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Joanna Priest: Her Place in Adelaide's Dance History.

Margaret Denton, B.A. (Hons.)

Awarded 1993

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma at any University, and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material written or published by another person except where reference is made in the text.

21/3/93

Abstract

Miss Priest opened her first dancing studio in Adelaide in 1932, and for nearly fifty years she taught ballet and ballroom dancing, as well as providing for her students classes in musical appreciation, art, handcrafts and drama. In 1939 she formed the South Australian Ballet Club, in 1954 she converted a former church into the Studio Theatre where she produced shows specifically for children as well as for adults, and in 1959 she began a children's television programme which ran for four and a half years. She was also a professional choreographer and producer of opera.

This thesis explores her contribution to Adelaide's dance history.

I consent to this thesis being made available for photocopying and loan.

31/2/93

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Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	5
Table of Contents	7
List of Illustrations	9
Introduction	11
Chapter 1. Early Life	21
Chapter 2. The Teacher	53
Chapter 3. The South Australian Ballet Club	94
Chapter 4. The Studio Theatre	130
Chapter 5. Southern Stars	165
Chapter Six. Choreographer and Producer	196
Appendix A	230
Appendix B	243
Plan of Bibliography	246
Bibliography	249

List of Illustrations

1. Rev. James Jefferis	22
2. The Brougham Place Church	26
3. <u>Yilki</u>	28
4. The Main Room at <u>Yilki</u>	30
5. Joanna's mother	34
6. Joanna's father	37
7. <u>Death and the Maiden</u>	44
8. Visit by Kirsova to the studio in Freemasons' Hall	50
9. The Bowman College Ballet	56
10. Vera van Rij	59
11. Mem Hodge	61
12. Joanna teaching in 1971	64
13. Walter Desborough and Mina Bauer	69
14. Patricia Hackett	72
15. The Second Torch Theatre	74
16. Joanna with some of her first students	84
17. Heather Gell	102
18. <u>The Lady Augusta</u>	107
19. Ted Shawn	113
20. Jooss's <u>Pavane</u>	115
21. Joanna in Berwick's <u>Pavane</u>	117
22. Programme cover for 1941 performance	120
23. Joanna's Studio Theatre	130

24. Map of North Adelaide	132
25. Tynte Street side of Studio Theatre	139
26. The Studio Theatre foyer	141
27. First production of <u>The Listeners</u>	144
28. <u>Ballerina</u>	146
29. <u>A Villanelle for Four</u>	150
30. Cecil Bates teaching in the Studio Theatre	153
31. First page of the <u>Southern Stars</u> book	174
32. Joanna's students folk-dancing	180
33. The cover of the <u>Southern Stars</u> book	185
34. Ratings of Children's Television programmes	189
35. "Ballet Rehearsal" by Dorrit Black	199
36. <u>Winter Landscape</u>	202
37. Second production of <u>The Listeners</u>	208
38. <u>Joan of Arc</u>	213
39. Joanna and Rob	222

Introduction

There have been three periods when professional theatrical performers were able to work in their various genres while residents of, as distinct from visitors to, Adelaide.

The first of these began two years after the colony of South Australia was founded in 1836, and during a period of economic boom. On 28 May 1838 the first "theatre" - the Theatre Royal above the Adelaide Tavern in Franklin Street - gave its opening performance, and during the next three years, three further "theatres" opened in that city. Of these, two were, like the first, large rooms in various buildings, but the Queen's Theatre in Gilles Arcade was built by the merchant Emanuel Solomon specifically as a theatre. It opened in 1841, just before the boom burst, sending dancers, singers and actors alike elsewhere to find work, and causing Solomon to lease the Queen's Theatre to the government, who used it for the next three years as a law court.

Conditions in the colony improved, helped considerably by the discovery of copper in Kapunda and the Burra, and in 1846 the actor-manager George Coppin and his actress wife, Maria, arrived and settled in Adelaide. As the theatre's lease to the government had not expired, Coppin persuaded the lessee of the adjacent building to convert its large billiard room into what became the New Queen's Theatre. Professional performers returned to Adelaide, and theatrical life was increasingly active, the high point being Solomon's renovation of the Queen's into the Royal Victoria Theatre, which gave its first performance in December 1850.¹

¹ At the time of writing, part of the façade is still standing, and during 1990 the foundations were excavated by archaeologist Justin McCarthy.

But by then gold had been discovered in Victoria, and audiences and performers left South Australia in their hundreds to seek their share of the new-found wealth. By 1851 the second period of resident theatricals had ended, and from then on the wealthier eastern states became the centres for theatre productions. Professional shows in Adelaide were provided by companies from interstate or overseas until the 1960s, when the third period of resident theatricals was made possible by government grants to Adelaide-based companies.

The first two periods have been discussed by several writers,² some of whom have given details about the dancers who appeared in Adelaide between 1841 and 1851, of whom Rachel Lazar, Mme. Vielburn and the Chambers family were the most notable.

3

Adelaide's dance history between 1851 and 1960 has consisted mostly of recording the building, renovation, renaming and/or destruction of its theatres, together with information about the drama, opera, ballet, vaudeville or other companies which have performed in South Australia.⁴

But there has never been a total drought of dance in Adelaide, and, in spite of the lack of indigenous, professional theatre there, it is surprising that some books which have appeared since 1940, purporting to discuss the arts in Australia generally, have failed to make any mention of dance in that city. Such books include Pioneering Ballet

² Gerald Fischer, "The Professional Theatre in Adelaide 1838-1922", Australian Letters, 2.4, (1960): Alec Bagot, Coppin the Great, (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1965): Margaret Abbie, "Professional Theatre in Adelaide", Diss. Adelaide (1970): Edward Pask, Enter the Colonies Dancing (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1979): Alan Brissenden "Theatrical Dance in South Australia" From Colonel Light into the Footlights, ed. A. McCredie (Adelaide: Pagel Books, 1988).

³ Bagot 1965; Abbie, 1970; Pask, 1979 and Brissenden, 1988.

⁴ In addition to the above-mentioned authors, see also Edward Pask, Ballet in Australia, the Second Act (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1982).

in Australia⁵, which centres on the Kirsova Company but fails to set it in relation to the other dance activities of the time, giving the impression that Australian dance history began with Kirsova, and The Arts in Australia⁶ which in nine pages⁷ comments briefly only on the Kirsova Ballet, Melbourne's Ballet Guild, the short-lived Australian Ballet Society (of which one of the dancers was South Australian Helen George), the Ballet Rambert's tour of Australia, and then for some unaccountable reason devotes one and a half pages of text, and two and a half pages of photographs⁸ to Australian dancers Lidia Kuprina and James Upshaw and their performances in Rio de Janeiro!⁹ Entertainment Arts in Australia¹⁰ deals almost exclusively with the Australian Ballet, and has in addition a photograph and short paragraph about each of the modern dancers Margaret Barr, Ruth Galene and Ronne Arnold.

Jean Garling in her Australian Notes on the Ballet¹¹ mentions Joseph Siebert and his company Les Ballets Contemporains as well as Joanne Priest and her South Australian Ballet Club¹² and Peggy van Praagh in Ballet in Australia lists Joanne Priest as one of

⁵ Peter Bellew, ed. Pioneering Ballet in Australia, (Sydney: Craftsman Bookshop, n.d. but no earlier than 1944 as it refers to the three years since the founding of the Kirsova Ballet which began in 1941.)

⁶ Norman Macgeorge, The Arts in Australia (Melbourne: F.W. Cheshire, 1948).

⁷ Macgeorge, 1949, 109-114 and 119-121.

⁸ Macgeorge, 1948, 115-118.

⁹ Cornelius Conyn in his book Three Centuries of Ballet (Houston: Elsevier Press, Inc., 1953), commits a similar sin. In his discussion of ballet in Australia he disposes of Kirsova, Borovansky and the National Theatre Ballet in less than two pages - part of 87, 88 and six lines on 101 - but devotes four more - 228-231- to his own Conyn Dance group.

¹⁰ John Allen, Ed. Entertainment Arts in Australia Dee Why West: Paul Hamlyn Pty. Ltd., 1968.)

¹¹ Jean Garling Australian Notes on the Ballet (Sydney: The Legend Press, n.d. but probably 1950 or early 1951 as it refers to the first production of Corroboree in 1950, p.38, and Borovansky's plans for 1951, p.32.)

¹² Garling, 27.

the choreographers for the National Theatre Ballet.¹³

The more comprehensive works by John Cargher and Edward Pask fill out the story of Adelaide's dance history, but not always accurately. In Opera and Ballet in Australia¹⁴ Cargher says that the Australian Theatre Ballet was "a company based in a studio theatre in Adelaide".¹⁵ That company's Adelaide season was presented at Joanna Priest's Studio Theatre, but the company was not based there. The writer later states that "Immediately after the war Joanne Priest founded the South Australian Ballet and Arts Club"¹⁶ but it was founded in 1939 as the South Australian Ballet Club.¹⁷ Another mistake is to claim that "in 1967 Dorothy Simpson started the South Australian Ballet Company."¹⁸ That company began in 1961 as the South Australian National Ballet Company, and, although Dorothy Simpson was active in its formation and throughout a large part of its life, others such as Leslie White, Cecil Bates and John Russo, then Secretary of the South Australian National Opera Company which was the instigator in forming the Ballet Company, were also instrumental in its inception.

Pask, in Ballet in Australia, the Second Act,¹⁹ gives the most detailed history of dance in South Australia to have appeared to 1982 but he makes the same mistake as Cargher about the naming of Joanne Priest's Ballet Club, as well as the date of its beginning, and erroneously claims that it later became known as the South Australian

¹³ Peggy van Praagh Ballet in Australia (Victoria: Longmans, 1965.)

¹⁴ John Cargher Opera and Ballet in Australia (N.S.W.: Cassell Australia Ltd., 1977.)

¹⁵ Cargher 233.

¹⁶ Cargher, 300.

¹⁷ See Chapters 2 and 3 for the reason the name was temporarily changed.

¹⁸ Cargher, 300.

¹⁹ Edward Pask Ballet in Australia, the Second Act (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1982).

National Ballet.²⁰ Regarding that company, there are also some inaccuracies about Cecil Bates' period as Artistic Director.²¹ Pask refers to Siebert's work, and that of Maxwell Collis and his South Australian Ballet Theatre, and, not surprisingly - as it was the first professional company in South Australia, and continues today - the greater part of this section is devoted to the Australian Dance Theatre.

The first book to deal solely with dance in South Australia appeared in 1987; this was Murray Bassett and Christopher Thompson's Les Ballets Contemporains,²² which tells the story of Joseph Siebert and his amateur company. The following year the most comprehensive history to date of South Australia's dance heritage was given in Alan Brissenden's chapter in From Colonel Light into the Foot-lights,²³ "Theatrical Dance in South Australia".

The paucity of resources in South Australian dance history has become apparent with the expansion in this state of dance courses in tertiary and secondary institutions, which began with the establishment of the Centre for the Performing Arts in 1979 and was followed in 1981 with the setting up of the B.A. Dance Course at what was then the South Australian College of Advanced Education.²⁴ By 1985 twenty state secondary schools were offering dance courses²⁵, and the number has increased, with dance becoming a subject for students at many levels and dance history projects being an

²⁰ Pask, 238.

²¹ Pask, 250.

²² Murray Bassett and Christopher Thompson Les Ballets Contemporains (Adelaide: Lutheran Publishing House, 1987.)

²³ Brissenden, 1988.

²⁴ Now part of the University of Adelaide.

²⁵ Brissenden, 1988, 100.

important part of the course.

In addition to the secondary sources discussed above, the periodical Dance Australia, since its establishment in 1980, has been invaluable in informing readers of events past and present in Australia, while Currency Press in Sydney is preparing A Companion to Music and Dance in Australia, which will fill further gaps. For South Australian students there are some primary sources held in the Mortlock Library, and the Performing Arts Collection of South Australia²⁶ is continually increasing its holdings.

However, when written sources are lacking, it is customary for researchers to turn to oral histories, even while bearing in mind Michelle Potter's comment that if a thesis is to be methodologically sound, it should not be "based on gossip, hearsay, and rumour".²⁷ Obviously an oral history is only as accurate as the memory and imagination of the interviewee, and, as many of these may be of advancing years, the risk of memory loss is increased.

In early 1988, when Joanna²⁸ Priest asked me to write her biography, she was 77, an age when a person's memory may be unreliable.²⁹ However, it was more than a year before I realised that, in addition to her failing memory, some of the things she had told to me, as well as to others, were in fact fantasy. Such, for example, were stories

²⁶ This was not founded until 1979, by which time much theatrical material relevant to South Australia had been given to earlier-established bodies interstate or the Mortlock Library. The first Dance Representative (the author) was not appointed until 1983 when a specific Dance Archive was begun.

²⁷ Michelle Potter, "Researching Dance History in Australia: A Case Study", paper delivered at a seminar, Needs and Functions of a National Dance Research Centre, March 1988 (Department of English, University College, Australian Defence Force Academy, 1988).

²⁸ She was christened Joanna, and told the author that she changed her name to Joanne because the children at school called her "Joanna the goanna". She reverted to her original name in the 1980s.

²⁹ The author was never one of Joanna's students, but after returning from study in London and New York was engaged by Joanna as a modern dance teacher for most of the 1960s, and during 1960-61 presented a fortnightly dance segment on Southern Stars.

that her father had been a Quaker when he arrived in Australia, that she had seen Nijinsky dance in London in 1931 and she has told four people four different stories about how she met Sir Bernard Heinze.³⁰

Among her papers are some typescript biographical notes which were prepared by her, but which contain details which are contrary to other evidence. In one, for example, it is claimed that she trained in England for three years and later in the USA for one year before opening her own school in Adelaide in 1932.³¹ In another place it is stated that she had "Practical experience in observation of B.B.C Telecasts from Crystal Palace over a period of five months, following which was [sic] offered position as Artistic Director of programmes for children from 9 to 13 years."³² Yet another error is her claim that she was "for many years, the only teacher in Australia to hold the Royal Academy Diploma (Advanced Teacher)".³³

A vivid imagination is one of the tools needed by a creative artist and Joanna claimed that the birthright of a choreographer was fantasy.³⁴ She was well aware of her own love of it. On one of her introductory talks for the television show Southern Stars she said to the children, "I wonder if you enjoy snuggling down in bed at night as much

³⁰ Various, at a dinner party, after a concert, at a ball and in England.

