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The Creation of the ABC Studio Orchestras, 1935–1945

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ABSTRACT

This article analyses the creation of studio orchestras by the Australian Broadcasting Commission (ABC) as part of a policy of musical federalization. The orchestras were created in the decade after 1935 in all six Australian states, and later expanded to form state symphony orchestras for radio broadcasting and for public performances in concerts. The article argues that the combined effort of a group of men appointed to managerial and controller positions in the ABC was responsible for the oversight of the founding of the studio orchestras; that they spread the available musical talent across the six states; and that they succeeded in their attempt to stimulate public demand for listening to orchestras on radio by paying close attention to the musical capabilities of conductors and thorough auditioning of players joining the orchestras. Within a decade after their foundation, the studio orchestras became permanent ambassadors for the programming of live classical music on the ABC's radio stations.

The Australian Broadcasting Commission (ABC) created studio orchestras in each state capital for the first time between 1935 and 1945. These radio orchestras were a significant innovation that emerged with the rapid rise of wireless broadcasting in the 1930s, which predated the arrival of television in Australia by two decades.¹ Small studio orchestras already existed in Sydney and Melbourne by 1931, the year before the ABC was inaugurated, but they were provided by the ABC in all Australian state capitals by the end of the 1930s.² Brief references to the studio orchestras are included in a number of publications, but they have not been examined systematically. An analysis of their formation is warranted by the fact that they were the foundation stones for all future orchestral development by the ABC.³

From its inception on 1 July 1932, the national service of the ABC prioritized the broadcasting and performance of classical music. The non-profit-making ABC was

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¹ Richard Waterhouse, *Private Pleasures, Public Leisure: A History of Australian Popular Culture since 1788* (Melbourne: Longman Australia, 1995), 211.

² Alan Thomas, *Broadcast and Be Damned: The ABC's First Two Decades* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1980), 69.

³ Brief commentary on the studio orchestras is included in Martin Buzacott, *The Rite of Spring: 75 Years of ABC Music-Making* (Sydney: ABC Books, 2007), 5, 16, 51–3, 59.

chartered to educate and enlighten, and to cultivate a national public desire for music and other interests ‘which tend to elevate the mind’.⁴ The Commission took the words of the first Australian Broadcasting Act seriously: that it should ‘endeavour to establish and utilize, in such manner as it thinks desirable in order to confer the greater benefit on broadcasting, groups of musicians for the rendition of orchestral, choral and band music of high quality’.⁵ The ABC interpreted the act as indicating that it should engage in extensive expenditure to ‘develop cultural musical life’ to assist musicians in Australia.⁶ Its patronage of music made great strides during the 1930s as the ABC made concert broadcasting by orchestras a permanent feature of Australian cultural life.⁷

There was no permanent symphony orchestra in Australia in 1932. Amateur and semi-professional orchestras played concerts in each state capital, but orchestral provision was uneven. In Tasmania the main orchestra was the amateur Hobart Orchestral Society, formed in 1923, which gave concerts of light music.⁸ Brisbane’s orchestral concerts were dominated by the Queensland State and Municipal Orchestra, formed out of the private Sampson Orchestra in 1923, but this body only presented three subscription concerts per year.⁹ In Adelaide a South Australian Orchestra, founded in 1920, gave symphonic programmes and accompanied choral works.¹⁰ The Perth Symphony Orchestra, formed in 1928, relied on voluntary collections to sustain itself.¹¹ Sydney and Melbourne—the two most populous Australian state capitals—had better orchestral provision. Between 1919 and 1923, Sydney was the home to a highly accomplished New South Wales State Orchestra under the leadership of Henri Verbrugghen. After that orchestra collapsed, Sydney’s concert life was dominated by the student orchestra from the city’s conservatorium conducted by W. Arundel Orchard.¹² Melbourne was the home of the renowned Marshall-Hall Orchestra before World War I. It took some

⁴ Martin Long, ‘ABC’, in John Whiteoak and Aline Scott-Maxwell (eds.), *Currency Companion to Music & Dance in Australia* (Sydney: Currency Press, 2003), 16.

⁵ Quoted in Clement Semmler, *The ABC—Aunt Sally and Sacred Cow* (Carlton, VIC: Melbourne University Press, 1981), 138. The ABC’s commitment to musical performance in Australia is the subject of Buzacott, *Rite of Spring*. For the ABC’s role in musical broadcasting, see C.J.A. Moses, ‘Australia: National Radio Fosters Music’, in Max Hinrichsen (ed.), *Hinrichsen’s Musical Yearbook. 1947–1948*, vols. 4–5 (London: Hinrichsen, 1948), 280–5; K.S. Inglis, *This Is the ABC: The Australian Broadcasting Commission, 1932–1983* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1983), 25–9, 52–3.

⁶ W.J. Cleary, ‘Developing the Musical Cultural Life’, in Albert Moran (ed.), *Stay Tuned: The Australian Broadcasting Reader* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1992), 59.

⁷ Geoffrey Bolton, *The Muses in Quest of a Patron*, Callaway Lecture 1996, CIRCME series no. 11 (Nedlands, WA: University of Western Australia, 1996), 5; C.J.A. Moses, ‘Symphony Orchestra. Musical Milestone’, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 16 March 1946, 2.

⁸ Wendy Rimon, ‘Orchestras’, in Alison Alexander (ed.), *The Companion to Tasmanian History* (Hobart: Centre for Tasmanian Historical Studies, University of Tasmania, 2005), 259–60.

⁹ Andrew Schultz, ‘Brisbane Orchestras, 1920 to 1947’, typescript, 1981, Architecture and Music Library, University of Queensland, 2, 17–19.

¹⁰ Julja I. Szuster, ‘Concert Life in Adelaide 1836–1986’, in Andrew D. McCredie (ed.), *From Colonel Light into the Footlights: The Performing Arts in South Australia from 1836 to the Present* (Norwood: Pagel Books, 1988), 184–5.

¹¹ Charles Thompson, ‘Musical Career and References to Beginnings of Perth Symphony Orchestra’, typescript PR 6565, [1972], State Library of Western Australia, Perth.

¹² Kenneth Morgan, ‘Music, Finance, and Politics: Henri Verbrugghen and the New South Wales State Orchestra, 1919–1923’, *Musical Australia*, 36/1 (2014), 13–35; Diane Collins, ‘Henri Verbrugghen’s Auditory Utopianism: Sound, Reform, Modernity and Nation in Australia’, *History Australia*, 6/2 (2009), 36.9; Phillip Sametz, *Play On! 60 Years of Music-Making with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra* (Sydney: ABC Enterprises, 1992), 7.

years after its demise to revive regular orchestral concerts in Victoria, but by the mid-1920s the amateur Melbourne Symphony Orchestra and the semi-professional University Symphony Orchestra had bridged the gap.¹³

Operating on a part-time basis by the early 1930s, these orchestras needed the infusion of new personnel and financial support, which the ABC could provide. One initiative pursued by the Commission consisted of ‘celebrity’ concerts where the presence of an internationally renowned conductor or soloist, often engaged for a musical tour in Australia, was the main drawing card for audiences.¹⁴ The ABC also had the ability through wireless broadcasting to spread musical relays of orchestral performance throughout Australia as a federal nation, taking account of the needs of each state.¹⁵ Establishing these studio orchestras became the ABC’s ‘most significant act of musical patronage in the 1930s’.¹⁶

The ABC’s promotion of classical music was strongly influenced by the example of the BBC’s musical development in relation to wireless broadcasting. From its inception in 1922 the BBC had broadcast opera and orchestral extracts, chamber music, choral music and light music, and in the first half of the 1930s it formed and supported a BBC Symphony Orchestra, based in London, and regional orchestras in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. These all offered regular broadcasts backed by a high-minded BBC administration led by Sir John Reith in a spirit of ‘adventure and commitment’.¹⁷ Australia’s important cultural ties with the United Kingdom and the Anglosphere, including its white immigration policy which shaped the then predominant Anglo-Celtic composition of Australia’s population, played a vital role in the ABC becoming an ‘imperial artefact’, closely following the BBC’s example. The ABC followed the BBC’s ‘almost messianic zeal for shaping taste’.¹⁸ Small wonder that the historian of the ABC has characterized its ethos in the 1930s as being an Australian BBC.¹⁹

My discussion contextualizes the provisions of broadcasting in Australia by the early 1930s in light of the ABC’s musical policies and then examines the team of influential employees at the Commission who combined their talents to create studio orchestras. A harmonious mix of personalities, processes and policies became an essential ingredient in galvanizing the ABC’s musical mission. The Commission played a vital role in the foundation of these orchestras and, as the material examined below shows, it targeted Australian state capitals where most attention was needed. The article explains

¹³ Thérèse Radic and Suzanne Robinson (eds.), *Marshall-Hall’s Melbourne: Music, Art and Controversy 1891–1915* (Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2012); Jim Davidson, *Lyrebird Rising: Louise Hanson-Dyer of Oiseau-Lyre 1884–1962* (Carlton, VIC: Melbourne University Press at the Miegunyah Press, 1994), 89, 118–22; Peter John Tregear, *The Conservatorium of Music, University of Melbourne: An Historical Essay to Mark its Centenary* (Parkville, VIC: Centre for Studies in Australian Music, Faculty of Music, The University of Melbourne, 1997), 72–5.

