was all about.

By March 1940, when six-monthly circulation figures for the magazine were first collected, *PIX* was selling more than 105,000 copies weekly. This figure does not take into account its unrecorded 'pass along' readership, estimated at 6.5 people per issue. This would have easily taken the projected circulation of Australia's first national all-picture magazine to an astonishing readership of approximately 682,500, at a time when the population was just over seven million.

PIX's popularity lasted for three decades. Characterised by outstanding photography, read by millions, national in scope and consistently diverse and eclectic, it continued until 1968, when it merged with *People*, becoming *PIX/People*, before disappearing from the *People* masthead altogether. In the tumultuous world of Australian magazine publishing, *PIX*'s aggressive modernism, exuberance and risk-taking and its distinctly Australian mix of sensationalism and scandal made it a genuine trailblazer. It offers a unique window into mid-twentieth century Australian life, and makes for intriguing and at times eye-opening reading to this day.

Margot Riley is curator of the exhibition *PIX: The magazine that changed everything*, opening 13 December.

'Words cannot tell what *PIX* shows you.' One of the many advertisements that were placed in various publications to promote the new magazine.

Ivan Ive (1905–1972)

PIX cameraman Ivan Ive was one of the most well regarded and accomplished press photographers of his generation. Following in the footsteps of his cinematographer and photographer father, Ive began taking photos as a boy. In 1923, at the age of 18, he joined Associated Newspapers Ltd (ANL), working for *The Sun*. In a career spanning more than 40 years, he risked his life, crashing his car several times when rushing news pictures back to the darkroom. On three occasions he took back pictures of the crash as well. On the fourth, in 1925, he lost his left eye — and the picture — but not his passion for photography.

By 1935, Ive was Chief Photographer for ANL. In 1938, his extensive experience and skill secured him a spot on the elite team of ace cameramen assembled to produce *PIX*. For the next three decades, Ive travelled all over the east coast of Australia and to New Zealand in his search for unique and interesting pictures capturing the spirit of the people and places he encountered. At a time when the local modelling industry was in its infancy, he was an intuitive talent scout, and his many *PIX* covers and photo stories glorifying 'the all-Australian girl' won him wide acclaim.

Photographer Ivan Ive, in the studio, against a backdrop of his own photos. Photo by Ivan Ive

Broadcaster, composer and writer Andrew Ford talks about a lifetime of music — and his new book.

THE SHORTEST HISTORY OF ANDREW FORD

WORDS **Phillipa McGuinness**

About half an hour into my interview with Andrew Ford, host of ABC Radio National's long-running program *The Music Show*, I ask a question that I assume he has been asked a hundred times before. We're sitting in the lobby of the ABC building in Ultimo and I almost expect him to roll his eyes, although he would be too polite for that. His answer — one I think is completely truthful — surprises me.

My question riffs on the 'Desert Island Discs' conundrum, inspired by the conceit of the BBC radio program of the same name: which eight tracks would you take to a desert island? Ford and I both acknowledge that it is the kind of question that should be given on notice, but his response, in three parts, is perfect. 'I actually listen to *Desert Island Discs* quite often. I like the format,' he says.

He expands on why he likes the program, reflecting on its similarities to his own: 'I think people quite often speak more openly when they're speaking about music.' But the clincher comes in his actual answer, about what music he'd take to the island, because it's an affirmation of his curiosity about all things musical. He says, 'I would choose music I don't know. I would much rather have some music that I know must be good because it's by Bach — or whoever — but haven't got around to it yet.' Of course he realises this isn't quite playing the game, but how can there be a neat, unchanging soundtrack to anyone's life, let alone to composer, writer and broadcaster Andrew Ford's?

February 2025 will mark 30 years since Ford first presented *The Music Show*. I'm a long-time listener and, as I declare at the start of our interview, a big fan. On Saturday mornings for decades, and more recently for an hour on Sunday mornings as well, or later on the podcast, I have listened to interviews with everyone from Ornette Coleman to Emmylou Harris to Billy Bragg to Elefant Traks. And their music. I've tuned in to programs dedicated to Benjamin Britten or Ella Fitzgerald or the history of Australian punk. I've learned a lot about Karlheinz Stockhausen and Arnold Schoenberg, the German and Austrian-American composers who, respectively, seem to work their way in to the program rather a lot.

Like many listeners, I love the show's sense of inclusion and possibility. Week to week, you might hear anything from a whole universe of music, including new records from artists and genres you've never heard of. Debut musicians or conductors might appear after an interview with a composer such as Canberra-based Larry Sitsky, who is 90. Reflecting the spirit of the show, Ford wrote in *The Memory of Music* that one of the great things about music, unlike, say, a lecture on advanced physics, is that by bringing your ears, your imagination and your memory, you can jump in anywhere. To make his point, in the same book, he presents this list: Snoop Dog, Sonny Rollins, Joni Mitchell, Wagner, Sami yoiking, klezmer, Pauline Oliveros. I'm sure all of them have been on the show, one way or another.

Ford tells me that one reason *The Music Show* lives on on Radio National (most live concerts or programs that are basically back-announced songs are on other ABC networks) is, paradoxically, because it's not a music show. It's a talk show, with music. He has frequently made the point, but it's easily forgotten, that Radio National is a producer's medium. Downplaying his role, he says he works at the ABC part-time and just happens to be the presenter.

Christopher Lawrence was *The Music Show*'s first host. Ford tells me that a few years later, 'I was rung up by Penny [Lomax] one day and asked if I would like to present the show. So I've always felt that I'm working for them [Penny Lomax and co-founder and fellow producer Maureen Cooney]. It's their show.' Cooney and Lomax's vision for the program over the 26 years they produced it together — its diverse genres, musicians, composers, poets, artists and writers, some world famous, others soon to be, many happily cocooned in a world of experimentation — has been continued by current producers Ellie Parnell and Ce Benedict.

Andrew Ford in an anechoic chamber at the ABC building in Ultimo. An anechoic chamber is a room designed to stop reflections or echoes of either sound or electromagnetic waves.
Photo by Joy Lai

The producers, Ford explains, 'choose the guests and the music, do the research and provide me with a brief which is summed up in the form of questions. Sometimes I ask them all in the order in which they're written, but not usually. Because, if the interview is going well then you can't do that. Sometimes I ask the first question and never get to any of the others because of the turn that the interview has taken.' This approach reflects not only Ford's ability to listen, but the advantage of having, behind the microphone, someone who is a musician as well as a broadcaster.

He says, 'I think the art of interviewing — and I think I say this in my book *The Memory of Music* — is not in asking the right questions but in understanding the answers. That's where it helps to be a musician. Because you could write good questions that anyone could ask. But if the answer comes back and it makes some reference to a particular bluegrass picking technique, or something about the C-sharp minor fugue from Book 1 of Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier*, and you don't know what they're talking about, then there's nowhere for you to go except to look down at your piece of paper and ask the next question. You miss things.'

It's clear from the warm responses of most of his guests — after more than 6000 interviews, there have been a few duds but not many — that they respect this knowledge. It elevates the program. And he never underestimates his audience.

Ford's unique perspective leads him to make a fascinating observation, one that others might never notice: many musicians speak the way they play. For example, no one will ever notice any contrast between the way songwriter Paul Kelly speaks and the way he sings and plays — the vibe of each is laconic. Finnish musician Pekka Kuusisto might stop mid-sentence and reach for an out-of-the-blue analogy, which, Ford says, is not unlike his violin playing. It takes a deep kind of listening to make such connections.

In his own time, Ford often listens to music while cooking or driving ... like so many of us. But it's usually a whole album.

I comment that it used to be difficult to find obscure music but now it seems everything is on hand, streamable, thanks to a technological revolution that has happened during the life of *The Music Show*. (For example, I had to look up composer Pauline Oliveros, mentioned in Ford's list above — she was an American experimental composer specialising in electronic music and accordion. AirPods in, I could listen to her music immediately.) He notes that access to lots of music can be very convenient 'for being able to quickly listen to something, which I often have to do. But it's not so good for deep listening or accessing information.'

That very morning he heard a track through one of the platforms and couldn't work out what a particular instrument was. He thought probably saxophone, but tenor or bass? And who was the player? No liner notes or CD booklet means he still doesn't know because the information wasn't included on the app, and rarely is. Moreover, of course not everything, even good stuff, exists on the streaming platforms. 'I've come up against this quite a lot. I still have a classic iPod in my bag and on it is an awful lot of music that I would not be able to find on Spotify. Or YouTube. Or anywhere.'

This iPod, if further proof were needed, is evidence of his general lack of snobbery and elitism; his is a quest for good music, regardless of its genre or period. I ask if he ever puts it on shuffle. He says he used to poo-poo the shuffle, but 'as you might imagine, my iPod is pretty eclectic — there's punk albums and Wagner operas and all sorts of things on that iPod. And if you hit shuffle, obviously they all kind of mix together. There's something about the start of a new track when you don't know what it is, or what it's going to be. Or maybe it starts and you can't place it but you find yourself listening incredibly hard and in a different way. Whereas if I put on The Clash or *Parsifal* I know what I'm going to hear. So I learned a healthy respect for the shuffle function after that, in certain circumstances.'

While we were talking about personal, everyday recreational listening at home, I ask about his teenage daughter's influence on his music. Would he, say, take her to a Taylor Swift concert? 'Oh yeah! I like Taylor Swift. We did sit through the whole Eras thing on Netflix.'

Ford was born in Liverpool, England, which is where four extremely famous musicians were also born. His 2017 almost-memoir, *The Memory of Music*, is full of rich descriptions of the music he listened to in childhood, from the record collections of parents, cousins and neighbours, singing alongside a piano in an aunt's lounge, and later, television. But our conversation, perhaps inevitably, leads back to The Beatles, and particularly the influence of radio.

'Their music has stood the test of time. It was a product of radio, and of their own listening to radio which was all there was really, especially when they were young. Radio made them famous before there was pop radio, in England anyway. There was just

the BBC. To the best of my memory there were no programs, let alone networks, that were specifically tailored to pop music. Programs played pop music alongside other stuff, but it was all part of a mixture of musical types — and comedy and drama.

'All of that is there in The Beatles. And so many musical styles — they were one of the first UK bands to explore country music in any way. Their embrace of early rock 'n' roll was second to none. And the girl groups — the Phil Spector sound — but also music hall.'

There's always a lot to say about The Beatles. 'I think it was part of their wide and lasting attraction — they were cross-generation — and they weren't just one thing. And both Lennon and McCartney had great rock voices, on top of everything else.' He adds, 'And then you could consider all the songs they wrote that they didn't get round to recording, that they wrote for other people. And all the touring they did! And it was all over, and they were still in their twenties.'

Fittingly, the first single Ford bought was 'I Want to Hold Your Hand'. But countless others did that too without going on to become renowned composers like he did. He had a good ear, he says, even though he didn't have conventional musical training as a child — he says that he doesn't play the piano well. But full of enthusiasm and imagination, he knew that he wanted to be involved, somehow. 'I wanted to compose, which isn't quite the same thing as being a composer.'

He can date this feeling to one night in March 1973. 'I would have just turned sixteen. There was this program on BBC Television, a Saturday night arts program live in the studio. This particularly night it was the London Sinfonietta with Karlheinz Stockhausen. He was doing a little residency with them, including the first performance of his *Ylem* [an intuitive composition with no written notes, for 19 singers and musicians, and four shortwave radios]. I was transfixed by it. They did a kind of rehearsal, and then a performance, so I felt that I was really there ... I could hear in the performance how things had changed as a result of the rehearsal — I was able to listen in a more detailed way.'

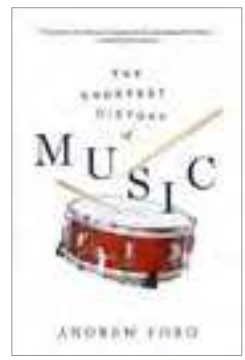
It was revelatory. 'I can be part of this, I thought. It was thrilling. So, I started writing music and I haven't stopped.' As well as being numerous and widely recorded, his compositions — many being commissions for major orchestras and ensembles — are impressively varied. I ask what he is working on now. Turns out it's a piece for electric guitar and loop pedals called 'Deep Riffs' for the virtuoso guitarist Ken Murray.

Ford tells me about another piece he was recently commissioned to write for children's choir and electric guitar. Like much of his work it includes text. Called 'I Sing the Birth', after the first line of Ben Jonson's 'A Hymn on the Nativity of My Saviour', it also includes part of Christina Rossetti's 'A Christmas Carol', which starts with the words 'In the Bleak Midwinter'. In a southern hemisphere response, Ford has included two Australian texts by poets Mark Tredinnick and Judith Nangala Crispin because, he says, 'I wanted to take into account that Christmas is not a midwinter festival in Australia despite the snowy reindeer image that we see everywhere. It was put to me by Luminescence [the Canberra choir that commissioned it] that I could write a new ceremony of carols because whilst Britten's *Ceremony of Carols* is a masterpiece, there really isn't anything else like it. It's half an hour of music for treble voices and harp. I love Britten's piece. I've sung it and I've conducted it. But I thought using a harp it was going to invite comparisons — hence the electric guitar.'

As if to pre-empt doubters, he adds, 'It's an incredibly versatile instrument. It can play very sweetly and quietly. It doesn't have to be an obliteration of everything all around it.'

Ford's most recent book is *The Shortest History of Music*. It opens with a description of didgeridoo (yidaki) virtuoso William Barton as a Kalkadunga boy in the Gulf Country of northwest Queensland, walking with his father to look for a tree that might make a didgeridoo. I asked why he chose Barton to introduce the whole history of music. 'I like being able to start in the present and in the past simultaneously and what he represents is the continuation of a tradition. But like most traditions we don't really know where it starts. We see or we hear the latest manifestations of that tradition when he picks up his didgeridoo but it goes back into prehistory, one assumes.'

Later in the book, Ford has written a poetic line that distils beautifully the evolution of 'organised sound' — John Cage's definition of music — across our own lives and across millennia. Tunes hummed, danced to, performed by grand orchestras, drummed out around campfires. Cadence, voice, pitch, rhythm, melody, harmony. The music that lives in our heads and in our hearts. He writes, 'Musical sounds exist in time and the time is always now.'



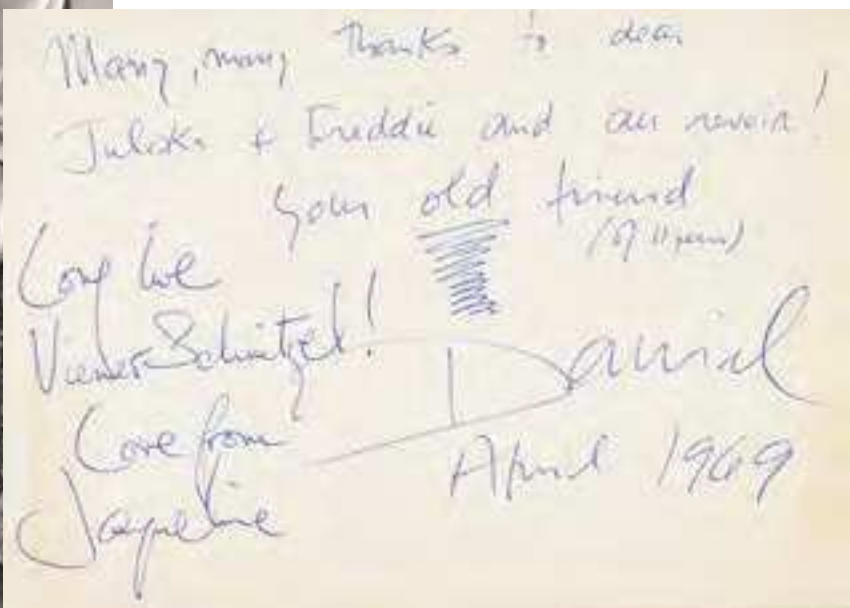
Cover of *The Shortest History of Music*, published by Black Inc.

Phillipa McGuinness is Editor of *Openbook*.

AT HOME WITH THE WENKARTS

A series of guest books shows that the home of a Sydney family was a hub for visiting and local musicians, and a key part of Musica Viva's history.

WORDS **Meredith Lawn**



Above, from left: Jacqueline du Pré and Daniel Barenboim, around 1972. Bromide fibre print. From the collection of the National Portrait Gallery, London. Photo by Clive Barda/ArenaPAL

Messages from Jacqueline du Pré and Daniel Barenboim, 1969

Opposite: The Wenkart family, 1961. From left: Susan, Fred, Julie and Tommy Wenkart. Photographer unknown

In 1969, Sydney welcomed back Daniel Barenboim, the acclaimed Argentinian-Israeli pianist and conductor. He was in Australia to conduct and perform with the English Chamber Orchestra. Travelling with him was the legendary British cellist Jacqueline du Pré, whom he had married just two years earlier. Precious black-and-white film footage from the time, captured by ABC TV's *This Day Tonight* current affairs program (available on YouTube), shows the young couple relaxing in a swimming pool, enjoying a rare day off from rehearsals and concerts.

Meanwhile, in leafy Wahroonga on Sydney's Upper North Shore, Fred and Julie Wenkart were preparing to have the 'golden couple' over for dinner. Their visit in April 1969 is recorded in the Wenkarts' guest book. And from du Pré's effusive message in the book — 'Long live Wiener Schnitzel! Love from Jacqueline' — we know what was on the menu.

Jacqueline du Pré had shot to international fame in 1965 when, at the age of 20, she recorded what was to become one of the definitive interpretations of Edward Elgar's Cello Concerto, with the London Symphony Orchestra conducted by Sir John Barbirolli. Du Pré and Barenboim visited Australia again in 1970, this time performing together in a program that included the Elgar Cello Concerto. Tragically, du Pré was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis in 1973, which would cut short her flourishing career and her life.

Wiener schnitzel was an appropriate choice for the Wenkarts' dinner party. Alfred (Fred) Wenkart married Juliska (Julie) in Vienna in 1937. After the annexation of Austria by Nazi Germany in March 1938, the Wenkarts fled Austria in July for Hungary,

where Juliska's family lived, with a plan to head for Australia. They arrived in Sydney on the *Remo* in May 1939. The couple opened a clothing factory in Hornsby, the suburb's first manufacturing company. Their daughter, Susan, was born in 1942 and their son, Thomas, was born in 1944. They bought their spacious home at 102 Grosvenor Street, Wahroonga, in 1946.

Over the next four and a half decades, the Wenkarts offered hospitality to countless international and local musicians and organisations in their Wahroonga home. It became a gathering place not only for Viennese cultural activities but also for the wider community of postwar European immigrants and visitors, who added great richness and depth to Sydney's cultural and intellectual life. In addition to musical events, the Kleines Wiener Theater (Little Viennese Theatre), the Independent Theatre, numerous charities and even cricket and soccer clubs made use of the Wenkart house and its expansive grounds. All this was recorded in the Wenkarts' guest books from 1952 to 1998, which the family donated to the Library in 2023.

'To my oldest Australian friends and original Musica Viva enthusiasts and helpers and most gracious hosts to all the visiting artists.'

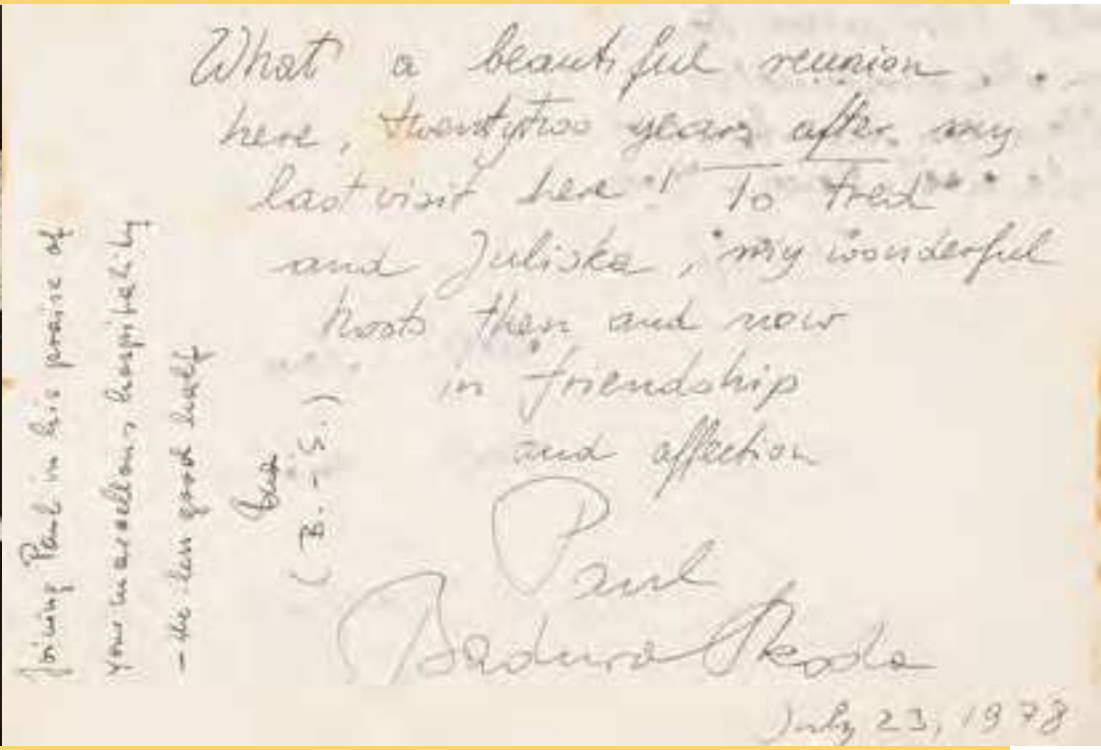
These visitor books are filled with handwritten messages in many languages that convey a sense of conviviality and appreciation. Several guests commented that the house felt like a home away from home. There are also drawings, musical jottings, inserted ephemera and photographs. When you flip through the books, the names of renowned musicians leap off the pages: pianist Alfred Brendel (Austria), soprano Lucia Popp (Slovakia), violinist Béla Dekany (Hungary), conductors Antal Doráti (Hungary/USA) and Nicolai Malko (Russia/USA), and ensembles such as the Alma Trio, Smetana Quartet, Bartok String Quartet and Vienna Trio, to name just a few.

The scale of some of the events held at the Wenkarts' home is quite astonishing. More than 80 guests gathered there for a farewell party and musicale for Austrian pianist Paul Badura-Skoda in August 1952. Among them were Eugene Goossens (then chief conductor of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra), William G James (composer), Laurence Godfrey Smith (pianist) and the Austrian Consul, Dr R Lind. An outdoor fireplace warmed guests as they danced on the paved terrace. Badura-Skoda himself returned and signed the guest books again in 1956, 1978 — when he wrote, 'What a beautiful reunion here, twenty two years after my last visit here! To Fred and Juliska, my wonderful hosts then and now in friendship and affection' — and 1982.