³¹ Joanna Priest "Brief Biographical Details" t.s., n.d.
File: Autobiographical Notes.

Details of her first two trips overseas are given in Chapters 1 and 2, and much of this information was gleaned from the Linley Wilson papers in the Battye Library, Perth.

³² "Biography, Joanne Priest O.B.E." t.s., n.d. Autobiographical Notes.
See Chapter 5 for details about her television work.

³³ Joanna Priest gained her Advanced Certificate in 1937 on Felix Demery's second visit to Australia and his first in South Australia. In 1935 he had examined in New South Wales, Queensland and New Zealand, during which time Lorraine Norton, Dorothy Gladstone and Frances Scully gained their Advanced Teachers' Certificate. Royal Academy of Dancing Gazette February 1936.

³⁴ Joanna Priest, "Ballet's Contribution to Cultural Education", Talk to University Wives' Club, 12 May 1953. (Talks and Reports File 25492).

as I do?...All my life I've had what I call a 'go-on' each night! It's one of my stories which goes on and on. And so satisfactory, because I can make it come out just as I want. I'M always the heroine of course."³⁵ It seems that for Joanna, the barrier between fantasy and reality sometimes became blurred and what began as fantasy she later regarded as reality. A reader may be tempted to ask why Joanna was not questioned about certain details, but it should be realised from what has been written above that in many cases it was not possible to confirm her stories, and some questions have had to be left unanswered.

In addition, there are many gaps in the written records of her career, which is not surprising as Joanna moved her studio four times in forty years and all material which did not seem essential was discarded. And there were also some periods when she deliberately destroyed material relating to her school and career.

Parts of this biography have therefore been based on interviews with people of various ages, and varying abilities to remember details; it has been difficult sometimes to decide what should be used, and some of the details included here may well be inaccurate. Every attempt has been made to check statements which are at variance with other facts, but this has not always been possible - notably of course, when people who were involved in certain episodes are no longer alive. The author will be most grateful to any reader who is able to correct such mistakes with irrefutable evidence, and who can fill in any of the gaps.

Because Joanna had a long career, with involvement in many aspects of theatre, hers is a story which stretches over an important and formative part of South Australian performing arts history. Needless to say the process of researching her career has brought

³⁵ Southern Stars script, 22 May 1960 (Southern Stars Scripts, File 25509).

to light new facts about people who were also involved in Adelaide's theatrical world during her most active years - from the early 1930s to the 1960s - and it is hoped that these will be of use to students who are delving in the interesting saga of dance history in South Australia.

FILE NUMBERING

File numbers in references throughout this dissertation are those of the Performing Arts Collection of South Australia. When the first Dance Representative was appointed to the Management Committee of that Collection in 1983, there was already a large amount of material waiting to be sorted; two years later, Joanna donated all her papers.

Each item which comes to the Collection - a cutting, photograph or programme for example - is given a serial catalogue number. Because the dance collection was relatively large, and in order to get it into usable form as soon as possible, each bundle of papers was put into a file and each file, not each item in it, was given a number. And because the sorting took many months, the numbers of these files are not all in sequence.

Files without numbers are in the author's collection.

INTERVIEWS

There are two different types of interview referred to in this work. One group has been undertaken over several years as ongoing work to collect oral histories of the dance world in South Australia, and several of these have been conducted by my historian colleague, Mrs. Helen Pearce. Audiocassette tapes of these interviews are held at the Performing Arts Collection of South Australia.

I have conducted the other interviews specifically for this study, and these are identified by "personal interview".



Chapter 1. Early Life

For many years Joanna Priest was well-known in Adelaide as a teacher of ballet and ballroom dancing. She was only one of several who offered these techniques, but her school was unique in South Australia as it provided a broad artistic education for her students who were given the opportunity to study music, drama and the visual arts under the same roof as they studied dance. From the late 1940s her career took an unusual direction when she became involved in professional productions of ballet and opera, and by the 1960s she had become known nation-wide as a choreographer, producer of operas, and pioneer in children's theatre and television.³⁶

In 1972 an article about her appeared in Kalori, the Journal of the Royal South Australian Society of Arts. It began:

In the shifting kaleidoscope of the performing arts the name of Joanna Priest shines out steadfastly. A name which has been regarded over the years with a profound respect and admiration. As a teacher she possesses the quality most desired in that profession, the power to "educe": "bring out, develop, from the latent or potential existence."³⁷

Hagiographic, perhaps? These are certainly not the terms normally used to praise a teacher of dancing. And surely it is the aim of every competent teacher to "bring out, develop, from the latent or potential existence"? Surely other teachers have been regarded "with a profound respect and admiration"? What had she done to evoke such sentiments?

³⁶ Her ballet The Listeners was performed by the National Ballet Company in Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide, Brisbane, Perth, Launceston and New Zealand; her ballet/opera Catulli Carmina was seen in Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne; Amahl and the Night Visitors in Melbourne, Perth, Adelaide and on ABV2; Let's Make an Opera in Sydney and Adelaide and Salome in Sydney.

Her children's television programme Southern Stars was shown for a short time in Melbourne in 1961 and two years later in Sydney, Canberra and Newcastle.

³⁷ Gwen Num "Joanne Priest OBE" Kalori 10.1 March 1972, 12.

The choice of a dance career by this woman, whose maternal grandfather and father were Congregational parsons, is surprising, especially as both men shared a puritanical dislike of dancing and theatre. Of her maternal grandfather, the Rev. James Jefferis, it has been written: "He remained Puritanical and condemned the theatre, dancing, gambling, prostitution and other 'moral dangers.'"³⁸ Another commentator described him in later life as one who: "retained his views on some subjects, such as the theatre and dancing, and would never accompany his wife and children to a play, although two of his granddaughters, Joanne Priest and Barbara Jefferis, have distinguished themselves in the arts." ³⁹

Had either the grandfather or the father been tempted to view the theatrical dance of their time - that is, during the late nineteenth and very early twentieth century - they would have felt justified in their criticism of an entertainment which was much inferior to the ballet Joanna saw on her first trip to England in 1930, nearly a century after her grandfather's birth. Although the Romantic ballerinas of the Victorian era were greatly admired by the public for their personal abilities, the ballets in which they danced were without intellectual content, and, in England at least, the Romantic Ballet was "virtually extinct soon after the middle of the nineteenth century, when it took root in music halls such as the Alhambra and the Empire until the Diaghilev Ballet reawakened an enthusiasm for the dance."⁴⁰

³⁸ Walter Phillips, "Jefferis, James," Australian Dictionary of Biography Vol.4, 1851-1890 (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1972) 474. Unless otherwise stated, further details about Jefferis are from Phillips' article.

³⁹ John Cameron, Yilki: A Place by the Sea (Victor Harbour: Yilki Uniting Church, 1979) 65.

⁴⁰ Ivor Guest, The Romantic Ballet in England (London: Pitman, 1972) 9.



Fig. 1. Revd. James Jefferis
Portrait by A. MacCormac, 1877.
The original is in the Brougham Place Church.
Photograph: Philip Martin.

It was Joanna's good fortune to see the results of that artistic renaissance and benefit from studying with teachers who had worked with Russian ballet companies in their years of glory: Marie Rambert from the Diaghilev Ballet and Ruth French, who had been a principal dancer in Pavlova's Company.

Joanna remembers that, when young, she wanted very much to learn dancing - although she cannot remember why - but her father would not allow it, and because of this, her training was postponed until after his death in 1925. Far from resenting this prohibition (which she understood at the time to be due to the expense of dancing classes) she was to say later that it was as a result of his influence that she came to realise that the art of dance was one way "to share beauty with everyone and anyone."⁴¹

Apart from their differing attitudes toward theatre, Joanna had much in common with her grandfather. Both had high moral standards, they showed concern for the unfortunate and encouraged the gifted to use their talents, they were progressive and independent thinkers with a facility for putting their thoughts into words, and they had a passionate belief in the importance of good education.

Joanna's maternal grandfather, the Rev. James Jefferis, was born in Bristol on 4 April, 1833, the third child of James Jefferis senior, and his wife, Sarah, née Townsend. The father was a builder and undertaker and, after finishing his schooling at Bristol Grammar School, James junior joined his father in the business.⁴² His material future seemed secure, but his spirit was not content.

The family belonged to the Church of England and there was some consternation when the son was influenced by John Timothy Beighton, the pastor of the nearby

⁴¹ Joanna Priest, "Ballet's Contribution to Cultural Education," Talk to the University of Adelaide Wives' Club, 12 May 1953 (Talks and Reports, File 25492).

⁴² Cameron, 1979, 60.

Congregational Church, to train for the Congregational ministry. An uncle offered to put him through Oxford or Cambridge and ensure him a benefice if he would train for the Anglican church, but this offer was not accepted.⁴³ It appears that independent thought, especially on such an important matter, was respected by the family. Joanna was to say later that her mother "discouraged an acceptance of any principle until I had decided I could live with it myself. In other words, I was encouraged to be an individual from the start."⁴⁴ Certainly there is no record that the family showed rancour towards young James. He became a student at New College, London, which was affiliated with the University of London, and graduated BA in 1855 and LLB in 1856.⁴⁵

In 1857, before he was ordained, he was invited to the Congregational Church at Saltaire, but once there was found to have tuberculosis and advised to move to a warmer climate. This advice coincided with an invitation from Thomas Quinton Stow, the pioneer of Congregationalism in South Australia, to help him with the establishment of a Congregational Church in North Adelaide.

After his ordination in December of that year, and two months after his marriage to Mary Louise (née Elbury), Jefferis left England on 16 December 1857 and arrived in Adelaide in April 1858. His work began in the Temperance Hall in Tynte Street North Adelaide, and continued there until the new Brougham Place church was opened in February 1861. This splendid "Baroque-Renaissance Style building"⁴⁶ seated eight

⁴³ Cameron, 1979, 62.

⁴⁴ Joanna Priest, "What I present and Why I Present It," Talk to members of the Television Society, Melbourne, 1 June 1961 (File 25492).

⁴⁵ Phillips, 474. Cameron, 1979, 62, says incorrectly that this was an MA.

⁴⁶ John Whitehead, Adelaide, City of Churches: A Jubilee 150 Survey (Magill: M.C. Publications 1986) 71. Cameron, 1979, 62, says it was "Built in 'Venetian-Ionic'."

hundred and Jefferis' preaching filled it not with Congregationalists only, but also with members of other denominations who admired his "eloquence and manly and liberal approach to religion".⁴⁷ But not all members of his congregations were devout. His granddaughter Barbara Jefferis Hinde has related that when on one occasion she interviewed a Mr. Windeyer, "a very celebrated lawyer... [he] told me that when he was a student all the law students used to go and listen to JJ's sermons, not, he added hastily, for their religious content, but because he was such a powerful orator."⁴⁸ His progressive - even radical - thinking was the attraction for many: at a time when people still considered religion and science as opposing entities, he "encouraged his congregation to see science and philosophy also as witnesses to God's truth."⁴⁹

In his history of Congregationalism, Three Quarters of a Century, the Rev. Francis William Cox commented: "Mr. Jefferis' qualities for a locality where so many young men dwelt were unique; for while he had the hearty buoyancy of youth, he had great practical wisdom, with a power of setting others to work, and keeping them at it."⁵⁰ Her colleagues would recognise Joanna in that description.

Among his activities during the next fifteen years was the establishment of the North Adelaide Young Men's Society, from which came some leading citizens of

⁴⁷ Phillips, 473.

⁴⁸ Barbara Jefferis Hinde, letter to the author 17 July 1990.

⁴⁹ John Cameron, In Stow's Footsteps (Glynde: S.A. Congregational History Project 1987) 24.

⁵⁰ F.W. Cox, Three Quarters of a Century (Adelaide: Vardon, 1912) 134.



Fig. 2 The Revd. James Jefferis' Church in Brougham Place, 1990
It now belongs to the Uniting Church. Joanna has referred to
this as "the pepper pot church" for obvious reasons.
Photograph: the author.

Adelaide known as the "Jefferis boys." As local secretary for the London Missionary Society he was a leader in the protest against "blackbirding" from the Pacific Islands; he also contributed leading articles to the local papers and was offered, but refused, editorship of The Advertiser.

His interest in scholarship involved him in the debate about sectarian education, and he encouraged members of his own denomination to join Presbyterians and Baptists in forming the Union College, which provided nonsectarian higher education and theological training. When this institution opened in May 1872, Jefferis was the first tutor in mathematics and natural science.

In order to ensure the College had a sound financial base, small groups of people approached various well-to-do members of the community to enquire if they would provide support. Jefferis, with two Presbyterian ministers, the Revds. John Davidson and James Lyall and the Secretary of the College, George Young, called on William Watson Hughes. This former sea-captain, born in Scotland, had settled in South Australia in 1840 and found himself with a small fortune when copper was discovered on his sheep run. When he told the deputation that he was prepared to give an endowment of £20,000 - £30,000 toward education, they were "slightly shaken [and] went away to consider what could be done with so vast a sum."⁵¹ Far more than the College required, this was diverted, largely through Jefferis' influence, to the establishment of the University of Adelaide.⁵²

In 1877 he accepted a longstanding invitation to become minister at the Congregational Church in Pitt Street Sydney, and there he again became absorbed in

⁵¹ Judith Brown Augustus Short, D.D. Bishop of Adelaide (Adelaide: Griffen Press, 1973) 218.

⁵² Cox 132.



Fig. 3 Yilki.
Photograph by Philip Martin of a painting by Mu.

local activities which included support of the Young Men's Literary Society and a widening of his church's work in the slums.

Continuing his own education, he gained his LLD by examination from the University of Sydney in 1885, a study which, by giving him a knowledge of constitutional law, enabled him to speak with authority on the matter of Australian Federation, which he supported, and for which he became known nationally.⁵³

Differences with some church members about the viability of the Pitt Street church caused him to resign. He was overworked and tired, as also was his wife, who had put her energies into improving conditions of living for orphan and destitute children, persuading the government to provide a boarding out system for such children rather than herding them into a large institution.⁵⁴

The Jefferis family returned to London in 1890 and Rev. Jefferis' first ministry was at New College Chapel. The climate there aggravated his chest condition, and he moved to Torquay. However, he missed Australia, and had also discovered that in England a nonconformist minister was not accorded the recognition he had known in his country of adoption.⁵⁵ So in 1894, and in spite of calls from two churches in Sydney, he returned to Brougham Place in North Adelaide.

