

# A web of connections

## The orchestral ledger in the Louise Hanson-Dyer Music Library

Alison Rabinovici

One of the treasures of the Louise Hanson-Dyer Music Library is a ledger which documents the library's holdings of orchestral music, and records the loans of those scores and parts for a period of nearly 50 years, from 1910 to 1954. It is, perhaps, the only extant—and complete—document of its kind in Australia. The ledger was produced by E. Whitehead & Co., of 238 Collins Street, Melbourne, and is dated '27/8/1910'. It is an impressive document in its own right, consisting of nearly 900 pages held between two massive linen-covered compressed cardboard covers. Nearly 100 years later, it was showing the combined effects of age, insect and water damage, and neglect.

The ledger contains within its pages a view into aspects of the history of music education at the University of Melbourne. It gives at least a partial view of programming and performance, and hence the reception, of music in Melbourne in the first half of the 20th century. As a record of loans of orchestral music to both individuals and institutions, it allows some unexpected glimpses into the musical world of those borrowers; it represents a web of connections between the University and its staff and students, and with the wider musical communities of Melbourne



and further afield. Until the recent conservation of the ledger, information contained within it was inaccessible.

A fieldwork placement in the subject 'History in the Field' with Dr Andrew Brown-May and Dr June Senyard in 2006 offered me the opportunity to undertake the first phase of the conservation management program of the orchestral ledger.<sup>1</sup> The project came under the umbrella of the Student Projects Program (Cultural Collections) coordinated by Helen Arnoldi.

Evelyn Portek, Music Librarian of the Louise Hanson-Dyer Music Library, represented the library's interests in the project, while Jude Fraser, Grimwade Conservator at the University's Centre for Cultural Materials Conservation, provided advice on the appropriate conservation approach and method, with further support from Wendy Walters, who was then Coordinator of Conservation Programs in Information Services.

In addition to the conservation and stabilisation of the ledger, much



University of Melbourne Conservatorium of Music, Orchestral ledger, 1910–1954, unpublished manuscript, Louise Hanson-Dyer Music Library, Rare Collections.

The ledger before treatment was in a parlous state. Photography by Alison Rabinovici.

of the information on each page has been entered into a searchable database, allowing an alternative form of information access. The ledger itself was systematically photographed during the conservation process, thus retaining a record of its original condition. After hours of intermittent work over many months, the conservation of the ledger was finally completed in June 2008. It is now housed in the Rare Collections of the Louise Hanson-Dyer Music Library.

The ledger presented a formidable conservation challenge. The pages were interlocked and adhered to each other as a result of water damage. Many of the visible pages showed obvious folding, foxing and creasing. Brittle and discoloured with mud and dust particles, it was not possible to turn the pages without risking further damage. Each page needed to be carefully separated and removed for individual attention and then brush cleaned and vacuumed with a HEPA-filter industrial vacuum cleaner. Dirt and insect remains were removed where possible with either a vinyl eraser or pulverised vinyl and where necessary, sheets were stabilised and tears mended with archival tape. Each sheet was then photographed, placed in an archival quality polyester sleeve, and finally stored in archival boxes. The database was constructed as the

conservation process proceeded, and records much of the information entered on each page.

Each sheet of the ledger (approximately 30 x 42 cm) is devoted to a particular orchestral work, and records the title, composer, publisher, library shelf location, hiring charge, details of purchase or donation, details of parts and scores borrowed, loan and return dates, names of the borrowers—both individuals and organisations—and often an address. Of the 867 orchestral works recorded in the ledger, 302 were never borrowed. Effectively, then, the ledger lists 565 works from which information can be drawn concerning the University's connections with people and institutions. Symphonies fill the earliest pages, followed by piano concertos, violin concertos and overtures, listed alphabetically by composer. Marches, dances, incidental music, suites, ballet music, oratorio selections, and so on, follow.