A newspaper cutting pasted into one guest book reports that 1000 guests enjoyed a barbeque and dancing at a party for the Hakoah Soccer Club held in the Wenkarts' garden in February 1960. More than 40 guests came for a dinner party featuring Chinese, Viennese and Hungarian dishes to farewell French pianist Philippe Entremont in June 1960. One hundred guests gathered for a recital by the great Russian cellist Mstislav Rostropovich and his accompanist Alexander Dedyukhin in August 1960, to raise money for Inala Rudolf Steiner School for Curative Education, a school for children in need of special care, at Pennant Hills. In 1963, the Australian Friends of the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra farewelled Hungarian pianist Lili Kraus at the Wenkarts' with a recital and a chicken and champagne supper. A Hungarian goulash party was given to farewell Hungarian violinist György Pauk and to welcome cellist Gábor Rejtő from the United States in 1969.

The home at Grosvenor Street was also a place to showcase local talent. Like Fred and Julie Wenkart, some were Jewish refugees from Hitler's Europe who had settled in Australia. They included Robert Pikler (Hungarian-born violist-violinist), Werner Baer (German-born pianist, composer and broadcaster) and, for a few years, Theo Salzman (Austrian-born cellist). Other musicians who signed the guest books were born here, such as Ernest Llewellyn (violist-violinist), Donald Hazelwood (violinist), Anne Menzies (clarinettist),

Paul Badura-Skoda, around 1956. Adrian Boddington Photography, Melbourne



Message from Paul Badura-Skoda, 1978

Theo Salzman, 1948. Photograph by Max Dupain

Francis Rosner, 1960. Photographer unknown

Lili Kraus, around 1963. Photograph by Fayer-Wien

Robert Pikler, 1961. Photograph by Max Dupain

Mária Sopronyi, 1969. Photographer unknown

Charmian Gadd (violinist), Ronald Cragg (violist), Romola Costantino (pianist), Yvonne Kenny (soprano), Nathan Wax (cellist) and jazz musicians Don Burrows and John Sangster. Additionally, the Wahroonga District Music Club held many Christmas parties and recitals with up to 200 guests at the Wenkart home. The club, founded by Laurence Godfrey Smith, was the first of its kind to be established on Sydney's North Shore.

The story of Musica Viva's early years is woven throughout the guest books, too. Musica Viva is Australia's oldest independent professional performing arts organisation and one of the world's leading presenters of chamber music. It was founded in 1945 by Richard Goldner, a Romanian-born, Viennese-raised violist who escaped the Nazi oppression of Jews in Austria and emigrated to Australia in 1939. From the mid-1950s, the Wenkarts' home was a venue for numerous recitals and garden parties for Musica Viva. Here chamber music was presented in its truest sense and setting — in the home, as the word 'chamber' originally implied. Goldner's appreciation is evident from his entry in 1980: 'To my oldest Australian friends and original Musica Viva enthusiasts and helpers and most gracious hosts to all the visiting artists.'

The Wenkarts also brought together Musica Viva supporters, who were so essential to the success of the organisation. There were numerous meetings and parties on behalf of the Musica Viva Members' Committee, including a 40th Birthday Gala Concert in 1985 presented by the Hazelwood Trio. The following year, an afternoon of chamber music was held to honour Ken Tribe AO, Musica Viva's retiring Chairman. On this occasion the music was provided by the Sydney String Quartet.

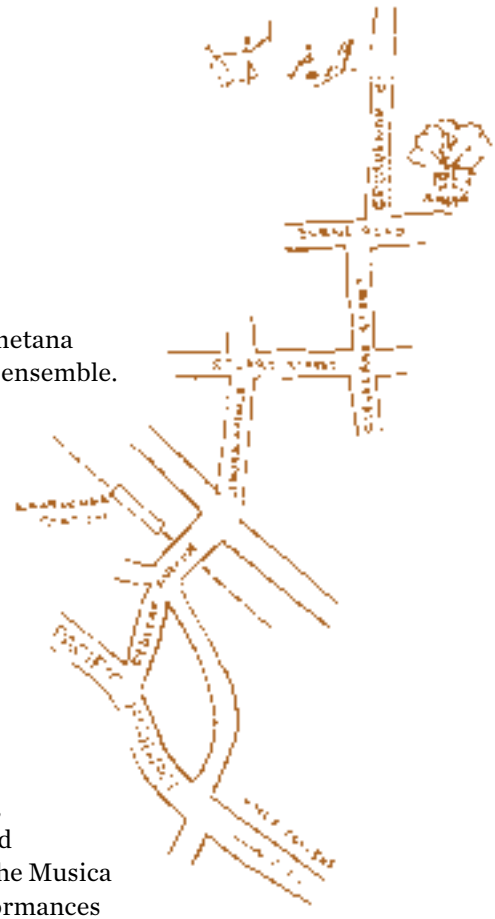
A tragic story is also revealed within the guest books. There is a card from Regina Ridge thanking the Wenkarts for hosting her farewell party in August 1975 after 25 years as Musica Viva's General Manager. Pasted next to her card is a newspaper cutting reporting her death two months later, after being hit by a car while on holiday in Prague. She had been visiting members of the Smetana Quartet for their 30th anniversary as an ensemble.

Musica Viva Australia is still going strong today, presenting concerts of often innovative chamber music by local and international artists, commissioning and programming new Australian works, and running music education programs in schools. The Library has been collecting its administrative records since 1975 — 700 boxes deposited in 16 consignments! The records include correspondence with touring Australian and international ensembles, promotional photographs, programs, and sound and video recordings relating to the Musica Viva in Schools program and other performances of Australian chamber ensembles. In 2023, the archives of Musica Viva Australia were added to the UNESCO Australian Memory of the World Register — part of the UNESCO program to preserve the world's documentary heritage — in recognition of their significant cultural value.

Intersecting with the first 50 years of Musica Viva, the Wenkart guest books shed light on the post–World War II flourishing of classical music, in particular chamber music, in Australia, which was nurtured by European refugees who chose to rebuild their lives in this country. Through Musica Viva's advocacy and the Wenkarts' hospitality, Australian audiences experienced international music-making of the highest order, and Australian artists were able to benchmark their own work against the best in the world.

Meredith Lawn is Music Archivist and Specialist Librarian in Cataloguing and Collection Services.

The Wenkart family guest books were digitised with funding from the Wenkart Foundation and can be viewed in the Library's online catalogue. The Library's Musica Viva Australia collection received cataloguing and preservation work in 2023 through the support of the Library Foundation.



A hand-drawn map showing how to get to the Wenkart house on Grosvenor Street, Wahroonga.

Opposite, clockwise from top left:

Messages from: Helen Perkin, 1966

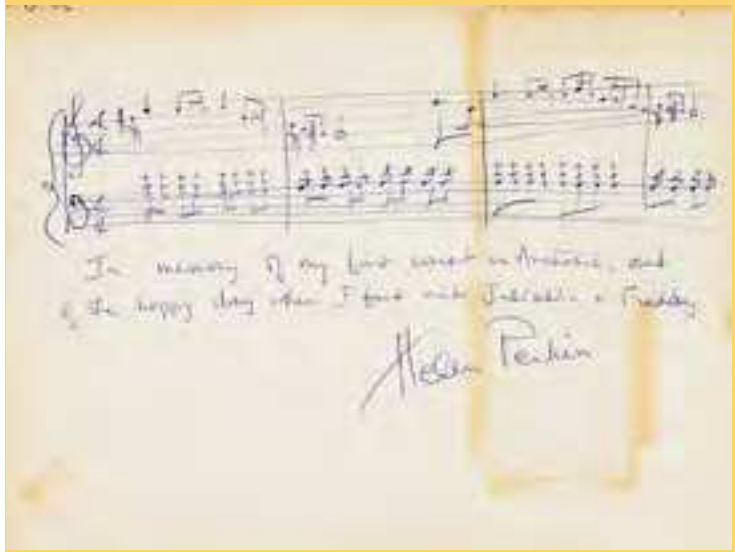
The Vienna Trio, 1969

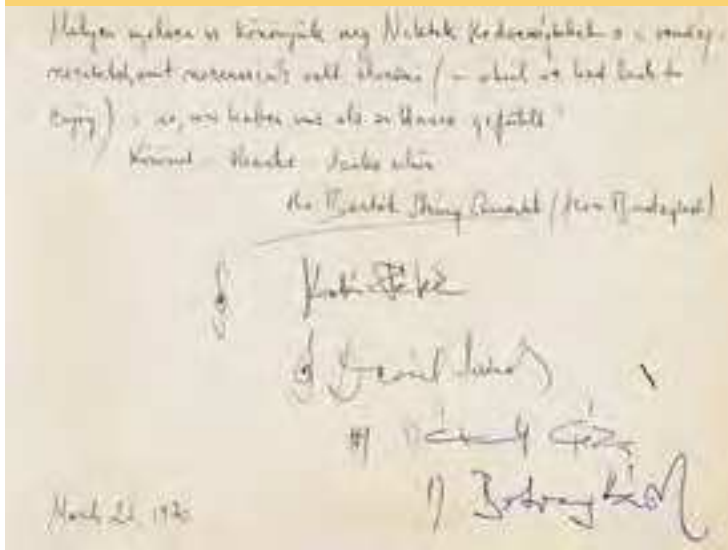
Australian guests, including Musica Viva's Chairman Ken Tribe, 1970

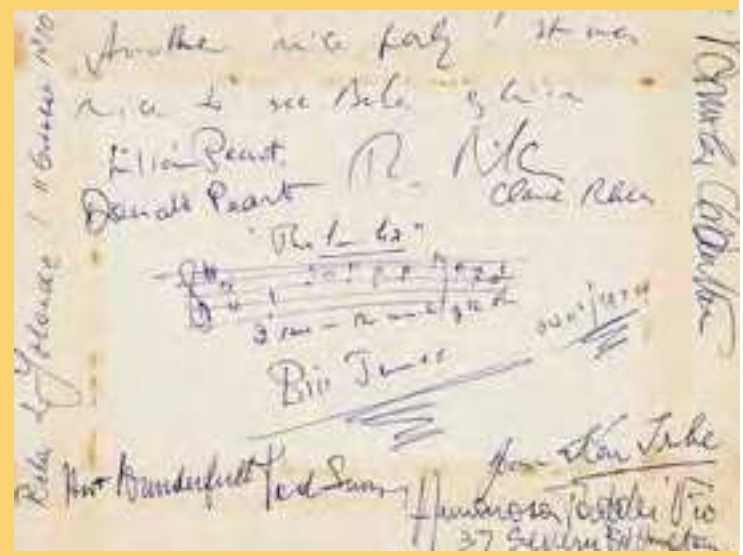
Richard Goldner, 1980

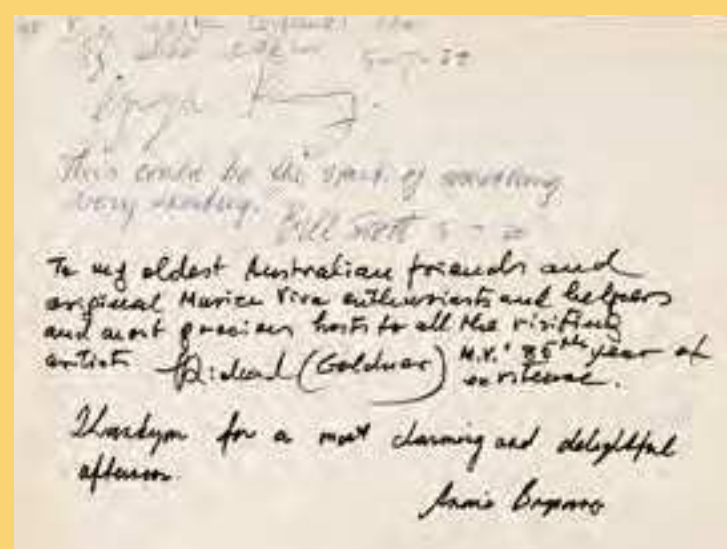
Wahroonga District Music Club, 1976

The Bartok String Quartet, 1970









El niño de verano

The air is thick with the humidity of another El Niño summer.
It is abnormally quiet for 4pm on a Sunday afternoon. Folk
don't have the energy to do much — *one can barely even exist* —

in this oppressive heat. It's underboob sweat kind of weather. I'm
tempted to pinch my mother's CPAP machine so that I might breathe
a little easier; stave off this creeping claustrophobia from mugginess

so dense you'd swear it was 3D. I lay on my bed like a starfish, gazing at
my shabby-chic sepia-toned clock bearing the image of an old-fashioned
bicycle with a wicker basket full of pink roses perched on the handlebars

and the word *Paris* in cursive font. It is lagging split-seconds behind
the beat because I haven't got around to replacing the batteries yet.
The slow revolutions of the blades of my dusty ceiling fan remind

me of submarine propellors. Or a merry-go-round. I conflate the
two and suddenly I'm imagining myself in the schoolyard as a child,
jumping between the blades of this subma-go-guillotine, Gladiator

style. But it is far too hot to be contemplating severed feet, so I pull
my mind away from such thoughts. The house yawns; stretches its
arthritic joints with cricks and creaks. Outside, an aeroplane hums

in the distance. Even the animals are silent. The washing on the line
would have dried hours ago, but it is too hot to go outside right now.
Sometimes I hear a flap of a billowing sheet or towel. When I collect

my laundry later on, the items are all crisp, as though tumble dried.
I like how they smell when they're extra crispy like this. I inhale
the sun. Soft branches of my mulberry tree lightly scrape like wire

drum brushes composing a laconic improv piece against peeling, sun-
faded weatherboards. Lulled into this makeshift jazz club, my thoughts
inevitably drift to you. When I think of you, my body responds. And

so, already slick with sweat on this sweltering Sunday afternoon, I add
to the chorus of *whirrr* ... *ttock* ... *flutter* ... *scat* ... with my body's own
music, as the southerly change sets in and the world hums back to life.

Paris Rosemont

Paris Rosemont is an award-winning, internationally published poet, who regularly performs her work. Her debut collection *Banana Girl* (WestWords) was shortlisted for the Association for the Study of Australian Literature's 2024 Mary Gilmore Award.

Illustration by Rosie Handley

PHOTO ESSAY

SWIMMING SYDNEY

A new book by Chris Baker, *Swimming Sydney: A tale of 52 swims* — part memoir, part love letter to swimming — is further proof that Sydney is the best city in the world to take a dip, do laps or surf.

From the Blue Mountains to Bondi to Burning Palms, beaches, backyard pools and bush swimming holes, *Openbook* presents Chris Baker's words, matched with photos from the Library's collection, and beyond.

Jumping off the east pier at Manly Wharf.
Photo by Nic Bezzina

Swimming Sydney: A tale of 52 swims, published by NewSouth.

For my money, Prince Alfred Park Pool is the pool that most successfully celebrates public urban space in Sydney. Once inside, the noises and intrusions of a busy city seem to disappear, replaced by a softened, 'walled' and enchanted haven of recreation, greenery, light, warmth and space … With its clever lines, sensuousness, human diversity and vivid colours, it's the sort of pool that Jeffrey Smart and David Hockney would love to paint.

From *Swimming Sydney*, pages 161–163

Prince Alfred Park Pool, Surry Hills.

Clovelly is a strange place: part wharf, part ocean pool, part snorkelling reef, part surf break. Seeing a heaving rainbow of beach towels and bronzed bodies on the patchwork of concrete, we are reminded of swimming spots in France and Italy and Greece. While there is a small sandy beach at Clovelly's western end, most of the swimmers get wet by jumping off a seawall or descending into the enclosure's usually calm water via ladders.

From *Swimming Sydney*, page 14

Clovelly Beach snorkelling, February 2023. Photo by Nic Bezzina

Bronte Baths have a near-perfect easterly aspect, and as the sun hits the waves that ripple through the baths, it creates mesmerising, dancing patterns. As I swim through the water, I'm delighted by the networks of intricate sunrays. Even on an overcast day, Bronte Baths is one of the city's prettiest swimming places, but today, as it glistens and sparkles, it is breathtakingly beautiful.

From *Swimming Sydney*, page 227

Early morning swimmers at Bronte Baths rock pool, March 1999. Photo by Philip Gostelow

After less than an hour on the M4 motorway, we're at the charming village of Glenbrook in the Lower Blue Mountains. Ten minutes later, we're walking into Glenbrook Gorge in the Blue Mountains National Park. The pool, like the gorge's base, is full of craters so the water's depth varies from waist deep to an indeterminate level. Despite its cold tingle, the water's embrace feels immensely healing and it's only the onset of shivers that tells me I should climb out.

From *Swimming Sydney*, pages 139–141

Opposite: Glenbrook Gorge, Blue Mountains National Park. Photo by Joe Bird, Walk My World

A spectacular stretch of coastline in the Royal National Park, Burning Palms beach typifies a raw littoral life that once existed in many parts of coastal Sydney. Twenty-eight beach shacks, most dating from the 1930s and clustered on the beach's northern headland, give a snapshot of what life was like for poor city folk who opted for coastal subsistence living over the privations of Depression-era Sydney.

From *Swimming Sydney*, page 74

View overlooking Burning Palms shack community, Royal National Park, 6 April 2015. Photo by Dean Saffron

WORDS **Barnaby Smith**

PRESERVING MUSIC HISTORY, ONE POSTER AT A TIME

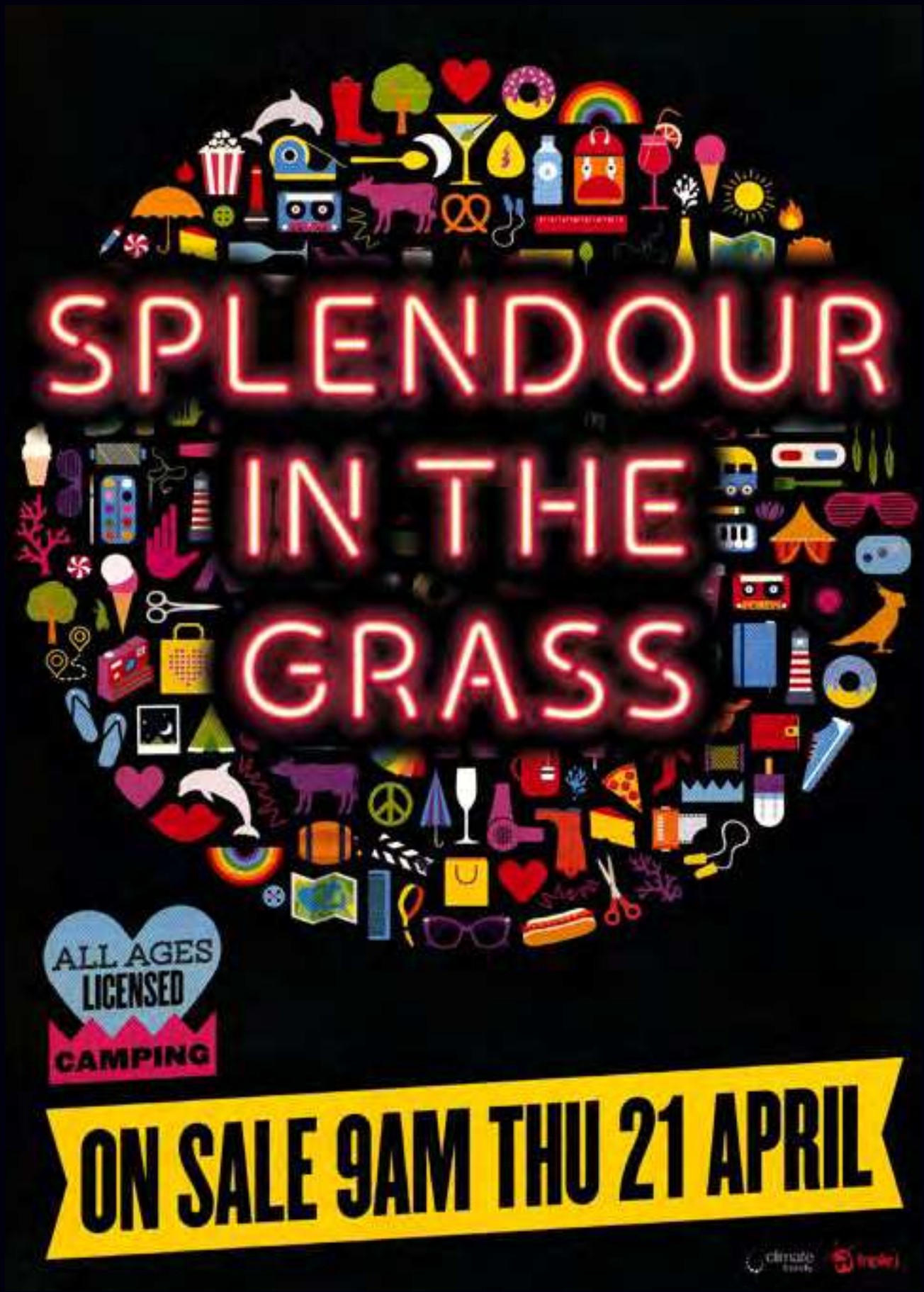
Some of the Library's most recent acquisitions come from telegraph poles and billboards.

Gig posters are not dead yet. A walk around any number of Sydney's inner-city suburbs, such as Newtown, Marrickville or Darlinghurst, or a drive down Parramatta Road will prove that. However, there is no denying that their function as a promotional tool for bands nowadays is diminished, as the online world, and social media in particular, continues to cement itself as the primary channel for getting the word out about a show or an album.

These posters can therefore seem like a rather quaint idea from the analogue age. A vintage gig poster offers intrigue on a number of levels: together, the musical act, the style of artwork and the venue produce a snapshot of a particular time, city and even social climate. Posters might also feed the penchant for retro nostalgia that lives inside most of us: psychedelic posters from the 1960s or street-art-style ones from the punk era are almost their own industry today.