In the same year he bought the "Fountain Inn" at Encounter Bay for a holiday house. This building had been a tavern for seafarers and whalers who worked in the

⁵³ For his views on this see: James Jefferis, "Australia Confederated," a lecture delivered at the Town Hall, Adelaide on June 17th 1880, published in Historical Records of the North Adelaide Congregational Church (Adelaide: Vardon, 1909).

⁵⁴ Cameron, 1979, 65.

⁵⁵ Cameron, 1979, 65.



Fig. 4. The Main Room at Yilki 1988.

This was at various times used as a bar, for church services and as the Inman Valley Council Chamber. The Council sat around the table in the foreground. The child in the distant painting above the chest of drawers is Revd. James Jefferis as a boy. Photograph: Philip Martin.

area for many years before the proclamation of South Australia in 1836.⁵⁶ Built in 1847, it was put to a further use when the Inman Council decided to hold its meetings there, beginning in 1856.⁵⁷ Jefferis renamed it "Yilki" and during his periods of residence he conducted services in what had been the bar for all who wished to join him. He died at "Yilki" on Christmas Day 1917 and his wife later gave part of the land there for a site on which a church was built in memory of her husband.⁵⁸

Jefferis' first wife had died in 1864, having borne him four children, two of whom died in infancy.⁵⁹ In 1866 he married Marian, née Turner, who was mother to ten children, of whom three died as babies.⁶⁰ The second youngest, Sophie Muriel, known as "Mu", was Joanna's mother.

Some time during the Jefferises' residence in England they met the Priest family, which lived in London.⁶¹ Thomas Priest and his wife, Esther (née Potter) had seven

⁵⁶ Michael Page, Victor Harbor. From Pioneer Port to Seaside Resort (Victor Harbour: District Council, 1987) 16.

On the same page the writer comments "The name 'Fountain' had no local significance but was simply a popular name for inns in Britain where some of the seafarers would have become acquainted with the famous Fountain Inn at Portsmouth".

⁵⁷ M. Page, 50.

⁵⁸ John Cameron, A Band of Pioneers. A History of the Congregational Churches along the South Coast of South Australia from 1839-1977 (Adelaide: Central Times, Epworth Building 1977), 67.

Jefferis, his second wife and his daughter Elsie Marian were buried in Brighton Public Cemetery beside St. Jude's Anglican church. An explanation for this oddity has been given by his biographer, Dr. Walter Phillips: "The control of the [Brighton Public] cemetery was transferred to St. Jude's trustees in 1923...Jefferis and his wife were buried in the Congregational section by Congregational ministers... [but] it is...strange that he was buried at Brighton, particularly as his first wife and two of his children were buried at West Terrace [cemetery]." Phillips, letter to the author, 3 Dec. 1990.

⁵⁹ The surviving children were James Eddington (1860) and Mary Louisa Elbury (1864).

⁶⁰ William Harry (1867), Ernest (d.), Minna Maud (1869), Frank (d.), Elsie Marian (1872), Nellie Tarlton (1874), Florence (d.), Nance Annie Adelaide (1879), Sophie Muriel (1881), and Arthur Tarlton (1884).

⁶¹ At the time of his marriage (Marriage Certificate dated 3 June 1865) Thomas Priest was an office keeper in the Home office, and his address was South Kensington, Middlesex. Joanna told me that he had been a Queen's Messenger and lived in the Houses of Parliament (J. Priest, interviews 11 April 1988 and 1 December 1989). However the Archivist of the House of Lords could find no record of his being a Queen's

children, Mary, Charles, Thomas, Martin, Fred [sic], Arthur and Albert.⁶² There was some artistic talent in the family - Thomas sang and Arthur played the organ, but there is no record that Fred had an interest in any of the arts.

Joanna has said that her father was a Quaker when he came to Australia but no evidence has been found to support this belief.⁶³ However the family was probably nonconformist: the Marriage Certificate of Fred's father, Thomas, records that his wedding with Esther Potter took place "according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the Established Church".⁶⁴ It was common among nonconformists to have their children baptised and married in the Established Church for legal reasons, and the reference in the certificate to the "Established Church" rather than the "Church of England" suggests "legal rather than ecclesiastical standing."⁶⁵

Fred trained as a Congregational minister at Hackney College, London, and after completing the course, he was appointed by the Rowntrees of York to help in their social

Messenger, nor "information to suggest that King's Messengers had lodgings etc. in the British Houses of Parliament." S.K. Ellison, Letter to the author, 28 February 1990.

He is not mentioned in Vincent Wheeler-Holohan's book The History of the King's Messengers (London: Grayson and Grayson, 1953).

⁶² Elsie Jefferis fell in love with Albert, but he died before the wedding could take place.

⁶³ Her story is when Fred arrived in Adelaide he found no Quaker societies in South Australia and, deciding that Congregationalism was closest in belief and form to that of the Quakers, he joined that church (Joanna Priest, personal interview, 11 April 1988). However the Library of the Religious Friends in London has no record of Fred Priest's birth in their digest for 1876 nor a few years either side, although it is recognised that this is not 100% reliable. Peter Daniels, Assistant Librarian, Religious Society of Friends letter to the author, 4 April 1990.

In fact a Quaker group had been established in Adelaide within two years of settlement, with its first meeting held on 3 December 1837 in the parlour of Barton and Bridget Hack, whose house was in Hindley Street. Charles Stevenson, The Millionth Snowflake (Adelaide: The Religious Society of Friends 1987) ix.

⁶⁴ Marriage Certificate of Priest and Potter 3 June 1865.

⁶⁵ Clive Hamer, Hon. Archivist of the Uniting Church of Australia, Synod of Western Australia, letter to the author 22 January 1991. In this letter Mr. Hamer states that the non-conformist practice of marrying, etc. in the Established Church was "a hangover from the time, prior to 1829, when Catholics and non-conformists were denied certain privileges under law."

work.⁶⁶ Like his father-in-law he became recognised as "a keen theologian...[whose] ministry was a strong one, and characteristic of his congregations was the large number of young men attracted by his preaching."⁶⁷ That he was also a progressive thinker is evident in the comment that he was "one of a small, but able, group of ministers...whose views were regarded by the 'Old Guard' as gravely heterodox."⁶⁸ Clearly, Fred Priest shared a number of characteristics with his father-in-law.

As no other explanation has been found for Fred's emigration to Australia, it may be reasonably assumed it was to marry Mu, and he did this on 6 September 1906 in grandfather Jefferis' Walkerville house, named "Elbury" after his first wife. Fred's first Australian ministry, which began in October of the previous year,⁶⁹ was centred about sixty kilometres north of Adelaide in the country towns of Hambly Bridge and nearby Alma where the Congregational church had been established in 1894 by the Rev. McKinnon Dick.⁷⁰

In the active country area Fred attracted large congregations, notably of young people, and after exercising a "potent ministry", it was "to the regret of his people"⁷¹ that he resigned in January 1909 to accept an invitation from the church at Henley Beach. His first two children had been born in the country, Mary Elsa in 1907 and

⁶⁶ Cox 267. Daniels has proposed that "It may be that his connection with Rowntrees has suggested more of a Quaker connection than there is." Daniels, 1990.

⁶⁷ Cox 178.

⁶⁸ E.S. Kiek, Our First Hundred Years 1850-1950 (Adelaide: Hunkin, Ellis and King, 1950) 57.

⁶⁹ Cox 269. This was probably the same year he arrived in Australia.

⁷⁰ Cameron, 1987, 31.

⁷¹ Cox 267.



*Fig. 5 Sophie Muriel Priest (Mu).
Joanna's mother, early 1960s.*

Robert Sydney in 1908. Joanna was born at Henley Beach on 27 September 1910.

The fame of Fred Priest's preaching spread to New South Wales and he was invited to Marrickville to act as locum after the retirement of the Rev. Dr. Rosely. He succeeded so well that the parishioners asked him to remain, and he did until 1921. In that year the congregation of North Perth, whose ministry had fallen vacant, invited him to fill it at a salary of £300 and "2 Sundays Hollidays [sic]." In addition £100 was allocated for removal expenses.⁷² The offer was accepted, and the Rev. Fred Priest and his family arrived in Perth on 16 August. He exercised a "devout and fearless" ministry⁷³ and in 1923 was Chairman of the Congregational Union in Western Australia.⁷⁴ During the first part of 1925 he was unwell, but seemed to have recovered. On 21 June he conducted the morning service but was unable to take the evening service⁷⁵ and, in the early hours of June 22nd, "He was called home,"⁷⁶ dying of a heart attack at the age of 49.

Joanna remembers him as a classical scholar, "a super-sensitive, highly strung, nervy individual," but also one who "saw always the benefit one thing could be to the other. One strove to be good, to make others happy, to be kind...to seek knowledge which might be useful to someone, sometime, and to share beauty with everyone and anyone."⁷⁷

Although like his father-in-law he was puritanical, disapproving even of sewing

⁷² Minutes of North Perth Church meeting 26 May 1921.

⁷³ Twenty Third Annual Report of the North Perth Congregational Church, 11 April 1926.

⁷⁴ Revd. E.G. Clancy, letter to the author 12 April 1990.

⁷⁵ Minutes of the North Perth Church meeting 11 June 1925.

⁷⁶ North Perth Congregational Church, Report 1926.

⁷⁷ Priest, "Ballet's Contribution" 1953 (File 15492).

on Sundays, he was "wonderful" with children and young people;⁷⁸ kind but self-controlled himself, he expected the same of others. On Sunday mornings the children had to remain unseen and unheard while he read to Mu his four sermons for the day.⁷⁹ Joanna resembled him in her love for, and confidence in, children and her love of beauty. In the matter of religion she has said that she had "too much" as a child, but she did not rebel against it. She was always aware that there was some power outside mankind - "the mind boggles at the thought of creation".⁸⁰ On 15 December 1953, she was to return to her maternal great-grandparents' denomination by being confirmed in the Church of England,⁸¹ although she has said she attended church very rarely.

Her father may have been a scholar but Joanna claims she was not. She loved English, drama and French at school, but the records of Perth College, which she and Mary attended, give no indication of outstanding scholastic ability. But they do show that she excelled as a sportswoman: in 1925 she won a prize for gymnastics, and in the same year she jumped 15'7" at the interschool sports, drawing for first place. She then cleared 15'10" in an exhibition jump and was runner up to the champion athlete.⁸² She was considered a tough player on the hockey field,⁸³ and could be

⁷⁸ Priest, personal interview, 1 December 1989.

⁷⁹ The services were: Christian Endeavour, Morning Church, Sunday School and Evening Church. Priest, Interview 1 December 1989.

⁸⁰ Priest, personal interview, 7 February 1988.

⁸¹ Records of Confirmations in St. Peters Cathedral, Adelaide, January 1953 - December 1964 (Adelaide: Anglican Church Office).

⁸² Verna Broadfoot, letter to the author, July 1990.

⁸³ Joyce Steele, personal interview, 9 August 1990.



Fig. 6 Fred Priest, c. 1923.

Joanna's father.

Photograph provided by Clive Hamer, Hon. Archivist of the
Uniting Church in Australia, Synod of Western Australia.

temperamental at times.⁸⁴ If not remarkable academically, she was nevertheless building up an artistic awareness which she claims was developed by her mother who spent a lot of time reading to her.⁸⁵

Mu, who was born in Bristol in 1881, is remembered by Joanna as a warm, gentle, patient soul who loved beauty and nature, and as the perfect parson's wife, listening to her husband rehearse his sermons, putting his needs first, and attending all church functions. Although the second youngest in her family, and when only a child herself, she had been made responsible for taking care of the youngest, Tarlton, who was a sleep-walker. She had also to look after one of her older sisters, Annie Adelaide (Nance), who was "frail."

When the family lived in Adelaide, she and her sisters attended Dryburgh House School where she was fortunate in having as a teacher the principal, Mrs. Kelsey, who had a deep appreciation of the arts, and taught drawing and literature.⁸⁶ Mu became a competent painter,⁸⁷ and during the years 1897-1900 when she was aged 16-19, she wrote several poems which were published as a book entitled In Sun and Shade.⁸⁸ These poems are feminine and somewhat sentimental, occasionally having flashes of humour, at other times of nostalgia and even despair. She, too, had a sensitive soul.

After her husband's death the Congregational Church paid her her husband's stipend for three months, and gave her use of the Manse until her own house was built.

⁸⁴ Gwen Garside (sister of Linley and N.A.R. Wilson), interviewed by Lynn Fisher, 30 July 1990.

⁸⁵ Priest, personal interview, 11 April 1988.

⁸⁶E.O. Kelsey The Cultivation of the Fine Arts as an Aid to the Study of Literature. (Adelaide: Burden and Bonython, Advertiser Officer, 1892).

⁸⁷ See Fig. 4.

⁸⁸ Sophie Muriel Jefferis, In Sun and Shade (Adelaide: E.S. Wigg & Son, n.d.).

In addition, an Australia-wide appeal was made for the benefit of herself and the children, and, while £500 was requested, the amount received was just short of £700.⁸⁹

As she grew up, Joanna did not lose her love for dancing, and now Mu, without her husband's prohibition, made enquiries about classes. It was Joanna's good fortune that in 1926 Linley Wilson returned from England and opened what may have been the first studio in Perth to teach "pure" classical ballet.⁹⁰ As well as being Joanna's first ballet teacher, she also became her sister-in-law, although Joanna did not meet her future husband until some years later.

Linley's father, Frank Wilson, was born in England in 1859 and married his wife, Annie, in 1880. They had nine children of whom Norman Alfred Robert (known as Rob), Joanna's future husband, was born in 1900 and Linley, the youngest of six girls, in 1898. The family came to Australia in 1891, arriving in Queensland, where Frank operated his own business before being asked to become manager of A. Overend & Co. Ltd., railway contractors, flour millers and machinery merchants in Brisbane. The family then moved to Perth, where Frank took the position of Managing Director of the Canning Jarrah Timber Company Ltd. From 1899 to 1902 he was President of the Perth Chamber of Commerce and also President of the Timber Merchants and Saw Millers Association. From 1896 to 1899 he was a Perth City Councillor, and entered Parliament in 1897. He held several ministries before becoming Premier in 1910 and 1916, represented Western

⁸⁹ Twenty Third Annual Report of the North Perth Congregational Church, 11 April 1926.