It is perhaps no surprise to note that the work loaned most frequently—63 times—was Handel's *Messiah*. It was also one of the earliest purchases for the Music Library, the first loan being recorded in 1913. Schumann's Concerto for piano in A minor, Op. 54, comes second, borrowed 48 times, and Rachmaninov's Concerto no. 2 for

piano & orchestra, Op. 18, is third, borrowed 46 times. Composers from the Austro-Germanic tradition represented by multiple works which were frequently borrowed include Wagner, Beethoven, Schubert, Mendelssohn, Mozart, Bach and Haydn. Sibelius and Grieg were also popular choices. The ledger lists 41 works by the Australian, Percy Grainger, mostly donated by the composer himself. Contemporary consumer resistance is evident, however, as with the exception of *Shepherd's Hey*, his works were rarely borrowed.

Statistics can be gleaned from the register, but should be viewed with the utmost caution. It does appear to reflect the desire of the University to have on its library shelves the canonical works, and perhaps the preferences of conductors and audiences. But the availability of orchestral music from an increasing number of public and private music libraries over succeeding decades must have influenced purchasing policies and borrowing trends. Only a comparative study of other orchestral ledgers, combined with a study of concert programs and reviews for the relevant period, would yield more useful information.

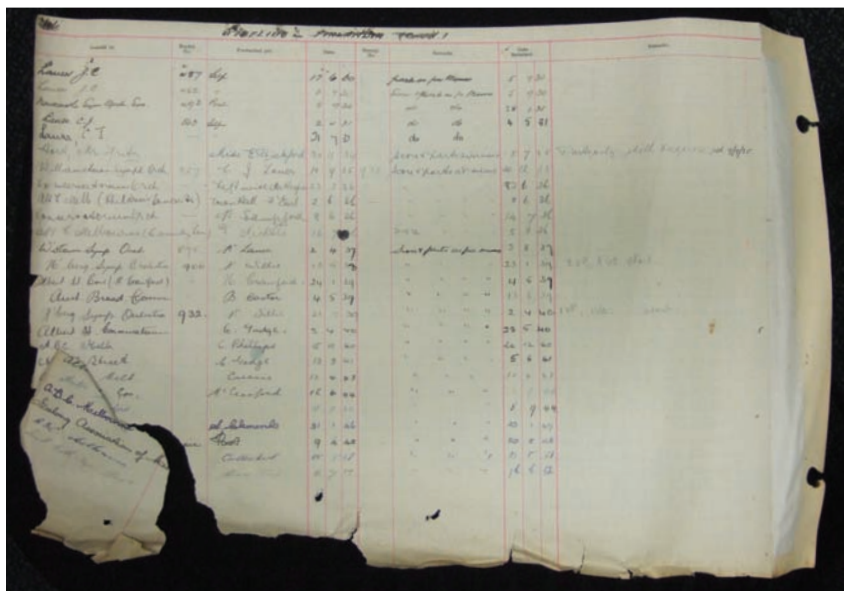
Major users were, not surprisingly, the Melbourne University

Conservatorium itself and the ABC orchestras, both in Melbourne and further afield. Theatre orchestras are represented, as are the orchestras of the Musicians' Union, the Victorian Railways Institute, the Victorian Professional Orchestra, schools and convents. Music was posted interstate to other universities, to orchestral societies in Adelaide, Sydney, Toowoomba, Brisbane, Newcastle, Hobart, Launceston, Canberra and Perth, and even overseas to New Zealand and Hawaii. Closer to home, a thriving world of amateur orchestras in suburban Melbourne and country Victoria emerges from the ledger pages. Music was loaned to orchestras in Williamstown, Heidelberg, Malvern, Kew, South Melbourne, Ivanhoe and Alphington, to the South Suburban Orchestral Society and the Zelman Memorial Orchestra. Parts and scores were sent by train to Bendigo, Geelong, Warrnambool, Horsham, Yallourn and Ballarat. The National Fitness Association (later the National Music Camp movement) is also represented. Quite clearly the ledger offers enormous potential for research into many aspects of the musical fabric of early to mid-20th century Australia, and provides inspiration for a comparative study of amateur orchestral playing in Melbourne and beyond.