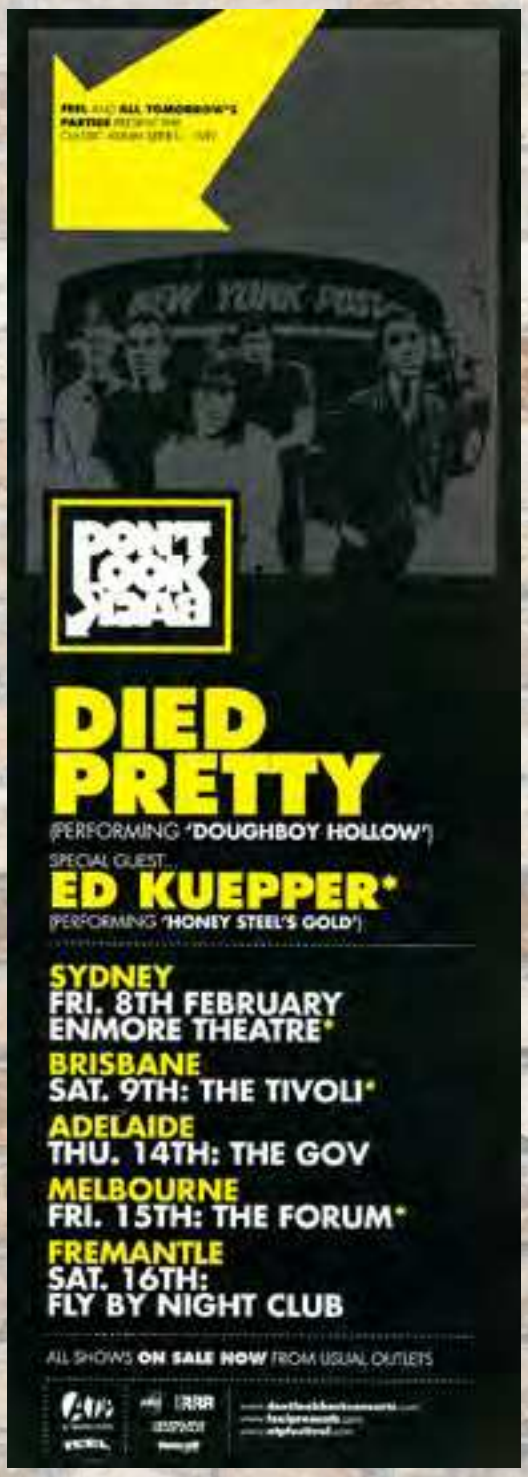
But what about the preservation of posters from more recent times, the digital era? Surely they deserve a place in the archives, and tell their own story.

Poster for the 2016 Splendour in the Grass in Byron Bay.


SPLENDOUR
IN THE
GRASS
ALL AGES
LICENSED
CAMPING
ON SALE 9AM THU 21 APRIL


GRAND OPENING
CONCERT
L'A·DE·DA'S
COUNT COPERNICUS
& THE COSMIC FIVE
GARY YOUNG'S HOT DOG
VAUDEVILLIANS
SUN 25 MARCH 8PM
DONCASTER THEATRE
ANZAC PDE. KENSINGTON
SUN DOWN
CONCERT CLUB


THE JEZABELS
SAT 9 JUNE
HORDERN PAVILION
LIGHTS & SNAKADAKTAL
TICKETEK.COM.AU 132 849


DON'T LOOK BACK
DIED PRETTY
(PERFORMING 'DOUGHBOY HOLLOW')
SPECIAL GUEST
ED KUEPPER*
(PERFORMING 'HONEY STEEL'S GOLD')
SYDNEY
FRI. 8TH FEBRUARY
ENMORE THEATRE*
BRISBANE
SAT. 9TH: THE TIVOLI*
ADELAIDE
THU. 14TH: THE GOV
MELBOURNE
FRI. 15TH: THE FORUM*
FREMANTLE
SAT. 16TH:
FLY BY NIGHT CLUB
ALL SHOWS ON SALE NOW FROM USUAL OUTLETS

The art that advertises gigs is part of what we love about music.

The Library recently acquired a special series of posters from Marrickville music and memorabilia store RPM Records, addressing a hole in the archives and ensuring that early-21st-century poster art will be preserved. The collection of approximately 25 pieces advertises concerts that took place between roughly 2005 and 2016, by the likes of Boy & Bear, The Rubens, Sarah Blasko and The Jezabels, as well as festivals such as Splendour in the Grass. Some of the posters — those produced for display at bus shelters, for example — are absolutely huge.

'I feel like poster art is historically relevant to people,' says Lizzie French, owner of RPM Records. 'The art that advertises gigs is part of what we love about music. I had to try to get these [posters] to a place where others could see them, and I'm thrilled they will be professionally preserved.

'We don't even have bus shelter posters anymore. We have scrollers or vinyl or LED ones. These posters are from the last era of them.'

Geoff Barker, Senior Curator, Collection Acquisition & Curation, has been involved in the Library's procurement of contemporary gig posters. This project, which was initiated in 2018, had well-defined parameters to address a gap in the collection. The idea was to seek posters for NSW pop and rock acts, playing in NSW venues. The other important principle was to look beyond the bands that have become veritable rock institutions — so no Midnight Oil, no INXS, no Hoodoo Gurus, no You Am I, no AC/DC.

Word reached Barker in 2021 that RPM had a collection worth investigating. French had picked up the collection — a vast one that went far beyond what the Library ended up taking — from a fellow peddler of music memorabilia she met via the Sydney markets scene, who himself had obtained the posters through contacts with Sydney printing houses. Barker had compiled a list of artists the Library was interested in seeing featured in posters, and he ended up visiting RPM on multiple occasions to trawl through the store's selection.

'We spent an afternoon unrolling posters and looking to see if any of the names on them matched the names on my list,' says Barker. 'There were a few that matched, and a few I didn't know about but which I thought would be good.'

When you see them scruffily affixed to walls, telegraph poles or windows, gig posters often feel like throwaway, ubiquitous scraps of urban ephemera, which in that moment have little cultural worth. Of course, the majority of them are ultimately ripped down and summarily disposed of — and as a result they can become rare once the gig in question has passed. This means, as Barker says, that posters can 'slip through the cracks. A lot of them don't survive, or at least don't survive undamaged.'

'So finding them in good condition was really important. And I think NSW material by NSW artists is great to have as criteria, as you're not making assessments on what bands or genres you personally like. It's all about the fact they're from NSW and playing in NSW, and that meant that we collected obscure things alongside much more famous works.'

This curatorial approach ensures a broader range of posters are selected. 'It might take 15 or 20 years to work out the significance of a particular band,' Barker says. Among the most visually striking items are the posters for veteran bands Choirboys and Died Pretty, and for Day For Night, the beloved queer event at Performance Space at Redfern's Carriageworks. Several posters feature scribbled handwritten dates, lending them an extra level of fascination as artefacts, and a reminder that they were once on the street.

This assortment joins a growing and diverse collection of music posters held by the Library — some of which are classified as artworks, and others as printed works, depending on the size of the run, among other things (this latest batch are counted as the latter). Another notable recent addition to the collection is work by one of the first women to design contemporary rock music posters in Australia, the late Deanne Bloomfield, who began her career in the mid-1960s. Also in the Library's vaults are pieces by the more well-known artist Paul Worstead, including posters for gigs by the band he is most closely associated with, Mental As Anything.

According to Barker, some of the posters from RPM are unlikely to be exhibited any time soon due to their sheer size, others because of their relative obscurity — instead, they will be able to be viewed on request or, once digitised, online. Bus shelter posters

Clockwise from left: Screenprinted poster, designed by Deanne Bloomfield, advertising the grand opening concert of the Doncaster Theatre, one of many Sydney venues that no longer exists.

Poster for Died Pretty's 2008 national tour performing their classic album *Doughboy Hollow.*

Poster for The Jezabels at the Hordern Pavilion in 2012.

can reach nearly two metres in height, and just laying them out to look at has been a less than straightforward undertaking for Barker and the Library team. With this collection project, preservation is prioritised over exhibition — the Library's intention is to continue adding to its stocks of contemporary gig posters, as their style and function evolve in the online age.

'One idea is to set up a system where music venues around Sydney keep one copy of each of their posters [for the Library], because then we'd be able to get a really good archive,' Barker says.

'A lot of venues come and go, and then Covid hit, and we all know what's happening to the music industry right now. And with a lot of music industry stuff going online, promotional ephemera is no longer easy to find. It's getting rarer and rarer.'

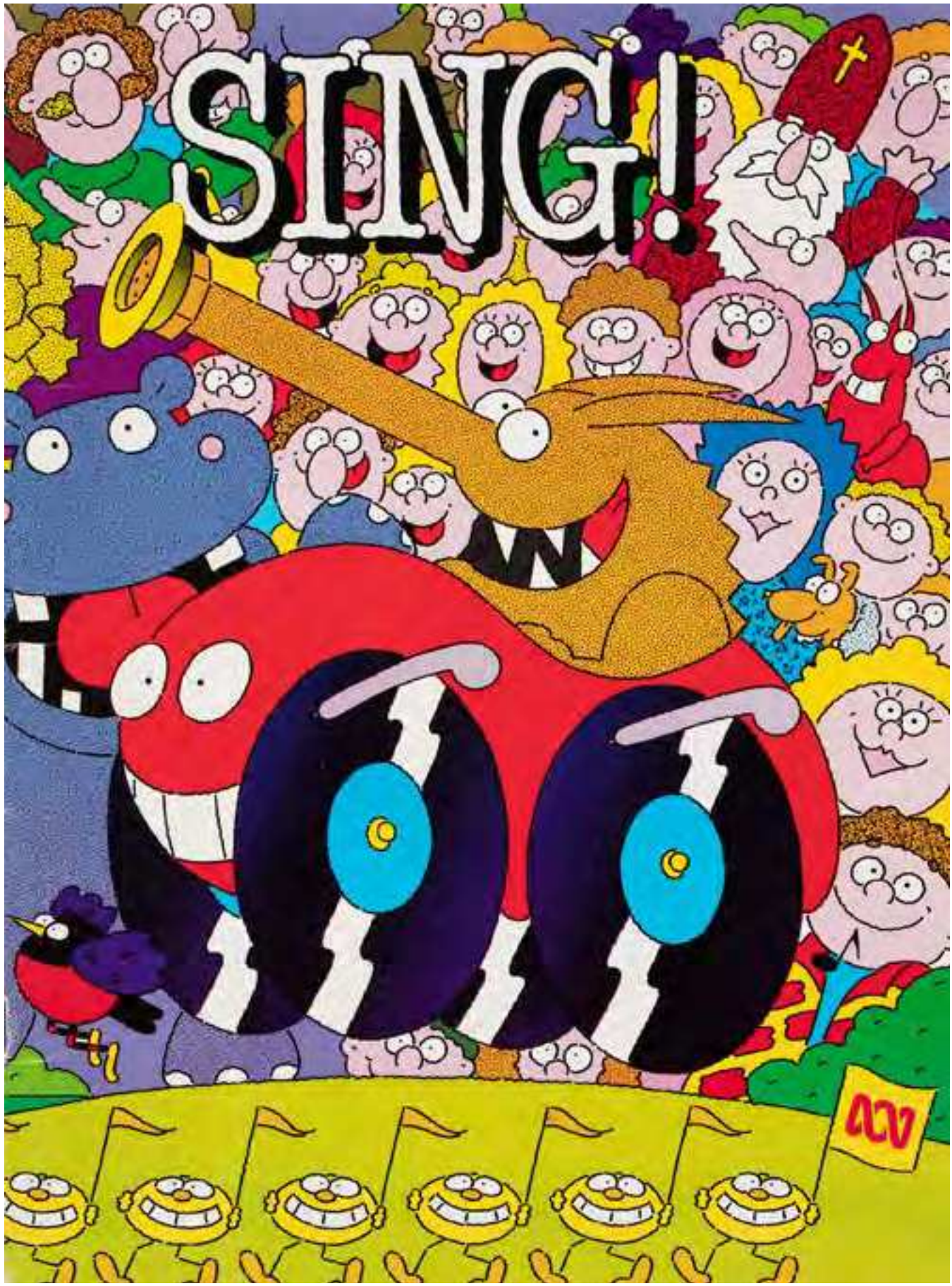
Barnaby Smith is an arts writer, poet and musician who lives in the Blue Mountains. He has written about Allen Ginsberg, Patrick White, and George and Charis Schwarz in previous issues of *Openbook*.

Above, from left: Poster for classic pub rock band The Choirboys.

Promoting the Day For Night queer event at the Performance Space, Carriageworks.

Opposite: Vintage day-glo billboard poster, designed by Deanne Bloomfield, advertising a 1973 concert headlined by Brian Cadd, with support act Kerrie Biddell.


BRIAN CADD
KERRIE BIDDELL
HORDERN PAVILION
SUN 3RD JUNE · BOOK. MITCHELL'S · DJ's · HORDERN PAVILION

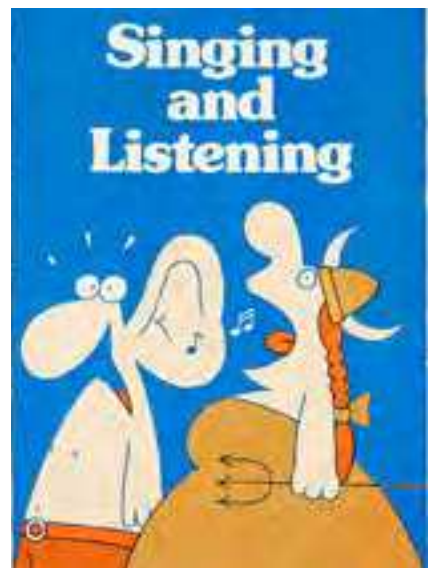

SING!

WORDS **Liz Giuffre**

SINGING our ABCs

Tens of thousands of Australian schoolchildren sang along to the same — now largely forgotten — songbooks.

It was 1986 in Mrs Moore's infants music class. She pulled out the songbooks as we sat on the wooden floor, avoiding the splinters, waiting for her to open the piano or get out the radio. Just like the floor, the books were well worn. They had simple but still fun cartoons on the front. Inside was basic sheet music with a melody line, chords and lyrics, and more cartoons. As only small kids can, we flung the books to one another. There was a four-letter word on the front, Sing, which became burned into my brain. It invited, encouraged, enabled and persuaded us to be part of making music.



What I didn't know then was that all over Australia — and for decades before and after — thousands of school students had a regular ritual of singing together in the classroom with these songbooks. They were produced by the ABC, with accompanying radio broadcasts and recordings. Kids without a local music teacher like Mrs Moore and her upright piano would listen in and sing along to the radio version (or later the cassette tape or CD). Even though each classroom and every lesson would have been slightly different, there's something enduring about the experience — all those books and their cartoons remain vivid.

For anyone willing to do some unofficial archive diving, a Google search will pull up the ABC's 'Sing! 1974–2014 song list'. It records the song titles, composers, first lines of the lyrics, and year(s) in the *Sing* books for that period. There are gems to find within. 'Any Dream Will Do' from the Tim Rice and Andrew Lloyd Webber musical *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat* appeared over three decades, in the 1974, 1981 and 1994 editions, as did the 1958 novelty song 'Purple People Eater' — 1981, 1993, 2003. Similarly, John Fogerty's 'Proud Mary', covered by many artists, most notably Tina Turner, appeared in the 1977, 1983 and 1995 editions.

Closely spaced repeat entries are interesting too: Pete Seeger's 'If I Had a Hammer' in 1975, 1976 and 1994, and Cat Stevens' 'Moonshadow' in 1981 and 1988. There was no note of his 1978 name change to Yusuf Islam, though.

Abba's 'Fernando', the massive No 1 hit single from 1976, wasn't featured until 2008 for some reason. Lipps Inc's 'Funkytown', originally released in 1980, finally debuted in 2012. The inclusion of Skyhooks' 'Horror Movie' from 1974 in the 2010 book seems plain weird but was probably less menacing when it was played on a classroom upright piano.

Right: Internal page from *Sing!* (1980)

Opposite: The cover of *Sing!* (1980)

A series of ABC songbooks with illustrations by Allan Stomann, designed by Barbara Beckett, published by the Australian Broadcasting Commission: *Everybody Sing!* (1976); *Sing Sing Sing* (1977); *Let's Sing!* (1978)

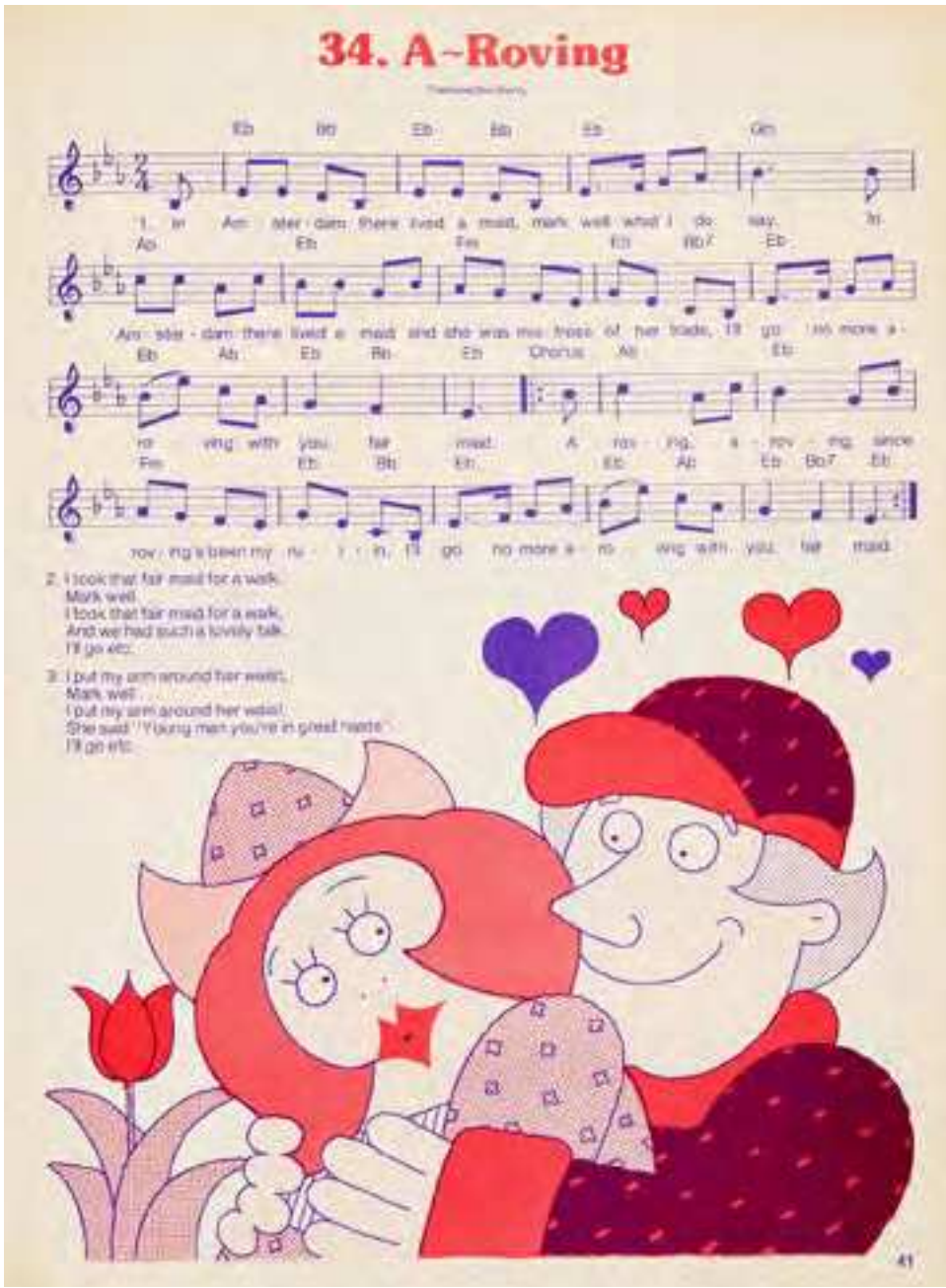
The *Sing* series, importantly, brought popular music into Australian classrooms, with a clear invitation — literally 'sing' or 'let's sing' — to participate. It was designed by the ABC's education department, so coordination, counting and basic music concepts like pitch and tempo were part of the intended outcomes. But so were what we'd now call 'soft skills' — like cultural contexts and themes in the songs' lyrics such as togetherness and learning. Folk and traditional songs were triggers for different types of conversations in classrooms. From the early 2000s in particular, songs in other languages with accompanying English translation were included — songs like 'Ay Ya Zahn' listed as 'Traditional Lebanese' in 2000, 'Ayelevi' listed as 'Traditional Ghanese' in 20001, and the Australian national anthem in the Dharawal language, the translation by Dr Jaky Troy, in 2003.

The *Sing* books were most popular before the boom in children's music, or what you could call the time BW (Before Wiggles). The opportunities for new songwriters, especially Australian artists, appeared to be limited in the early days of the books. A young bloke called Peter Combe (later an OAM-winning icon of kids tunes like 'Newspaper Mama') seems to have gotten his start with the series. But it was most dominant before making music just for children on a mass scale took off.

The specifics of how the series came about, including confirmed start and end dates, remain unclear. It was produced by the ABC for Australian infants- and primary-school-aged children from around the late 1950s to the early 2010s. It had obvious predecessors in the ABC's *Children's Hour* broadcasts, which in some states and regions are nearly as old as 'Aunty' herself, founded in 1932. Over the years there were variations to the name — sometimes it was *Let's Sing*, *Everybody Sing* or *Let's All Sing*.

While the series is fondly remembered by audiences, and it is mentioned in the occasional footnote or article about music education, it still hasn't been explored formally. In my research I have found traces in oral histories and patchy listings in libraries, as well as crowd-sourced memories assembled in the people's archive that is eBay. But perhaps you had to be there. There remains lots to find, including a complete collection of the *Sing* books. As far as I can tell, there's no proper archive of them all in sequence — although I hear music teachers around the country, even my own from high school (Hi Miss Hurley!), still have collections of their own.

There are some clues about the project's origins; one is the 'ABC Songbook Index', compiled by Timothy Tuck. An accomplished educator and



The lyrics of 'A-Roving', described as a sea shanty and sung enthusiastically by primary school students in the 1970s and 1980s, sound shockingly inappropriate now.

author, Tuck's 'best of' compilation of the books from 1979 to 1988 organised the songs according to style, genre, level of musical ability required, and educational outcomes, such as teaching counting, sharing and negotiation. For example, Tuck listed The Beatles' 'With a Little Help from My Friends' as a song to teach 'caring'; 'Whistle a Happy Tune' from *The King and I* to teach about 'feelings'; Bob Dylan's 'Mr Tambourine Man' to teach about 'imagination'; and Tim Finn's 'Fraction Too Much Friction' or Redgum's 'And the Band Played Waltzing Matilda' to teach about 'peace'.

Important evidence about the purpose of the *Sing* series, and perhaps an explanation for its lack of formal archiving and recognition, can be found on the last page of Tuck's index. Under the title 'What to do with a dead book', and accompanied by an illustration of an angel-clad book, Tuck offers suggestions for recycling the books: cutting them up to make puzzles, snap cards, wall charts and other mini-art features.