¹⁴ For details on ‘Celebrity’ concerts, see Buzacott, *Rite of Spring*, 47, 103, 122, 142; Sametz, *Play On!*, 45–8.

¹⁵ Bernard Heinze, ‘Radio broadcast given on the occasion of the A.B.C.’s 25th Anniversary’, typescript in Bernard Heinze Papers, box 31, State Library of Victoria, Melbourne.

¹⁶ Thomas, *Broadcast and Be Damned*, 69.

¹⁷ Asa Briggs, *The History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom. Volume 1: The Birth of Broadcasting* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 253; Asa Briggs, *The History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom. Volume 2: The Golden Age of Wireless* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 34, 159; Nicholas Kenyon, *The BBC Symphony Orchestra 1930–1980* (London: BBC Books, 1981), 2.

¹⁸ Diane Collins, *Sounds from the Stables: The Story of Sydney’s Conservatorium* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2001), 73.

¹⁹ Inglis, *This Is the ABC*, 19, 25.

the difficulties of creating musically suitable broadcasting orchestras, especially in outlying states, and appraises the achievements and limitations of these orchestras by the end of World War II. Particular attention is drawn to the auditioning of suitable players, the selection of conductors and the efforts made to ensure that all six states improved the quality of their broadcasts with the studio orchestras.

In 1924 Australia had begun a privately owned radio system of A and B class stations. The former, which mainly played live music from studios, received most of their revenue from listeners' licence fees. The latter were financed by private means such as advertising.²⁰ By 1932, eight main and four regional stations were available on a national network as well as forty-three commercial stations.²¹ After its inauguration, the ABC took over all of the A class radio stations of the Australian Broadcasting Company, which had existed briefly between 1929 and 1932. It also incorporated small groups of orchestral players that had played live music, predominantly of the light variety, over the air. The ABC began national control of radio programming in 1934, and by 1938 had two stations in each state capital. The national network maintained mixed musical programmes varying from light music to classical compositions, opera, jazz and dance music, but it increasingly became the carrier of more 'elevated' music. 2BL in Sydney, 3LO in Melbourne, 4QR in Brisbane, 5CL in Adelaide, 6WN in Perth and 7ZR in Hobart became the stations for these transmissions.²²

Broadcast music always took the lion's share of programme time in ABC radio's first decade. In 1940, for example, music filled fifty-four per cent of the annual programme time, with popular classical music comprising 17.23 per cent.²³ In the 1930s, classical music broadcasts comprised just over half of the programmes of 3LO, the most profitable of all Australia's radio stations.²⁴ Funding to support the orchestras, including the musicians' wages, came through surpluses accrued from substantial increases in the purchases of ABC wireless licences, of which there were 370,000 in 1932.²⁵ The ABC's revenue from this source increased from £250,000 in 1932–1933 to £720,000 in 1938–1939.²⁶ Wireless broadcasting grew phenomenally in Australia during the 1930s. By the end of 1936, Australia had 887,015 radio listeners, which was nearly fifteen per cent of the national population.²⁷ Diane Collins has observed that radio's rapid development 'reorganised the delivery of culture'.²⁸

Forming a permanent orchestra in each state capital was not necessarily an obvious course for the ABC to take in 1935–1936, and arguments against it were strong. An influential view was that the Commission should focus its musical policies around the establishment of one accomplished national orchestra rather than attempting to

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 8; John Potts, *Radio in Australia* (Kensington, NSW: New South Wales University Press, 1989), 18, 167.

²¹ Ian K. Mackay, *Broadcasting in Australia* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1957), 35.

²² Inglis, *This Is the ABC*, 6, 8; Long, 'ABC', 18.

²³ 'Broadcasting Act', 8 August 1941, SP 1558/2, box 58, ABC Archives, National Archives of Australia, Chester Hill, New South Wales (NAA/NSW).

²⁴ *The Sound of Melbourne: 75 Years of 3LO* (Sydney: ABC Books, 1999), 30; Inglis, *This Is the ABC*, 15.

²⁵ K.S. Inglis, 'The ABC and Australian Society, 1932–1982', *Tasmanian Historical Research Association Papers and Proceedings*, 27 (1980), 16–17; Sametz, *Play On!*, 30.

²⁶ Inglis, *This Is the ABC*, 47.

²⁷ 'A Nation of Listeners. Phenomenal Growth of Wireless', *Herald* (Melbourne), 20 January 1937, 6.

²⁸ Collins, *Sounds from the Stables*, 73.

establish six state orchestras, some of which would comprise fewer than twenty musicians. Another equally valid notion was that insufficient instrumentalists lived in Australia to form orchestras whose musical quality was good enough to be broadcast. However, the proposition that one national orchestra would be suitable was soon discounted because the federal nature of Australia meant the Commission was obliged to treat the states on an equal musical basis.²⁹ Besides, interstate politics effectively ruled out any consideration of concentrating resources on a national orchestra, and there was no possibility of having both a Commonwealth orchestra and orchestras in each state capital.³⁰ In a vast country with population centres so far apart, it was essential that each state capital should have its own professional orchestra for broadcasting. This view eventually trumped the call for only one national orchestra.³¹ The ABC's establishment of a Federal Music Department in 1935 gave it the administrative basis to coordinate musical development in each state.³²

A group of individuals connected with the ABC took the lead in developing policies for studio orchestras in each state capital. Walter Tasman Conder, the first chief executive of the ABC, had managed 3LO in Melbourne until 1928. For two years he oversaw the early development of the ABC, but was removed from his post in 1934 after being found guilty of financial irregularities and replaced as Chairman of the ABC by William James Cleary.³³ This was a fortunate move in relation to the ABC's musical ambitions. Sometime general manager of Tooth's brewery and Chief Railway Commissioner for New South Wales, and now a retired businessman keenly interested in cultural improvement, Cleary played a leading role as organizer and coordinator for the ABC's musical trusteeship. Cleary improved the employment of musicians by the ABC mainly because of his desire for 'symphonic and high class orchestral music', an outlook that reflected his knowledge of what the BBC had achieved with their broadcast orchestras.³⁴ Herbert Brookes, Vice Chairman, an engineer, pastoralist and manufacturer, nurtured warm friendships with some musical celebrities who visited Australia, and worked effectively with Cleary. Brookes also had considerable experience in arranging orchestral concerts by the University Symphony Orchestra in Melbourne.³⁵

Three other men were instrumental in developing the ABC's musical policies in association with Cleary and Brookes. Charles Moses, appointed Federal Liaison Officer in 1934 and promoted to General Manager from 1935, originally from Britain where he had been an outstanding sportsman, was also keenly interested in promoting the arts. He regarded the ABC as the custodian of Australia's musical resources. In 1938 he

²⁹ Mackay, *Broadcasting in Australia*, 67; Geoffrey Serle, *The Creative Spirit in Australia: A Cultural History* (Richmond, VIC: Heinemann, 1987), 153.

³⁰ Keith Barry, Memorandum to the General Manager, 16 December 1936, SP 1558/2, box 21, ABC Archives, NAA/NSW.

³¹ Sue Tronser, 'Great Sporadic Blossoms', *Symphony Australia: The Concert Yearbook* (1992), 16.

³² Roger Covell, *Australia's Music: Themes of a New Society* (Melbourne: Sun Books, 1967), 114, 116.

³³ Inglis, *This Is the ABC*, 25.

³⁴ Long, 'ABC', 16; Secretary of the Musicians' Union of Australia to John Curtin, 17 October 1938, Musicians' Union of Australia, New South Wales Branch, AU NBAC Z 401, box 5, Noel Butlin Archives Centre, Australian National University, Canberra.