⁹⁰ In Daphne Popham's article on Linley Wilson in D. Popham, ed., *Reflections* (Perth: Carrolls, 1978) 210, it is claimed that Linley Wilson's was "the first school of classical ballet in Australia." She may well have been the first person in Perth to teach this technique, with the other schools providing only "fancy dancing" which will be discussed in the next chapter. But she was not the first in Australia. In Adelaide alone, Nora Stewart had opened her studio in 1914, Wanda Edwards in 1919, and Phyllis Leitch presented her pupils in "operatic dancing" in 1921. See Alan Brissenden, "Theatrical Dance in South Australia," *From Colonel Light into the Footlights*, Andrew McCredie, ed., (Adelaide: Pagel Books 1988) 84-85.

Australia at the Coronation of King George V and was created CMG in 1911.⁹¹ He has been described as "strong and stubborn...[with] a quick mind and [a person who] did not suffer fools gladly...Notable for his publicly avowed moral values, he was a loyal friend and a much-loved husband and father."⁹²

Linley made her first trip to London with the aim of becoming a concert pianist, but her first sight of classical ballet, a performance by Diaghilev's Ballets Russes, impressed her so strongly that she gave up the piano and began studying ballet.⁹³

Joanna was one of Linley's first pupils when she opened her studio in Perth, and the problem of payment for her classes was solved by a "work scholarship" which meant doing chores such as cleaning the studio and preparing Miss Wilson's meals in return for her classes.

As well as ballet, Joanna learned eurythmics, a form of movement training was developed by the Swiss composer and educator Émile Jacques Dalcroze (1865-1950) to help his music students experience a sense of rhythm by feeling it through the movements of their bodies.⁹⁴ The first teacher of this method in Perth was probably a Perth resident, Miss Irene Wittenoom, who had qualified at the Dalcroze school in England. She returned to teach in Perth schools, but left when she married, after which interest waned there until 1923 when Australian Heather Gell and two other qualified English

⁹¹ Fred John's Annual: Australasia's Prominent People 1914 (London: Pitman, 1914) 224.

⁹² David Black, "Wilson, Frank," Australian Dictionary of Biography Vol.12, 1891-1939 (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1990) 520.

⁹³ Lynn Fisher, "An Australian Ballet Was Dancer's Dream," West Australian 23 June 1990. After returning to Australia Miss Wilson was active in seeking support from two other Australian teachers, Frances Scully in Sydney and Jennie Brenan in Melbourne, for the adoption of the Royal Academy of Dancing's syllabus and examination system. The effort was successful and Felix Demery, the first examiner, came to Australia in 1935.

⁹⁴ Émile Jaques-Dalcroze, Eurythmics, Art and Education (London: Chatto and Windus, 1930) 106.

teachers, Ann Driver and Cecelia John, presented demonstrations as part of an Australian tour. The Kindergarten Union of Western Australia then decided to sponsor a teacher and brought out Elle Heinrich.⁹⁵ Miss Heinrich arrived in mid-1926 to find seventy students had been booked and arrangements made for her to share Linley Wilson's studio until she was settled. But she never became settled as a eurythmics teacher, largely because of her "unfortunate manner that upset and offended many people. After a good start she was left with few pupils."⁹⁶ But there were some students who were not discouraged by her. One has described her as

a WONDERFUL teacher! Absolutely INSPIRING! ...She really did have an unfortunate personality: she was a big brusque woman and...quite demanding...but the music she played was so lovely I didn't mind putting up with her way.⁹⁷

Just when Joanna commenced or ceased taking eurythmics classes with her is not recorded, but she was apparently one of Miss Heinrich's pupils in 1929 when Pavlova made her first, and only, visit to Perth. Joanna later recalled that Miss Heinrich invited herself and her pupils to dance for Pavlova: Miss Heinrich danced first,

going through Gounod's 'Ave Maria' on her knees. Then came our turn...Pavlova watched...I heard her say to Dandré, her husband, 'There is a dancer'...and when our demonstration was over...she told me I must go abroad to study."⁹⁸

The chance to do this came at the end of 1930 when Linley Wilson made the second of many trips back to England and on this occasion took Joanna with her. Grandmother

⁹⁵ The correct spelling of this name may be "Elli Hinricks," but, as most of the information I have been given has the name as "Heinrich", that spelling will be used here. She graduated from the London School of Dalcroze Eurythmics in 1921. Joan Pope, telephone interview, November 1990 (Eurythmics File).

⁹⁶ Mollie Lyon (née Townley), interview by Joan Pope, Jan/Feb. 1990 (Eurythmics File).

⁹⁷ Leila Black, interview by Joan Pope, January 1990 (Eurythmics File).

⁹⁸ Joanna Priest, "Tales of the Ballet," Advertiser 22 April 1958, 4 (File 25492).

Jefferis gave (or possibly lent, but no-one can remember for certain), some of the money towards the expenses of this trip as did a close friend of Mu, Mrs. A.E.H. Evans,⁹⁹ and another amount was provided by Professor A.D. Ross, a long-standing friend and supporter of Miss Wilson, who wrote to him in appreciation that he had offered financial support without its being solicited:

it will be a great help to Joanne, and she is worth helping...it is difficult to tell you how tremendously I appreciate your idea of a presentation to me...I should like every penny to be spent on Joanne in London that she in turn may come back and give all she can to our children here.¹⁰⁰

In his reply Professor Ross told Miss Wilson:

I feel convinced that Joanne will spare no trouble to take full advantage of the opportunities she will have for training in London...I feel convinced she has her profession fully at heart and that she will give to it of her best. A period in London will increase her efficiency on your staff.¹⁰¹

It was taken for granted that Joanna would continue to work as assistant to her teacher on her return.

On this, as on subsequent visits to England, Joanna stayed in London with a cousin of her mother, "Aunt" Sophie Howard. Aunt Sophie and her husband, although not professional musicians, were music lovers, and invited professional string quartets to visit them every Sunday. Their daughter Madeleine married Ernest Albert Whitfield, who, though blinded in the first World War, was a professional violinist who toured in England as well as abroad. He retired from the concert platform in 1935 and became a member of several committees relating to the blind, as well as community bodies.¹⁰² In 1951 he

⁹⁹ Anne Somerville, telephone interview 27 January 1991.

¹⁰⁰ Linley Wilson, Letter to Professor A.D. Ross, 3 August 1930 (Linley Wilson Collection: Battye Library 417190 Box #3).

¹⁰¹ Professor A.D. Ross, letter to Linley Wilson, 1 September 1930 (Linley Wilson Collection: Box 3).

¹⁰² Debrett's Peerage and Baronetage 1980, 664.

was created Baron Kenswood for "political services" to the Labour government.¹⁰³

The other member of the Howard family was an adopted daughter Andrée, who was half French. Her mother, Mme. Sinet, was an Englishwoman whose French husband had left her. When World War I broke out, she brought her daughter to England, where by chance Mrs. Howard met her on a London bus and was so touched by Mme. Sinet's distress that she offered Andrée a home, and later, adopted her.¹⁰⁴ Andrée trained as a dancer with Marie Rambert and also with some of the Russian émigré teachers in Paris,¹⁰⁵ and was one of the outstanding English choreographers during the birth of British Ballet. One of her colleagues in the Ballet Rambert, Maude Lloyd, remarked on her talent, which was spread through so many arts.

She sculpted quite well; she painted quite well; she designed costumes and sets very well; and she had an innate love and understanding of music, as too did her parents.¹⁰⁶

Sally Gilmour, another member of the company who danced in many of Andrée's ballets, remembered her as having "an extremely sensitive feeling for the way animals and people behaved and looked. She was perhaps too sensitive; the world rather dented and bruised her."¹⁰⁷

¹⁰³ John Whitfield, letter to the author, 22 November 1989. Although Mr. Whitfield is the second Lord Kenswood, he stated in this letter that he does not use the title.

¹⁰⁴ Kathrine Sorley Walker, "The Choreography of Andrée Howard," Dance Chronicle 13.3 (1990-1991): 265.

¹⁰⁵ John Percival lists her teachers as being Egorova, Kshessinska [sic], Preobrazhenska [sic] and Trefilova. M. Clarke and D. Vaughan, eds., The Encyclopedia of Dance and Ballet (London: Pitman, 1977) 177.

¹⁰⁶ Maude Lloyd, "Some Recollections of the English Ballet", Dance Research 3:1 (Autumn 1984): 46.

¹⁰⁷ Sally Gilmour, "Remembering Andrée Howard," Dance Research 2:1 (Spring 1984): 56.



Fig. 7 Andrée Howard in her ballet **Death and the Maiden**.
Photograph from The Dancing Times, March 1943: 265.

The other side of her character enabled her to be "a wonderful mimic, capable of sustained comic invention, high-spirited and gregarious"¹⁰⁸ but sadly, the depression of a lonely, long Easter weekend caused her to take her own life.¹⁰⁹

It would not have been surprising if Andrée and Joanna, both born in the same year, with a common love of dancing and urge to choreograph, had become close friends. But they did not. Joanna found Andrée without conversation¹¹⁰ and unsure of herself, though completely confident when she was rehearsing one of her ballets.

Joanna's ballet teachers in London were Ruth French and Marie Rambert. Miss French was an Englishwoman who was born in London in 1906. She trained with Khlustin (Clustine) who was Pavlova's ballet master from 1914 to 1922,¹¹¹ Sasha Goudin and Serge Morosoff.¹¹² As well as being a principal dancer in Pavlova's Company, she appeared in London revues and musicals - often the only employment for a dancer in London - and was a soloist in the Vic-Wells Ballet. Admired as a dancer, she was also a respected teacher and became an examiner of the Royal Academy of Dancing. Under her tutelage Joanna learned the syllabus of that body, and reached Intermediate level before returning to Australia.

Joanna and Linley had seen Pavlova dance in December 1930¹¹³ and her sudden

¹⁰⁸ Walker, 265-266.

¹⁰⁹ Walker, 336. She died in 1968.

¹¹⁰ Joanna Priest, personal interview 23 June 1989. Compare this, however, with Sacheverell Sitwell's comment:
"I like to look at Pearl [Argyle, a great beauty] and talk to Andrée" (Lloyd, 48).

¹¹¹ Mary Clarke, in M. Clarke, and D. Vaughan, eds, 147.

¹¹² Anatole Chujoy and P.W. Manchester, The Dance Encyclopedia, (New York: Simon and Schuster 1967) 387.

¹¹³ Wilson, letter to Ross, 6 February 1931 (Linley Wilson Collection, Box 3).

death came as a shock to them, as to all ballet lovers. The story is well known that, at the gala performance of the Camargo Society which took place about a week after her death, the music of "The Dying Swan" was played to an empty stage and a weeping audience. A few nights later, when Joanna was dancing in a display given by Miss French's students, she ran to Miss French when she heard her scream, and found her holding a basket of roses with a card which read, "For my darling Ruthie, I fear I shall not be well enough to come to your opening night. I have caught a wretched cold and will have to remain in Holland until I am well. I shall be thinking of you - Anna".¹¹⁴

Joanna had less affection for Mme. Rambert, about whom much has been written both by Rambert herself and by others.¹¹⁵ In 1913 she was a student at the Dalcroze school in Switzerland when Diaghilev engaged her to help his company - and Nijinsky - with the difficult rhythms of Stravinsky's "Le Sacre du Printemps". She remained with the Diaghilev company, taking classes with balletmaster Enrico Cecchetti, whose method of teaching she adopted later when she settled in England after marrying the playwright Ashley Dukes, and opened her studio from which grew the Ballet Rambert Company.

Joanna claims Rambert did not like her but had to respect her on the occasion when a teacher did not turn up to take a class. Joanna offered to teach it, and Rambert's response was "What, you, from the bush?" But take it she did and Rambert, having watched, offered to engage her as a teacher. Excited by this, Joanna told Aunt Sophie,

¹¹⁴ Priest, "Tales of the Ballet" 1958. (File 25492).

¹¹⁵ Marie Rambert, Quicksilver (London: Macmillan 1972); Lionel Bradley, Sixteen Years of Ballet Rambert (London: Dugdale Printing 1946); Mary Clarke, Dancers of Mercury (London: Adam and Charles Black 1962). See also books about the Diaghileff company, e.g. Richard Buckle, Diaghilev (London: Hamish Hamilton 1979) and the early days of English ballet, e.g. Arnold Haskell, Balletomania (Harmondsworth: Penguin 1977).

who replied "Can you live on 1/6 a week?"¹¹⁶ The idea was dropped.

In 1958 Joanna wrote:

The [person]...who influenced my thought and work most was Rambert. Intelligent, brittle, erudite, ruthless, sagacious and turbulent, she had a gift of seeing talent in a student, and of pulling just the right strings to make an artist of him. One cannot love Rambert, but one can be grateful to her, and respect her genius.¹¹⁷

Joanna more than justified the confidence placed in her.

In February Linley Wilson reported to Professor Ross:

Joanne has accomplished even more than she set out to do and I am very, very proud of her not only for passing all the examinations but for the way in which she has approached and stood up to everything. I... am looking forward to the help that she will be able to give me in spreading the art of dancing more widely in Western Australia.¹¹⁸

Joanna had passed the Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing (ISTD) ballroom examination, thus becoming an associate of that Society, and she had also passed the Elementary and Intermediate examinations of the Association of Operatic Dancing of Great Britain. Miss Wilson commented "It is only grit and determination on top of knowledge that can get one through."¹¹⁹

On Joanna's return to Perth in early 1931 she continued, as planned, to work as Linley's assistant teacher. She also took part in a performance presented by Linley at the Assembly Hall, Perth, "Under the Patronage and in the Presence of Professor Ross."¹²⁰

¹¹⁶ Priest, Videotaped interview, interviewer not identified, [1982].

¹¹⁷ Priest, "Tales of the Ballet," 1958 (File 25492).

¹¹⁸ Wilson, letter to Ross 1931.

¹¹⁹ Wilson, letter to Ross, 1931.

¹²⁰ Poetry of Dance and Mime: Performance by Linley Wilson's students, 12 and 14 December 1931. (Programme in Linley Wilson File)

A reviewer of this performance reported: "Miss Joanne Priest's solos were remarkable for clean cut technique and vitality... 'Tarentelle' [sic] also gave Miss Priest opportunities for vivacious and clever dancing".¹²¹ But not even praise of this nature changed Joanna's aim. She had no ambition to become a performer; she wanted to teach.