A book that literally includes instructions for its own destruction has to be one of a kind!

Apart from triggering fond memories, the *Sing* books beg questions about culture, copyright and curation. Who chose the songs and how did they get permission to reproduce them in cheap books for the children of Australia? Was there a committee making recommendations, or did music publishers somehow pitch their wares in order to be included? Most of the books had pop songs from previous generations. For example, books from the 1980s featured 1960s' staples by Lennon and McCartney, and Bob Dylan.

It's almost impossible to imagine 'Ob-La-Di, Ob-La-Da' or 'Blowin' in the Wind' surviving the budgetary and legal obstacles they would likely attract now. A publisher today wouldn't just be dealing with an artist, but with entire legal teams from multinational companies eager to squeeze as much out of a public broadcaster as possible. And if the publication went online, the fees would rise again.

The programmers also gave a clue about the perceived intergenerational audience for the *Sing* books — with music chosen not just for kids in the classroom, but also for their teachers and parents. It's a bit like when I try to explain to my young children now that Kylie Minogue has been around for longer than her 2023 song 'Padam Padam'. Or when I tell them that I heard 'Locomotion', Kylie's first single, through the 1987 *Sing* book a year before it hit radio (and years after it was originally released by Little Eva as a single, written by Carole King).

Above, from left: *All Together Sing* (1979)

Detail from the *ABC Songbook Index* compiled by Timothy Tuck

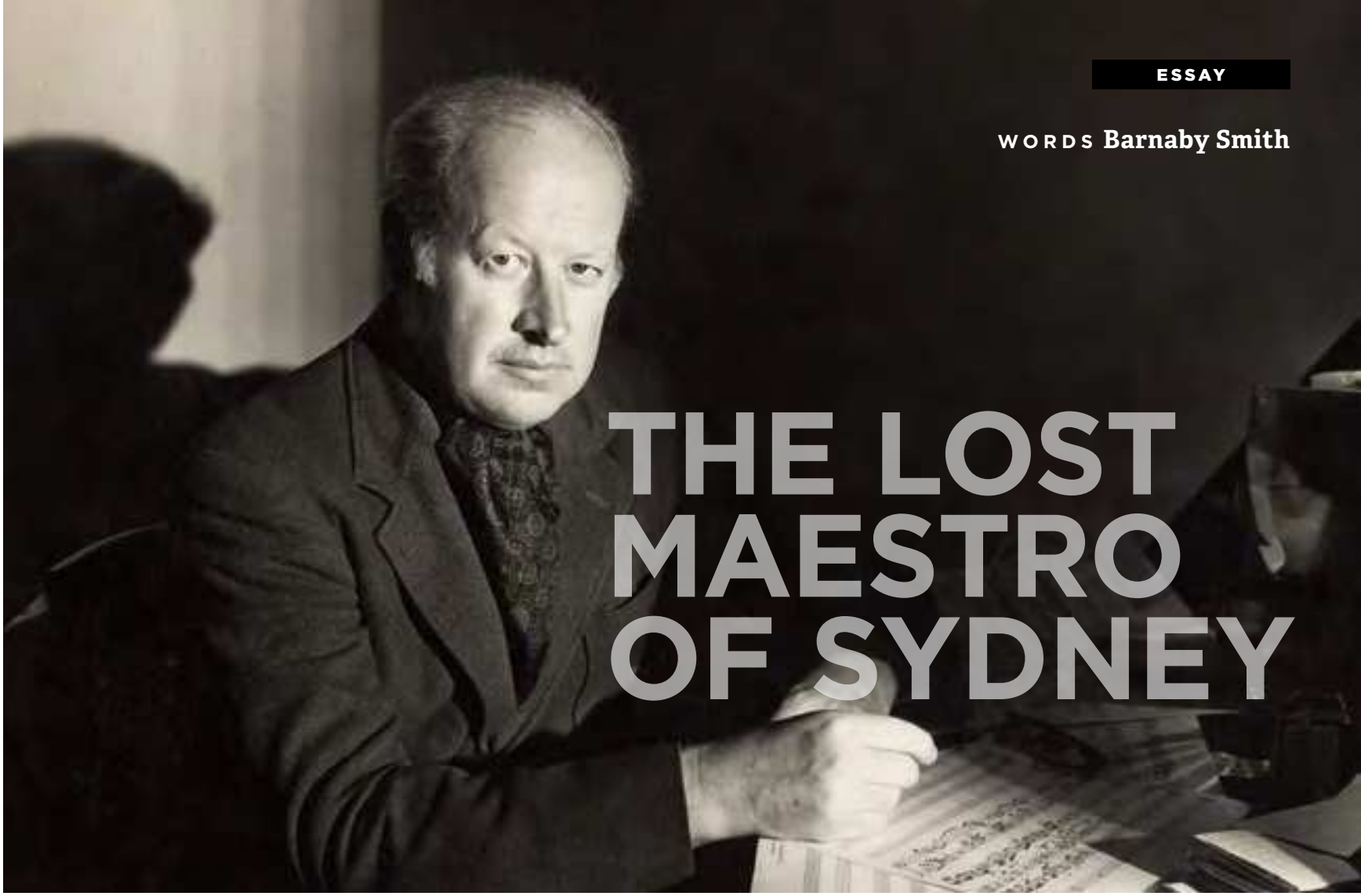
On 1 July 2023, the day of the ABC's 90th birthday, I was interviewed by ABC Radio Melbourne about the series. Listeners were invited to share their memories on social media. The response was overwhelming — adults who remember the series spoke of it with fondness and reverence. Memories of the books didn't only bring back lyrics or basic dance moves, but prompted recollections of schoolyard crushes, lost friendships and the real impact of great teaching.

Yet not all of the *Sing* series has aged well. Finding a full collection of the books is hard — perhaps owing to those suggestions for creatively disposing of the 'dead books'. And of course a series based on the culture and fashion of its time will date — not every song can be timeless. Many of the lyrics and the genre labels, particularly those relating to race and other markers of identity, feature language that we wouldn't encourage adults or children to use today.

Revisiting cultural artefacts like the *Sing* songbooks reminds us of the progress we've made with inclusion and diversity, but also what we may have lost. The simple act of turning the pages (or destroying them) and engaging with music as a tangible, physical thing has educational and health benefits that we keep being reminded of yet continue to ignore in practice.

These days my kids do 'brain breaks' in their classrooms, which seem to be a chance to get up and dance along to YouTube videos chosen by the teachers and the kids themselves. Does this provide the same benefits? And how will researchers of the future understand YouTube videos? While I'm pleased they're at least doing some music, and acknowledge that moving away from paper-based songbooks no doubt allows them to explore movement and a much broader range of sounds, it makes me a little nostalgic for the simple times of Mrs Moore, the upright piano, and singing on that splintered floor.

Dr Liz Giuffre is a Senior Lecturer in Communication at UTS and has been a 2024 Visiting Scholar at the Library.



ESSAY

WORDS **Barnaby Smith**

THE LOST MAESTRO OF SYDNEY

English composer and conductor Sir Eugene Goossens was a visionary force behind the Sydney Opera House. His legacy should be remembered and celebrated.

Tram sheds. Or more specifically, Fort Macquarie Tram Depot at Bennelong Point — the large, imposing fortress-like building, built in 1902, that serviced Sydney's tram network during the first half of the twentieth century. This is what Eugene Goossens saw from his office window at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music (then called the NSW State Conservatorium of Music) in the Royal Botanic Gardens.

This was around 1950. Goossens had been the inaugural chief conductor of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra (SSO) since 1947, a role he held concurrently alongside his position as director of 'the Con'. His historic idea for a dedicated performing arts hall for the city, at the site of this tram depot, came relatively early in his nine-year stint in Australia. At this time, with a long and distinguished career in both the UK and the USA behind him, he had the world, or at least Sydney, at his feet.

An immensely revered figure in postwar Australian culture, Goossens held a social status that allowed him to pursue his idea for an opera house for Sydney through close connections with senior political figures (such as NSW Premier JJ Cahill).

Eugene Goossens, as featured in *Walkabout* magazine. Courtesy Tourism Australia

Musically, he had a transformative impact, thanks partly to an open and inclusive attitude towards repertoire.

Eventually and infamously, Goossens' tenure in Sydney ended in shame, acrimony and controversy in 1956 when he was hounded out of the country in the wake of a sex and pornography scandal involving Rosaleen Norton, the occultist, artist and so-called 'witch of Kings Cross'. Yet this did not change the fact that this Englishman's vision, born of his view from that window, transformed Australia's cultural life, revamped Sydney's reputation on a global stage and fundamentally altered the city's image of itself. The tram depot was demolished to make way for the Sydney Opera House in 1958.

It is strange then that during the media coverage marking the Opera House's 50th birthday in October 2023, amid all the celebratory rhetoric and historical retellings, Goossens was only a peripheral figure mentioned in passing and quickly glossed over — in mainstream outlets, at least. In 2023 I played a small role as a researcher for a BBC Radio 4 documentary about Goossens and his time in Sydney, titled *A Very Australian Scandal*. In the wake of this immersion in all things Goossens, and as the Opera House anniversary came and went, certain questions couldn't help but emerge. Why did he barely register as we marked the occasion? Why did it take an overseas production to give Goossens his due for his role in the iconic building's story? And what does all this say about how Australia views and carries its arts history?

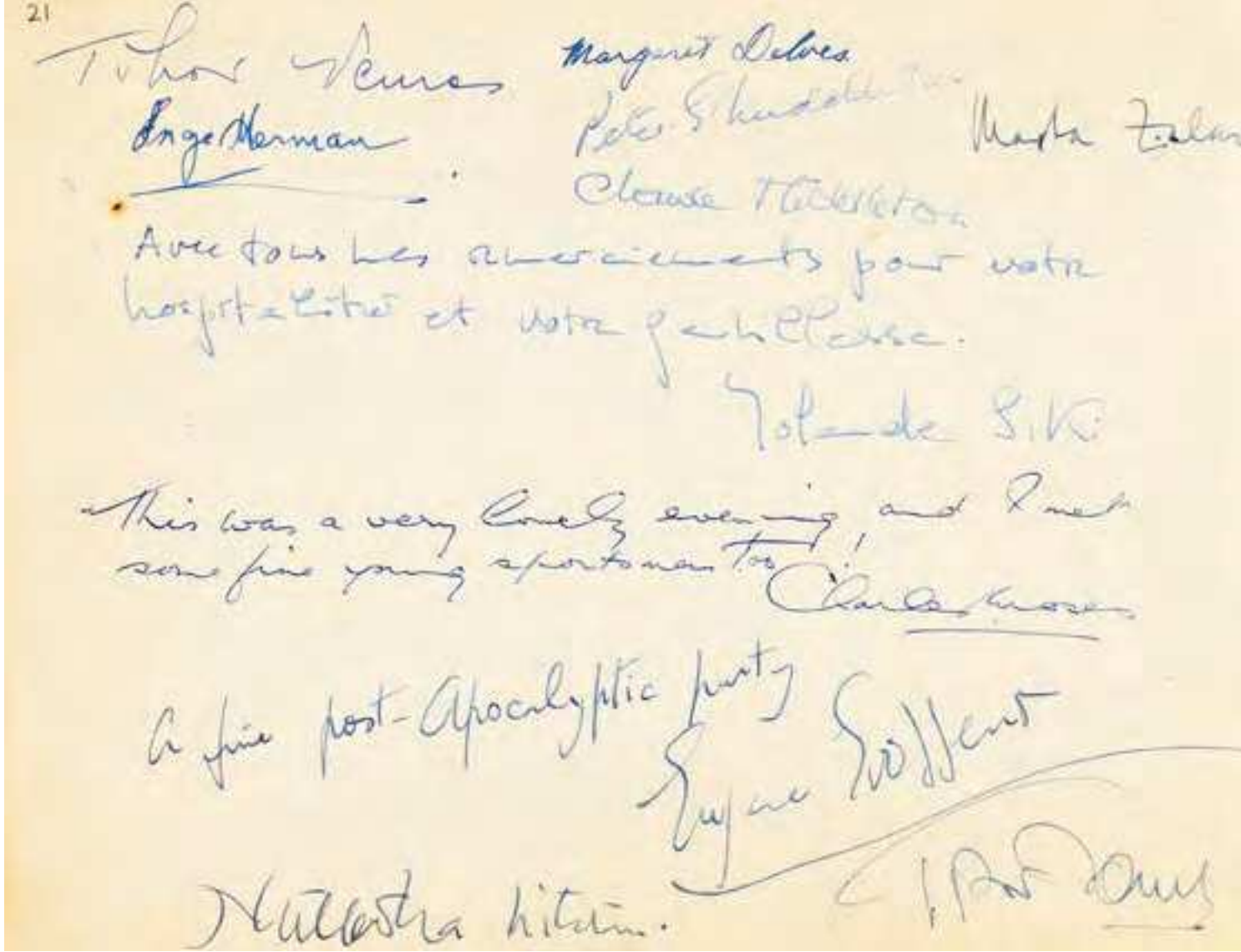
The story of Goossens' rise and fall in Australia is well known (at least, among those in the relevant cultural milieu, and perhaps of a certain age) and is a sad one. The conductor, who had spent over 20 years in America, initially toured here in 1946, working with the ABC. This prompted the ABC's general manager Charles Moses to lure Goossens to Australia permanently by offering him a dual-position package — as conductor of the newly formed SSO and director of the Con — that would provide him with a salary that was higher than the prime minister's at the time (Ben Chifley).

Goossens was a busy, enthusiastic, debonair and flamboyant presence in Sydney. 'It's hard to fathom these days quite how well known Goossens was in Australia after the war,' says writer, producer and presenter of *A Very Australian Scandal*, journalist Phil Hebblethwaite. 'He was far and away the most famous cultural figure in the country — a genuine pop star in the pre-pop-star era.'

Musically, he had a transformative impact, thanks partly to an open and inclusive attitude towards repertoire. Not only did he actively champion and perform the works of recent or contemporary composers (such as Vaughan Williams, Stravinsky, Shostakovich and Prokofiev), he was also pivotal in the early career of opera singer Joan Sutherland and was 'almost solely responsible', says Hebblethwaite, for promoting the music of Australian composer John Antill — particularly his ballet, *Corroboree*. Goossens was also a pioneer of outdoor concerts.

One reason that London-based Hebblethwaite was initially intrigued by the Goossens story was the conductor's private interest that ultimately brought his downfall. Goossens, alongside several early-twentieth-century British composers (in particular Cyril Scott and Peter Warlock) took a strong interest in the occult — in his case it dated back to his twenties when he was an emerging musical figure in London in the 1910s. In Sydney, this interest led him in 1952 to Norton, whose work he came across in a gallery, and her lover, the poet Gavin Greenlees. Norton's pantheistic occultism and 'sex magic' proved irresistible to Goossens, who was married, and the two embarked on a heated affair. In a letter to Norton quoted in the BBC documentary, Goossens gleefully writes of a 'delicious orificial tingling' that Norton aroused in him. Goossens, Norton and Greenlees would engage in various rituals, sexual acts and erotic photography during their time together.

Sydney's vice squad became aware that this towering public figure was involved in witchcraft, sex magic and 'obscenity' due to some pernicious behaviour by the tabloid press, who had come into possession of letters between Goossens and Norton. Upon re-entering Australia in March 1956 (after receiving his knighthood from the Queen in London), tipped-off airport customs officials seized and searched his bags, discovering over 1100 items including pornographic images, films and books, and rubber masks, likely for use with Norton and her circle. The material, which was destroyed, was probably tame by today's standards,



Page signed by Eugene Goossens in a Wenkart Family Guest Book held in the Library (see article page 30), around 1954. His inscription, just below that of Sir Charles Moses, general manager of the ABC, reads 'A fine post-Apocalyptic party'.

and the only legal ramification for Goossens was a £100 fine for importing prohibited goods. Yet the public humiliation forced him to resign from the SSO and the Con, and he left Australia in ignominy in May, never to return, and was not acknowledged in the ceremony that opened the Sydney Opera House in October 1973.

Sixty-eight years later, gossip surrounding the Goossens scandal continues to have momentum, as the documentary found. The possibility of a set-up, conspiracy or blackmail to destroy Goossens, originating from the upper echelons of Sydney society, is one theory that has been floated. Another is that it was a diabolical scheme hatched by professional rivals. A further question is why he did not look to his powerful political friends to help make the problem go away, or take more robust measures through lawyers. The actions and attitudes against him are viewed by many today as a national embarrassment, and represent a sorry indictment of the conservative, provincial and rather insecure social climate of the time. An international view of this very Australian scandal, from someone such as Hebblethwaite, is one of bemusement, and a sense that the country allowed itself to lose an immensely important musical presence, because of a largely harmless — if certainly eyebrow-raising for a great English conductor — private passion.

While it's important to acknowledge that the episode destroyed a man's life (he died in London in 1962 in relative obscurity and financial disarray at the age of 69), the scandal feels like something that need not be picked over anymore. The important and constructive questions revolve around proper acknowledgment of the musical and cultural legacy of a true titan of twentieth-century orchestral music. It's a topic I discussed with Dr Stephen Mould, a senior lecturer in conducting and opera studies at the Con, and an author and researcher who describes himself as 'a bit obsessed' with Goossens' career.

'Where was he?' Mould asks of the conductor's conspicuous absence during the Opera House anniversary period. We can speculate: perhaps Goossens' role in the Opera House has been swamped in the popular narrative by the well-

documented Jørn Utzon saga, the 14-year building process and the bloated budget. Or maybe it did not feel appropriate to address such an unfortunate, murky story in a moment of national recognition and pride.

Mould, though, posits another possibility that widens the topic far beyond just the historical fate of Eugene Goossens, and certainly the sordid details of the scandal: that we simply are not sufficiently engaged with our cultural foundations as we move quickly from one zeitgeist to another in the digital age. Goossens' apparent marginalisation stems from a general ambivalence towards how (admittedly quite special-interest) realms like classical music have evolved.

'Sometimes I mention names of other SSO conductors to people — like Zdeněk Mácal, Willem van Otterloo, even Sir Charles Mackerras — and people don't know those names,' says Mould. 'I think it's sometimes hard for people to look back on Australian history with a sense of pride — the Americans are incredibly good at doing it. But in Australia, there tends to be this kind of self-deprecation.

'What I find in modern life, particularly in universities and other institutions of the arts, people are so busy getting on with the next concert, appointing the next person, that people don't actually look back. I'm unusual even by the standards of the Conservatorium in that I have an abiding interest in all this stuff.'

So rather than being left out of the Opera House anniversary coverage because of any lingering legacy about what happened with Norton and his sexual proclivities, Goossens is simply a victim of the almost-goes-without-saying fact that classical music heritage does not spark much interest, in Australia and elsewhere, however historically important. It's a view shared by Hebblethwaite.

'My hunch is that the scandal has nothing to do with him being written out of the cultural narrative in either Australia or Europe,' he says. 'If anything, it keeps him hanging in there by a thread. The cold truth is it's only classical music nerds who care. I wonder how many people in Australia know that the pioneering African American conductor Dean Dixon ran the SSO between 1964 and 1967, replacing Goossens' successor, Nikolai Malko.'

Visitors to the Opera House will find a bust of Goossens in the foyer (which was installed in the early 1980s — a brief period, Mould says, when there was a heightened interest in Goossens' work). There is also a concert hall at the ABC's Ultimo headquarters that is named after him. These are significant things. It should also be noted that a couple of specialist Australian music publications did retell Goossens' story in marking the Opera House's 50 years. It is noteworthy too that in May 2023, the SSO performed one of Goossens' own works, *Tam O'Shanter*, Op 17a.

There has also been a play (*The Devil is a Woman* by Mandy Sayer and Louis Nowra), a feature-length documentary film (*The Fall of the House*) and a novel (*Pagan* by Inez Baranay). However, such works focus more on the scandal than Goossens' musical achievements, and a redressing of this imbalance is something Mould believes is overdue. Remastered releases of his work — such as his recording of Beethoven's Second Symphony from 1952, which Mould regards as among his crowning achievements in Sydney — is a place to start. Intriguingly, Mould is in the process of editing a biography of Goossens, currently titled 'Eugene Goossens: In the Voices of His Own Time', written by one of the conductor's former students, the late Donald Westlake, former principal clarinet with the SSO. The exhaustively researched book, Mould says, offers the 'opportunity to see his career from another perspective'.

Goossens was also a pioneer of outdoor concerts.

After he had returned to the UK to live out what became his final years, Goossens kept up an admirably benevolent attitude to Australia, despite his experiences. In 1957, he wrote to the *Sydney Morning Herald* to express his delight that the city was moving ahead with Utzon's design. 'Australia's a pretty good place to be and have your musical activity,' he said in an unearthed 1959 audio interview, a snippet of which the radio documentary included. His Queen's-English voice has a heartbreaking, ageing timbre to it. There remains an abiding feeling of loss and sadness around the Goossens tale.

'I just wish his name had been more present, as the person who had that initial vision,' says Mould of the missed opportunity in 2023. 'I think [of] the number of years he was the principal conductor, where he could have been doing other things on the other side of the world, and the amount of time he gave to this country in building something. He was a pioneer.'

Barnaby Smith is an arts writer, poet and musician who lives in the Blue Mountains. He has written articles about Allen Ginsberg, Patrick White, and George and Charis Schwarz in previous issues of *Openbook*.

Eugene Goossens at the NSW State Conservatorium of Music in around 1950, with the view towards what would become the Sydney Opera House. Photo by Max Dupain

WORDS **David Cohen**

The Hancock Brothers

Have you heard of the Hancock Brothers? They're revenge specialists.

Not your standard revenge; their approach is more ... shall we say understated? Yes, let's say that. If it's understated revenge you're after, you could do worse than call the Hancock Brothers. (You can't literally call them, though — you have to download the app and then 'place an order' — but it's worth it.)

Once you've 'placed an order', the Hancock Brothers will tailor a solution to meet your individual needs. Simply click 'Agree' and the 'intervention plan' will be executed without delay. For example, say some guy in the carpark at Westfield reprimands you for leaving your trolley next to the parking bay and not returning it to the trolley station. And let's say this guy, as far as you can tell, doesn't even work for Westfield, he's just some random guy, and yet he takes it upon himself to police you and your trolley. Under his confident and authoritative gaze, you meekly return the trolley to the trolley station. And as you're driving home, you think of all the things you could have said, things you should have said. But it's too late now, isn't it? Or is it? Because the Hancock Brothers will find out who that guy is (they have their methods), closely observing his movements to figure out when he'll be back in the Westfield carpark. Then they will painstakingly recreate the trolley scenario, ensuring that he witnesses them not returning the trolley to the trolley station. When he self-righteously directs them to return the trolley, they will respond with a response so incisive and artfully phrased, he'll be left standing there, stunned and open-mouthed, like a perfect statue of himself. The Hancock Brothers will then leave the trolley just near the trolley station — not *in* the trolley station but *just near* it, so that it might roll back down the incline towards parked cars. Or it might not. Who can say? But they'll do this in full view of that now stunned and speechless guy, just to rub salt into the wound. Maybe he'll think twice next time.