³⁵ Rohan Rivett, *Australian Citizen: Herbert Brookes 1867-1963* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1965), 177-8.

noted in a newspaper article that the Commission 'broadcasts orchestral music from the studio each week at present, and we hope through these concerts to build up a larger listening public, to remove prejudices which at present prevent people from listening to good music'.³⁶ Moses had the encouragement and support of Cleary. His job was to sell the joint ideas developed by his colleagues about Australia's orchestras to the commissioners of the ABC, and to identify himself 'personally and persuasively with the ABC's grand musical design'.³⁷ Moses argued that radio was 'the obvious means of overcoming the enormous geographical distances in Australia and of providing a constant and immediate cultural stimulus'.³⁸

Among musical practitioners, Professor Bernard Heinze of the University of Melbourne, appointed musical adviser to the ABC in 1934, and his friend W.G. James, a pianist and composer, appointed Musical Director of the ABC in 1936, played an important role in promoting orchestras and orchestral music.³⁹ Heinze had started to conduct in Melbourne in the 1920s and was committed to the role of broadcasting in spreading music. He displayed organizational, administrative and lobbying ability in conducting Melbourne's University Symphony Orchestra in the 1920s and was the leading figure in the city's orchestral world by the early 1930s.⁴⁰ Between 1929 and 1932, Heinze was part-time Director-General of Music for two Melbourne commercial stations, 3LO and 3AR, which were part of the Australian Broadcasting Company at this time.⁴¹ He supervised the Australian Broadcasting Company's studio orchestra before 1932 and was always on the lookout for musical opportunities to advance his own career. Heinze was an unapologetic promoter of his own conducting and the main 'fixer' who supported associates but sidelined any rivals who tried to take the shine off his musical ambitions. Nobody was allowed to become a conducting rival.⁴² Heinze ensured that James, an excellent pianist who had been Director of Programmes for stations 3AR and 3LO, under the umbrella of the Australian Broadcasting Company, was appointed controller of programmes in Victoria as part of the ABC in 1932.⁴³ As Chairman of the ABC, Cleary was the catalyst for harnessing the existing interest of Brookes and Heinze for establishing ABC orchestras named after the cities in which they performed.⁴⁴

³⁶ Charles Moses, 'Good Music for Those who Cannot Afford It', *Sydney Morning Herald Women's Supplement*, 5 December 1938, 12.

³⁷ Anthony Cane, 'Charles Moses Remembered', *24 Hours*, nos 1/2 (March 1989), 26.

³⁸ Moses, 'Australia', 282.

³⁹ Secretary of the Musicians' Union of Australia to John Curtin, 17 October 1938. For James's musical career, see David Tunley, *William James and the Beginnings of Modern Musical Australia* (Sydney: Australian Music Centre, 2007).

⁴⁰ Tregear, *Conservatorium of Music*, 75, 79.

⁴¹ R.J.W. Selleck, *The Shop: The University of Melbourne 1850-1939* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2003), 616-17.

⁴² Collins, *Sounds from the Stables*, 75; John Poynter and Carolyn Rasmussen, *A Place Apart: The University of Melbourne: Decades of Challenge* (Carlton, VIC: Melbourne University Press, 1996), 49-50; George F. Loughlin, *Cities of Departure: An Autobiography* (Kew, VIC: Anne Loughlin, 1984), 131; Thérèse Radic, *Australian Music Biography and the Skew of Cultural Context: Changing Viewpoints to Assess Significance*, Percy Grainger Lecture, 1994, CIRCME series no. 8 (Nedlands, WA: University of Western Australia, 1994), 12-13. Orchestral players were critical of Heinze's abilities as a conductor; see Sametz, *Play On!*, 76-7.

⁴³ *Sound of Melbourne*, 39; Semmler, *The ABC*, 138.

⁴⁴ Interview with Bernard Heinze, 20 December 1964, box 94, MS 1924, Herbert and Ivy Brookes Papers, National Library of Australia, Canberra. The links between Cleary, Moses, Heinze, James and Brookes are discussed in Buzacott, *Rite of Spring*, 40-7.

These men had closely intertwining professional relationships. Brookes was a personal friend and benefactor of Heinze, who had worked on the staff of the Melbourne University Conservatorium with James, who became the ABC's first Controller of Music in 1936 on Heinze's recommendation. James also became a life-long friend of Moses after they worked together for the ABC. Brookes's wife was the daughter of the former Australian prime minister Alfred Deakin, and a prominent social figure in Melbourne's musical world. Moses was enthusiastic about strengthening the orchestras and firmly supported Heinze's plans.⁴⁵ Heinze, along with Percy Code, the ABC's first principal conductor, and other influential people in the Australian Broadcasting Company, had already stated, three years before the ABC was created, that broadcasting would 'be the means of setting symphony orchestras permanently on their feet'.⁴⁶

Cleary explained to a parliamentary committee of inquiry in 1942 that his aim in the 1930s was to expose music to the Australian public in the hope that they would become interested in it as a means of cultural improvement.⁴⁷ He wanted to promote higher standards of musical performance by selecting players carefully, augmenting studio orchestras with additional musicians for public concerts and ensuring that sufficient rehearsals were held to maintain quality.⁴⁸ In travelling around the various states in 1935–1936, he found that the number of suitably accomplished musicians was limited and 'in some of the outlying states we found that men were trained in symphony orchestras at night and working on trams or as labourers during the day'.⁴⁹ James explained that the ABC's musical policy was to try to bring orchestral music up to a uniform standard in all states.⁵⁰ Moses, for his part, was determined to promote the ABC as a concert entrepreneur 'to provide fine music to enrich our broadcast programs'.⁵¹ These coordinators of musical policy at the ABC insisted on having a studio orchestra in each state because it was ABC policy to decentralize its musical activities.⁵²

In 1932 the ABC inherited permanent instrumental ensembles of fifteen players in Sydney and Melbourne, which presented arrangements of the classics and lighter works. At its inception the Commission decided to develop permanent orchestras to take advantage of better technical facilities, in terms of transmission and reception, and to cultivate the listener's need for 'the better things in music'.⁵³ During 1932–1933, the

⁴⁵ Long, 'ABC', 16; Inglis, *This Is the ABC*, 10, 20, 23–4, 39–46; Tregear, *Conservatorium of Music*, 61, 81; Charles Buttrose, *Playing for Australia: A Story about ABC Orchestras and Music in Australia* (Melbourne: Macmillan, 1982), 18–19; Thérèse Radic, *Bernard Heinze: A Biography* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1986), 61. For the interaction of Brookes and Heinze in relation to musical performance, see David Garrett, 'The Accidental Entrepreneur—how ABC Music became more than Broadcasting' (PhD thesis, University of Wollongong, 2012), 82–4.

⁴⁶ *Australasian Band and Orchestra News*, 26 July 1929. Code's career is summarized in H.J. Gibbney, 'Code, Edward Percival (1888–1953)', in Bede Nairn and Geoffrey Serle (eds.), *Australian Dictionary of Biography (ADB). Volume 8: 1891–1939* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1981), 48.

⁴⁷ Thomas, *Broadcast and Be Damned*, 70.

⁴⁸ W.J. Cleary to D.B. Copland, 28 May 1936, box 28, SP 1558/2, ABC Archives, NAA/NSW.

⁴⁹ Cleary, 'Developing the Musical Cultural Life', 60.

⁵⁰ W.G. James to General Manager, 9 November 1936, box 28, SP 1558/2, ABC Archives, NAA/NSW.

⁵¹ Quoted in Buttrose, *Playing for Australia*, 35.

⁵² Keith Barry to W.G. James, 23 December 1942, box 47, SP 1558/2, ABC Archives, NAA/NSW.

⁵³ W.G. James, 'Establishment of Orchestras', 8 October 1942, box 185, C662/T1, ABC Archives, NAA/NSW.

ABC augmented the fifteen-player ensembles in Sydney and Melbourne to twenty-four players.⁵⁴ These became the ABC Sydney and Melbourne concert orchestras. They acquired scores and parts from cinema orchestras that had collapsed with the ending of silent films in the late 1920s.⁵⁵ They were of sufficient size to perform smaller orchestral works in their original form. On special occasions in 1932 and 1933, these orchestras were augmented to between forty and fifty players and symphonic music was first presented over the airwaves by the ABC's own orchestras. Sydney and Melbourne had more professionally trained orchestral musicians than other state capital cities, so it was not particularly difficult for the additional players needed for public concerts to be added to their studio orchestras.⁵⁶

The ABC made members of these studio orchestras available to other organizations to strengthen their performances, especially semi-professional orchestras giving concerts, including the New South Wales Conservatorium Orchestra, the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra and the orchestra of the Elder Conservatorium of Music, Adelaide. In 1934, the ABC purchased broadcasting rights from the New South Wales State Orchestra, the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra and the South Australian Symphony Orchestra.⁵⁷ Also in 1934, the New South Wales Conservatorium Orchestra combined with the ABC Sydney studio group to become the New South Wales State Symphony Orchestra at public concerts.⁵⁸ However, the ABC's policy of decentralizing orchestras meant that it never had the financial means to support larger orchestras on a permanent basis.⁵⁹

Heinze had been appointed musical supervisor to the ABC specifically to improve the standard of musical programmes broadcast through national stations.⁶⁰ By the time he was appointed, the ABC was regularly broadcasting programmes between Adelaide, Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne and Perth.⁶¹ The ABC's promotion of musical federalization was implemented in 1935–1936 after James was made Federal Controller of Music and Dr. Keith Barry, a general practitioner who had been a music critic for Sydney's *Daily Telegraph*, was appointed Federal Controller of Programmes. He was in favour of orchestral music as a means of providing more elevated tastes and cultural uplift to Australia's radio listeners—a replication of the ABC's cultural mission.⁶² Cleary, as Chairman of the ABC, requested that a review of the Commonwealth orchestral resources and a plan for the development of orchestral personnel compatible with the Commission's resources should be implemented.⁶³ He worked together with Moses, Heinze, James and Barry 'to develop the musical cultural life of Australia and provide

⁵⁴ John Chesworth, 'Melbourne Symphony Orchestra', 2MBS-FM Program Guide, July 1992, 7.