The emergent picture of loans and borrowings, of taste and repertoire, holds less fascination perhaps than the stories of individual library users which emerge from the ledger pages. It is this web of connections formed between the University and the wider musical community that gives the ledger particular importance for future research. This is illustrated in the following case studies.

C.J. Lauer (1897–1971),<sup>2</sup> conductor of the Williamstown Orchestral Society, was a regular borrower from 1927 to 1937. An accountant by profession,<sup>3</sup> Lauer lived

in Williamstown for most of his life. He habitually collected scores and parts himself from the University; one can imagine him taking the tram from his city office during his lunch break, or calling in after work. As a young man, Lauer studied violin and viola with Albert Parkes (born 1868), a successful teacher and violinist, long resident in Williamstown. Parkes's son, Cecil, was an Australian 'musical genius' who led the Williamstown orchestra at the age of 14, and as a 17 year old in 1920, toured the United States.<sup>4</sup> The Williamstown orchestra was a particularly long-lived





of the world, where they worked as itinerant street musicians. Many of these musicians were children—harpists, violinists and flautists—who were contracted to a *padrone*, or master, by their parents. The plight of these child-musicians became a major topic in the French, Italian and American newspapers in the 1860s and 1870s.<sup>12</sup> Agostino Di Gilia and Antonio Briglia,<sup>13</sup> both from Mariscovetere, were two particularly notorious *padroni* of the period, whose activities were well documented in the American press, often in a particularly sensationalist manner.<sup>14</sup>

Melbourne police reports in the 1880s also expressed concern about the number of young Italian child musicians on the streets whose parents or guardians 'refused to give any particulars regarding themselves or their offspring'.<sup>15</sup> But by the 1890s until World War I, Italian musicians were arriving with their extended families from southern Italy,<sup>16</sup> and Carlton's population grew from this nucleus of musician families.

Giuseppe Briglia (born Mariscovetere 1878, died Melbourne 1960) arrived in Melbourne with his family on 8 November 1900.<sup>17</sup> Briglia was to play an important role in music in Melbourne, in both the Italian and wider communities.

Although the ledger records do not specify for which orchestra he was borrowing, Briglia played both violin and viola in the Italian community's Cavour Club Orchestra,<sup>18</sup> and later became its conductor. He also played in and conducted theatre and opera orchestras around Melbourne. By 1912 Briglia's Orchestra was, along with the Ricco, Curcio, and Cerbasi orchestras, providing music for all kinds of social occasions.<sup>19</sup> Suggestive of the kind of skills that music students did not acquire at the University, Briglia by 1918 offered 'a training class for advanced students desirous of obtaining orchestral experience before applying for admittance into the professional symphony orchestras. Not a school for individual instruction or beginners.'<sup>20</sup>

By 1930, Briglia was borrowing music for the Victorian Professional Orchestra, founded in 1929 for the benefit of theatre musicians thrown out of employment by the 'talkies'.<sup>21</sup> Silent movies had routinely enjoyed orchestral accompaniment, the size of the ensemble dependent on the size and prestige of the theatre.<sup>22</sup> Forty-five musicians gave the first concert in 1929, to an audience of nearly 2,000. The program mainly consisted of opera overtures, arrangements of popular operatic selections, light

orchestral pieces,<sup>23</sup> and a number of violin and piano concertos.<sup>24</sup> The recession nearly forced the closure of the orchestra in 1931, as the income from performances was barely enough to cover the musicians' expenses.<sup>25</sup>

Briglia's activities within the Italian community were not confined to music. He was a member of the Cavour Club from 1917, serving variously as president and treasurer for over 20 years, until the forced closure of the club when Italy entered the war in June 1940. Always active in Italian community affairs, Briglia, along with Joseph Santamaria (father of B.A. Santamaria), attempted to establish an Italian language newspaper in Melbourne, to be known as *L'Unita*.<sup>26</sup>

Briglia in many ways typified the part played by Melbourne's Italian community in the wider Australian musical scene. He moved easily from small ensembles for private and public functions, orchestral work, paid and unpaid, for the Italian community, conducting and playing in theatre orchestras, and teaching. Briglia and his family were remembered with love and respect by Melbourne's Italian and wider musical community.<sup>27</sup>