It could not be expected that such an independent person would want to continue indefinitely as an assistant, no matter how much she respected her teacher. But to set up a studio in Perth, teaching in opposition to Linley, would have been difficult. Fortunately, and before any strife arose, a solution was provided by Mrs. Evans, Mu's friend, who offered to lend Joanna the money to open her own studio in Adelaide. The offer was accepted and the confidence in her again justified as Joanna paid back the loan before the end of her first year of independence.

She could not have realised at the time what a good choice she had made by settling in Adelaide. Although it was only the fourth largest city in Australia, it had a set of exceptionally enthusiastic balletomanes. This had been noted by Arnold Haskell when he came to Australia in 1936 with the first of the de Basil companies, the Monte Carlo Russian Ballet. He wrote

The success of the ballet made theatrical history in Adelaide...[i]n this city of 250,000¹²² inhabitants, the theatre was nearly full for eighteen days, and the season could have continued another eighteen...that is amazing. Chicago, with three and a half million, can roughly stand eighteen days; Paris, to-day, far less; New York, the same amount.¹²³

¹²¹ "Recital of Dance and Mime," Western Australian 15 December 1931: 5.

¹²² John Stonham (ed.) Year Book of the Commonwealth of Australia, no.25, 1932, 400, states that the urban-metropolitan population was 312,619.

¹²³ Arnold Haskell, Dancing Round the World (London, Gollancz, 1837) 93.

It was also commented on by Kirsova after her company's 1944 tour:

Australia is fortunate in having... an [intelligent, keen] audience...a warm-hearted enthusiasm, a craving to learn, a sensitivity to ideas...It is to be found in Sydney, in Melbourne, in Brisbane. Perhaps nowhere is it more intense than in Adelaide.¹²⁴

This was fertile soil for the seeds of Joanna's imagination.

¹²⁴ Hélène Kirsova Kirsova Australian Ballet (Adelaide: Frank E. Cork, n.d. but presumably late 1944 or 1945 as the author writes of "Our recent interstate tour" (pages not numbered).)



Fig. 8 Visit by H el ene Kirsova to Joanna's studio in Freemasons' Hall, 1936.
Joanna is on Kirsova's left, and Mem Hodge on Joanna's left.

This page was printed in error. But to remove it would necessitate re-numbering therefore reprinting the whole thesis which does not seem justifiable in the present climate of conserving resources. I hope this can be overlooked.

Chapter 2. The Teacher

Joanna took a risk in opening a studio in Adelaide, particularly at the time she did. Although she had been born in the suburb of Henley Beach in 1910, her family had moved to New South Wales the following year, then to Western Australia, so she returned to South Australia unknown. Linley Wilson had given her teaching experience, but to teach for another does not carry the hazards encountered in setting up and running a business on one's own, and she faced well-entrenched competition from other dance studios in Adelaide. And, in 1932, South Australia was at its lowest point in the Depression.¹²⁵ Could people afford dance classes?

In spite of the poor economic climate, teachers in the large Adelaide studios were kept busy. Some parents made sacrifices so that their children could continue with their dancing classes,¹²⁶ but Jean Rogers has pointed out that the South Australian economy was dominated by a small number of companies whose profit declined only temporarily during the depression, and by 1933-34 had almost returned to its pre-depression level. Thus well off families whose income derived from those companies were not required to change their lifestyles dramatically; their children continued their ballet classes without disrupting the family budget and the adults continued with their usual entertainments,

¹²⁵ South Australian Year Book 1986, 85. Table 8.5 shows that in 1932, which was the worst year, the percentage unemployed in the 1st quarter of 1932 was 33.1%; for the 2nd quarter, 35.2%; for the 3rd, 35.4% and for the last, 32.3%.

¹²⁶ Jean Bedford, interview by Helen Pearce, audiocassette, 24 October 1990.

including balls, for which ballroom classes were mandatory.¹²⁷ And it was not only the wealthy who enjoyed social dancing, and reasons for this have been given by Jack Royans: firstly, the "talkies" and the widening use of radios made a large number of people familiar with dance music; secondly, "talkies" made redundant the musicians who had accompanied the silent films, and these people looked for work in other places, including the "dance industry"; thirdly, two thirds of the population were employed, even if not full time, so there was still a body of people with varying amounts of spending money; fourthly, some entrepreneurs provided a form of escapism in "bob hops" at one shilling (ten cents) admission; and finally, the dances provided something which no other entertainment could give, and that was to bring unacquainted girls and boys together in close contact.¹²⁸

Thus teachers of ballroom dancing - even those new to a city - survived. Joanna opened her first studio in 1932 in Freemasons Hall, North Terrace, and during that first year her ballroom classes were so well-attended that it was necessary to hire a larger room to accommodate the pupils.¹²⁹ Even with classes costing only sixpence (5c), she was able within that year to repay the loan which had allowed her to set up her school. Her venture had started well.

There were considerable differences between Adelaide's dance world of 1932 and that of the 1990s, one being that the dance techniques were differently named, several being grouped under the general heading of "fancy dancing". This included styles such

¹²⁷ Jean Rogers, "Leisure and Adelaide's Social Élite During the Great Depression 1929-1934," B.A. (Hons.) Diss. Adelaide (1984) 1, 2, 22, 40.

¹²⁸ Jack Royans, "Dancing through the Depression: A Study of Ballroom Dancing in Adelaide c.1927-c.1934," B.A. (Hons.) Diss. Flinders (1988) 1-2.

¹²⁹ The number of students has been estimated as between 200 and 300. Honor John Wilson, personal interview, audiocassette, 23 May 1989.

as tap dancing, national dancing, musical comedy (now called jazz ballet), acrobatic (referred to sometimes as "acrobats"),¹³⁰ classical - which was barefoot dancing - and operatic dancing, the term used for what is now known as classical ballet.¹³¹ Frank Salter, in his book Borovansky commented:

The style known as Fancy embraced just about everything from gymnastics to eurythmics, and included something called adagio dancing which was mainly contortionism. Generally, this fancy style set its exponents to gyrating barefoot as nymphs, leaves blown about by the wind, or flowers no horticulturalist ever catalogued.¹³²

In some places the net was spread wider to include Morris dancing, maypole and Scottish reels.¹³³ These fancy dancing techniques were necessary for dancers who wanted to work in vaudeville, which was the only professional employment available to them in Adelaide at the time.¹³⁴

Another difference was that before the mid-1930s there was no examination system, hence no check on the knowledge and abilities of teachers, and no minimum requirement was necessary for opening a school. Young girls could and did set up "studios" in their homes, and teach paying friends. Desme White started teaching at the age of ten, Gladys Watts when she was thirteen, and Zell Sanders at sixteen.¹³⁵

¹³⁰ Phyl Skinner, personal interview, audiocassette, 19 April 1988; C. Laffan, letter to the author, 15 October 1991.

¹³¹ During that period "The Ballet" was the name given to a group of girls dancing in a chorus line. For the rest of this discussion the word "ballet" will have its current usage.

¹³² Frank Salter Borovansky: The Man Who Made Australian Ballet (Sydney: Wildcat Press, 1980) 76.

¹³³ Marjorie Hollinshed In Search of Ballet in Australia (Brisbane: Boolarong Publications 1987) 3.

¹³⁴ Phyl Skinner's taped interview gives an account of her audition for, and subsequent work with, Sir Benjamin Fuller's Tivoli Circuit, with resident ballet mistress Jean Bedford. Bedford, interview, 1986, and Skinner, interview, 1988.

¹³⁵ Desme White, interview by Helen Pearce, audiocassette, 5 February 1987; Gladys Watts, personal interview, 22 May 1986; Zell Sanders, interview by Helen Pearce, audiocassette, 23 February 1989.

Whatever it might have done to the young bodies, it brought some extra money into the teacher's home - a welcome contribution during the Depression. Although some of these lessons consisted of learning dance routines rather than barre and centre exercises, there was still a great possibility of doing harm - Dorothy Noye recalls taking pointe shoes to her first class.¹³⁶ Of this evil, Salter has remarked:

It was in the category defined as toe dancing that the greatest horrors were perpetrated. Women with almost no technical training encouraged small girls to rear up on their toes in badly-made pointe shoes, on feet not remotely prepared for this kind of onslaught.¹³⁷

A variation of this was toe tapping, performed with taps fastened onto pointe shoes,¹³⁸ although this does not seem to have been taught widely.

The proliferation of inexperienced instructors was one of the problems which united teachers in various states of Australia to lobby the parent bodies of the Cecchetti Society and the Association of Teachers of Operatic Dancing (later the Royal Academy of Dancing) in England to establish their syllabuses in Australia and send examiners to ensure that a standard of teaching was set and maintained.¹³⁹

¹³⁶ Dorothy Noye, interview by Helen Pearce, audiocassette, 30 October 1990.

¹³⁷ Salter, 76.

¹³⁸ Dorothy Simpson learned this technique in Melbourne. It is not known if it was taught by any Adelaide teachers. Dorothy Simpson, personal interview 28 July 1988.

¹³⁹ The Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing was founded in London in 1904 for teachers of ballroom and other types of dancing. The Cecchetti Society was incorporated in 1924. Horst Koegler, ed. The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Ballet 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987) 211.

The Association of Teachers of Operatic Dancing was founded in 1920. A Royal Charter was granted in 1936, after which it was named the Royal Academy of Dancing (R.A.D.). M. Clarke and D. Vaughan, eds. The Encyclopedia of Dance and Ballet (London: Pitman, 1977) 296.



Fig 9 The Bowman College Ballet.
Photograph from Souvenir Prorgamme of The Bowman College of
Dancing and Physical Culture, late 1920s.

A major reason for the lack of knowledge was the tyranny of distance.¹⁴⁰ Most teachers in Australia at that time looked to England as the centre of the dance world, but few could afford to travel there to further their knowledge. Jean Bedford, who was for many years a well-respected teacher in Adelaide, recalled that those who could not travel attempted to increase their dance vocabulary by reading dance magazines, copying steps they had seen performed on stage, and using their own imagination. Some made a trip to Melbourne or Sydney to work with more experienced teachers, especially teachers with overseas experience such as Jenny Brenan in Melbourne.¹⁴¹ Finally, opportunities to show a child's progress were much more limited than they are today. Before examinations were established, the students' talents could be seen at the end-of-year concert, some children entered for competitions which were held annually, and entertainment at the many balls was often provided by one or other of the dancing schools. Apart from such exhibitions, the aims of ballet classes were limited to the acquisition of grace and deportment and the enjoyment of a hobby. Sometimes they were used therapeutically: then as now a child could be referred to dance classes for the amelioration of a medical condition such as poor general health or a chest complaint.¹⁴² There were also some who trained with the expectation of becoming dance teachers.

Joanna entered this rather isolated dance world with better training than some of her competitors, but she was not the only newcomer into the field in the early 1930s. Four people who had been, or were to be, professional dancers also established

¹⁴⁰ Geoffrey Blainey The Tyranny of Distance (Melbourne: Sun Books, 1966).

¹⁴¹ Jean Bedford, personal interview, 1 May 1986, and see also Marjorie Hollinshed, In Search of Ballet in Australia (Brisbane: Boolarong Publications, 1987) Chapter One.

¹⁴² Gladys Watts went to Weber, Shorthose and Rice to improve a chronic chest infection (Watts 1986). Eileen Gropler began classes with Vera van Rij because she was "frail" (Gropler, personal interview, 6 May 1986).

themselves quickly. Three of these were women: Dorothy Slane, who had been dancing professionally in USA for eight years and returned to Australia in 1931 when the Depression caused a downturn in American theatre, Vera van Rij, a South African who had been a member of Pavlova's company and settled in Adelaide after she married musician Spruhan Kennedy, and Mina Bauer, who returned to Adelaide at the end of 1931, after spending some time in America where she had made a film on interpretive dancing, dedicated to Isadora Duncan.¹⁴³ Bauer had picked up some exotic dance styles while overseas, and she advertised herself as teaching not only "Fokine Ballet Technique" but also "castanetting, Spanish heeling, Oriental, Indian dancing, acrobatics, limbering, stretching and control kicks".¹⁴⁴

The fourth newcomer was Walter Desborough.¹⁴⁵ He had begun his ballet training in Adelaide with Mina Bauer and now joined her as a teacher in her studio behind the old South Australian Hotel. He later went to Sydney to work with the Kirsova Ballet, and when that company folded in 1944, returned to Adelaide where he again taught and in 1949 formed a small company which toured country towns. At the end of 1950 he and two of his students, Raymond Trickett and Jack Manuel, became members of the National Ballet company.

These teachers, like Joanna, had to prove themselves, and their greatest competition came from three well-established ballet teachers, Wanda Edwards, Phyllis

¹⁴³ Thelma Afford, "Ab-Intra Studio Theatre in Adelaide 1931-35," Australasian Drama Studies 12-13 (1988): 169.

¹⁴⁴ News 18 April 1929.

¹⁴⁵ His real name was Dasborough, but his father was utterly against his becoming a dancer and using the family name, so he changed it to Desborough. Raymond Trickett, letter to the author, January 1991.



Fig. 10 Vera van Rij.
Photograph by Rembrandt, Adelaide, reproduced by
Town Topics 9 September 1932.

Leitch and Nora Stewart, each of whom, like Joanna, could afford to study overseas.

Wanda Edwards embraced the Cecchetti method of training and was, with Lucie Saranova of Melbourne, responsible for the establishment of that syllabus in Australia.¹⁴⁶ Phyllis Leitch, who had been made a member of the Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing, chose to study the Royal Academy of Dancing system also, and adopted this syllabus for her school.¹⁴⁷ She herself passed the Elementary examination in 1937, the same year that Joanna won her Advanced Teachers' Certificate.¹⁴⁸ Nora Stewart adopted neither syllabus, and continued to teach ballet, ballroom and Margaret Morris dancing, of which she was the only exponent in Adelaide at that time.¹⁴⁹ One of Joanna's former students considered that, of the established teachers, Nora Stewart had the greatest reputation, and that there developed between the two schools "tremendous rivalry. Pupils of Miss Stewart despised us and we despised them."¹⁵⁰

Joanna's first pupil was her cousin Marian (Mem) Hodge, who left school at the age of fourteen to study ballet full time and became Joanna's first assistant

¹⁴⁶ For further details about Wanda Edwards and the establishment of the Cecchetti Society in Australia see Hollinshed, pp 125-126.