⁵⁵ Katherine Brisbane (ed.), *Entertaining Australia: An Illustrated History* (Sydney: Currency Press, 1991), 219.

⁵⁶ 'Broadcasting Act', 8 August 1941.

⁵⁷ Thomas, *Broadcast and Be Damned*, 69.

⁵⁸ Sametz, *Play On!*, 35.

⁵⁹ Moses, 'Australia', 287.

⁶⁰ *Star* (Melbourne), 29 June 1934.

⁶¹ Brisbane (ed.), *Entertaining Australia*, 219.

⁶² Inglis, *This Is the ABC*, 46–7; Buzacott, *Rite of Spring*, 53; Lesley Johnson, *The Unseen Voice: A Cultural Study of Early Australian Radio* (London: Routledge, 1988), 130. Barry's career is summarized in Clement Semmler, 'Barry, Keith Vincent (1896–1965)', in John Ritchie (ed.), *ADB. Volume 13: 1940–1980* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1993), 123–4.

⁶³ James, 'Establishment of Orchestras'.

opportunities for musicians'.⁶⁴ James explained that his was 'an entirely new policy with regard to orchestral music and the development of public taste for it'.⁶⁵

Heinze and Moses held discussions about establishing 'core' orchestras in each state capital.⁶⁶ This soon came about. On 16 March 1935 the ABC decided to establish orchestras in the smaller states, which the Commission, in internal memoranda, invariably identified as the BAPH states (Brisbane–Adelaide–Perth–Hobart). Heinze's view was that 'the building up of the orchestras in the minor states is essential'.⁶⁷ The review recommended that the standard of the musicians appointed to these smaller orchestras should be equal to that of the permanent musicians engaged by the Commission in Sydney and Melbourne, especially as the smaller the orchestra, the greater the need for efficient playing because individual defects would be easily heard. Conder explained that 'the whole idea of placing these small orchestras in the outlying states is to help develop the efficiency of the Commission's Stations there, and to supply those States with group organizations capable of setting the musical standard in the State'.⁶⁸ To achieve this goal would be a tall order because Moses reckoned that before the mid-1930s only forty-five musicians in Australia had regularly played classical music together and there was a shortage of available accomplished orchestral players.⁶⁹

Heinze played a leading role in consolidating studio orchestras in Sydney and Melbourne, and in establishing permanent orchestras in other state capitals. By increasing its orchestral activities, the ABC hoped to improve the efficiency of its general broadcasting work and employ 140 musicians throughout Australia. It emphasized the need for living symphonic music in the various states as a matter of national importance, for 'to obtain the utmost from symphonic music it was necessary to hear and see it being played'.⁷⁰ Heinze discussed the situation with Moses, who recommended that the ABC should enlarge the Sydney studio orchestra to forty-five players and increase it to seventy or more for public performances.⁷¹ It was also decided to increase the size of the ABC (Melbourne) studio orchestra to thirty players for regular work and to forty-five for special symphony concerts.⁷² In 1936 Joseph Post, who had trained the ABC Wireless Chorus and had directed many of its programmes, was appointed as conductor of the ABC (Melbourne) studio orchestra, and Percy Code, an accomplished trumpet player and conductor of more than 100 studio concerts during seven years in Melbourne, was transferred to conduct the ABC (Sydney) orchestra.⁷³

Clery toured the national stations of the ABC in August 1936 (except for Queensland) and outlined plans for improving services as part of a musical expansion policy. Two main features of the policy were the importation of first-class artists to

⁶⁴ Clery, 'Developing the Musical Cultural Life', 60.

⁶⁵ James, 'Establishment of Orchestras'.

⁶⁶ Buttrose, *Playing for Australia*, 41.

⁶⁷ Bernard Heinze to H.G. Horner, 19 August 1935, box 48, SP 1558/2, ABC Archives, NAA/NSW.

⁶⁸ W.T. Conder to ??, box 47, SP 1558/2, ABC Archives, NAA/NSW.

⁶⁹ Buttrose, *Playing for Australia*, 41.

⁷⁰ 'Broadcast Music. Permanent Orchestra. Formation in Perth', *West Australian* (Perth), 30 September 1935, 16.

⁷¹ Sametz, *Play On!*, 37.

⁷² 'New A.B.C. Plans Symphony Relays', *Herald* (Melbourne), 26 August 1935, 1.

⁷³ 'A.B.C. Conductor. Mr. Joseph Post. Melbourne Orchestra', *Sun* (Sydney), 12 September 1936, 3; 'Move by A.B.C. is Praised. Conductors are Exchanged. Fine Work', *Labor Daily* (Sydney), 9 November 1936, 8; Sametz, *Play On!*, 36–7.

help develop local talent and the establishment of permanent symphony orchestras of between forty-five and seventy-five players.⁷⁴ Although some internationally renowned players occasionally came to Australia in the 1930s, a larger influx was impossible because the Musicians' Union of Australia refused to sanction such importations under its highly protectionist policies at a time when the White Australia Policy and the financial depression were in full force and eighty per cent of musicians in Australia were unemployed. The Musicians' Union of Australia had pledged its support for the White Australia Policy at its annual conference in 1923, and refused to be swayed in its stance by any arguments connected with a shortage of homegrown musical skills.⁷⁵ These factors did not change despite the shortage of experienced, professional orchestral players in Australia in the 1930s.⁷⁶

Establishing permanent orchestras proved easier to carry out in Sydney and Melbourne, where the local studio orchestras had been augmented for public professional performances (see below), than in the smaller state capitals. In 1935 and 1936 the ABC therefore set about creating four small broadcast orchestras, in Perth, Adelaide, Hobart and Brisbane, to add to their existing larger orchestras in Sydney and Melbourne. These orchestras provided music between, during and around news items, programmes and radio plays. In deciding the number of players to be contracted for its studio orchestras, the ABC viewed matters 'from the Australian outlook, rather than from that of any individual state'.⁷⁷ A system of continuous auditions was introduced to keep a check on musical standards. When visiting conductors came to Australia, auditions for new players were undertaken to enable the studio orchestras to be expanded to concert strength.⁷⁸

The ABC only had a certain amount of money available for orchestral development, and allocated players according to the population base and musical talent in the state capitals. Sydney and Melbourne scored over other cities on both these counts. Heinze, whose professional career was based in Victoria, questioned whether Sydney should have a larger orchestra than Melbourne. He noted that visiting artists regarded the Sydney orchestra as the senior orchestra in Australia, and that it received more sympathetic treatment than any other orchestral group. But he added that the ABC would not want that impression 'to gain a hold on the public imagination', and therefore recommended that the Sydney and Melbourne orchestras should be of equal size, with forty-five players.⁷⁹ Heinze's statement clearly supported his own musical ambitions in Melbourne, but it was nevertheless a fair point given the contribution Melbourne was then making to classical musical performance in Australia. Barry suggested, however, that the ABC was justified in having forty-five contracted players in Sydney compared

⁷⁴ L. Fitz-Henry, 'Overseas Celebrities to Tour National Stations. Omission of Brisbane Arouses Protests from Musical Bodies', *Sunday Mail* (Brisbane), 8 March 1936, 8.

⁷⁵ Kay Dreyfus, *Silences and Secrets: The Australian Experience of the Weintraubs Syncopators* (Clayton, VIC: Monash University Publishing, 2013), 17, 80, 119; Bronwen Arthur, 'Ban the Talkies! Sound Film and the Musicians' Union of Australia', *Context* 13 (1997), 54–5.

⁷⁶ Mark Carroll, "'A Flutter in the Orchestras': The Ballets Russes and the Australian Orchestral Situation in the 1930s', in Mark Carroll (ed.), *The Ballets Russes in Australia and Beyond* (Kent Town, SA: Wakefield Press, 2011), 142.

⁷⁷ Bernard Heinze to Charles Moses, 15 August 1939, box 28, SP 1558/2, ABC Archives, NAA/NSW.

⁷⁸ 'Mr. W.J. Cleary defends standards of A.B.C. Orchestras', *Telegraph* (Brisbane), 19 June 1937, 1.