Or say some road worker is holding up a 'SLOW' sign as you're driving your car towards an intersection where road work is in progress, and you dutifully slow down, assuming that you can continue through the intersection, but then the road worker, pointing to a nearby 'NO ENTRY' sign, tells you that the intersection is blocked off and you must turn around, and then you hear her say, 'Can't you read?' Well, the Hancock Brothers will recreate the scene to perfection, and when the road worker (predictable or what!) asks, 'Can't you read?' the Hancock Brothers will immediately demonstrate their proficiency in reading — and speaking — several exotic languages, including Nahuatl, an indigenous language of Mexico known for its complex grammatical structure, and then challenge the road worker to respond in kind. No matter how many foreign languages the road worker may be fluent in, the Hancock Brothers will always go one better. You'll be unable to resist bursting into spontaneous applause when you read the comprehensive post-intervention report that the Hancock Brothers will provide as a matter of course, and when you watch the secretly filmed HD video of the intervention being successfully carried out. For a small additional fee, the video will include a close-up of the road worker's face, capturing her humbled and contrite expression at the crucial moment. Just

Illustrations by Rosie Handley


CAN'T YOU READ?


CALL US FOR HELP
REYNOLD
& ASSOCIATES
WE'RE VERY PERSUASIVE

don't forget to tick the relevant box on the order form (again, it would be nice if you could simply call up, but good luck finding a contact number).

But that's not all. For a slightly larger additional fee (for God's sake, don't forget to tick that box), there's the 'Going the Extra Mile' package, This is useful if, say, you're in the process of getting off a bus, and the driver, blazing with Talmudic fervour for the Passenger Code of Conduct, gives you an earful for not ringing the bell, *even though he's stopping anyway* to pick up some people waiting at the stop. Simply select the 'Going the Extra Mile' option, and the Hancock Brothers will catch that bus during a quiet period, or maybe a not-so-quiet period, and ostentatiously ring the bell as the bus approaches the next stop, and just as the driver is stopping the bus at that stop (the Hancock Brothers will see to it that nobody is waiting there), say, 'Oh sorry, wrong stop; please carry on.' But the really great part is, they won't do this just once; they will proceed to do it at every stop along the route! You will weep with satisfaction as you behold the bus driver's enraged face in high resolution (the close-up is automatically included when you select the 'Going the Extra Mile' package).

The Hancock Brothers perform their work with meticulous attention to detail, working closely with you to ensure a successful outcome, and on those rare occasions when the intervention doesn't go quite according to plan, they will be only too happy to give you 50 per cent off the price of the next intervention, because let's face it, there will always be a next intervention. Honestly, you won't have any complaints. You may have just one complaint. That would be about the Hancock Brothers app, particularly the 'form' you have to complete when 'placing an order'. Say you're in the process of 'placing an order' for an intervention on the impatient bastard who tail-gated you along the M1 that time, stupidly not considering the possibility that a wasp had entered your car, and that you'd slowed down to deal with the wasp, and say you've spent 15 minutes filling in all the required fields, and then all the information you've carefully entered vanishes for no reason, and the same thing happened last time and from memory the time before that, so you have no choice but to start keying in the details all over again, and then somehow you end up getting charged twice, and you have to fill in another form (it's the only option …) to explain the situation and request a refund, and five days later you receive an automated reply that, despite being automated, is slightly condescending in tone, and you're still waiting for your refund. In a situation like that you may want to call on Reynold & Associates. Reynold & Associates offer a similar service, but they're positioned at the more extreme end of the revenge industry, insofar as they don't shy away from a bit of the strong-arm stuff: stuff that's not strictly 'legal', stuff that may or may not involve a 'flamethrower'. But the thing is — it's no small thing — they provide a phone number. And Reynold & Associates always, always pick up.

David Cohen is the author of the novels *Fear of Tennis* and *Disappearing off the Face of the Earth*, and the short story collections *The Terrible Event*, shortlisted for the 2024 Steele Rudd Award, and *The Hunter and Other Stories of Men*, which won the 2019 Russell Prize for Humour Writing. He lives in Brisbane.

Mrs. Richard Von Hagen
and
Mr. Walt Disney

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The California Institute
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Julie Andrews
and
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and a presentation of
"THE CAL ARTS STORY"

GRAUMAN'S CHINESE
THEATRE
6925 Hollywood Blvd.
Thursday, August 27, 1964
8:30 P. M.

R. S. V. P.

BLACK TIE

WORDS **Richard Gray**

Celebrating 60 years of Mary Poppins on film and in the papers of PL Travers, a fascinating journey from page to silver screen

PRACTICALLY (IM)PERFECT

'NO' The word is scrawled in bold pencil across a 1961 script treatment of *Mary Poppins*. Exclamation marks pepper the page, emphasising the intensity of the writer's objections. What could be the text under scrutiny? It's the lyrics for a new song by American songwriting duo the Sherman Brothers. It's called 'Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious'.

The force behind the protest is none other than PL Travers, who was preparing to publish the fourth book in her successful series about the no-nonsense British nanny. Mary Poppins first blew in on an east wind in 1934 and captured the imagination of readers worldwide. Yet the story of her journey from the page to the silver screen is as captivating as any of her fictional adventures.

When Walt Disney's adaptation hit theatres in 1964, it became the studio's highest-grossing film to date. But the path to release was anything but smooth, with Travers often finding Disney's spoonfuls of sugar hard to swallow. A deep dive into the papers of PL Travers, held at the Library since 1989, reveals just how fiercely she guarded her creation — one as dear to her as it is to the world.

Opposite: Travers' invitation to the Hollywood premiere of the film.

From Queensland to Cherry Tree Lane

Pamela Lyndon Travers, born Helen Lyndon Goff in 1899 in Maryborough, Queensland, had her early life, and relationship with her father, richly documented by biographer Valerie Lawson. In *Out of the Sky She Came*, Lawson notes how Pamela's father instilled in her the belief that she was 'not Australian at all, but a misfit of the Antipodes'.

Yet Travers remains firmly tied to Australia. In Bowral, in the Southern Highlands where she moved with her mother and sisters after her father's death in 1907, a statue of her most famous creation appears to be in mid-flight. Another statue of Mary Poppins stands in Sydney's Ashfield Park, near where Travers lived from 1918 to 1924.

Travers left Australia for London in 1924, making it her home for over 70 years. But the character she created a decade later is a blend of her Australian and British heritage. After all, Mr Travers was a Queensland banker long before the fictional Mr Banks cashed a cheque.

It begins with the Starling: From page to screen

Like every other studio in the world, Disney had been in pursuit of the screen rights to *Mary Poppins* since the late 1930s. His daughters Sharon and Diane loved the stories, and Walt promised them he'd turn the stories into a movie — perhaps prematurely given that when the books were first published, Disney had yet to release a feature film. Then, in 1937, the studio wowed audiences with *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, one of the first animated features in the world.

> 'The real Mary Poppins, inevitably, as it seems to me, must remain within the covers of the books.'

By the 1950s and 1960s, Disney had emerged from the challenges of the 1940s — marked by war, industrial action and declining profits — with renewed vigour. In 1950, the studio ventured into wholly live-action films with *Treasure Island*. In 1954, it became one of the first studios to bring their content to television on a weekly basis. Then, in 1955, the Disneyland theme park opened in California. Walt was at the height of his powers.

Travers finally agreed to sell the rights to Disney in 1959, during what biographer Lawson has called 'a black year of Pamela's life'. A letter from lawyer Arnold Goodman, dated 3 July, shows that she would receive a US$100,000 down payment (over $1 million today) for her script treatment and, more importantly, five per cent of the producer's gross. In other words, there was a lifetime of potential payments if the film was successful. In return, Disney obtained the stage and screen rights. Crucially, the offer guaranteed that Travers would be consulted on casting and artistic matters.

There is spirited correspondence, often directly between Walt and Pamela, much of which later informed the 2013 biographical film *Saving Mr. Banks*. In an August 1960 letter, Disney mentioned giving the film an 'English feeling'. In late December, Walt sent an upbeat Western Union cablegram expressing 'enthusiasm still high for *Mary Poppins*' along with best wishes for Christmas and the New Year. When in February 1961, Walt invited Pamela to the Disney Studios in Burbank, California, all expenses paid, she accepted.

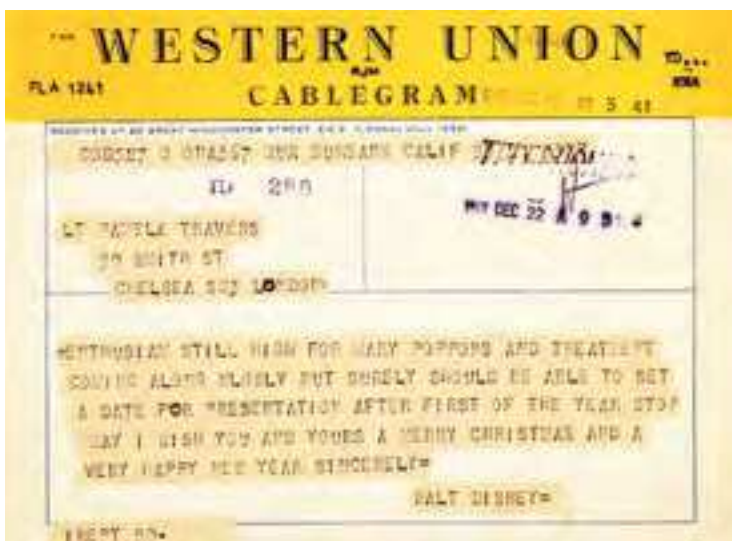
Left: Publicity portrait of PL Travers taken around 1934. Photographer unknown

Right: Walt Disney reassures Travers of the importance of the film in a 1960 cablegram.

[Travers] insisted on speaking with actor Julie Andrews, who would make her screen debut in *Mary Poppins*, following her proposed casting, even though Andrews was still recovering in hospital after childbirth.

Yet, Travers was full of artistic concerns. She insisted on speaking with actor Julie Andrews, who would make her screen debut in *Mary Poppins*, following her proposed casting, even though Andrews was still recovering in hospital after childbirth. Travers 'found her, even in the first flush of motherhood, very alert and intelligent'. In another lengthy letter, Travers suggested actor Margaret Rutherford for the role of the Bird Woman — it ultimately went to Jane Darwell — and modestly concluded by saying she'd 'just jotted down my thoughts in case some element in them might be useful'.

Around this period, we find 10 pages of notes responding to Disney's script treatment written on Beverly Hills Hotel and Bungalows stationery. Travers sent a 14-page letter to Disney on 6 March 1962, filled with a myriad of notes, including objections to Mrs Banks being a suffragette. It also had the memorable directive: 'don't let the penguins sing.'


WESTERN UNION

CABLEGRAM

MY DEAR TRAVERS

ENTHUSIASM STILL HIGH FOR MARY POPPINS AND TREATMENT

COMING ALONG NICELY BUT SHOULD BE ABLE TO SET

A DATE FOR PRESENTATION AFTER FIRST OF THE YEAR STOP

MAY I WISH YOU AND YOURS A MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A

VERY HAPPY NEW YEAR SINCERELY=

WALT DISNEY=

'A splendid spectacle'

History records that the penguins did sing. As did a pig, some geese, a horse and a whole 'Jolly Holiday' of farm animals. Filming on *Mary Poppins* began in May 1963 under *Old Yeller* and *The Absent-Minded Professor* director Robert Stevenson. It continued until September. Travers' comments kept coming — a copy of the shooting script dated 11 February 1963 is filled with her notes and big Xs. Some notes are small and pencilled in, while others are big pen squiggles down the sides of entire pages.

Julie Andrews wrote to her character's creator from the set of the film. I found a handwritten set of pages from Andrews in the Travers papers which serve as a wonderful contemporaneous account of the nature of shooting a live action/animated hybrid. Andrews notes that getting 40 seconds worth of film a day means they're doing 'pretty well', while assuring Travers that 'Dick Van Dyke is grand as Bert' and that 'his cockney is really not too bad'. When the shoot was done, animation and post-production took another 11 months.

An anxious Travers eventually received an invitation to the Hollywood premiere on Thursday, 27 August 1964, at the famous Grauman's Chinese Theater on Hollywood Boulevard. With typical Disney hyperbole, the company's magazine, *The Disney World*, declared, 'Hollywood has seldom, if ever, seen quite the sort of motion picture premiere that Walt staged for *Mary Poppins*.' The red carpet was lined with people in giant penguin costumes, and the 1500-strong guest list included members of the cast — Julie Andrews and Dick Van Dyke were there — along with big stars of the time: Maureen O'Hara, Celeste Holm, Ed Wynn, Annette Funicello, Buddy Ebsen, Angie Dickinson, Cesar Romero and Vera Miles. Walt and his wife Lillian were escorted down the carpet by Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs in full costume. On the red carpet, Travers simply said that she was 'looking forward to seeing what he has done tonight'.

Above left: Julie Andrews, Walt Disney and PL Travers at the Hollywood premiere. © Disney

Above right: This promotional activity book was part of one of Disney's biggest marketing campaigns ever. © 1964 Disney

Opposite: Left: Coloured illustration from *Mary Poppins Comes Back* by Mary Shepard. Original artwork is held in the Library's collection.

Right: Sheet music for songs like 'Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious' were lucrative for the studio. © 1964 Disney

Screening alongside *The CalArts Story* — a short promotional film produced for the Disney Studios for the California Institute of the Arts, of which Walt Disney was a trustee — *Mary Poppins* opened to rave reviews. Still, Pamela was reportedly in ambiguous tears at the premiere. After sending initial congratulations for 'the beautifully cast' film on 31 August, she sent an additional letter on 1 September to Walt with a large 'THANK YOU', praising Andrews in particular and adding that 'the whole picture is a splendid spectacle'. However, Travers reflected in the same letter that the film was, in her view, split between the home scenes at 17 Cherry Tree Lane, based on her books, and the Disneyfied hybrid animation/live-action musical elements. 'The real Mary Poppins, inevitably, as it seems to me, must remain within the covers of the books,' she concluded.

A musical legacy

Following its international premieres, including a 1965 gala event at Sydney's Metro Kings Cross theatre with the Pearly Prince of Hampstead (a traditional London figure known for wearing elaborate pearl-studded outfits) in attendance, *Mary Poppins* continued to gain popularity on both stage and screen. Disney had never experienced success on this scale. The film grossed a then-record $57,000 in its first week at Grauman's, rising to $65,000 in its second. It was nominated for 13 Academy Awards in 1965 and won five: Best Actress for Julie Andrews, Best Editing, Best Visual Effects, and Best Score and Best Song ('Chim Chim Cher-ee') for the Sherman Brothers.

While Travers was initially reluctant about them, the film's songs have arguably become its most memorable legacy. It's hard to find someone unfamiliar with at least one of the film's hits. You might even be humming one of the tunes right now — whether it's 'Feed the Birds (Tuppence a Bag)', 'Step in Time', 'Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious', 'Jolly Holiday' or 'Let's Go Fly a Kite'. Disney's Buena Vista Records saw a significant boost from the success of the original cast recording, and sheet music sales were also lucrative for them.

Decades later, the songs gained new life in Cameron Mackintosh's stage adaptation, which expanded on the Sherman Brothers' work with additional music and lyrics by George Stiles and Anthony Drewe, and a book by Julian Fellowes. When *Mary Poppins* debuted on the West End, Laura Michelle Kelly won an Olivier Award for her performance as the nanny. Verity Hunt-Ballard and Stefanie Jones received acclaim for the 2010 and 2022 Melbourne and Sydney productions, with Jones reprising her role in the UK touring company in 2024.

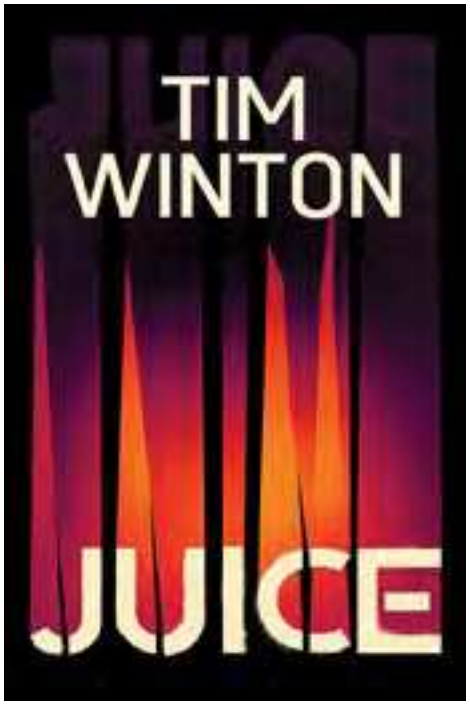
Up to the highest heights

The release of *Mary Poppins* marked the pinnacle of Walt's career. In the same year, he brought Abraham Lincoln to life as an Audio-Animatronics figure at the 1964–65 New York World's Fair and unleashed the colourful boat ride *It's a Small World* — with its infectious theme song — on the world. But as he began planning his ambitious Experimental Prototype Community of Tomorrow (EPCOT), he was diagnosed with lung cancer in November 1966. On 15 December, Walt Disney passed away.

One can only wonder what more Walt Disney might have created with time, or if he saw 1964 as a turning point. Travers, however, lived with their twin legacies for another 30 years. At times, she emphatically rejected Disney's film, denouncing its 'false sentimentality', and left instructions in her will to prevent the Shermans from composing more songs for future productions. Still, I couldn't help but notice that she carefully kept all those striking Hollywood invitations, promotional pieces, comic books and awards programs with her correspondence. She passed away on 23 April 1996 at the age of 96.

As the film turns 60, its magic endures. Whether through the original, the stage version or the 2018 sequel *Mary Poppins Returns*, audiences inevitably associate Travers' character with Disney's interpretation. In a rare moment of near acceptance, Travers admitted in a 1977 interview on the BBC's radio program *Desert Island Discs*, 'I've seen it once or twice … and I've learned to live with it.'

Richard Gray is Coordinator, Reader Services.



Juice

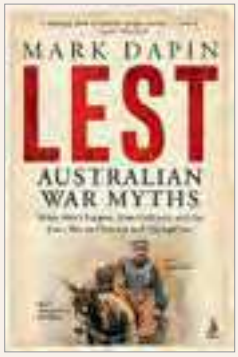
by Tim Winton

Hamish Hamilton

In *Juice*, Tim Winton takes us on a leap into an imagined future, a disconcerting but plausible setting that lacks the usual comforting familiarity of a novel set in contemporary Australia. Readers will note the detour from Winton's past forms, but as the story unfolds his distinctive voice is still there — this may well be the novel that Winton has been signalling over his career. In *Juice*, the environmental degradation that is backgrounded in many of his previous novels has now come to pass.

From the start we are thrust into action. The narrator and his young charge are in imminent danger on their journey through a ravaged desert landscape. The unfamiliar names for vehicles, machines and places help set the scene. But what is this time? Where are they?

Some questions are answered when the narrator embarks on a *One Thousand and One Nights*–style oral story aimed at delaying their probable murder, just like Scheherazade. It is a suspenseful way of providing exposition, as the storyteller explains his background and gives enough clues about how the country got to this point. These are legends of a future time. We gather that society is in a fractured state after the breakdown of the former order. It is a dangerous time and place, where disorder and disarray



Lest: Australian war myths

by Mark Dapin

Scribner

For many Australians, an appropriate national story was hard to find. Colonisation is shameful and Federation borders on tedious. So, World War I filled a void for those wanting or needing a narrative to belong to. Yet, as this book shows, heroic idealism is never straightforward. As soldier-turned-whistleblower David McBride has said: being Australian is 'part of who I am, and defines my character, good and bad'.

In *Lest* Mark Dapin looks at the 'good' and 'bad' of our military histories. He challenges what's been easy to promote and accept. Taking aim at the machinery of war rather than individual combatants, Dapin debunks tightly held claims, looks at how accounts have been reimagined, and surfaces stories that add to our tales of remembrance. Critically, *Lest* considers the propagation of myths and questions the glamorisation of war. Dapin states his work is 'salted with jokes'; it's perhaps not as funny as he suggests, but, based on interviews and solid research it's an important read.

Rachel Franks, Coordinator Scholarship

Australian Gospel: A family saga

by Lech Blaine

Black Inc.

'If you see a man who looks like Jesus Christ, run.'

Lech Blaine's newest memoir unpicks the knotted stories of his loving parents, his foster siblings and their megalomaniac born-again Christian parents. Michael and Mary Shelley, who loathed the Blaine's working-class lifestyle in regional Queensland, terrorised the family in a desperate bid to get their children back. This almost too-wild-to-be-true story is a stunning literary achievement, and a thumping good read.

Blaine's distinctly unfussy writing style belies a deep intelligence. In *Australian Gospel*, he attacks organised religion in white suburbia, anxiety about class, and the failings of mental health care not only in Queensland but across the country, while giving dignity to the people who are crushed by the foster care system.

This may be the most important — and personal — book published this year. A must read.

Callum McLean, Public Programs

have been precipitated by environmental catastrophe.

Juice is like a road movie, with its imagery of bright landscapes, utilitarian vehicles and people in survival mode confronting hazards both human and environmental. Winton's description of the brightness is very evocative of Western Australia (the light over east seems dim in comparison), and his use of language and allusion takes us there.

The book's descriptions of the degraded environment and the scorching long summers are compelling, and it isn't much of a stretch for the reader to picture these scenes. Perhaps some parts of Australia are already more than halfway there. Winton's rather taciturn storytelling style throughout the book lays out its own reference points without getting bogged down in explanations. This is very well done by the author. He leaves it up to the reader to imagine the situations that fit, based on the context he's provided.

There are some disturbing events throughout the book, as revenge is exacted on the descendants of the perpetrators of the catastrophe. This is plausible, echoing the summary hunting down and execution of aristocracies by revolutionaries throughout history. Family, resilience and love are also part of the mix, key themes that bind the characters and bring some humanity to a stark setting.

Juice is a work all its own, but it brings to mind novels by Neal Stephenson — particularly *Anathem* and *Termination Shock* — stories that take us on a jump-cut from the known present to an imagined future.