¹⁴⁷ Brissenden, 85.

¹⁴⁸ The results for Adelaide in 1937 were:

-Advanced Teachers' Examination Joanne Priest.

-Intermediate Examination Donella Gambling, Eileen Gropler, Marian Hodge, Honor John, M. Parkyn, G. Watts.

-Elementary Examination J. Dugan, J. Frayne, Phyllis Leitch, Margaret Parkyn, P. Skinner, M. Smith. RAD Gazette May 1938, 10 (File: Royal Academy of Dancing).

Although these girls were students of different teachers, they did the work for the R.A.D. examinations with Joanna, as she was the only person in Adelaide at that time who knew the syllabuses.

¹⁴⁹ The Margaret Morris technique was a form of modern dance, in that it was "a new basic technique for those who don't want to be ballet dancers, but need a technique on natural freer lines, from which to develop a more creative type of dance and dramatic ballets." Margaret Morris, quoting herself in her autobiography: My Life in Movement (London: Peter Owen, 1969) 18.

¹⁵⁰ Gillian Cave, letter to the author, undated but received early September 1990.



Fig. 11 Mem Hodge in the Studio in Freemasons' Hall, mid 1930s.

teacher. Another early pupil was Gillian Fry, whose mother, former ballet teacher Dorothy Deeley (Mrs. Kenneth Fry), befriended Joanna and introduced her to "the artistic side of Adelaide society."¹⁵¹

The syllabus offered to Joanna's pupils was different from that in any other Adelaide studio at that time. As well as ballet classes, there were classes in art, singing, poetry, drama and French, taught by specialists in their fields. As one former pupil said, "Jo was always educating us and broadening our tiny minds - she encouraged us to try and do sculptures of dancers, to appreciate pictures and theatre design...But I think the most lasting memory is appreciation of music".¹⁵²

There is no record that Joanna learned to play any instrument during her schooldays, yet music was as important to her as dance. She would have learned much from Linley Wilson who had intended to become a concert pianist before abandoning this ambition for ballet,¹⁵³ and, apart from the concerts and theatres she visited while in London, the relatives with whom she was staying were music lovers who regularly entertained professional musicians. Her growing understanding of music developed further after she met the conductor, Bernard Heinze, some time in the early 1930s.¹⁵⁴ From then until the time of his death in 1982 they maintained a close, even intimate, friendship.

So important to her was music that an appreciation of it was the first thing she

¹⁵¹ Cave, 1990.

¹⁵² Cave, 1990.

¹⁵³ Lynn Fisher, 1990.

¹⁵⁴ Sir Bernard must have had a certain charisma as Harold Tidemann recalls that he "captivated the ladies of the SA Orchestral Auxiliary Committee on each of his many visits." H. Tidemann, "A View from the Stalls," Advertiser Saturday Review 9 July 1983: 32.

taught the very young who came to her for ballet classes:

during the first few years' work for the very young child, we concentrate almost entirely on the understanding and interpretation of the technical side of music. During these years the child learns her note values and time values [,] certain musical rhythms, like to [sic] skip, gallop, polka etc. and some of the musical terms which she must know in order to appreciate music to the full when she is older.¹⁵⁵

She advocated using "the Classic principles in the music education of our children. Let them hear what is simple, harmonious, proportioned and restrained, and let music - the hearing of it - the study of it - become part of their lives."¹⁵⁶

It was a source of great pride to Joanna when one examiner expressed delighted surprise at her students' musicality. The results generally were good, and Joanna said:

I was pleased about that of course. But what pleased and encouraged me more was Madam [sic] Espinosa's unconcealed admiration for what she termed the unusual musical feeling and knowledge these children brought to their work.¹⁵⁷

Outstanding musical ability in others commanded Joanna's respect, and, of all the dance teachers in Adelaide, the only one whose classes Joanna would allow her students to attend was the eurythmics teacher, Heather Gell, of whom more will be written in the next chapter.

Although Joanna used music as the starting point for most of her ballets, and movement to interpret them, it can be argued that words, both spoken and written, were the tools by which she made the greatest impact on her students.

Skill with words might be expected in a woman whose family had literary

¹⁵⁵ Joanna Priest, Talk to Parents and Friends, n.d. but either 1948 or 1949 (File 25492).

¹⁵⁶ Joanna Priest, "The Artistic Development of the Child," Talk to Parents' and Friends' Association meeting, 12 March 1958 (File 25492).

¹⁵⁷ Priest, Talk, 1948 or 1949.



Fig. 12 Joanna teaching at the Studio Arts Centre, c. 1973.
Students from left: Andrew Batten, Sarah Blunden,
Sally Savage, Linda Muller.

ability on both sides. Mention has already been made of Grandfather Jefferis' power as a writer and orator, a talent shared by Joanna's father. Another of Grandfather Jefferis' granddaughters, Barbara Jefferis, became a well-known author. But Joanna credits her mother, who was both a competent painter and lover of literature, with being the person who fostered what talent her daughter might have inherited. And Mu's own talent in literature would have been, in its turn, fostered not only in her home, but also at the school, Dryburgh House, which she and her sisters attended when they lived in Adelaide.

Dryburgh House, which was situated on part of the land now owned by St. Peter's College, was established in 1876 by a Mrs. Marcus, the wife of a Congregational clergyman, and was later taken over by her daughter, Mrs. Kelsey.¹⁵⁸ This remarkable woman was a well-educated and advanced thinker in several fields. The collection of her writings which are in the Mortlock Library include papers on a variety of subjects, some handwritten, including notes on Coleridge, Keats, Browning, "The Cloister and the Hearth" and "Education for Liberty"; others typed, including "Some thoughts on the characters found in 'The Tempest'", "Conchology" and "Habit and Self-Control as Building Stones of Character". A few, such as "The Education of Australian Girls"¹⁵⁹ and "Cultivation of the Fine Arts as an aid to the study of Literature",¹⁶⁰ were printed.

Mrs. Kelsey taught drawing and literature, and in the address entitled "Cultivation of the Fine Arts", she wrote:

¹⁵⁸ I have not been able to discover the date when Mrs. Kelsey took over the school.

¹⁵⁹ Read by Mrs. Kelsey at the Adelaide Meeting of the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science, 28 September 1893 (Adelaide: Burden and Bonython, Advertiser Office, 1893).

¹⁶⁰ An address delivered by Mrs Kelsey at a meeting of the Art Teachers' Association, School of Design, 11 October 1892 (Adelaide: Burden and Bonython, Advertiser Office, 1892).

in the arts exact limitation is all but impossible. Training of the eye and hand facilitate the training of the mind...art helps the study of literature...a good teacher is to draw out as much as possible that love of the beautiful which is inherent in every child...although we cannot all be artists, sculptors and poets we may all be trained to love and take delight in their works and trainings.¹⁶¹

This love, passed from teacher to student, and from the student to her daughter, became and remained Joanna's creed throughout her career, a creed that she expounded to an ever-growing audience as she moved from classroom to theatre and then to television. She said of her students: "I want [each] to have a fine sense of beauty...to recognise beauty within herself. To strive for it and then keep it...[this] will surely come a long way to counteract the ugliness that seems to mar this age."¹⁶²

While she saw in all the arts a means of creating this beauty, ballet was for her the supreme art as it combined all the others. Dance students, she said, should not be limited to technical training alone: "a...dancer needs special knowledge of movement, music, form, line, colour, design and true artistic feeling."¹⁶³ And she set out to provide that special knowledge in these fields, as well as in literature and drama.

Locally produced drama, like ballet in Adelaide at the time, was strictly in the hands of amateur performers, and continued to be so until the 1960s when governments began giving grants to the arts, making it possible for workers in the performing arts to become professional.¹⁶⁴ At the time of Joanna's arrival in Adelaide the longest

¹⁶¹ Kelsey 1892.

¹⁶² Joanna Priest, Principal's report, 1955 (Talks and Reports File 25492).

¹⁶³ Priest, Talk, 1948 or 1949.

¹⁶⁴ In an interview Maggie Day, who was for many years associated with local drama productions, recalled "At the time of the first [Adelaide] Festival of Arts, actors began to be paid...People found money was coming through the doors, much to their startled surprise as everybody had been living on bread and dripping up to then," Colin Ballantyne, Maggie Day and Joanne Priest, individual interviews on one videocassette. Interviewer not identified. n.d., but Joanna's interview may have been in June 1982 if she was correct in saying that Marie Rambert had died just two days previously. Rambert died in London on 12 June 1982. (Performing Arts Collection of South Australia.)

established drama company was the Adelaide Repertory Theatre, founded in 1908. The next was the W.E.A. Dramatic Society, which was formed in 1926, and changed its name to the Little Theatre in 1931. These groups, like most of Adelaide's dance studios, were conservative, but during the 1930s this conservatism was stirred by three people who came to Adelaide with fresh aims and new approaches to theatre.

One new arrival was the journalist Kester Berwick. This was a pseudonym for his real name, Frank Perkins, which he changed "in an attempt to find a less plebeian persona for articles such as 'Mass Art and Individualism.'"¹⁶⁵ In 1930 he met by chance in Adelaide the actor Alan Harkness, and discovered they shared a common belief in seeking a fresh approach in theatre. This they worked out with a group of young people, adopting the name "Ab-Intra" because "it was 'from within oneself' that the reality or strength of their work must come."¹⁶⁶

The Ab-Intra Theatre was a large room off King William Street, where, as Peter Ward colourfully describes it, the "audience sat on large satin cushions, inhaled large amounts of incense, and were 'prepared' for the play by Japanese gongs beaten to weird music churned forth from the Edison."¹⁶⁷ Ward relates that the group "performed plays of the highest quality, ranging from No [sic] plays to Stringberg [sic]."¹⁶⁸ One of the Noh plays, "The Demon's Mask", was unusually staged: "The two priests used their staffs as oars to row through the darkness of the auditorium; they told their story as they

¹⁶⁵ He first used Baruch as a surname, but the spelling of this was changed to Berwick when he was living in Austria, as "Baruch" was thought to have Jewish connotations (Afford, 174). Priest's records refer to him throughout as Berwick, the spelling which will be used in this dissertation.

¹⁶⁶ Afford, 168.

¹⁶⁷ P. Ward, "Theatre in Adelaide From 1920 to 1960," Australian Letters 2.4 (1960): 98.

¹⁶⁸ Ward, 98.

went".¹⁶⁹

This performance took place in December 1931, at the Leigh Street studio of Mina Bauer and Walter Desborough.¹⁷⁰ The two dance teachers became interested in Ab-Intra, and "readily gave their time and talents to help the new cause".¹⁷¹ The eurhythmics teacher, Heather Gell, was another who found this original thinking attractive, and presented her students in programmes at the Ab-Intra Theatre, while both Berwick and Harkness took part in some of her productions.¹⁷²

After the closing of their experimental theatre in 1935, Berwick and Harkness went overseas and Berwick developed a particular interest in Central European modern dance, which was introduced to England by the German Kurt Jooss. Jooss had been a student and dancer with the "father" of that style of dancing, Rudolf Laban; in 1927 he was appointed dance director of the Essen Folkwangschule at the time of its foundation, and in 1930 ballet master at the Essen Opera House. By this time he "had worked out a dance method which negated most of the premises that every ballet maker of this century had felt bound, in part at least, to accept...a denial of the alleged necessity for painted setting, corps-de-ballet as a decorative adjunct, and the colour range of orchestral

¹⁶⁹ Afford, 169.

¹⁷⁰ Afford 169.

¹⁷¹ "Modernist Cult in Adelaide," Sunday Mail 16 January 1932: 13.

¹⁷² Among these productions were Miss Gell's Nativity Play at the Theatre Royal in December 1932, The Blue Bird in December 1933 and The Water Babies in November 1934 (Programmes in Heather Gell File 40512).

Miss Gell collaborated with Harkness and Berwick for their third 1933 programme called Plastic Interpretations. Afford 173.

Other original thinkers performed for Ab-Intra. In the September 1932 production, Robert Helpman (without the additional "n" in those days) also took part. Afford 172.



Fig. 13 Walter Desborough and Mina Bauer.
Photograph in "Modernist Cult in Adelaide",
Sunday Mail 16 January 1932.

accompaniment."¹⁷³ His ballet, The Green Table, which satirised the League of Nations, had its first performance in Paris in 1932, and won first prize at the Concours Internationale de Chorégraphie. After this success, he founded the Ballets Jooss. However, while preparing for his first tour in 1933 he learned that, because of his opposition to the Nazi movement, "his arrest and removal to a concentration camp was a matter of a few hours."¹⁷⁴ He and his group escaped to England where he was joined by his colleague Sigurd Leeder, the entire staff of the Folkwangschule in Essen, and twenty-two students, and the Jooss-Leeder school was established at Dartington Hall in Devon in 1934.¹⁷⁵ It was through Berwick that Joanna learned about this centre.

A third innovative performer in Adelaide from the 1930s to the 1950s was Patricia Hackett. Born in Perth in 1909, Miss Hackett has been described as

an aristocrat, a lawyer by profession, daughter of a philanthropic newspaper magnate, a demi-mondine [sic], actress, director, designer, costumier, life-long companion of Dr. Mildred Mocatta, feminist, socialite, hostess, art collector, eccentric, manic depressive, poet, author of belle [sic] lettres and experimenter [sic] in the use of hallucinogens and narcotics.¹⁷⁶

Her acting career in Adelaide began in 1932, in The Man with a Load of Mischief, produced by the Adelaide Repertory Theatre, but she was not generally welcomed as a performer. Her companion, Mildred Mocatta, recorded "the ordinary acting people...were heartily against her...My dear they didn't like her. They couldn't

¹⁷³ A.V. Coton, The New Ballet - Kurt Jooss and his work (London: Dennis, Dobson, 1946) 19. Note, though, that these "necessities" had already been discarded by choreographers of the Diaghilev company.

¹⁷⁴ Coton 75.

¹⁷⁵ A somewhat different version of this story is given by Arnold Haskell in Balletomania at Large (London: Heinemann, 1972) 130. He states "Jooss, an 'Aryan' had left Germany, crossing the border on foot with his whole company rather than abandon his composer-pianist, Fritz Cohen. During the war through the intervention of Maynard Keynes he had found a home at Dartington."