⁷⁹ Heinze to Moses, 15 August 1939.

with Melbourne's thirty-five on account of the larger size of Sydney and its larger array of orchestral talent.⁸⁰

While visiting Perth in 1935, Cleary discussed the formation of a new, permanent orchestra with Basil Kirke, the manager of the 6WF station. He also dealt with tenders for the erection of a new studio for that station.⁸¹ Heinze was charged with responsibility for selecting members of the permanent orchestra to be established at 6WF by the ABC. He was accompanied by E.J. Roberts, Musical Director in Sydney for the Commission, who was to prepare the orchestra for its first concerts. Roberts had once been leader of the Covent Garden Orchestra and the London Symphony Orchestra but had taken up conducting in Australia.⁸² He was expected to spend between six and eight weeks in Perth. After his departure, a permanent conductor would be appointed.⁸³ Heinze and Roberts conducted the auditions for the ABC (Perth) Orchestra in the 6WF studios.⁸⁴

The standard of the existing amateur Perth Symphony Orchestra was very poor, and the same was true of the ABC's Western Studio Orchestra.⁸⁵ Heinze did not mince his verdict on its lack of musical ability: he was 'firmly convinced that no good purpose can be served by continuing to support this body of instrumentalists ... many of its players are hopelessly inefficient in primary questions of technique and musicianship'.⁸⁶ Heinze was privately critical of Roberts, who had originally been appointed to conduct dinner-time music, musical comedy and accompaniments to light numbers rather than symphonic music.⁸⁷ W. Nelson Burton, who had studied cello at the Royal Academy of Music, London, at the end of World War I, and who was the existing conductor of the Western Studio Orchestra, was appointed conductor of the 6WF Studio Orchestra. In 1936 this orchestra, sponsored by the ABC, was augmented to become the Perth Symphony Orchestra for the ABC's public concerts. It was based at Broadcast House, Perth, situated in St. George's Terrace next to the Supreme Court Gardens, and acquired by the ABC in 1936. Burton had the useful skill, for a small orchestra, of being able to arrange parts for different instruments to play if all instruments were not available.⁸⁸

Other states soon followed suit. In February 1936, four leading members of the ABC visited Launceston to establish what was needed there to support a studio orchestra in Tasmania. The visitors were Cleary, Heinze, Moses and the Commissioner of the ABC, Mrs. May Couchman. The impetus behind the visit lay in the belief that major developments should be discussed face to face rather than in writing. Cleary noted that the

⁸⁰ Keith Barry to Charles Moses, 27 September 1939, box 28, SP 1558/2, ABC Archives, NAA/NSW.

⁸¹ 'Broadcasting in Western Australia. Chairman of the A.B.C. Visits Perth', *Telegraph* (Brisbane), 10 August 1935, 8.

⁸² Barry to Moses, 27 September 1939.

⁸³ 'Broadcast Music', 16.

⁸⁴ 'Auditions for New Perth A.B.C. Orchestra', *Daily News* (Perth), 3 October 1935, 5.

⁸⁵ A.H. Kornweibel, *Apollo and the Pioneers: The Story of the First Hundred Years of Music in Western Australia* (Perth: Music Council of Western Australia, 1973), 91.

⁸⁶ Report from Prof. Bernard Heinze on his visit to Perth and Adelaide, addressed to the Chairman of the ABC, 1 November 1935, box 47, SP 1558/2, ABC Archives, NAA/NSW.

⁸⁷ Bernard Heinze to the General Manager, 4 May 1935, box 48, SP 1558/2, ABC Archives, NAA/NSW.

⁸⁸ Geoffrey Blainey and Ronda Jamieson (eds.), *Charles Court: The Early Years* (Fremantle: Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 1990), 138; Marcia Harrison, *West Australian Symphony Orchestra: Celebrating 75 Years* (Perth: West Australian Symphony Orchestra, 2003), 7, 11, 13–14.

ABC did not want to consider broadcasting opportunities purely on the basis of revenue received, thereby favouring larger, more populous states, but was committed to taking account of the smaller, outlying states.

In Tasmania, the ABC had decided that orchestral production should be based in Hobart. Heinze found that most of the musicians in existing orchestras in Launceston were amateurs, and unsuitable for the Commission's purposes. He auditioned musicians for the ABC's permanent orchestra in Hobart, many of whom were paid professionally, but found some were below the average standard and others could not be compared with the quality found on the mainland.⁸⁹ The ABC had not been financially successful in Tasmania by 1936 but regarded its duty to the state as equal in nature to its commitment to the larger states.⁹⁰ Moses concluded there was no hope for orchestral music in Tasmania unless the ABC took control by organizing a studio orchestra and putting on concerts.⁹¹

Local musical talent should be encouraged and the Commission wished to promote such talent and to strive for improved musical standards, but realized it had a smaller pool of proficient players to draw upon than in the larger mainland states. The ABC realized it was 'not only pioneering wireless programmes but was performing a national service, and they looked on their problems from the point of view of Australia as a whole'.⁹²

The ABC did not want to establish one central orchestra to serve the whole of Australia because 'it believed it would gradually crush creative thought particularly in the smaller states'.⁹³ Instead, it wanted to decentralize its musical offerings and enable local talent to be heard. Even if it was only possible to form a small studio orchestra in Tasmania that lacked the players to perform larger symphonic works, Cleary argued that 'its value as an asset to Tasmanian broadcasting would be appreciated'.⁹⁴ It was necessary for the ABC to audition trained players because the existing members of the Hobart Orchestral Society and the Hobart String and Chamber Orchestra could produce nothing better than mediocre performances. This was unacceptable to the ABC, which wanted to raise the standard of the Hobart studio orchestra to that of the orchestras in Brisbane, Adelaide and Perth.⁹⁵ James acknowledged the very poor existing standard of orchestral playing in Tasmania, but argued that:

as it is the aim of the Commission to try to bring orchestral music up to a uniform standard in all states, the best method would be to take over the orchestral music in Hobart as is done in other states.⁹⁶

⁸⁹ Report submitted by Prof. Heinze on Recent Visit to Tasmania, 27 February 1936, box 47, SP 1558/2, ABC Archives, NAA/NSW.

⁹⁰ 'Broadcasting in Australia. Work and Objects of Commission. Address by Mr J. W. Kitto', *Mercury* (Hobart), 31 March 1937, 3.

⁹¹ C.J.A. Moses, Copy of memorandum, 25 January 1937, box 28, SP 1558/2, ABC Archives, NAA/NSW.

⁹² 'Broadcasting Control Commissioners Here. Plans for Future Programmes', *Examiner* (Launceston), 25 February 1936, 8.

⁹³ 'Policy of A.B.C. Development of Talent. Proposed New Studio', *Examiner* (Launceston), 22 February 1936, 8.

⁹⁴ 'Goodwill Tour. A.B.C. Officials Arrive. State Orchestra', *Examiner* (Launceston), 21 February 1936, 6.

⁹⁵ C.J.A. Moses, Memorandum to the Commissioners, 25 January 1937, box 28, SP 1558/2, ABC Archives, NAA/NSW.

⁹⁶ James to General Manager, 9 November 1936.

Eventually, a small number of players were deemed satisfactory enough for a studio orchestra. By July 1936 an orchestra of eleven members had been formed, comprising one flute, one clarinet, one trumpet, timpani, piano, three violins, one viola, one cello and one double bass. It was intended that E.J. McCann, ABC Programme Director, and founder of the small orchestra that played for Hobart's radio station 7ZL, would be the orchestra's conductor, but he lacked a secure conducting technique. Instead, Clive Douglas, a young Sydney violinist and composer, who had won several ABC prizes for his compositions and who had been connected with the Commission's orchestras in Melbourne and Sydney, was appointed after he had been interviewed by Heinze and then by Cleary, Moses and Heinze together.⁹⁷ There was no conducting audition; the appointment was made on the basis of Douglas's musical abilities and his activity as a composer. Since the music library at his disposal was inadequate, Douglas used his compositional skills to arrange much music himself, although he struggled to find sufficient scores for three radio programmes a week.⁹⁸

When appointed, Douglas had slender experience as a conductor and his limited knowledge of orchestral scores and conducting techniques soon became apparent in rehearsals.⁹⁹ Nevertheless, as a good judge of musicianship in others, he requested that the Commission should provide instruction classes for the orchestra because 'the standard of the local members, with one or two exceptions, is very much below that of professional players on the mainland'.¹⁰⁰ One possible solution to this problem was to transfer players from one state to another. The ABC did so on a selective basis when the studio orchestras performed concerts, sending twenty-two players from Sydney and Melbourne to Brisbane, Adelaide, Perth and Hobart in 1938; but the costs were too prohibitive to countenance the regular transfer of interstate players.¹⁰¹