People likely will call this a dystopian novel. For me, however, the story is the thing. It's one where the people and country are the main take-aways, and these elements are not overshadowed by Winton's imagined sci-fi world.

Cameron Morley, Public Library Services

The Skin I'm In

By Steph Tisdell

Pan Macmillan

The debut novel by Ydinji actor and comedian Steph Tisdell follows 17-year-old Layla as she navigates her final year of high school. An Aboriginal teenager raised in the city, Layla faces typical teenage dilemmas like friendship, love and self-identity, while also contending with the complexities of her cultural heritage, racism and the lingering effects of colonisation. As Layla struggles with balancing her true self against the desire to fit in with her peers and teachers, the novel offers an exploration of her journey to find her place in the world.

The narrative is both heartwarming and heartbreaking, capturing the internal and external conflicts involved in understanding and embracing one's heritage. Tisdell's storytelling deeply resonated with me, as some of Layla's thoughts and feelings felt like they were drawn directly from my own experiences growing up, making her struggles and triumphs feel genuinely personal and authentic. This powerful debut is a compelling read for anyone interested in themes of identity and belonging.

Gemma Evans, Reader Services

My Brother Jaz

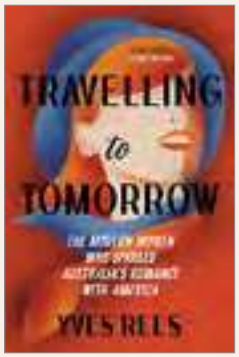
by Gideon Haigh

Melbourne University Press

You're a world-renowned cricket journalist. An acclaimed writer of biography, true crime, social, corporate and political histories. So many books with your name on the spine, 54 in total, almost as many as the years you've walked this Earth. For most of those years you have carried the heaviness of your brother's death in a car accident. But never written about it — you've scoffed at the self-indulgence of memoir. Yet now you yourself have written a raw and astonishing memoir.

Read this book by Gideon Haigh, and marvel at how something so short can carry such weight. It's blessedly free of laboured lessons about closure and devoid of any proclaimed search for meaning. Perhaps loosening the emotional pressure valve responsible for decades of emotional shutdown might propel this brilliant writer, one of our best, to greater heights. Whatever happens next, I hope 'Gid', whose life was transformed by the loss of his brother Jaz, might breathe a little easier.

Phillipa McGuinness, *Openbook* Editor



Travelling to Tomorrow: The modern women who sparked Australia's romance with America

by Yves Rees

NewSouth

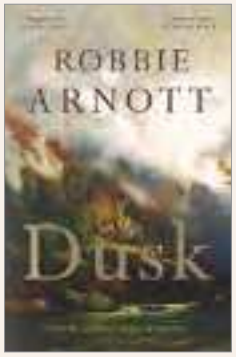
Get ready to dive into the fascinating lives of 10 remarkable yet mostly unknown Australian women who followed their dreams to the USA in the early 1900s and profoundly influenced early cultural exchange between Australia and the USA.

Follow Rose Cumming, from humble beginnings on a Yass homestead to a 45-year career as a flamboyant interior designer in New York City. Or surfer and swimming instructor Isabel Letham, from Sydney's Northern Beaches, as she experiences the burgeoning art of synchronised swimming in California and brings it back to Freshwater. Read how a determined young lawyer from Queensland, May Lahey, moves to Los Angeles and becomes Australia's first female judge — 35 years before Australia would have one.

Vivid storytelling immerses you in the rich and textured lives of these courageous, intelligent women. It feels more like having an enthralling conversation over a glass of wine or a cup of tea than reading a history book.

Blending their talents as a memoirist and historian, Yves Rees describes these women with impressive nuance, narrating their significant achievements and remarkable lives without elevating them to inaccessible feminist icons, while acknowledging the class and racial privileges that contributed to their opportunities. The author's personal reflections woven throughout the book encourage us to consider how the stories we choose to share manufacture our understanding of national history and cultural identity. For the history enthusiast and curious novice alike, this book will leave you questioning how many other stories have fallen through the cracks of history, and the role of the historian-as-storyteller in uncovering them.

Sam Cooling, Reader Services



Dusk

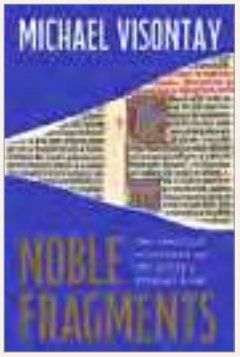
by Robbie Arnott

Picador

Having loved Robbie Arnott's *Limberlost* — *Age* Book of the Year 2023 — I was excited to dive into his new novel, *Dusk*. In what seems like a past version of Tasmania (the setting is never specified), a puma has been killing people, even the hunters sent to destroy her. Twins Ida and Floyd are attracted by the bounty on offer as a way out of their impoverished circumstances. Their quest has a mythical feel as they travel through the changing landscape, encountering strange bones and fossils.

Arnott's nature writing is luminous. You feel the rich detail and subtle shifts in light — the moon, the mists — the movement of water, birds, and wind through grasses. The human part of the story too has great beauty, but also cruelty and suffering. The twins' harsh early life and the misdeeds of their parents follow them and threaten to define them. *Dusk* creates a world so vivid that it leaves an impression of it continuing to play out after you've turned the last page.

Cathy Hammer, Media & Communications



Noble Fragments: The maverick who broke up the world's greatest book

by Michael Visontay

Scribe

In *Noble Fragments*, Sydney journalist Michael Visontay traces the story of New York bookseller Gabriel Wells, who acquired a genuine Gutenberg Bible, printed around 1455. He then 'broke up' the volume, selling single pages and significant chapters to a network of collectors and institutions. This absorbing narrative explores the world of the rare book trade in the first half of the twentieth century. It also uncovers the often harrowing links between the author's own family and Gabriel Wells.

As a librarian who works with rare books, I knew reading about a notorious 'breaker' was always going to be intriguing, if triggering. It sparked my interest in the Library's single Gutenberg leaf, acquired in the 1940s. Do we know where it came from?

Visontay's book is a perfect read for any bibliophile. It raises legitimate questions about public versus private ownership of rare books and the ethics behind the 'mutilation' of the original object. Rest assured, I have a pile of correspondence from the 1940s on my desk to research the origins of the Library's own 'noble fragment'.

Maggie Patton, Collection Acquisition & Curation

The Echoes

by Evie Wyld

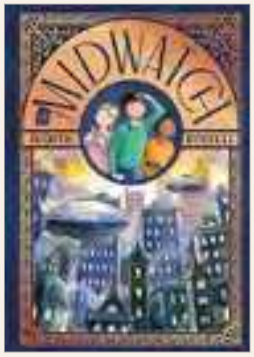
Vintage

The Echoes excavates seams of darkness between Hannah's Australian childhood, her adulthood in London, and revelations before and after the accidental death of her partner Max. Evie Wyld is masterful at balancing multiple voices and times — Before, After, Then — to gradually unpick Hannah's distressing childhood.

Max's ghost narrates the After chapters. Confined to their apartment, he watches Hannah struggle after his death, learns more about her family (who she would not talk about), and provides dark humour with his silent comments on her poor cooking and decision-making. Despite this supernatural element, the book is grounded in the reality of human adversity, enhanced by Max's commentary.

Interspersed clues reveal the childhood abuse experienced by Hannah's mother, Kerry, and uncle, Tone, perpetrated by their mother, and its unspoken effects on their own families. Intergenerational trauma is enacted over the violence of colonialism, literally present under their feet. I found this novel compulsive reading, and though the themes are weighty, Wyld's writing is compassionate and mesmerising.

Jane Gibian, Reader Services



The Midwatch

by Judith Rossell

Hardie Grant Publishing

When Maggie Fishbone is taken to The Midwatch Institute — a school for orphans, runaways and unwanted girls — she is filled with dread. Fortunately for Maggie and her fellow new enrollees, 'things are not exactly as they first appear'. Soon enough she finds herself taking 'hiding lessons', learning how to pick locks and translating bizarre sentences written in German.

Assisted by the book's incredible illustrations, readers are drawn immediately into the world of the story with its Art Deco–inspired architecture, airships, statues of fantastical creatures and secret underground tunnels.

As Maggie and her new friends work to uncover a mystery together, the message of the story becomes obvious: every child — even those deemed 'unwanted' or 'useless' — has something valuable to offer to the world. Adventure-loving young readers, especially those aged nine and over, will think this book is 'the cat's whiskers'! I certainly did.

Susan Brawn, Learning

Girl Falling

by Hayley Scrivenor

Pan Macmillan

As a regular trailwalker in the Blue Mountains, I was immediately drawn to *Girl Falling* by Hayley Scrivenor, because I was intrigued by a crime novel set in a familiar landscape. Best friends and mountain climbers Finn and Daphne are bound by shared grief over their sisters' tragic deaths. But when a devastating accident occurs, the foundations of their friendship are shaken, leaving the reader to question how far loyalty and trust can truly stretch. While I'm not a fan of the crime genre, the story exceeded my expectations — I just couldn't put it down.

Scrivenor weaves a captivating tale with relatable characters, including a well-worn family dog and a vivid sense of place that expertly draws the reader in. Just as I smugly thought I had it all worked out — classic rookie error — the author delivered a brilliant twist that left me eager to check out her bestselling debut, *Dirt Town*.

Vanessa Bond, Media & Communications

The library that made me

John Gaden photographed in the Library's studio by Joy Lai

WORDS **John Gaden**

I am a slow reader. I read at a measured talking pace, doing spoken inflections in my mind and observing the heft and balance of the text. Probably something to do with being an actor. But I have loved the world of books and reading from an early age. The first time I remember thinking that books were important was when I was visiting my paternal grandmother, who was very ill and in a lot of pain from arthritis and cancer. She was sitting propped up in bed in her Double Bay flat, reading Sylvia Pankhurst's *Ethiopia: A cultural history* with a magnifying glass. It's a big heavy volume and her frail arms could barely support it, but she was rapt. I thought, books really matter.

As a student, both at school and university, I would use libraries, but mostly in a state of panic to finish overdue essays and assignments. I once resolved to read Karl Marx's *Das Kapital* in the excellent Fisher Library at Sydney University. I fell asleep with my head on the desk, suffering from a terrible hangover from the previous night's revelry. I was awakened by friends, having reached page four. Much as I loved books, libraries were, at that time, associated with deadlines.

That changed over time, and especially after an accidental discovery in my fifties. I had enrolled in a course at the Alliance Française in Paris to try to brush up my French, a language I had loved since schooldays, inspired by a wonderful Francophile teacher. After a couple of weeks, I was feeling defeated. Maybe I was being impatient, but I seemed to be getting nowhere. Every time I tried to speak the language, the French would do that pursed lips exhalation and utter a weary 'Speak English'. One morning, feeling particularly demoralised, I was walking past Notre Dame and through the little square behind it. Suddenly, I came across a sign that said 'Shakespeare and Company'. A bookstore. People sitting outside reading and sipping coffee in the sun. The windows full of books, new, old, second-hand, antiquarian, all in English.

My relief at seeing books in English — my first language, the language of my thoughts, dreams and craft as an actor — was matched by my sense of serendipity at seeing that name. Shakespeare. I've done a lot of Shakespeare — almost every one of his plays, some two or three times, and I've directed quite a few, too. My favourite? *Henry IV, Part 1*. Then in a very close second, *Lear*. But it's so dark, you have to be feeling strong to play Lear.

That day in Paris, I stepped inside Shakespeare and Company and felt an immediate joy in the ambience — that sense of a world ruled by books and book lovers. Downstairs there were floor-to-ceiling shelves stuffed with books. Upstairs was a reading room, with more books and space, plus paintings, a window with Notre Dame views, and comfy chairs. You could take any book off the shelf, sit and read (and think and doze) for a few hours, then put the book back, or buy it.

The book I pulled from the shelf was volume 1 of the three-volume Montaigne's *Essays*, in the English translation by Charles Cotton from 1685. It felt fortuitous. A few days before, on my rambles round Paris, I'd seen and loved a statue of Montaigne. As I read, I warmed to his tolerant, accepting and generous observations of human behaviour. A very inquisitive humanist, who strengthened my belief in a certain way of living.

For the next few hours I sat in the Shakespeare and Company reading room surrounded by the wonderful collection of books amassed by George Whitman. George was an American GI who, after serving in Europe during World War II, stayed on in Paris. The US Army had given GIs generous vouchers to buy food and books. George traded his food vouchers with other GIs for their book vouchers and acquired a large number of English-language volumes. He needed a home for them, and in August 1951 he purchased the ramshackle building at 37 Rue de la Bücherie and opened his bookshop, Le Mistral. In 1964, with the blessing of Sylvia Beach, he renamed it Shakespeare and Company.

Sylvia Beach started the original Shakespeare and Company bookstore in Rue de l'Odéon in 1919. It was *the* meeting place for expat writers, and Beach was the first to publish Joyce's *Ulysses*, when no other publisher would touch it. It was shut down in 1941 during the Nazi occupation and Beach was interned.

So much of the character of Shakespeare and Company is the character of George Whitman — eccentric, open-hearted, inclusive, convivial and socialist. Inside there is a sign that says, 'Be not inhospitable to strangers, lest they be angels in disguise' (Hebrews 13:2). From its earliest days, people were encouraged to sleep there if they lacked a place to stay. The price of a floor for the night was two hours stacking books or cleaning, plus reading a book a day. It's estimated that 30,000 people have stayed there.

There were poetry readings, book signings, jazz sessions, talks and parties for which George would cook large pots of stew. It quickly became a home for expat writers and travellers: Lawrence Ferlinghetti, Anaïs Nin, Lawrence Durrell, James Baldwin, Peter Matthiessen, Jeanette Winterson and Henry Miller were just a few. Many of the events have become legendary, but one in particular gives their flavour —a reading by Beat poets Gregory Corso, Allen Ginsberg, William Burroughs and others in August 1958. Corso protested that the first poem wasn't real poetry. When asked what he meant by real poetry, he took his clothes off and read his poems naked. Two big bearded 'bodyguards' threatened to beat up anybody who left. Next came Ginsberg, also naked. His poem 'Howl' caused a sensation. Finally Burroughs read from his as yet unpublished *Naked Lunch*. George reported, 'Nobody was sure ... whether to laugh or be sick.'

There are hundreds of such stories.

George died in 2011 aged 97 and his daughter Sylvia and her partner now run the bookshop. After my first visit, I went back to the reading room every morning, then on to my French class in the afternoons. And whenever I'm in Paris, I always drop by two or three times.

When you walk through that door into Shakespeare and Company, you walk into a world where books and the culture of reading are the be all and end all, a world ruled by books and the spirit they can create. So in a sense, the library/reading room/bookshop that made me came midlife, at a time when I had begun to think that books were in decline and technology and the internet were ruling the world. At Shakespeare and Company I discovered the power of the culture of books and reading, a humane and joyous 'empire of the spirit'.

John Gaden has worked as an actor and director in film, television and theatre for over 50 years.

Photo of two women reading outside Shakespeare and Co, Paris. Photo by Martin Bache, Alamy

WORDS **Kathy Kallos**

A GREEK–AUSTRALIAN ODYSSEY

Above left: Greek christening celebrations in Sydney, September 1946, from a *PIX* magazine series of photos that included a visit to Bondi Beach.

Above right: St George Greek Orthodox Church, Rose Bay, from a *PIX* magazine series of photos of Greek christening celebrations in Sydney, September 1946, Photos by Ivan Ive

Right: Baggage label from Greek–Australian Line, RHMS *Patris*, around 1959. Courtesy Museums Victoria

Photo of Kathy Kallos, the author, aged 10, taken at the Athena Photographic Studio in Sydney, 1972, and sent to her aunt in Athens.

When oral historian Kathy Kallos interviewed the photographer who took her portrait more than half a century ago, she uncovered part of the collective narrative of Sydney's postwar Greek migrant community.

I still recall the rush to get to the photographic studio that morning. My mother woke me early to wear my hired costume again, so I could be immortalised before the school bell and the morning rush of customers to our corner shop downstairs, below my bedroom. Only hours earlier, at my school's fancy dress ball I'd waded enviously through an ocean of frou-frou ballerinas, elegant Cinderellas and delicate Tinkerbell fairies.

Dulwich Hill's Athena Photographic Studio was among scores of Greek-owned businesses in Sydney's inner west during the era of post–World War II migration. One of the largest contingents of Greek migrants in Australia, the community had been lured to settle in the Marrickville local government area due to its affordable housing, accessible transport and favourable job prospects.

Unlike the ballerinas and princesses, I had been chosen to raise the flag of Hellenism in the Antipodes by wearing the full Amalia dress, the traditional Greek national costume. My ensemble was inspired by Queen Amalia, who ruled Greece as wife of King Otto between 1836 and 1862. The outfit consisted of a long pale blue skirt, a deep crimson velvet bolero that was intricately embroidered with golden thread, and a lacy white blouse with very long, itchy sleeves. A matching fez with a dangling golden tassel completed the look. The photograph that was taken is black-and-white. My mother sent it with pride to my aunt in Athens.

Like most kids of postwar European migrants, I straddled two cultures. I spoke Greek at home and English in the playground, weaving in and out of two distinct worlds, trying to fit comfortably into both. It set me on a path towards a unique Greek-Australian identity.

This lifelong endeavour has led me to return to the community that shaped my cultural identity, through my work in gathering personal narratives for the just-launched oral history project, the Greek-Australian Archive. The Gregorios and Stavrini Onisforou Oral History Collection explores the experiences and challenges that Sydney's Greek migrants faced in creating their new lives and building a community and an identity in a foreign country.

The project was a partnership between UNSW, the State Library of NSW and the Greek Orthodox community. It was supported by an Australian Research Council grant, along with donations from the Greek-Australian community. A significant contribution by the Onisforou family led to the collection being named in honour of parents Gregorios and Stavrini Onisforou.

Just over 100 people were interviewed by the UNSW team, with roughly half the interviews being conducted in Greek and half in English. Highlights and excerpts of the Greek interviews have been translated into English, and transcripts prepared in the language in which the interviews were conducted. The oral histories, searchable interview transcripts, primary resources and interviewees' personal photos are featured on the State Library's website, so people can hear the voices of those interviewed and see the photographs of their lives.

Growing up, I was oblivious to my part in the story of Greek migration to Australia. The rich diasporic tapestry of life in Sydney featured our parents holding on to everything they knew from their homeland, as they struggled with their own sense of belonging. I've come to realise that the image taken that morning in 1972 says more about my postwar Greek migrant parents and their generation than it ever did about me.

I managed to meet the photographer himself, now 91 years old, as part of this project. 'The photo I took of you has more significance today than the day I took it,' explains Sotirios Gravanis, who clicked the shutter all those years ago. 'It tells you a story, an important story, it gives you history. It's a reflection of our traditions and culture and how every Greek parent wanted to keep those alive, along with the Greek language.'

Mr Gravanis is among those who have shared their life story for the Greek-Australian Archive. The oral histories and photographs, sourced from the interviewees themselves, have taken several years to collect, not least because of the Covid pandemic. Time is a precious commodity, because the postwar Greek migrant generation is fading rapidly. However, their extraordinary stories and unique voices, often spoken in mother tongue, will remain in perpetuity.

As the project leader, UNSW Professor George Kouvaros, explains, 'What these interviews provide is a much more fine-grained understanding of what this generation experienced during the process of settlement. The everyday dramas, the things that went right and the things that went wrong, the pain as well as the joy.' In the aftermath of World War II, Australia was in the midst of an economic boom that offered Greeks and other European migrants opportunities to achieve prosperity and raise families in a politically stable environment. The Greek economy was in a poor state as the country struggled to recover from its civil war, which took place from 1946 to 1949.

Sotirios Gravanis recalls, 'The primary purpose was to come and work and everyone had their own dreams.' He left Piraeus Harbour in Athens in 1959 on board the ship *Aurelia*, as did thousands of other young men and women during the 1950s and 1960s. He'd learned his craft from his own father, who operated a photographic studio in the city of Patras, in the northern Peloponnese. The young man worked there for six years before being inspired by his own customers who were having their passport photos taken to migrate to the 'Land of Milk and Honey'. Their optimism about a better future prompted his decision to follow them, despite his father's best efforts to keep him close to home.

Mr Gravanis took thousands of images during his 35-year tenure at the Athena Photographic Studio, keeping the negatives in boxes for years until he sold the Dulwich Hill property. He described to me his overwhelming schedule as he went about documenting the new lives and milestones unfolding in the new country. Countless Greek weddings, baptisms and cultural events during the peak migration and settlement period of the 1960s and 1970s often had him working in his darkroom around the clock to produce the keenly anticipated photos.

Photographic images adorned the pages of the Greek language press but, perhaps more importantly, provided a conduit between those who remained in the mother country and those who'd come here. Many, sadly, never returned to see their families. 'Photos connected people with their loved ones. They'd send them back to Greece to show friends and family they were in fact continuing to follow the Hellenic customs and traditions,' Mr Gravanis explained to me when I interviewed him.

The photographs that are part of the Greek-Australian Archive were sourced directly from the interviewees themselves. Hope, courage and resilience are etched on the young faces who made a choice, or otherwise, to traverse continents. 'These photographs show this generation of migrants as they were *then* and as they are *now*,' Professor Kouvaros explains. 'But they also focus attention on what often remains unsaid in the oral histories — those intentions and aspirations that deepen our understanding of migration.'

Only a few shopfronts down from the Athena Photographic Studio, in a disused timber Baptist church and its adjoining hall, I learned to read and write Greek. Attendance from 4 pm to 6 pm three afternoons a week, my parents made clear,

was non-negotiable. It was important for Greek migrants to send their children to Greek School 'in order to understand the culture', explained Athina Stavrellis, my former Greek School teacher.

In our interview, Athina reflects on her sense of responsibility in teaching the Greek language and the importance of celebrating significant historical events, such as Greek Independence Day every 25 March. Along with many from the Greek community, teachers and students marched annually in a symbolic parade from Martin Place to the Sydney Opera House, wearing emblematic blue and white, the national colours of Greece. They still do.

Photo of Panagiota (Yota) Krili, onboard the *Toscana* on her way to Australia. She became a teacher, author and poet and her interview is available (in Greek) on the Greek–Australian Archive.

Along with her husband and young daughter, Athina migrated to Australia in 1968 as a political refugee, fleeing the right-wing military dictatorship that ruled Greece from 1967 to 1974. During our discussion, she recounted her bewilderment at seeing tanks rolling down the empty streets of Athens on her way to work one April day in 1967, unaware of the dramatic events of the coup d'état that were unfolding.