Succeeding generations of Italian-Australians continued to extend the web of connection with music at the University. Briglia's son Carlo, who

Di Gilio's Band at a private function at 1 Jervis Street, East St Kilda, 1911. Included is Roccantonio Di Gilio, who with his brother Michelangelo founded the band in the late 19th century and acted as booking agents for other musicians. Also pictured are Francesco Domenico [Frank] Leone and Leonardo Labattaglia (standing, fourth from right). The band played at formal occasions such as weddings, in theatres and restaurants and occasionally busked in the streets of inner Melbourne. Most of the musicians in the band were from Basilicata. Reproduced with permission of the Italian Historical Society—COASIT.

also became a well-known Melbourne musician, studied at the Conservatorium, as did another Australian-born Italian, Augustino (August) Di Gilio (1897–1950). The Di Gilio family, a number of them musicians, arrived in Australia in 1893.<sup>28</sup> August studied flute with his uncle, Roccantonio (Rocco), who ran the Di Gilio Band, which played for major functions such as the Tango Exhibition and Grand Opening of the St Kilda *Palais de Danse* in December 1913,<sup>29</sup> in theatres and restaurants and occasionally even busked in the streets of inner Melbourne.<sup>30</sup> Rocco Di Gilio played in the Marshall-Hall Orchestra, exemplifying the way in which so many musicians of humble backgrounds moved between two very different worlds. August also studied the violin, possibly at the Albert Street Conservatorium.<sup>31</sup> Showing exceptional talent at an early age, he won the open violin solo for three consecutive years at the Ballarat South Street Competition, 1910 to 1912, aged only 13 on the first occasion.<sup>32</sup> Di Gilio was awarded a University of Melbourne Conservatorium Exhibition in 1913, 1914 and 1915, enrolled in the first year of a Diploma of Music in 1914, and was eventually awarded the Diploma in December 1922, despite



having failed acoustics in his final year.<sup>33</sup> A rather plaintive note appears in the minutes of the Conservatorium in July 1921: 'A report was made that Mr Di Gilio was anxious that something should be done to enable him to take out his Diploma for which he had done everything with the exception of passing in the subject of Acoustics.'<sup>34</sup> Acoustics and harmony and counterpoint appear to have been significant hurdles for

more than one music student in the early decades of the Conservatorium. August Di Gilio taught at the University Conservatorium from 1919 (aged only 22) until 1939.<sup>35</sup> His rise in the University was rapid, as the Conservatorium's minutes show that he was appointed as a probation examiner in 1921, an examiner for the Australian Music Examinations Board (AMEB) in 1922 and a teacher of both violin and flute by 1924.<sup>36</sup> He

Evelyn Portek, Music Librarian, with some of the pages of the ledger following cleaning, flattening and rehousing in Mylar polyester sleeves, stored within an acid-free cardboard archival box. The pages can now safely be consulted by researchers. Photography by Alison Rabinovici.

led the orchestra in 1922,<sup>37</sup> and he may well have borrowed music from the library in this capacity, as he did for many years for the Kew Symphony Orchestra.

As well as teaching at the University's Conservatorium, Di Gilio taught at the New Conservatorium,<sup>38</sup> and continued a busy teaching practice for many years in city studios at Suttons and Allan's music stores. He was perhaps one of the first Australians of Italian descent to play with the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, a position he held until his untimely death in 1950. As a teacher, he not only had longstanding commitments with the University, but maintained a connection with the local Italian community. At times he refused remuneration from families, such as the Candela family, who could ill afford violin tuition for their children.<sup>39</sup>

As these brief accounts suggest, the orchestral ledger is a most exciting document. It promises to be a fertile source of information for those wishing to explore many aspects of Australian music: performance, reception, the formation of musical habits and tastes, and indeed, the lives of the musicians who were involved in the making of music in Melbourne. A web of connections places the Conservatorium library at the centre

of a vital and energetic musical life outside the University, as well as within the walls of academia. The library was important, not only for amateur and professional musicians of Anglo-Celtic or Germanic background, but also for local Italian-Australian musicians. The stories of C.J. Lauer, and of the Briglia and Di Gilio families, point to the enormously rich and varied background of many who made music in Melbourne. Their stories illustrate the wide spectrum of musical engagement as amateurs and professionals, within both the local and the wider musical communities of Melbourne. The gradual engagement of a younger generation with formal musical education also emerges from these stories. The orchestral ledger in the Louise Hanson-Dyer Music Library should be regarded, then, as providing inspiration for much further research.