In 1939, the ABC granted Douglas's request that he should concurrently serve as conductor of the Hobart Symphony Orchestra as well as of the ABC's studio orchestra in Hobart.¹⁰² Douglas, who succeeded Orchard as conductor of the Hobart Symphony Orchestra, comprising mainly students and amateurs with a few professional players, brought that orchestra and the ABC (Tasmania) studio orchestra closer together to schedule public performances.¹⁰³ To improve his conducting capabilities, the ABC sent Douglas to Melbourne to observe concerts conducted there by Malcolm Sargent and

⁹⁷ Rimon, 'Orchestras', 260; 'A.B.C. Tasmanian Orchestra. Forward Step in Hobart's Musical Development', *Mercury* (Hobart), 1 July 1936, 3; 'Clive Douglas', *Mercury* (Hobart), 9 September 1936, 3; 'The New Conductor of the A.B.C. Tasmanian Orchestra', *Huon and Derwent Times*, 24 September 1936, 8. Douglas's career is summarized in G.W. Howard, 'Douglas, Clive Martin (1903–1977)', in John Ritchie (ed.), *ADB. Volume 14: 1940–1980* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1996), 21–2; Lynne Gavin Douglas, *The Golden Age: Clive Douglas, D.Mus., 1903–1977, Australian Composer and Conductor* (Wollongong: Wirripang, 2011).

⁹⁸ Jennifer Hill, 'Clive Douglas and the ABC: Not a Favourite Aunt', in Nicholas Brown, Peter Campbell, Robyn Holmes, Peter Read and Larry Sitsky (eds.), *One Hand on the Manuscript: Music in Australian Cultural History 1930–1960*, Humanities Research Centre monograph series no. 9 (Canberra: Humanities Research Centre, Australian National University, 1995), 232.

⁹⁹ W. Arundel Orchard to C.J.A. Moses, 3 May 1937, box 28, SP 1558/2, ABC Archives, NAA/NSW.

¹⁰⁰ Clive Douglas to Col. L.R. Thomas, 9 November 1936, box 28, SP 1558/2, ABC Archives, NAA/NSW.

¹⁰¹ 'Orchestras in the Smaller States', extract from Minutes of Meeting of Music Advisory Committee, 30 November and 1 December 1942, box 5, SP 613/1, ABC Archives, NAA/NSW.

¹⁰² 'A.B.C. Gives Approval', *Mercury* (Hobart), 13 April 1939, 14.

¹⁰³ Clive Douglas, 'Autobiography of an Australian composer', 2 typescript vols., Book One, 1903–1947, entry under 1939, box 15, MS 7656, Clive Douglas Papers, State Library of Victoria, Melbourne.

George Szell, both conductors of international repute who had been recruited by the ABC as ‘celebrity’ conductors to tour Australia. During his absence from Tasmania, Joseph Post, conductor of the ABC (Melbourne) Orchestra, filled in for him with the Tasmanian studio orchestra in Hobart.¹⁰⁴ Shortly after the outbreak of World War II, Douglas was transferred from Hobart to Brisbane to become conductor of the ABC studio orchestra there.¹⁰⁵ In 1944, the ABC decided to increase the personnel of its Hobart Studio Orchestra from eleven to seventeen players.¹⁰⁶

The new 5CL permanent studio orchestra in Adelaide, with William Cade as conductor, began to give broadcasts shortly after the new year of 1936. Cade, a native of Adelaide, had started his career as a professional violinist, but had conducted at the Regent and Plaza theatres in Melbourne. He had also guest conducted the South Australian Symphony Orchestra and had served as musical director at the Theatre Royal, Adelaide.¹⁰⁷ The 5CL orchestra comprised fifteen players: one flute, one oboe/cor anglais, one clarinet, one bassoon, two trumpets and one trombone, timpani, piano, three violins, one viola, one cello and one double bass. The players mainly came from local cinema orchestras which were closing down after the introduction of talking pictures.¹⁰⁸ The Australian composer Miriam Hyde noted that during World War II the orchestra was reduced to fourteen permanent players but Cade was resourceful and patient in coping with these slender forces.¹⁰⁹

Visiting Adelaide on behalf of the ABC in August 1936, Heinze found that the orchestra could perform orchestral light music satisfactorily for broadcast, and that Cade rehearsed the ensemble well, appeared to have their confidence and interest, and secured good discipline and efficiency in the playing. The orchestra was used for fifteen hours of work a week, comprising three three-hour rehearsals and three performances of an hour. However, its library was very weak, consisting of only 109 copies of music, ‘including old-fashioned arrangements and threadbare dance tunes and some cheap issues of out-of-date picture house music’. Heinze auditioned several players while in Adelaide. He noted, however, that the studio there was almost impossible for broadcast purposes because it was not soundproof. In addition, technical men walked around it all the time because the only exit from the control rooms was through the main studio.¹¹⁰

Presenting to Cleary the results of his visits to Perth and Adelaide, Heinze noted that the orchestras in both cities would be improved by importing players from the eastern states but that, to begin with, the reconstructed orchestras in the several minor states should consist, if at all possible, entirely of musicians resident in those states, and that they should be engaged on probation. After permanent conductors were

¹⁰⁴ ‘A.B.C. Visitors’, *Examiner* (Launceston), 3 August 1939, 9.

¹⁰⁵ Clive Douglas, ‘Shades of the Past’, typescript autobiography, 1962, box 14, MS 7656, Clive Douglas Papers, State Library of Victoria, Melbourne.

¹⁰⁶ J.E. Thorpe to Charles Moses, 3 September 1944, box 17, Series 613/1, no. 6/6/1, ABC Archives, NAA/NSW.

¹⁰⁷ ‘Visiting Conductor. The Career of Mr. William Cade’, *West Australian* (Perth), 22 May 1941, 6.

¹⁰⁸ ‘Orchestra’s First Rehearsal. Hornet Moth’, *News* (Adelaide), 7 January 1936, 10; Szuster, ‘Concert Life in Adelaide’, 185. For Cade’s career, see Joyce Gibberd, ‘Cade, William Richard (Bill) (1883–1957)’, in John Ritchie (ed.), *ADB. Volume 13: 1940–1980* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1993), 331; James Glennon, ‘Personalities Remembered No. 74: William R. Cade’, typescript from a radio series broadcast from 5CL, 1970–1, copy at the State Library of South Australia, Adelaide.

¹⁰⁹ Miriam Hyde, *Complete Accord* (Sydney: Currency Press, 1991), 102.

¹¹⁰ Bernard Heinze to C.J.A. Moses, 14 August 1936, box 47, SP 1558/2, ABC Archives, NAA/NSW.

appointed, musical advisers could furnish the ABC with a report about whether or not these orchestras were satisfactory and then it could be decided whether importing musicians from other states would be necessary. Heinze recommended this way of proceeding for two reasons. One was to take account of unemployment among the ranks of musicians. The other was that such procedures would demonstrate that the ABC was sincere in its desire to furnish its studios with local musicians where they conformed to the necessary standard.¹¹¹

Heinze had planned to visit Brisbane in October 1935, but this was postponed until April 1936 when three executives from the ABC, including Heinze, visited Brisbane to audition about 150 players for positions in a new ABC studio orchestra.¹¹² Commentary in the Brisbane press expressed dismay that Brisbane had been 'consistently overlooked' and might be 'relegated to the unhappy position of the Cinderella among the mainland capital cities'.¹¹³ But there was a recognition that local musicians needed to engage with the interests of the ABC to stimulate musical standards and provide an appropriately capable broadcast orchestra based in Brisbane.¹¹⁴

The Queensland politician Joseph Francis had tried to persuade the ABC to establish a permanent orchestra in Brisbane on similar lines to those operating in Sydney and Melbourne in mid-1935. Relays of studio concerts from those two cities were heard over Queensland's radio station 4QG, but the number of instrumentalists available in Brisbane had not yet been corralled into a permanent orchestra there. Francis pressed the claims of 'the more remote states for such orchestras', and found that Cleary and Heinze were already 'developing a comprehensive plan in respect of orchestral organization for the whole of Australia'. Francis realized there were numerous issues for the ABC to consider in their plans. They had to take account of the musical talent available in different states; the amateur and semi-professional groups already functioning in different locations; the hiring of suitable conductors; the two-hour time difference in broadcasting concerts in the eastern states compared with Perth; and the total cost of creating state studio orchestras compared with other forms of entertainment such as light music, drama, news and talks. He was aware that the Melbourne and Sydney orchestras were keen to augment their size through additional funding from the ABC rather than monies being diverted to the less developed states. But he also outlined a case for an ABC-supported orchestra in Brisbane.¹¹⁵

There had been occasional use of such orchestras in Queensland, both on government-owned and commercial radio stations, but this was the first time that such an orchestra was employed for regular use in Brisbane. The ABC (Brisbane) studio orchestra took over the activities of the Brisbane Concert Orchestra, which had for several years broadcast through ABC station 4QG. It was a small body of fifteen players, conducted by E.J. Roberts, augmented to about forty players for public concerts.¹¹⁶

¹¹¹ Bernard Heinze to W.J. Cleary, 1 November 1935, MS 1924, Herbert and Ivy Brookes Papers, National Library of Australia, Canberra.