Athina recalls her feelings of apprehension en route to Australia aboard the ship *Australis* but remembered spotting something familiar during a stopover in Fremantle that shifted her mood. 'We passed the university and out [front] of the university was a bust of Socrates ... it was a kind of feeling that everything is going to be fine ... I'm coming to a country who knows our history at least,' she reminisces.

In Sydney, she spent years trying to get her early-childhood teaching qualifications officially recognised, which meant that for much of her productive working life she was underpaid. During her early days in Marrickville, when she was trying to find a job, an official once told her she was living in the wrong neighbourhood if she wanted to learn English. Athina was initially taken aback by the comment, but later realised that he had a point — there was more Greek than English spoken in Marrickville at the time.

An intimate connection with time and place through working on the oral history project has fitted my adult lens with greater clarity, awareness and perspective, so I can better appreciate the social and historical context of the era. I realise that my generation has borne witness to an extraordinary time, one that is now written into the history pages of Australia's broader multicultural success story.

Generational inheritors like me have retained a strong and vital connection to Greek culture, customs and language. But the shifting sands of time will inevitably see the emerging Greek–Australian hybrid culture evolve and be shaped by its own distinctive characteristics.

Scholarly articles by linguists say that the likelihood of losing language proficiency typically takes around three to four generations depending on circumstances. Perhaps the most direct way that Greek-Australians can hold on to language and commemorate the postwar generation who brought it to these shores is to simply listen to their voices.

Australia has often been lauded as one of the most successful multicultural societies in the world. NSW is the most populous and diverse state, with over a quarter of its residents being born overseas. Everyone has their own story and every single story is important. The Greek-Australian Archive website is a platform designed to encourage us all, regardless of our background, to engage with the significant history of migration and reflect on how it has shaped and influenced the development of our rich Australian story.

Kathy Kallos is a committee member of Oral History NSW. She has worked on the Greek-Australian Archive since 2019. She is a former ABC and SBS journalist and secondary school teacher of Modern Greek and English.

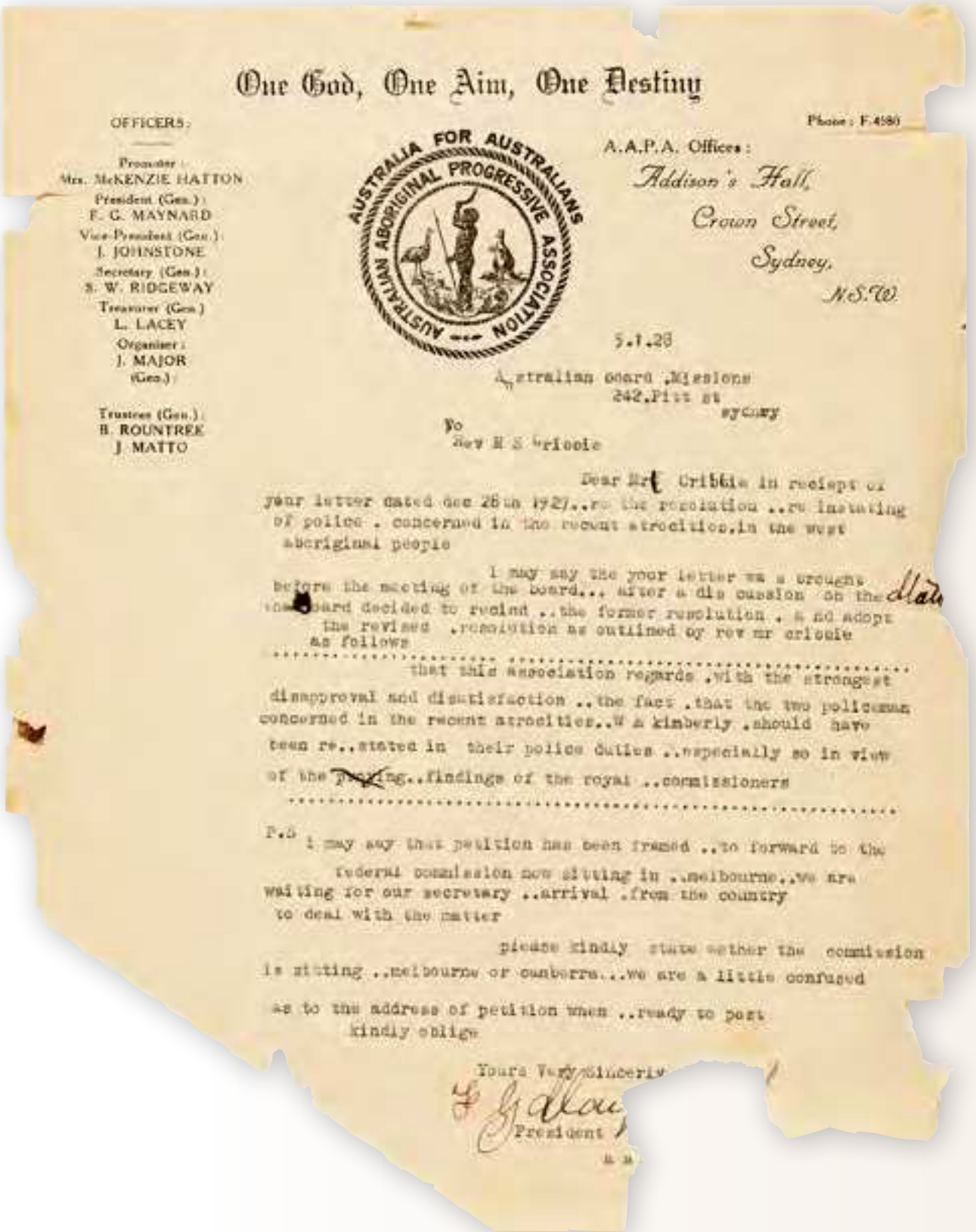
See the Greek-Australian Archive at greekaustralianarchive.sl.nsw.gov.au.

20 questions

1. The poinsettia, a popular decorative plant at Christmas time in Australia, originally comes from where?
2. Which two of Santa's reindeer are named after weather phenomena?
3. What Australian band, formed in the 1980s, was named for a popular icy treat?
4. Which Greek letter also means a very small amount?
5. Where would you find a corpus callosum?
   (a) the brain (b) the feet (c) the eye (d) cells
6. Which crime fiction protagonist has a name that means 'an enigmatical representation of a word in pictures'?
7. Who was Alexander the Great's tutor?
8. Which university is the world's oldest?
9. Which famous English actor was also the mother of stage and screen actor Toby Stephens (*Die Another Day*, *Jane Eyre*, *Black Sails*)?
10. Which country has a demonym (the word used to refer to people from that country) that is a palindrome (reads the same in both directions)?
11. The chemical element Sn for stannum is better known in English as what?
12. Rapa Nui (Easter Island) is the territory of which country?
13. What is the most common name for a road (street, avenue, parade etc) in Australia?
14. Lana Del Rey has recorded 'Summertime: The Gershwin Version'. Which musical is the song originally from?
15. Where and when was the first 'Nippers' club established?
16. What is the name of the Glebe cafe that started serving cappuccinos in 1982 and became an institution in its own right?
17. To which country has children's book illustrator Sally Soweol Han returned to live?
18. This year marks the 60th anniversary of the release of the film *Mary Poppins*. The Library holds the papers of the book's author, PL Travers. What does the P stand for?
19. What is the name of the keyboard instrument that the Library acquired from Jean Garling?
20. In what year did *PIX* magazine launch in Australia?
    (a) 1938 (b) 1939 (c) 1945

Find the answers to this quiz at the bottom of page 6.

WORDS **John Maynard**



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To
Rev H S Cribble

Dear Sir Cribble in receipt of your letter dated dec 28th 1927..re the resolution ..re instating of police . concerned in the recent atrocities.in the west aboriginal people

I may say the your letter was a troughs before the meeting of the board... after a discussion on the matter the board decided to rescind ..the former resolution . & ad adopt the revised .resolution as outlined by rev mr cribble as follows

.....

that this association regards .with the strongest disapproval and dissatisfaction ..the fact .that the two policemen concerned in the recent atrocities..W a kimberly .should have been re..stated in their police duties ..especially so in view of the finding..findings of the royal ..commissioners

.....

P.S I may say that petition has been framed ..to forward to the federal commission now sitting in ..melbourne..we are waiting for our secretary ..arrival .from the country to deal with the matter

please kindly state wether the commission is sitting ..melbourne or canberra...we are a little confused as to the address of petition when ..ready to post kindly oblige

Yours Very Sincerely
F G Maynard
President

100 years of the Australian Aboriginal Progressive Association

The demands of activists echo across a century.

The Australian Aboriginal Progressive Association (AAPA), today recognised as the first united all-Aboriginal political organisation, formed in 1924 under the leadership of my grandfather Fred Maynard. The platform of demands that the AAPA put forward during the 1920s remains at the forefront of Aboriginal demands in the 21st century — land rights, genuine self-determination, defending a distinct Aboriginal cultural identity, protecting Aboriginal family life and demanding that Aboriginal people be placed in charge of Aboriginal affairs.

International influences had a major impact on Aboriginal political mobilisation. During the 1920s my grandfather, his brother Arthur and other Aboriginal men were working on the wharves in Sydney and came into contact with visiting black sailors from across the globe. These connections saw them gain Black manifestos, newspapers and books that greatly influenced their political thinking.

The first signs of a more formal international connection was the formation in Sydney in 1903 of the Coloured Progressive Association, largely comprising international merchant sailors — African American, West Indian, African, Islander, Indian and some Aboriginal dockworkers. The Coloured Progressive Association may well have slipped from memory and history, were it not for the arrival in Australia in 1907 of African American boxing sensation Jack Johnson.

Jack Johnson was a dazzling boxer. He was also highly politicised, articulate and outspoken. During the 1907 visit he had three fights, knocking out all of his opponents. When he left, the Coloured Progressive Association held a farewell to Johnson in Sydney that my grandfather attended. Then in 1908 the new World Heavyweight Champion, Canadian Tommy Burns, arrived in Australia, hotly pursued by Jack Johnson demanding a fight. Johnson had been denied the opportunity of fighting for the World Heavyweight Championship by white champions who drew the colour bar, which prevented black fighters seeking the title. Australian entrepreneur Hugh McIntosh put up over £6000 to stage the fight between Johnson and Burns, and raised the money to build the Sydney Stadium at Rushcutters Bay to host the event. This fight, the first time a white champion was up against a black fighter for the World Heavyweight Championship, would be the biggest sporting event with international interest that Australia would host until the 1956 Melbourne Olympic Games. There were 20,000 people inside the stadium and another 40,000 outside.

Jack Johnson tore Tommy Burns apart in the ring. He knocked him down three times in the opening two rounds but, like a cat playing with a mouse, wanted to make Burns and the crowd endure this punishment for as long as he could sustain it. Johnson taunted Burns and laughed at the crowd. The police jumped into the ring at the start of the fourteenth round to stop the fight as the punishment was so severe and embarrassing. Jack Johnson was crowned World Heavyweight Champion.

Original letter to Reverend RS Gribble of the Australian Board Missions, dated 5 January 1928 and signed by FG Maynard, President of the AAPA, and the author's grandfather.

Speakers at the Centenary Forum for the Australian Aboriginal Progressive Association. From left to right: John Maynard (host), Ray Kelly, Gary Williams, Djon Mundine, Pauline Clague, Ganur Maynard, Heather Goodall. Photo by Joy Lai

Meeting such an inspiring figure obviously made an impression on Fred Maynard and other Aboriginal people.

The second significant international influence on the rise of organised Aboriginal political activism was Marcus Garvey, leader of the biggest black nationalist movement witnessed in the United States. Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), at its height in 1920, had over two million followers worldwide. Garvey's message of race pride and his demand for self-determination resonated with Aboriginal dockworkers in Sydney. Through their contact with international black merchant sailors, they gained copies of Garvey's newspaper *Negro World* and were inspired by his platform for change through economic, social and political demands for black people across the globe. A chapter of Garvey's UNIA was established in Sydney and ran from 1920 to 1924. Aboriginal members like Tom Lacey and Fred Maynard, witnessing the collapse of Garvey's organisation in the United States through the efforts of the Bureau of Investigation (now the FBI), formed the AAPA in Sydney in 1924, with a platform influenced by Garvey's demands.

The AAPA held the first ever Aboriginal political convention in Australia in Sydney in 1925 at St David's Church and Hall in Arthur Street, Surry Hills. Over 200 Aboriginal people from right across the state were in attendance. The AAPA was instantly front-page news in the Sydney press, with banner headlines: 'On Aborigines Aspirations — First Australians to Help Themselves — Self Determination' and 'Aborigines in Conference — Self Determination is Their Aim — To Help a People'. Fred Maynard, in his inaugural address as President of the AAPA, which was covered by the newspapers, made a strong statement on the need for Aboriginal people to be placed in charge of Aboriginal affairs: 'We want to work out our own destiny.' Within six months, the AAPA had established 13 branches and four sub-branches with a membership of over 600. It opened its own central offices in Crown Street, Surry Hills.

The AAPA held a second three-day conference later in 1925 at Kempsey on the NSW North Coast. It was noted in the media that over 700 Aboriginal people attended this history-making conference. At its conclusion, hundreds of Aboriginal people queued for hours to sign a petition and endorse a resolution by Fred Maynard to be sent to all sections of government and published in the press:

> As it is the proud boast that every person born beneath the Southern Cross is born free, irrespective of origin, race, colour, creed, religion or any other impediment. We the representatives of the original people, in conference assembled, demand that we shall be accorded the same full rights of citizenship as are enjoyed by all other sections of the Community.

In 1927 the AAPA sent a manifesto of demands to all sections of government that was widely published across NSW as well as in Queensland, Victoria and South Australia. The demands were for enough land

Fred Maynard, in his inaugural address as President of the AAPA, which was covered by the newspapers, made a strong statement on the need for Aboriginal people to be placed in charge of Aboriginal affairs: 'We want to work out our own destiny.'

for each and every Aboriginal family in the country, that the family life of Aboriginal people be held sacred, and that Aboriginal people be placed in charge of Aboriginal affairs.

The NSW Aborigines Protection Board informed the state Premier Jack Lang that his government should dismiss these demands, arguing that the Board was well looking after Aboriginal people in the state and the Premier should not let these agitators unduly occupy his time or mind. When informed of this rejection, Fred Maynard penned a powerful three-page letter to Jack Lang outlining his anger at this rebuff from the Board:

> That the European people by the art of war destroyed our more ancient civilisation is freely admitted, and that by their vices and diseases our people have been decimated is also patent, but neither of these facts are evidence of superiority. Quite the contrary is the case ... The members of the AAPA have also noted the strenuous efforts of the Trade Union leaders to attain the conditions which existed in our country at the time of invasion by Europeans — the men only worked when necessary — we called no man 'Master', and we had no king.

In an interview in late 1927 my grandfather revealed the increased surveillance, threats and intimidation that the AAPA membership was under. The *Newcastle Sun* reported:

> He [Fred Maynard] had been warned on many occasions that the doors of Long Bay [Gaol] were opening for him. He would cheerfully go to gaol for the remainder of his life, he declared, if, by so doing, he could make the people of Australia realise the truly frightful administration of the Aborigines Act.

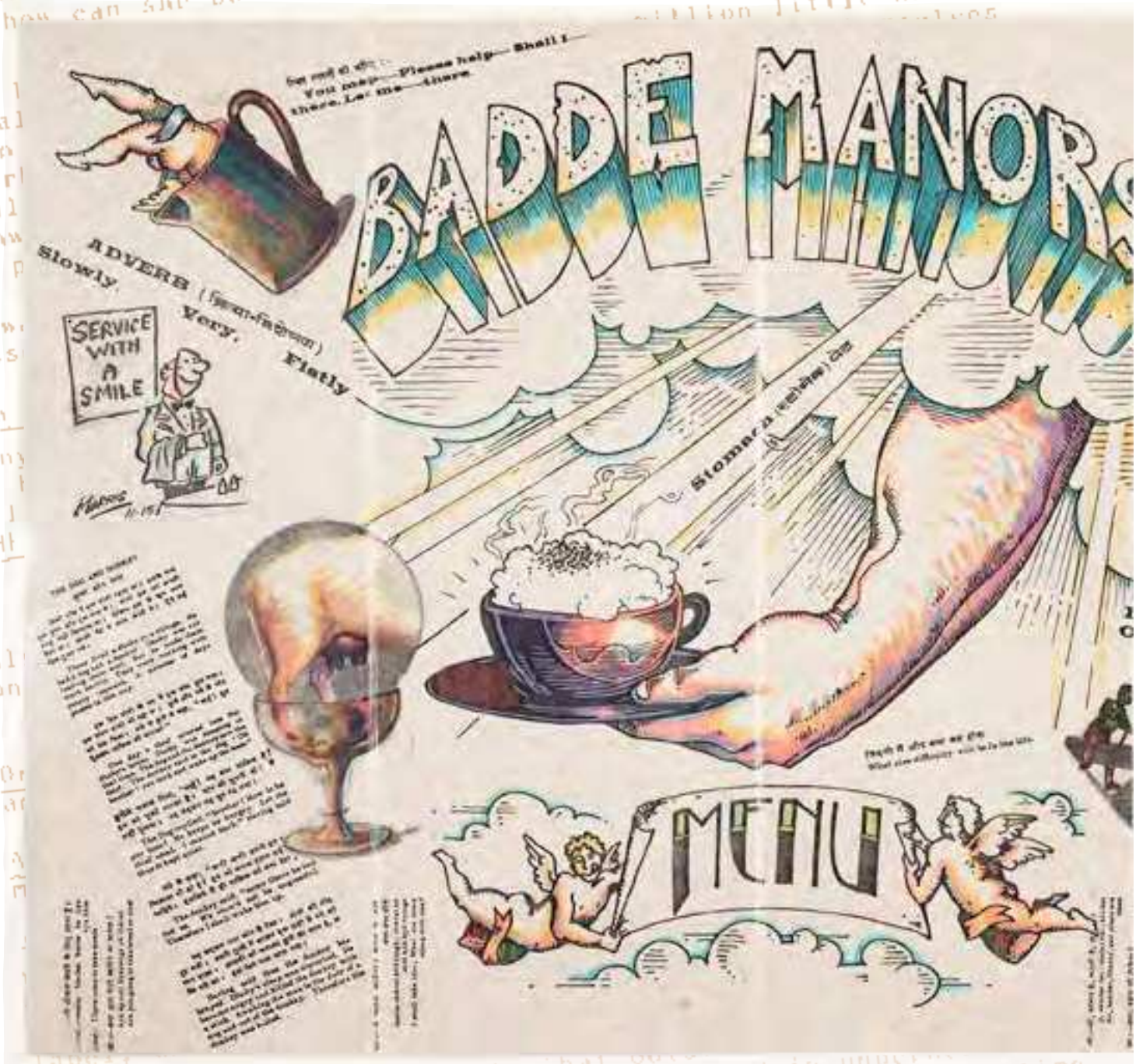
It was for a long time assumed that the AAPA disappeared from public view in 1927. But evidence I have uncovered in recent times has revealed that this was far from the truth. The AAPA remained an active force through to 1929. It was planning to release a newspaper called *The Corroboree* to keep Aboriginal people informed of issues important to them and also to target and embarrass the NSW government and Protection Board. There was another conference in the planning stages for Nambucca Heads, in northern NSW. In early 1929, media coverage in the *Labor Daily* alerted readers that Fred Maynard and another Aboriginal speaker were to speak to the Chatswood Willoughby Labour League in NSW on Aboriginal issues. Maynard was described 'as a forceful and logical speaker who was striving by voice and pen to bring about much needed reform'. The report mentioned that he made a call for an Aboriginal representative in the federal parliament or, failing that, to have an Aboriginal ambassador appointed to live in Canberra to watch over his people's interests and advise the federal authorities.

Sadly, the Great Depression impacted upon the AAPA and its membership so it was difficult to continue effectively. But there was an even more crushing impact: the NSW police attacked the AAPA and encouraged its demise. A decade later, Aboriginal activist Bill Ferguson stated that he was aware of the AAPA and knew it held three conferences but was hounded out of existence by the police acting on behalf of the Board. A 1931 report by the Australian Communist Party on Slavery and Aborigines was even more revealing about the AAPA. It stated that the rank and file organisation set up by the Aborigines was smashed by a coalition of the police, the Protection Board and missionaries.

The pride and unity that the AAPA inspired would disappear for many decades. Yet today its legacy and memory inspire new generations of Aboriginal people in the fight for Aboriginal rights and justice.

Professor John Maynard is a Worimi historian, researcher and commentator from the Port Stephens region of NSW and is Professor Emeritus at Newcastle University. A new edition of his book *Fight for Liberty and Freedom: The origins of Australian Aboriginal activism* is published by Aboriginal Studies Press. This is an edited version of an address he gave at 100 Years of Organised Activism, a forum to commemorate the centenary of the AAPA, held at the Library in 2024.