*Alison Rabinovici* is enrolled in a Masters degree in musicology at the Faculty of Music, University of Melbourne. Her eclectic research interests include the history and technology of early sound recording, amateur and popular professional instrumental performance in Australia, and organology. She has researched the history of two little-known British instruments, the one-stringed Japanese fiddle, and the phono-fiddle. Her research on the Stroh violin was published in the *Galpin Society Journal* in 2005.



#### Notes

- 1 For an earlier research report, see: Alison Rabinovici, 'The orchestral ledger in the Louise Hanson-Dyer Music Library, University of Melbourne,' *Context: Journal of Music Research*, vol. 29, no. 30, 2005, pp. 97–110.
- 2 Biographical data is drawn from the index to the Victorian birth, death and marriage records, at the State Library of Victoria.
- 3 Residential addresses and occupations are drawn from *Sands & McDougall's Melbourne and suburban directory*, Melbourne: Sands & McDougall, various years.
- 4 'A musical genius: Cecil Parkes goes on tour: American experiences and appreciations,' *Australian Musical News*, September 1920, p. 70. (Cecil Parkes' small violin can be seen at the Williamstown Historical Society Museum,

- along with fascinating documentation of the rich musical life of Williamstown.)
- 5 Gregor McShane, *Prodigy: Cecil Parkes, Melbourne's violin virtuoso*, Auckland: Brick Row, 1991, pp. 31, 40–43.
  - 6 'New Symphony Orchestra', *The Argus*, 10 August 1936, p. 13.
  - 7 'Williamstown Orchestral Society', *Australian Musical News*, April 1963, pp. 21–22.
  - 8 'Williamstown Orchestral Society takes over Hoyts library', *Australian Musical News*, August 1963, p. 14.
  - 9 Musical life in Williamstown has been documented in McShane, *Prodigy*, and Lynne Strahan, *At the edge of centre: A history of Williamstown*, North Melbourne: Hargreen Publishing, 1994.
  - 10 I am indebted to Dr John Whiteoak for pointing me in the direction of the Italian Historical Society Archives, and also for many conversations about music in Carlton's Italian community.
  - 11 Also documented with the alternative spelling 'Di Giglio'
  - 12 John E. Zucchi, *The little slaves of the harp: Italian child street musicians in nineteenth-century Paris, London and New York*, Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1992.
  - 13 Not to be confused with families of the same name in Melbourne.
  - 14 See for example 'Child slavery: A brutal Italian task-master brought to grief: Parents selling their children: An Italian Fagin', *Daily Evening Bulletin*, 30 July 1873; 'The Padrone system', *The Chicago Tribune*, 28 February 1886, p. 9; 'The Padrone system flourishes in Chicago's Italian section', *The Owyhee Avalanche*, 21 January 1898.
  - 15 Constable Robert Wardley, 'Relative to Italian boys singing and performing in the streets', police report, No. 1 Division, Russell Street Station, Melbourne, 17 August 1888. Reproduced in ['From Our Archives'] 'Italian boys busking in the streets: 1888', *Italian Historical Society Journal*, vol. 11, no. 1, January/June 2003, p. 32.
  - 16 Frank L. Jones, 'The Italian population of Carlton: A demographic and sociological survey', PhD thesis, Canberra: Australian National University, 1962, pp. 162–163.