¹¹² 'For A.B.C. Queensland Musicians. Many Being Tested', *Cairns Post*, 4 May 1936, 7.

¹¹³ 'Music and the Drama', *Courier-Mail* (Brisbane), 26 October 1935, 18.

¹¹⁴ H.T.H., 'Music and the Drama', *Courier-Mail* (Brisbane), 25 April 1936, 20.

¹¹⁵ 'Form Permanent Orchestras. Mr Jos. Francis Tells of A.B.C. Move Benefit Queensland', *Telegraph* (Brisbane), 30 July 1935, 13. Francis's ideas reflected many points raised with him by Cleary: see W.J. Cleary, 'Conversation with Mr J. Francis', 26 July 1936, box 28, SP 1558/2, ABC Archives, NAA/NSW.

¹¹⁶ 'New Radio Orchestra, Monologist to Tour', *Herald* (Melbourne), 25 June 1936, 41.

The ABC claimed it could not increase the strength of the ABC (Brisbane) orchestra until Brisbane demonstrated ‘a keener appreciation of music in the concert hall’.¹¹⁷ An opposite view was expressed in a Brisbane newspaper column claiming that the ABC should cease to regard station 4QG as ‘the Cinderella of the National network’.¹¹⁸ In August 1936, Nelson Burton was transferred from Perth to Brisbane to take charge of the ABC orchestra there. Roberts, the senior conductor of the ABC, had just spent seven weeks in Brisbane organizing that orchestra for the ABC national station, and now returned to Perth as Musical Director of the ABC (Perth) studio orchestra, which he had previously spent four months training.¹¹⁹

The orchestra organized by Roberts in Brisbane was augmented from time to time in association with the Queensland State and Municipal Orchestra under George Sampson—then the most experienced local conductor—for public and orchestral concerts. On those occasions the players in the 4QG orchestra were the leaders in the various sections of the State and Municipal Orchestra.¹²⁰ The establishment of the permanent studio orchestra at 4QG made more rehearsals and public orchestral performances possible. The Brisbane studio orchestra’s personnel comprised one flute, one oboe/cor anglais, one clarinet, one bassoon, one horn, one trumpet, one trombone, timpani, four violins, one viola, one cello and one double bass. The orchestra was required to attend six three-hour sessions per week.¹²¹ With the formation of a studio orchestra, the 4QG station was given every opportunity to broadcast orchestral music, including national relays.¹²² The first full dress studio appearance of the ABC (Brisbane) orchestra occurred on 30 June 1936. The programme comprised light orchestral music in the form of the Bohemian-German composer Fidelio F. Finke’s *Opera Buffe Overture*, Haydn Wood’s suite *A Day in Fairyland* and a potpourri from Edward German’s comic opera *Tom Jones*.¹²³

In 1937, together with Sampson and the Brisbane Town Clerk, Moses conducted negotiations that led to the disbandment of the Queensland State and Municipal Orchestra. The library and trust fund of the orchestra were placed at the disposal of the ABC and a new professional orchestra, the Brisbane Symphony Orchestra, was established. Around half the players were part of the 4QG studio orchestra; the rest were hired to augment the size of the orchestra for public concerts.¹²⁴ The ABC gave preference to local talent wherever possible for the new studio orchestra, but if there were weaknesses in any section it was obliged to maintain its high standard of efficiency to introduce competent players from the southern states.¹²⁵

¹¹⁷ ‘Reduction of 1/ in Licence fee would mean £40,000 to A.B.C.’, *Telegraph* (Brisbane), 20 August 1937, 8.

¹¹⁸ Fitz-Henry, ‘Overseas Celebrities to Tour National Stations’, 8.

¹¹⁹ ‘New A.B.C. Conductor’, *West Australian* (Perth), 27 August 1936, 9; ‘Mr W. Nelson Burton of Perth Permanent A.B.C. Orchestra Head’, *Telegraph* (Brisbane), 4 August 1936, 13.

¹²⁰ ‘New Radio Orchestra’, 41.

¹²¹ ‘A. H. Thomas, Much Hard Work Ahead’, *Telegraph* (Brisbane), 11 March 1936, 8; ‘Musical Standards. A.B.C. will Help’, *Townsville Daily Bulletin*, 1 May 1936, 4.

¹²² ‘A.B.C.’s Improvement Plans for Queensland’, *Queenslander* (Brisbane), 1 April 1937, 11.

¹²³ ‘A.B.C. (Brisbane) Orchestra. First Full Dress Concert Programme. Roy Agnew Again’, *Telegraph* (Brisbane), 11 July 1936, 15.

¹²⁴ Schultz, ‘Brisbane Orchestras’, 22–5; George Sampson, ‘Tales of the Pioneers—Pioneering Music in Brisbane’, typescript, 5 May 1946, box 1, 50/15, George Sampson Papers, Fryer Library, University of Queensland.

¹²⁵ ‘Orchestra for 4QG. A.B.C. Plans in Queensland Relays and Tours’, *Courier-Mail* (Brisbane), 1 May 1936, 14.

The movement of musicians from Sydney and Melbourne was necessary because there were not then, in each Australian state capital, enough players of certain instruments essential for a symphony orchestra. Sydney and Melbourne were the only two cities that could offer sufficient work for musicians to live in comfort.¹²⁶ From 1938 to 1940 the number of players sent to the smaller states from Sydney or Melbourne comprised between eight and ten for Brisbane, seven or eight for Adelaide and four for Perth. When World War II began, the number of interstate players required in Adelaide increased significantly, amounting to eleven players in 1941 and eighteen in 1942. Oboes, bassoons, horns and strings were always in short supply in the BAPH states.¹²⁷

The musical standard of these studio orchestras varied considerably; all had some weaknesses. Tasmania gave particular and continued concern. The conductor Clive Douglas wrote down his assessment of the situation:

Tasmania, musically in 1936, was a place of limited resources. The musical standard was low, as were the number of capable musicians. One was forced to improvise and devise ways and means of presenting programmes in a manner not comparable with Sydney or Melbourne.¹²⁸

In late 1936, Douglas requested that the ABC should permanently augment the Hobart studio orchestra by regularly employing players on the casual list and by engaging two additional violinists. The standard of the local players was far below that found on the mainland; some players were self-taught but lacked finesse; and part of the rehearsal time was given over to technical exercises and wasted with correction of the violinists' fingering and bowing faults. Extra brass players were needed to give fullness to the small orchestra's broadcasts. Many players, owing to the isolation of Tasmanian culture, had never played in a first-class orchestra and therefore needed guidance from mainland players who had.¹²⁹ By 1937 there was only one French horn player in Tasmania, and he was the trumpet player in the Commission's studio orchestra. There was no adequate bassoonist or oboist.¹³⁰

The ABC's studio orchestra in Tasmania and the Hobart Orchestral Society merged in 1939 to become the Hobart Symphony Orchestra.¹³¹ The orchestra was producing a poor standard during World War II and the ABC therefore felt it inadvisable to increase the number of orchestral concerts given in Hobart.¹³² Symphonic music broadcast to Tasmania from the Commission's Sydney base was of a higher musical standard than could be hoped for from the Hobart Symphony Orchestra.¹³³ The Chairman and Commissioners of the ABC were informed that broadcast performances of the Hobart studio orchestra:

Are avoided by Tasmanian listeners and for discerning music appreciators have no appeal whatever. Not to speak unkindly, the impression received is that of glorified

¹²⁶ George Sampson, 'Music and National Life', *Brisbane Cathedral Notes*, 1 June 1936, box 1, 50/17, George Sampson Papers, Fryer Library, University of Queensland.

¹²⁷ W.G. James, 'Celebrity Orchestral Concerts', 3 August 1942, box 47, SP 1558/2, ABC Archives, NAA/NSW.

¹²⁸ Douglas, 'Autobiography of an Australian composer', Book One, 1903–1947.

¹²⁹ Douglas to Thomas, 9 November 1936.

¹³⁰ Moses, Copy of memorandum.

¹³¹ Rimon, 'Orchestras', 260.

¹³² Charles Moses, Memorandum to all Commissioners, 12 August 1944, box 17, Series 613/1, no. 6/6/1, ABC Archives, NAA/NSW.

¹³³ Memorandum of Keith Barry, 10 August 1944, box 17, Series 613/1, no. 6/6/1, ABC Archives, NAA/NSW.