¹⁷⁶ Peter Goers, "Patricia Hackett" Agnes and Hackett: Biographical Profiles of Agnes Dobson and Patricia Hackett t.s., Performing Arts Collection of South Australia (August 1984) 7.

stand, you know, for anyone who was in her social position outdoing them in the theatre."¹⁷⁷

Her style of acting "used exaggerated gesture and movement and [she] lost herself in the ethos and affectations in a role."¹⁷⁸ But Colin Ballantyne admired her "marvellous approach toward stylisation which interested [him] profoundly...[she] understood how to be a powerful, stylistic actress in small theatres."¹⁷⁹ Although Hackett was more radical than Joanna and, unlike her, quite without regard for the opinions of "society", the two admired each other's work and Pat Hackett became the first of several women with whom Joanna forged a strong friendship.

Ever independent, Hackett opened her own theatre - the (first) Torch Theatre - in 1934.¹⁸⁰ This was in the basement of a building in Claridge Arcade, approximately where Allan's Music Shop is in Gawler Place. It seated 150 and gave eight productions in two years ¹⁸¹ before Hackett closed it in 1936 when she went overseas. In 1952 she opened the second Torch Theatre, this time in her home at Hackney, in the basement which had been one of Adelaide's early distilleries. The auditorium, which seated fifty people, was covered with pine bark chips, and the seats placed on tiered steps. After

¹⁷⁷ Mildred Mocatta, Interview by Peter Goers and Jo Peoples, May 1983. Agnes and Hackett 1984, 10.

¹⁷⁸ Goers 7.

¹⁷⁹ Colin Ballantyne, "With no regrets...a Personal History of the Adelaide Stage 1925-1975," interviewed by Peter Goers, From Colonel Light into the Footlights, ed A. McCredie (Adelaide: Pagel Books, 1988) 63.

¹⁸⁰ "I have built the Torch Theatre to give Adelaide a chance to see plays that ordinary theatres are not interested in providing - plays that have no 'box office' appeal." Patricia Hackett, quoted by Max Afford: "Torch Theatre" Progress in Australia, April 1934:18.

¹⁸¹ K. Kyffin Thomas, "Patricia Hackett as I Knew Her," Westerly May (1965): 36.



PATRICIA HACKETT

Fig. 14 Patricia Hackett.
Portrait by Noel Wood, reproduced in Westerly, May 1965.

several years of production, this theatre gave its last performance in 1960 for the first Adelaide Festival of Arts.¹⁸² Pat Hackett died in 1963.

Joanna gave her own students the chance to learn from the original styles of Berwick and Hackett. The former was invited to teach mime to the students, one of whom recalls: "he would have us pulling ropes [tug of war] and got us to the extent that we really and truly were pulling and one lot would fall down."¹⁸³ He also took a very active role, both as speaker and Committee member, in the South Australian Ballet Club which was founded in 1939.¹⁸⁴

In one of her explorations of new fields, Joanna tried choreographing with Hackett's recitations of verse as accompaniment, and did this not just as a classroom exercise, but for public performance. Among such works were The White Ship, The Grey Maid and The Land of Nursery Rhyme.¹⁸⁵ And it was to accommodate Miss

¹⁸² Thomas, 34.

¹⁸³ John-Wilson, interview, 1989.

¹⁸⁴ SA Ballet Club. 24 April 1940; 10 June 1941. Further references to the Club's minutes - including the period when the Club was called the South Australian Ballet and Arts Club - will be given as SABC and the date. (SABC Minutes and Annual Reports, File 39297).

¹⁸⁵ Patricia Hackett and Joanna Priest, arrangers and producers, The White Ship, Adelaide University Theatre Guild, Guest Performance by the South Australian Ballet Club, Adelaide, The Hut, 10,11 June 1943. The Grey Maid and The Trees of the Master, Adelaide University Theatre Guild, The Hut, 13,14,15 December 1943.

The Grey Maid, South Australian Ballet and Arts Club, Adelaide, The Blue Door, 24, 25, 28, 29 April 1944.

The Land of Nursery Rhyme, South Australian Ballet and Arts Club, The Blue Door, 16, 17, 23, 24 September 1944. (These programmes are all in the PAC Programme File 25494.)



Fig. 15 Patricia Hackett's second Torch Theatre in the basement of her home in Hackney, 1989.
Photograph: Philip Martin.

Hackett - who had two terms on the South Australian Ballet Club Committee¹⁸⁶ - that the Club was known from March 1944 until the end of 1946 as the South Australian Ballet and Arts Club. Some of Joanna's students also performed, with Joanna's approval, in plays produced by Miss Hackett.

But long before the foundation of the South Australian Ballet Club and these experiments, the end-of-year performances by Joanna's students had from the first shown her desire to present something original, something different from the usual ballet school "break-up". The first was informal, and held in Dr. Kenneth Fry's garden at the end of 1932. The former Gillian Fry remembers that "One item was a pretty twee number - lots of us were dressed up as rabbits and did a step-hop and lots of jumps sort of dance".¹⁸⁷ The second show, given the following year, was in Freemasons' Hall. A demonstration of classroom steps was followed by three mime studies, performed to French songs - "Frere Jacques" [sic], "Sur le Pont", and "Le Petit Navaire" [sic].¹⁸⁸ Although no programme has been found for this performance, it is probable that this part, which was repeated in 1934, was accompanied by young singers on stage. The show was described as "of the most refreshing description because of its originality in every particular...A refined programme from every point of view."¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁶ She was a member of the original committee, but went overseas soon after. Minutes, South Australian Ballet Club, 16 May 1939; 8 June 1939. Her second term was from 4 May 1943 until she and Dr. Mocatta resigned on 16 December 1946.

¹⁸⁷ Cave, 1990

¹⁸⁸ Advertiser 25 November 1933. It is of interest that Joan and Betty Rayner had performed their version of "Le Petit Navire," in May 1931, before Joanna came to Adelaide. "Theatre of Youth", South Australian Homes and Gardens 1 May 1931: 10.

¹⁸⁹ "A Dancing Programme Full of Charm and Originality". Advertiser 25 November 1933. (Scrapbook File I: 1932-1944 File 25501).

In the 1934 presentation, entitled "The Poetry of Dance and Mime",¹⁹⁰ the songs were again performed, with the addition of "Les Petites Litaines [sic] de Jesus". There was also a Mime Play telling of the Moon-man who enables children to become the people of their choice. It was described by one critic as "something unique",¹⁹¹ and another wrote:

Joanne Priest certainly sprang a surprise on Adelaide...when everybody trooped along to the Australia [Hall] expecting to see 'just another of those dancing shows'...It was the first time a Mime Play had ever been properly done in Adelaide, and this one was done perfectly, which in itself is something of a change for Adelaide.¹⁹²

As happened often in those days, some reporters gave more space to naming members of the audience and describing what they wore than to the performance on stage:

Dark-eyed Jean Barbour, clad in...a halo that would have been the envy of a Russian Grand Duchess...The Barr-Smiths watched it from the front row of the circle in semi-vice-regal state...Mrs. Lavington Bonython draped herself in a purple cloak like Caesar on the Ides of March...Tall David Goodhart left the golf links to look after themselves, what time he absorbed some culture.¹⁹³

With an audience such as that Joanna's future was assured. She had been accepted by Adelaide society.

In 1935 she was able to leave the studio in Mem Hodge's capable hands and go

¹⁹⁰ It should be noted that the last performance in which Joanna appeared for Linley Wilson in 1931 was also entitled Poetry of Dance and Mime. However, as Joanna was using inexperienced dance students, she had much more mime than dance in her programme.

¹⁹¹ "Poetry of Dance and Mime, Charming Production by Joanne Priest," Advertiser 19 November 1934. (File 25501).

¹⁹² Suzanne, "Joanna Certainly Opened Adelaide's Eyes - Tiny Tots' Mime Show," Truth 24 November 1934.

Harold Tidemann remembers Suzanne (Dorothy Reynolds) as "the terror of Adelaide" because of her outspokenness. Tidemann, telephone interview, December 1991.

¹⁹³ Suzanne 1934.

on another study tour. This time she began in America where, on the advice of Mrs. Fry,¹⁹⁴ she worked with Theodore Kosloff in Hollywood, and also went to Agnes de Mille for mime classes.¹⁹⁵ Arvid Kurtz, a teacher at the Adelaide Conservatorium, had given her a letter of introduction to his brother Efrim, who was then conductor for the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo, and this gave her carte blanche entry to the theatre in St. Louis where the company was performing. Concerning that adventure, she said that she "lived a fairy tale existence for three whole weeks, being permitted to wander at will back stage, soaking in all the things I needed to know for my own future here in Adelaide".¹⁹⁶ The knowledge she thus gained about the Company's dancers and repertoire gave her the confidence to join the musician Hooper Brewster-Jones as a dance critic for The Advertiser when the Monte Carlo Russian Ballet visited Australia first in 1936 and again in 1937.¹⁹⁷

From America she went to England and here her approach to teaching took on a new depth. In accordance with her conviction about the inseparability of the arts, she extended her interest into handicrafts, because she felt the "the ballet is so mixed up with the arts that some attempt should be made to develop the artistic instincts in conjunction with the dancing."¹⁹⁸ And, as well as attending ballet classes, she visited as many nursery schools as possible, because she was "interested in the psychology of

¹⁹⁴ Cave 1990.

¹⁹⁵ "Ballet Dancing Popular Overseas. Adelaide Teacher Returns," Advertiser 1 April 1936. (File 25501).

¹⁹⁶ Joanna Priest, "Tales of the Ballet," Advertiser 22 April 1958. (File 25492).

¹⁹⁷ It is interesting to note that when the de Basil company was in Adelaide in 1939 the critiques in the Advertiser were by either Joanna, or Brewster Jones. (File 25501).

¹⁹⁸ Joanna Priest, "Revival of the Ballet: Miss Priest Tells of Trend," Sunday Mail 25 April 1936. (File 25501).

children."¹⁹⁹

On Berwick's advice she visited Dartington Hall, hoping to see the Ballet Jooss, but unfortunately it was not performing at that time. She did, however, observe the co-educational school there for children of twelve and upwards. This was run on what Joanna considered to be "psychological lines...the boys and girls are allowed to do whatever they like." For example, "lessons are not compulsory, [and] if the pupils disapproved of the treatment they receive they are allowed to lodge a protest."²⁰⁰

Before Joanna left on this trip, the hard lobbying by a few teachers to get the Cecchetti and Royal Academy of Dancing syllabuses established in Australia had succeeded. Wanda Edwards and Melbourne teacher Lucie Saranova had formed the Australian branch of the Cecchetti Society in 1934 and the next year the first examiner, Molly Lake, came to Australia.²⁰¹ In 1931 Linley Wilson, Jennie Brenan in Melbourne and Frances Scully in Sydney had successfully approached the then Society of Operatic Dancing to send an examiner to Australia, and in 1935 Felix Demery arrived, although he did not come to South Australia that year, examining only in New South Wales, Queensland and Melbourne before moving on to New Zealand.²⁰² When he returned two years later, Joanna was a candidate for, and gained, the Advanced Teachers' Certificate. Her qualifications now led other Adelaide teachers to send their students to her for coaching in the examination syllabuses.

¹⁹⁹ Priest, "Revival" 1936.

²⁰⁰ Priest, "Revival" 1936.

²⁰¹ Brissenden 84.

²⁰² It was during this year that Lorraine Norton, Dorothy Gladstone and Frances Scully passed the Royal Academy of Dancing's Advanced Teachers' Certificate Examination, becoming the first teachers in Australia to do so. RAD Gazette February 1936: 9.

At the end of 1937 Joanna quietly married Norman Alfred Robert (Rob) Wilson, in Sydney where his mother, his remaining parent, lived. This gentle man was born in Perth on 25 May 1900, and in 1916 he enlisted in the first A.I.F. Some time after his arrival in France, when he was digging trenches, the authorities caught up with him and discharged him as under age. Back in London, he enrolled in a Marconi course for Ships' Radio Engineers, and, once qualified, joined the Merchant Marine, working across the Atlantic Ocean, during which time, according to his Continuous Certificate of Discharge, his Ability and General Conduct were "Very Good" on all trips.²⁰³ In 1924 he left that occupation to join the motor industry in the U.S.A., and returned to Australia in 1932 to take charge of a silk weaving mill in Ballarat.

It was on his way there that he met Joanna. She had gone with one of his sisters, Gwendoline, to meet him at a railway station through which he would pass on his way from America to Ballarat. This station has been variously identified as Perth, Adelaide or Melbourne, but, wherever it was, Joanna's first impression was of a tall, handsome man with an American accent and wearing a hat which made such an impression that a photograph taken of Rob about this time has written on the back "The hat Jo married."²⁰⁴ From Ballarat he moved in 1935 to General Motors in Melbourne, and transferred to the Adelaide branch after marrying Joanna. He was to prove a wonderful support to her, relieving her of all day-to-day tasks so that she could give her complete attention to her school and choreography. The students recognised this, one of them saying later: "We all loved Rob and seemed to know he was just right for Joanne, he was

²⁰³ Board of Trade [U.K.], Continuous Certificate of Discharge No. 979565, issued to Norman A.R. Wilson, 13 November 1918-18 September 1923 (Joanna Priest Collection, Miscellaneous Papers).

²⁰⁴ Lesley Hammond, personal interview, audiocassette, 11 July 1989.

so calm and good-natured and humorous and coped so well with Joanne's somewhat volatile personality".²⁰⁵

In 1942 Joanna had her first baby, and it was a sad irony that a woman who had such enthusiasm for encouraging children to express themselves in music, speech, the visual arts and movement should have as her only child a little girl who was severely affected by rubella. Named Nicole, she was born when the connection between German measles in a pregnant woman and congenital deafness in the baby was just being established. As well as being unable to hear or speak, she was also blind, and did not achieve even the ability to sit unaided. Such handicaps required almost twenty-four hour care, and Mu came from Perth to look after her during the daytime, enabling Joanna to continue teaching. Joanna cared for her at night. In 1946 Nicole died of pneumonia, and the sad experience galvanised Joanna into exploring ways she could help children similarly affected. To some extent this helped settle her grief.

The epidemic of German measles which affected Joanna had resulted in a number of congenitally deaf babies, and the mother of one, Mrs. Keith Forward, played a large part in establishing the Adelaide Oral School which opened in 1945 in St. Cyprian's Church Hall in Melbourne Street; the following year it moved to Kermodie St.²⁰⁶

Joanna visited the children there weekly, as a remedial teacher, and some years later wrote:

²⁰⁵ Cave, 1990.