‘BAPTISM BY

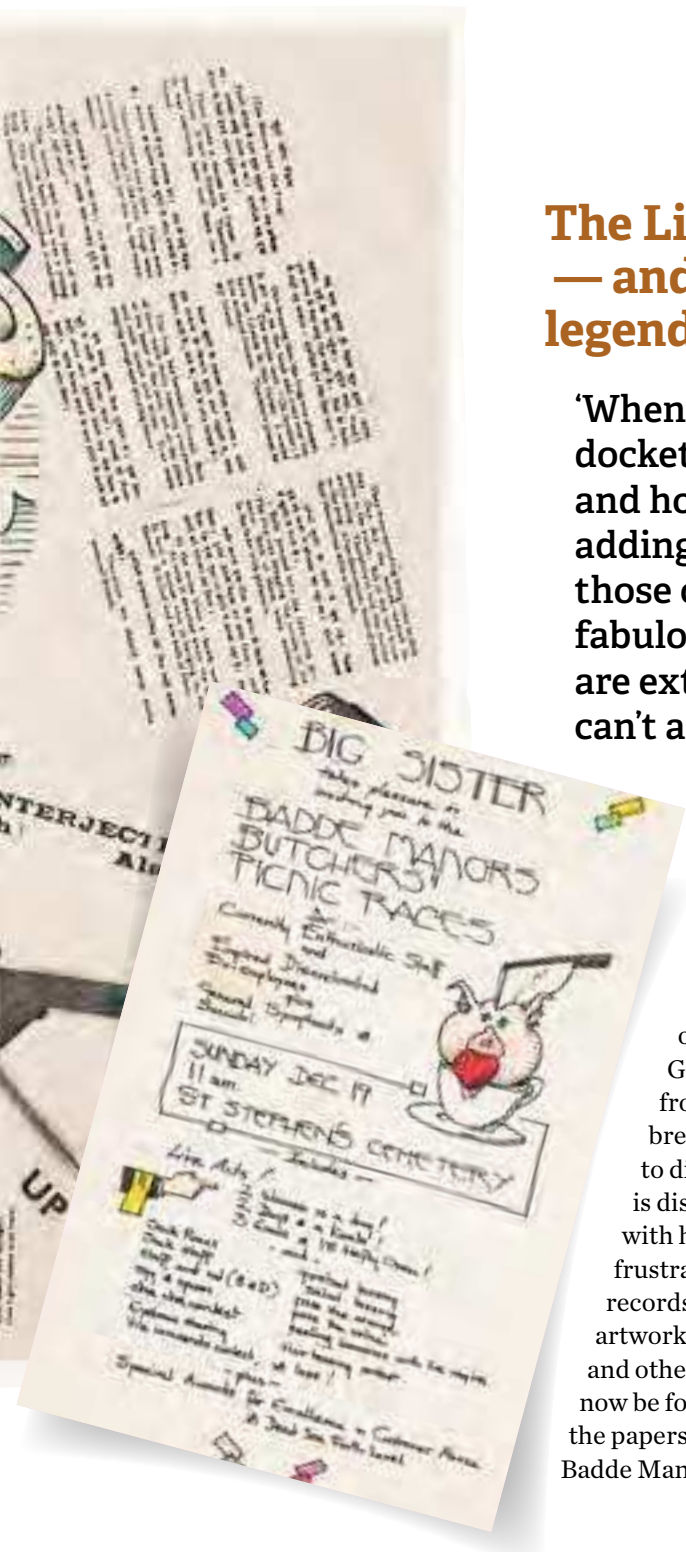


Above: A Badde Manors menu

Opposite: An invitation from ‘Big Sister’ to the Badde Manors picnic

FROTH'

WORDS **Andrew Trigg**



The Library has acquired the extraordinary — and frequently hilarious — records of legendary Glebe cafe Badde Manors.

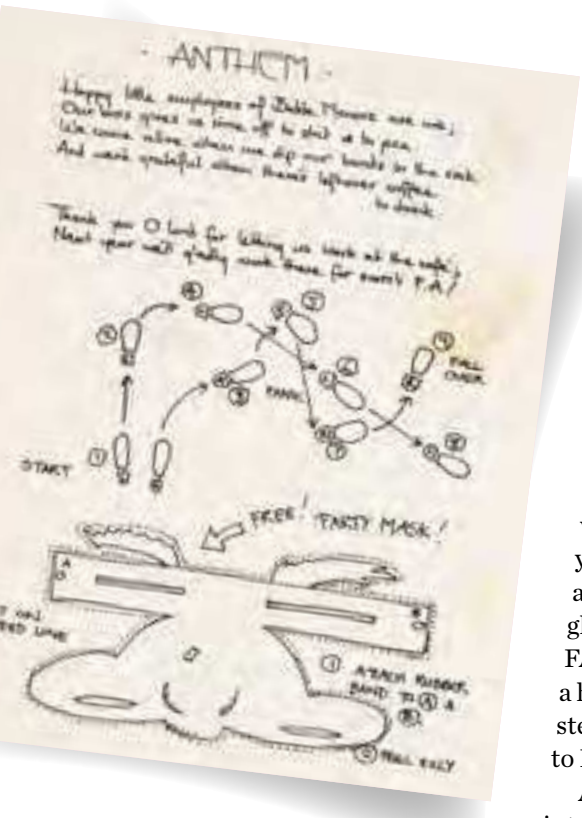
'Whenever I look over the dockets, I notice with awe and horror how erratic the adding up can be. Please, those of you who have fabulous personalities and are extremely soulful but can't add up, take extra care.'

Gentle — and not-so-gentle — reminders, rules, lists, diktats and observations like this one about customers' bills were regularly circulated to the staff of Badde Manors cafe, a unique Glebe institution. Everything from tea towel maintenance to breakfast shifts to garbage removal to disappearing takeaway containers is discussed in detail, flavoured with humour and, sometimes, frustration. They, along with business records, menus, recipes, photographs, artworks, clippings, postcards received and other assorted ephemera can now be found at the Library, all part of the papers of Robert Sebes relating to Badde Manors, from the mid-1970s to 2005.

Robert Sebes and his then wife Judy Tihany (later Backhouse) purchased the corner premises of the future cafe at 37 Glebe Point Road in 1976. They were both children of Hungarian migrants; Robert's father ran a cafe on the North Shore. They spent the next six years travelling the world, before returning to install an interior of salvaged materials, which remains largely unchanged 40 years on. Drawings and plans for the cafe, which opened in 1982, are included in the collection, as are many typed memos to staff.

These were often supplemented by explicit instructions on the art of hospitality. One might think producing a cup of tea is quite simple. Not so, according to this directive, probably from Judy: 'I have for four years had a dream, an ideal, a vision of customers actually being ASKED how they would like their tea. There is no point making a general strength cup of tea if someone prefers theirs weak and then has to ask for hot water, or strong, and then thinks it's piss weak. So, considering we can make it any way they like, could you please ASK the customers how they would like their fucking tea!' Tea drinkers, I suspect, are rarely asked this even today.

The same humour and conviviality were applied to the planning of staff events. Venues ranged across the inner city, from Walsh Bay to Darling Harbour. According to the invite for the Badde Manors Butchers' Picnic Races,



The 'Anthem' song sheet for employees

attendees — 'General Sycophants and Succubi' — would party to live acts and there'd be 'Special Awards for Excellence in Customer Abuse'.

A hand-illustrated song sheet of the 'Anthem' offers employees the kind of motivational management speak rarely found in workplaces today: 'Thank you O Lord for letting us work at the cafe, Next year we'll gladly work there for sweet FA!' This is accompanied by a helpful diagram of dance steps that go from Start ... to Panic ... to Fall over.

Any researcher who delves into this collection will glean practical insider tips that have remained secret until now. The Badde Manors recipe for iced chocolate is revealed, for example: '90 g cocoa and 75 g sugar for 3 litres milk'. Innovations such as the 'Double Whammo (long white)' remain a mystery to the author — perhaps it is an early iteration of the strong flat white? But multicultural offerings such as teh susu (Indonesian-style super-sweet milky tea) exemplify the transnational culinary ethos of the establishment.

Also heterodox, cuisine-wise at least, was Badde Manors' commitment to vegetarian cuisine, which lives on to this day. As Robert Sebes once said, 'There isn't really a health food philosophy about the place. It's just that we don't cook food you have to kill first.'

There was a serious commitment to cake, too. Serves were big, sweet and luscious. All the Hungarian cakes were made by an ageing pastry chef who'd learned his trade at the Viennese cafe Demel.

Food and drink do not solely maketh the cafe, however. Cafes have always had a social function. In the great tradition of the early English coffeehouses, also known as 'penny universities', cafes are places where ideas, including subversive ones, can be openly discussed. The neighbourhood of Glebe has nurtured many important Sydney institutions. Badde Manors began at around the same time as Gleebooks, the Aboriginal and Islander Dance Theatre (the precursor to Bangarra), CAMP Ink (Sydney's first lesbian and gay political organisation) and Elsie Women's Refuge (who were tenants of Robert and Judy next door). The Sydney Anarchists resided up the road at 130 Glebe Point Road between 1975 and 1976. Sydney University is a stone's throw away. The Taoist Sze Yup Temple, Glebe Markets and the much-lamented Valhalla arthouse cinema added to the layers of inner-city life and culture.

Many cafes come and go. Very few become institutions. Perhaps it was the activism and the rich cultural life around Badde Manors that fed it and in turn was fed by it. It was, as one of its flyers said, 'the soul of Glebe'.

The records show that Robert took a DIY approach to the physical space. His hand-drawn designs for the layout of the kitchen are highly detailed, right down to the mise en place of every bain marie. The dining room is cosy, the booths are intimate, and the triangular floor plan draws visitors in. He wanted the cafe to be an inviting place for people to inhabit.

> 'I have for four years had a dream, an ideal, a vision of customers actually being ASKED how they would like their tea.'

Nowhere is this more evident than in one confronting staff directive: 'The Dirty Old Man/The Cockroach/Gary Glitter (as he is variously known) pissed himself at Table 1 the other night, so he is definitely not allowed in. However, he is NOT to be yelled at rudely or even callously — he is a human being.'

The Badde Manors collection is embellished by back-of-the-envelope calculations of mortgage repayments, as onerous then as they are today. Just as important — and resonant — was Robert's application in 1983 to the local council for outdoor seating. 'I believe that such a feature would immeasurably enhance Glebe's already burgeoning cosmopolitan atmosphere and would also be likely to be an alluring incentive to shop in Glebe.' He was initially rebuffed, but walking down Glebe Point Road today, it is evident that his vision was realised.

A Badde Manors menu

I worked in hospitality for 10 years prior to working in libraries. Though I was never referred to as a 'Head Prefect', as Judy referred to herself, I do miss the camaraderie, and it was the family-run places that were the most fun and rewarding to work in. Admittedly, the Badde Manors family was an unconventional kind of family, with some unconventional business practices. A few notes to staff are signed 'Love Judy', not your standard HR sign-off. The staff meeting that generated 'Minutes of a Most Auspicious Meeting' was held at 'Judy's Place'. As has been reported of late, unfortunately it's not like that for all workers in the industry.

Robert and Judy separated in 1984. Judy later married Tony Backhouse and left the business in 1987, but remained a co-owner. Robert continued to manage and run Badde Manors until he sold the business in 2004 — according to his second wife, Gina Richter, in part because of the introduction of WorkChoices industrial relations laws. He then sold the building the following year.

Judy Backhouse died in 2004. Robert Sebes's death last year was mentioned in the Hansard of the NSW Parliament, testament to the affection with which the cafe they co-created is remembered.

The Badde Manors collection was generously donated to the Library by Gina Richter. It evidences a time when cafes and late nights working serving food and coffee/tea/hot chocolate were fun and radical and concerned with more than just the bottom line. Even if the Head Prefect did update staff with the occasional

> *SPECIAL OMINOUS NOTE*
> *From now on, I am taking a GRIM VIEW of people replacing themselves, as recently there were occasions on which even the people who were replacing others replaced themselves, and nobody knew what they were doing at all.*

Andrew Trigg is a Specialist Librarian in Collection Acquisition & Curation.

Bûche de Noël

Photo by Joy Lai

WORDS **Amy Hill**

I am low-key a grinch, but what I love about Christmas is making — and consuming — an obscene amount of cake with my family and friends. I tend to hyper-fixate on traditional Christmas recipes, like this Bûche de Noël (Yule log) from France, which became my Christmas cake obsession a few years ago. It's a thin rolled sponge, usually filled with some type of cream and decorated to look like a log. It's thought to date from the 1870s, when a French pastry chef was inspired by a European Christmas tradition, where a log is kept burning for the coldest and darkest part of the year.

This Bûche de Noël recipe is from a 1948 book I found in the Library called *Recipes for Christmas Cheer* with a few small tweaks. Having trialled many sponge recipes, I'm impressed with how robust this one is. I've used a jam and cream filling, with a chocolate ganache and fresh raspberries and dark chocolate for decoration. But you could switch the jam for marmalade and add orange zest to the cream for a jaffa vibe. Or for something a little more summery, try lemon curd with fresh passionfruit, and mascarpone whipped with cream, both inside and out.

Chocolate custard ganache

250 g double cream

125 ml full-cream milk

yolks of 3 large eggs (about 45 g of yolk in total)

1/2 tbsp caster sugar

150 g dark chocolate, chopped finely

1/4 teaspoon salt flakes

Sponge

3 eggs, separated

120 g caster sugar, plus 3 tbsp extra for coating

120 g plain flour

1 tsp baking powder

1 tsp butter, melted

3 tbsp boiling water

Fillings*

300 g double cream

1/4 tsp icing sugar, to taste

150 g ooray (Davidson plum) jam or raspberry jam

* Please take filling measurements as a guide. I believe that fillings are measured by your heart.

Method

To make the ganache, heat the cream and milk in a small saucepan over medium heat until simmering.

Whisk egg yolks and sugar in a small bowl until combined. Pour a little heated cream over the egg mixture and whisk well to combine. Pour back into the saucepan, turn heat to low, and stir constantly until the mixture thickens and coats the back of the spoon.

Place chocolate and salt in a bowl. Pour the custard through a sieve over the chocolate. Leave for 1 minute, then whisk slowly until a thick ganache forms. Cool completely, then refrigerate until firm, at least 2 hours.

Meanwhile, make the sponge. Preheat oven to 180°C fan-forced (200°C conventional). Line a 37 x 25 cm rectangle slice tray or baking tray with baking paper.

In a large bowl, beat egg whites with an electric mixer until stiff peaks form. Add sugar gradually, beating after each addition, until thick and a little glossy. Add egg yolks and beat until combined. Sift in flour and baking powder and gently fold through until combined. Gently fold in butter and water. The batter will look like it's melting but it will be okay — keep stirring until completely combined.

Spread the batter evenly in the prepared tray, then gently bang the tray on the counter 2–3 times to remove any air bubbles. Bake for 6–8 minutes, or until the sponge springs back when lightly poked. Don't over-cook, as a dry sponge is more likely to crack when being rolled up. Run a knife around the sponge edges to loosen. Turn out onto a piece of baking paper spread with the extra caster sugar. Discard the paper from the sponge base. Starting at a short end, tightly roll up the sponge and sugared baking paper. Do this slowly and gently while the sponge is still warm to help prevent tears. (If it does crack, don't worry — the ganache will hide this and hold it together.) Leave to cool completely, about 2–3 hours.

When ready to assemble the log, prepare the filling. In a bowl, beat cream and icing sugar until medium peaks form.

To assemble, slowly unroll the sponge. Once flat, use a knife to trim any uneven edges. Spread jam over the sponge, starting from the short side closest to you and leaving a 1 cm gap along the short side furthest away. Spread whipped cream evenly over the sponge, leaving a 1 cm gap around the long sides and 2 cm along the far short side. Slowly and gently roll the sponge and fillings back up (without the sugared baking paper). Carefully place on a serving plate. If it's a warm day, refrigerate for 5–10 minutes to firm a little.

Whip the ganache, then spread over the log to cover, starting at the ends to prevent the filling splurging out. Use a fork to pattern the ganache to mimic bark. Cover the log and refrigerate until ready to serve. (It will keep for about 3 days.) Remove from fridge about 15–20 minutes before serving.

Amy Hill is a Creative Producer in Exhibitions & Design.

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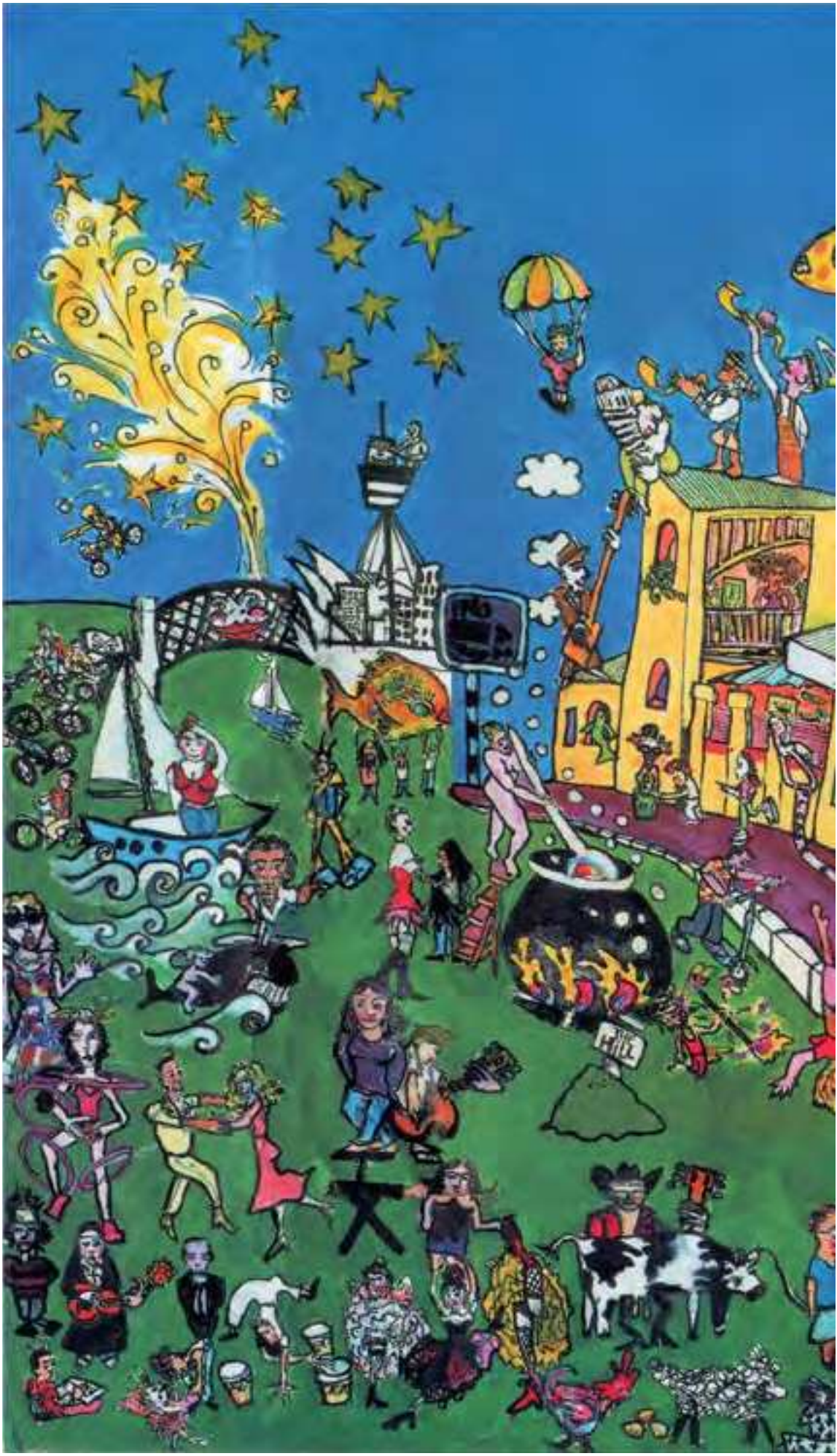
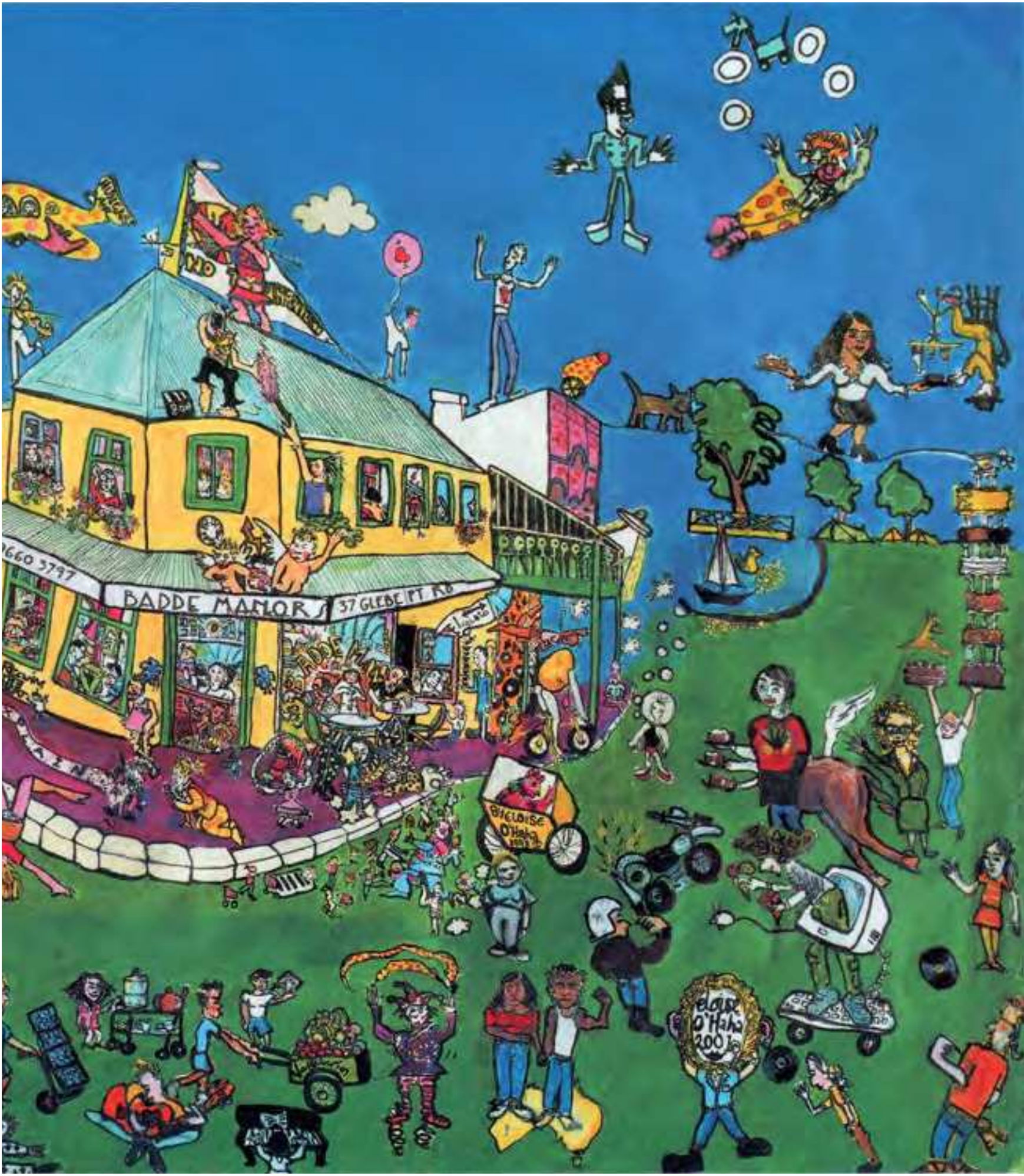


Painting of Badde Manors exterior by Eloise O'Hare. This image was updated and turned into postcards that were stuck on many fridge doors and walls. The original painting was on the wall of the cafe when owner Robert Sebes went back to Hungary for a year. The artist commented 'Just about everyone who worked at the café was a famous Australian artist, performer or musician.'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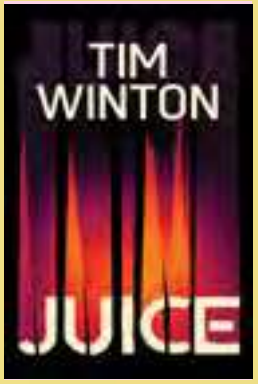

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