Manly ferry boat musical catering. This results in part from lack of appropriate balance in the composition of the orchestra but mainly from its musical weakness.¹³⁴

Tasmania was not the only problem. Studio performances of the ABC orchestras in Sydney and Adelaide could demonstrate poor playing in terms of intonation, ensemble and general routine. They often sounded little better than amateur groups. Heinze's opinion was that some conductors, such as Cade, were capable of conducting a small studio orchestra in light orchestral music but conducting large symphonic concerts was beyond them aurally and technically.¹³⁵ Around 1939 some individual players of the Perth Symphony Orchestra were good, but there was only one permanent cellist and the wind players had not been trained in orchestral or symphonic works. Roberts could conduct works he knew quite competently but was floored by new repertoire. He was not really equipped to be a conductor of serious music. He was liked by orchestral players but was known as 'shellshock' Roberts because of his jerky style of conducting. Such was the lack of Australian-resident conducting talent at the time, however, that it would have been difficult to engage anyone other than Roberts in Perth.¹³⁶ Before the studio orchestras were created, conductors such as Roberts and Cade were hired because they were the best available even though they lacked real musical leadership. Thus, Roberts and Cade were, according to Cleary, 'steady plodding tradesmen ... the sergeant-majors who drill the platoon, but do not plan campaigns'.¹³⁷

Both Sargent and Szell, as high-profile visiting conductors, complained about poor orchestral standards in Brisbane.¹³⁸ The visiting Finnish conductor Georg Schnéevoigt stated that the Adelaide and Perth orchestras were 'very weak in their artistic composition'.¹³⁹ Occasional comments that the ABC orchestras were first-class in standard and not far behind the level of the major European and American orchestras were wide of the mark. Keith Barry compared the standard of the first orchestral concert he heard in Australia in 1936 with concerts he had attended in London by the London Philharmonic, London Symphony and BBC Symphony orchestras, and stated that there was no comparison in either the playing or the conducting.¹⁴⁰ But it was not just the playing standard of the orchestras that caused concern; a lack of administrative efficiency and a limited repertoire were also noted in some cases. Thus Douglas reported that, when the ABC transferred him to Brisbane in 1941, most of the orchestra's library was lying around waiting to be filed or sorted and the whole studio repertoire of the

¹³⁴ J.E. Thorp to Chairman and Commissioners of the ABC, 21 July 1944, box 17, Series 613/1, no. 6/6/1, ABC Archives, NAA/NSW.

¹³⁵ Bernard Heinze to C.J.A. Moses, 24 January 1939, box 28, SP 1558/2, ABC Archives, NAA/NSW.

¹³⁶ Virginia Goodman, *Isadore Goodman: A Life in Music* (Sydney: Collins, 1983), 43; Leo Denis (Vaughan) Hanly, Oral History, typescript, 35, 37, J.S. Battye Library of West Australian History, State Library of Western Australia.

¹³⁷ W.J. Cleary to Herbert Brookes, 20 August 1934, box 91, MS 1924, Herbert and Ivy Brookes Papers, National Library of Australia, Canberra.

¹³⁸ Malcolm Sargent to W.G. James, 2 August 1938, box 21, SP 1558/2, ABC Archives, NAA/NSW.

¹³⁹ Georg Schnéevoigt to W.J. Cleary, 21 August 1940, box 47, SP 1558/2, ABC Archives, NAA/NSW.

¹⁴⁰ Keith Barry to the General Manager, 24 February 1939, box 28, SP 1558/2, ABC Archives, NAA/NSW.

ABC (Brisbane) Orchestra comprised ‘a few pot-boiled pieces, played so often that the notes on the pages were almost scrubbed out with the players’ gaze’.¹⁴¹

In 1942 the ABC expressed concern about the orchestras in the smaller, BAPH states. Barry noted one of their major deficiencies when he commented ‘that they are entirely dependent on a combination which can only be described as a large café orchestra’.¹⁴² The costs of sending players interstate from Sydney and Melbourne to Brisbane, Adelaide, Perth and Hobart in wartime were considerable.¹⁴³ Yet the Commission wished to continue its federal music policy for orchestras for as long as it was financially viable. The Music Advisory Committee of the ABC stated that:

the standing orchestras in all States ... should not be dispensed with, nor, if possible, reduced in numbers. These Units form the ‘backbone’ of the Commission’s musical activities and indeed keep alive in the minds of music lovers the existence in their midst of at least the nucleus of a Symphony Orchestra.

The Music Advisory Committee nevertheless acknowledged problems of musical quality in performances from the outlying states. Their solution was not to disband the smaller orchestras but to limit the national relays of some state orchestras, particularly that in Brisbane. They also recommended that the personnel of the Commission’s orchestras be improved wherever possible. They hoped in due course to increase the size of the ABC orchestras in Perth and Hobart, suggesting that ‘the larger the standing Orchestra the more satisfactory the position both with regard to Studio Programmes and Public Orchestral Concerts’.¹⁴⁴

Within a few years in the late 1930s, the ABC had established permanent studio orchestras in each Australian state capital. It became the largest employer of musicians in the nation and the Musicians’ Union of Australia considered that ‘immediately prior to its advent, good orchestral music was practically non-existent in Australia’.¹⁴⁵ The creation of studio orchestras was a successful part of the federal policy of broadcasting followed by the ABC that catered for all of Australia and the musical needs of its six states. The mutual cooperation of Cleary, Heinze, Moses, James and Barry, in their ABC positions, had rolled out the formation of the studio orchestras based on first-hand acquaintance with their musical capabilities through auditions of players and visits to the state capital cities. This formed part of what the visiting conductor Antal Doráti referred to as the ‘professionalising’ of orchestras by removing the remains of ‘dilettante’ elements.¹⁴⁶ Although it was recognized from the outset that the BAPH states could only support smaller orchestras than Sydney or Melbourne, and although musical limitations were acknowledged in those outlying states, the ABC did not

¹⁴¹ Douglas, ‘Autobiography of an Australian composer’, Book One, 1903–1947.

¹⁴² *Joint Parliamentary Committee on Broadcasting, 1941–42: Minutes of Evidence Relating to Broadcasting Together with List of Witnesses and Index* (Canberra: Commonwealth Government Printer, 1942), 433.

¹⁴³ This was acknowledged in ABC Inter-Office Memo, 31 August 1945, box 17, SP 613/1, ABC Archives, NAA/NSW.

¹⁴⁴ Minutes of Meeting of Music Advisory Committee, 30 November and 1 December 1942 (both quotations).

¹⁴⁵ Secretary of the Musicians’ Union of Australia to Joseph A. Lyons, 12 February 1937, Musicians’ Union of Australia, New South Wales Branch, AU NBAC Z 401, box 5, Noel Butlin Archives Centre, Australian National University, Canberra.

¹⁴⁶ Antal Doráti, ‘General Report on the Orchestral Position in Australia’, 2 September 1940, box 47, SP 1558/2, ABC Archives, NAA/NSW.

deviate from its policy of serving the whole of federated Australia. Studio orchestras were not fully created until 1935–1936, but a decade later they were firmly embedded as part of Australia’s musical broadcasting. A number of the conductors of these orchestras had limitations, but they were the best available in Australia at the time.

To increase the size of the studio orchestras would have cost the ABC ‘a staggering sum’.¹⁴⁷ But larger orchestras, based on the nucleus of the studio orchestras, had been assembled in each state for public performances on numerous occasions. By 1941, all of the studio orchestras were augmented for public concerts to include eighty to 100 players in Sydney and Melbourne, and fifty to sixty in other cities.¹⁴⁸ These arrangements meant that full professional orchestras were provided for all public concerts staged under the auspices of the ABC, but it was not yet possible to employ permanently all of the players.¹⁴⁹ By 1939 the ABC expected that government assistance would be supplied so that it could expand the size of its studio orchestras, but the coming of war scotched this possibility.¹⁵⁰ By the end of World War II, however, the ABC decided that the time was ripe to extend the size of their studio orchestras into fully fledged orchestras suitable for both broadcasting and public concerts and able to play large symphonic works. These orchestras were created in all six states between 1944 and 1951 as a natural extension of the studio orchestras the ABC had established in the decade after 1935.¹⁵¹

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¹⁴⁷ ‘Reduction of 1/ in Licence Fee’, 8.

¹⁴⁸ ‘Music and the Drama. What the ABC is Doing’, *Cairns Post*, 5 April 1941, 8.

¹⁴⁹ *Joint Parliamentary Committee on Broadcasting*, 588.

¹⁵⁰ Waterhouse, *Private Pleasures, Public Leisure*, 142.

¹⁵¹ Kenneth Morgan, ‘Cultural Advance: The Formation of Australia’s Permanent Symphony Orchestras’, *Musicology Australia*, 33/1 (2011), 69–93.