  - 17 Forms for registration under the *War Precautions (Aliens Registration) Regulations 1916* and the *Aliens Registration Act 1920* (forms A, A2 and E), series no. MT269/1, barcode no. 5957540, National Archives of Australia, <http://naa12.naa.gov.au/scripts/ItemDetail.asp?M=0&B=5957540>, accessed 14 August 2006. The Briglia name is also documented in Melbourne in the 1890s. See Bette Maiuto, 'The Leone and Pascale families', *Italian Historical Society Journal*, vol. 1, no. 2, February 1990, p. 7.
  - 18 'Ercole Ortori', *Italian Historical Society Journal*, vol. 7, no. 1, January/July 1999, p. 24.
  - 19 Advertisements in *Australian Musical News*, 1 November 1912.
  - 20 'Briglia's Orchestra', *Australian Musical News*, 1 March 1918, p. 234.
  - 21 'Professional orchestra: Victorian one to end', *Australasian Band and Orchestra News*, vol. 26, February 1931, p. 24.
  - 22 Boosted by the later arrival of musicians from Italy, Carlton's second generation of Italian-Australians was well represented in theatre and dance orchestras of the 1920s and 1930s. See Mark Donato, 'Little Lon.', *Italian Historical Society Journal*, vol. 2, no. 1, June 1994, pp. 20–21.
  - 23 'Orchestra gossip: Displaced orchestra men', *Australasian Band and Orchestra News*, vol. 26, September 1929, p. 31.
  - 24 Listed in the orchestral ledger.
  - 25 'Professional orchestra: Victorian one to end', p. 24.
  - 26 G. Briglia, letter to the Hon. R.V. Keane MP, Commonwealth Minister for Trade and Customs, 18 April 1945, on file, "L'Unita" ("Unity") Italian & English newspaper. G. Briglia, National Archives of Australia, series no. A367, barcode no. 61949, <http://naa12.naa.gov.au/scripts/ItemDetail.asp?M=0&B=61949>, accessed 10 October 2008.
  - 27 Angelo Candela and Romilda Lauricella, 'Interview with Angelo Candela', Melbourne, 1985. Transcript of oral history interview: *Candela family, Angelo Candela's career*, document no. AB-0019, tape 85, Collection of the Italian Historical Society.
  - 28 It is possible that there was a family connection with 'Augustino Digilio aged thirty-six from Mariscovetere' who was documented as one of the *padroni* in control of seven child street musicians in Paris 1867–1868. See Zucchi, *The little slaves of the harp*, p. 63.
  - 29 "Palais de Danse" opened: Tango exhibition', *The Argus*, 22 December 1913, p. 8. Quoted in John Whiteoak, 'The Tango touch: Exoticised and Italianised Hispanic music in Australia: 1932–1972', paper presented at a conference on 'Exoticism, identity and constructions of Hispanic music', Trinity College, University of Melbourne, 19 October 2006.
  - 30 'Di Gilio's Band', *Australian Musical News*, 1 March 1918, p. 234.
  - 31 August Di Gilio's name appears in an Albert Street Conservatorium program titled *One hundred and sixteenth students' concert program, 6 Aug 1912*, held in the Collection of the Italian Historical Society.
  - 32 August Di Gilio's teachers were Messrs Ernest Toy, Felix Gade and Carmen Delprat. See 'August Di Gilio', *Australian Musical News*, January 1926, p. 19.
  - 33 Student record for August Di Gilio, University of Melbourne Archives.
  - 34 University of Melbourne Conservatorium, 'Minutes: Conservatorium', 1912–1927, pp. 248–249, University of Melbourne Archives.
  - 35 Peter John Tregear, *The Conservatorium of Music, University of Melbourne: An historical essay to mark its centenary 1895–1995*, Parkville: Centre for Studies in Australian Music, Faculty of Music, University of Melbourne, 1997.
  - 36 University of Melbourne Conservatorium, 'Minutes', pp. 252, 265, 310.
  - 37 'University Conservatorium Concerts', *The Age*, June 1922.
  - 38 'The New Conservatorium', *Australian Musical News*, 1 October 1923, p. 35.
  - 39 Candela and Lauricella, 'Interview with Angelo Candela'.