²⁰⁶ It is now called the Cora Barclay Centre for Children with Hearing Impairments, Inc. Before the founding of the Adelaide Oral School deaf children went to the Brighton Deaf and Dumb Institution, and it was Mrs. Forward's unfavourable impression of this that induced her to found the new school. Mrs. Keith Forward, personal interview, 23 May 1989.

I experimented with percussion instruments to enhance their sensitivity to vibration and to give them the 'feel' of rhythm...I have absorbed a number of totally deaf children into my normal classes. You would not be able to pick them out because they are just as rhythmical as the others... what they cannot understand with their ears they have learned to see with their eyes.²⁰⁷

During Helen Keller's visit to Australia in 1948 Joanna gave a demonstration of what she was doing with such children to an audience which included Miss Keller and Lady Norrie, wife of the Governor of South Australia.²⁰⁸ It was for this, as well as for her work with normal children and in the theatre, which led to her being awarded the OBE in 1970.²⁰⁹

Joanna's involvement with deaf children continued for many years, and, following the severe poliomyelitis epidemics of the early 1950s, another group of handicapped children was referred to her for rehabilitation - those suffering the effects of that disease.²¹⁰ She also accepted children with various other disorders, including burns. Much of this rehabilitative teaching was left to Joanna's assistants, one of whom has recalled the horror and inadequacy she felt at her first sight of a child's severely burned legs and body.²¹¹

²⁰⁷ Priest, letter to Keith Glennon, 19 March 1956 (Special Collections, Barr Smith Library, University of Adelaide.)

²⁰⁸ Priest, untitled speech to audience at a demonstration of her work for deaf children. n.d., t.s. (File 25492).

²⁰⁹ See Chapter 6 for the citation.

²¹⁰ "I use actually very little ballet technique in the early stages. The exercises are laid down for each child with the help of a former pupil of mine, William Owen, who is an expert physio." Priest, Letter to Keith Glennon, 1956.

The letter continues "When a limb is 'wasted' as a result of polio, it means the muscle affected is no longer alive and functioning. But, nature has provided most adequate subsidiary muscles in practically every case. It is just a matter for the physio (or me) to work that subsidiary muscle...til it is strong enough to take over the major muscles' work." The wish to help was sincere, even if the understanding of the pathology of polio was oversimplified.

²¹¹ Valerie Maxwell-Gwynn, personal interview, audiocassette, 27 September 1990.

In 1940 Joanna had been appointed instructress in the Diploma course for Physical Education at the University of Adelaide, taking classes in "rhythmics and dancing", and thus adding another style to her repertoire. She held this position until 1951,²¹² and meanwhile her school was growing, so that more space was needed for her classes.

Although the date of the move is not certain, by July 1942 Joanna had shifted her studio to a large room above a paint shop off Rundle Street.²¹³ It stank, and the windows looked down on a men's toilet. Needless to say, the girls were forbidden to look out.²¹⁴ After over a year in this not very salubrious place she made another move to the building in Porters Lane which she called The Blue Door.²¹⁵

Here she continued with her regular teaching of ballet, ballroom dancing and children with handicaps, and undertook another project, a Finishing School, with full-time students she referred to as her "alumnae".²¹⁶ Her aims for them included being "taught primarily how to learn and like it" and being equipped "for the vanishing art of sparkling, intelligent conversation".²¹⁷ In the mornings the students had ballet classes and lessons in academic subjects and the arts, and in the afternoons they

²¹² Margaret Jennings, Archivist of the University of Adelaide, letter to the author 10 March 1992.

²¹³ The minutes of the South Australian Ballet Club, 4 July 1942 recorded the resolve that "In future the Club's Official Address should be the Clubrooms off Tavistock Street." Those who were Joanna's students at that time describe this second studio as being off Rundle Street, east of Pulteney Street, so the street referred to above would be Tavistock Lane, not Street.

²¹⁴ Lynette Tuck, personal interview, 12 April 1988.

²¹⁵ Minutes, S.A. Ballet Club, 24 March 1944. "Mr. Cornell moved the Committee approve the vacation of Drummond's [presumably the room over the paint shop], and the occupation of the new premises at Porter's Lane".

²¹⁶ As all the students were female, Joanna spelled this word in the feminine gender. Joanna Priest, Principal's Report, 1953 (File 25492).

²¹⁷ "A Dancer came home," News 17 October 1953. (Programmes II Supplement File 25497).

served their apprenticeship as teachers by giving lessons in private schools and the studio's country branches, as well as weekday and Saturday morning classes at The Blue Door and the "marathon Friday night...Ballroom Classes."²¹⁸

Records are not complete and roll books have not been kept, but from the prospectuses which are available it is known that in 1937 and 1938 the schools visited were Girton, Presbyterian Girls' College, Milton School, Stawell [sic] and The [sic] Wilderness.²¹⁹ In 1956 - two years after Joanna's studio had moved from the Blue Door to the Studio Theatre - dance classes were held at St. Alban's Church of England Grammar School, Methodist Ladies' College, Wilderness and Mercedes. Branches of the studio were at Kapunda and Angaston, and a new branch was being formed at Victor Harbour.²²⁰ The estimated total number of students was then about 700.²²¹ In 1957 new branches opened at Gawler and Largs Bay, and Joanna estimated that the number of students had increased to approximately 1,000.²²² The work at country centres continued into the 1960s, the last branch to close being at Elizabeth.²²³

²¹⁸ Anne Simpson Moore, letter to the author 18 July 1991.

Joanna's first assistant teachers were her own trainees, beginning with Mem Hodge and Honor John, followed by Helen Western and Lynette Tuck, then Prudence Coffey and Catherine Wall.

²¹⁹ Joanne Priest School of Dancing Prospectuses 1937, 1938.

²²⁰ Studio Arts Centre Prospectus, 1956.

²²¹ Principal's Report, 1957.

²²² Principal's Report 1957.

²²³ Lynette Tuck-Howard and Christine Sears, personal interview 1 April 1992.



Fig. 16 Joanna Priest in her studio at Freemasons' Hall, 1990.
with former students and teachers, from left: Helen George,
Lynette Tuck Howard, Mem Brewster-Jones and Honor John Wilson.
Photograph: Philip Martin.

But the aim of the school, apart from providing a pleasant pastime and a basic understanding of all the arts, was to train teachers. Joanna had no interest at that time in her students becoming professional dancers. In fact, she positively discouraged it. Margaret Monson was her first student to become a professional dancer in Australia when she joined the National Ballet in 1949, in spite of Joanna's wishing her to remain at the Blue Door as a teacher.²²⁴ Another student, Pam Ward, wrote "You can imagine how happy I was [to be accepted as a full-time student at the Blue Door]", but, when she told Joanna she wanted to dance before settling down as a teacher, "Priesty could not understand me."²²⁵

There are several possible reasons to explain Joanna's disinclination to encourage her students to become dancers. As has already been mentioned, the only professional employment for dancers in Adelaide at that time was in commercial theatre, which was certainly not acceptable to a ballet purist. And even had there been a local ballet company, dancing was not a socially approved career in Adelaide then, and one needed only to look at newspapers reports of those who attended Joanna's school performances to realise she was strongly supported by Adelaide society.²²⁶

²²⁴ Merle Couch Shanahan, personal interview, audiocassette 29 January 1992.

²²⁵ Pam Ward-Gray, letter to the author, 25 August 1991.

In the Report of the Arts Enquiry Committee for South Australia, ed. Dr. Brian Elliott. Joanna, who produced the report on ballet, wrote: "of the young dancers who do come to light, few are ready to forego marriage and domesticity for a cause so struggling." (Adelaide: roneograph, 1961) 102.

That is an interesting statement, as by that time several dancers from Adelaide had found work as professional dancers in Australia with the Borovansky and National Ballet Companies (e.g. Zell Sanders, Keith Sincock, Wilf Stevens, Margaret Monson, Beverley Richards, Mercy Parnell, Odell Crowther, Kathie Michael, Ray Evans, Walter Desborough, Ray Trickett and Jack Manuel). Some had gone overseas, and others had tried to find work as dancers, even if they had not been successful. It was not a matter of students not being "ready to forego marriage," etc. so much as a lack of available work.

²²⁶ It was probably not until a bishop's daughter, Dorothy Stevenson, became a principal dancer and choreographer in both Australia and England during the 1940s and 1950s that the general idea of "life upon the wicked stage" was modified - at least as far as female dancers were concerned.

Another factor was that although at first she was devoted to teaching, over the years she tired of it, preferring to spend the time working on choreography, and to ensure she could do this she needed a reliable supply of teachers, trained in her style of teaching, to take over her classes. Yet another reason is that during her very productive period from the late 1930s into the late 1940s she had a group of mature dancers who had been moulded in her style and, consciously or unconsciously, she wanted to keep control of those she had so moulded. Should any of these leave for whatever reason, she would have lost an artist into whom much work had gone. Should any leave to join a professional company, that could have been regarded as a betrayal.

The high point in Joanna's life as an educator came in 1959, when her school, which by then had moved to the Studio Theatre, Wellington Square, was selected as the subject of a film made by the Commonwealth Film Unit. Joanna responded to the announcement of this by calling it "a great honour - one which one accepts with humility and enormous gratification."²²⁷ Titled Children's Theatre, the film opens with a view of the Studio Theatre's delightful setting in Wellington Square, followed by shots of students working in ballet, art, singing and speech classes as well as performing their own choreography. Some of the preparations necessary for a stage production are shown: rehearsing, the making of costumes, painting of sets, composition of music, printing of posters, setting up the stage and arranging chairs in the auditorium. The climax of the film is the performance of a ballet called

²²⁷ Priest, Principal's Report, 1958.

Aboriginal Legend.²²⁸ The short ballet completed, children and staff leave the theatre, farewelled by Joanna.²²⁹

Although some of the dialogue in the film sounds stilted, this does not detract from the overall impression of a small, well-organised, multi-faceted school of performing and visual arts, which was unique in Australia at the time. The educational value of the arts is emphasised, but the film does not rule out the possibility of this training being the basis for a later career as a performer. On the wider Australian scene the Borovansky Ballet Company, the principal employer in Australia of classical dancers, had ended in 1960, the year after the death of its founder and director Edouard Borovansky. Two years later the English dancer and teacher Peggy van Praagh was appointed as Artistic Director of the new Australian Ballet which gave its first performance in 1962. Joanna may have met van Praagh during one of her visits to England through their common association with Marie Rambert. Whether or not this was the case, the two women became close friends, and Joanna's thinking inclined still more toward the idea of her students becoming professional dancers.

The opening of the Australian Ballet School in 1964 still found her undecided. She arranged a private audition with Peggy van Praagh for one of her students - who was not accepted as she did not have a body suitable for professional training - while wishing to restrain another student, Josephine Mutton (later Jason) from auditioning.²³⁰ However Josephine and her parents stood firm, and she was in the first

²²⁸ This is based on Joanna's ballet Nerida and Berwain which was first performed in 1953, to music by Arthur Bliss.
For the film version Henry Krips composed new music.

²²⁹ Children's Theatre Commonwealth Film Unit (1959). Copied from film to videotape (1991).

²³⁰ Josephine Jason, personal interview, 29 December 1992.

intake for the school, together with fellow South Australians Wendy Moyle from Dorothy Slane's studio, Helen Beinke from Gwen Mackey's and Joseph Janusaitis from Mme. Babicheva's.

The die was cast, and from then on the main purpose of Joanna's full-time school was to prepare students to become professional dancers. She also became reconciled to them working in modern dance companies. From 1960 she had on her staff a visiting teacher of one of the contemporary dance techniques, and, when the Centre for Performing Arts opened in Adelaide in 1980 with the stated aim of training dancers for modern dance companies, some of her students went there for their tertiary dance course.

In 1975 she sought approval of her full-time course under the Tertiary Education Assistance Scheme. Her application revealed her own development of thought:

People in Australia have often failed to recognise that dance is...a valid career (either as a performer or teacher) or indeed as a theraputic [sic] device. Dance is no longer considered to be solely entertainment nor only a social pastime.²³¹

²³¹ Joanna Priest, Addendum to the Application for the Studio Arts Centre's Professional Dance Course to be approved under the Tertiary Allowances Scheme. Enclosed with a letter from Joanna Priest to Mr. C.L. Fitzgerald, Regional Director, Department of Education. 19 September 1975. Her application was refused on the grounds that it was "Ministerial policy not to approve courses at private profit making institutions".

K. Giddings, Acting Regional Director, Department of Education, letter to Joanna Priest, 25 September 1975 (School Material File 25504).

Although much of Joanna's energy was involved in the training students to become professional dancers, she did not neglect the younger students, and continued to develop two philosophies which she believed applied to all, the full-time senior as well as the most junior. One of these concerned the importance of discipline in a child's life, and the other, the value of ballet in a child's general education.

Regarding discipline, she stated in her Principal's Report of 1955:

this is a most difficult age in which to bring up children...To be at peace by virtue of the fact that the countries concerned are afraid of annihilation if they indeed do war, seems to me to be a bitter, frightening and insecure sort of peace...How can we help to make our child feel secure[?]....teach her discipline. First the discipline from without leading to self-discipline. That is her only security, but make no mistake, it will suffice.²³²

The following year she took up the theme again:

The world is again unsettled, the children, always a reflection of the world's moods, are without doubt feeling its insecurities. It is only by providing them with something to hang on to that we can give them security.²³³

Joanna considered that she and others associated with children had a corporate responsibility to teach them self-discipline and was indefatigable in urging others to accept this:

One of the most difficult things of all...is to find the balance between encouraging a child to be an individual and to think individually, and getting him to accept and live without a pattern which belonging to a community demands...I feel that here in Australia at the moment we do too little to encourage both sides of the balance. We do not first of all, demand an acceptance of a basic pattern. We do not insist on discipline

²³² Priest, Principal's Report, 1955 (File 25492).

²³³ Priest, Principal's Report, 1956 (File 25492).

- yet I am convinced that now-a-days discipline is the child's only security.²³⁴

She saw the value of ballet as more than merely the benefits associated with physical exercise, and in 1975 wrote:

The Art of Ballet helps to develop in the child a healthy body and a quick and perceptive mind...which helps appreciation of the Visual Arts and an informed insight into all the Arts. In these times of rapid change, this basic training in the Art of Ballet develops in the child a better understanding of himself and of society at large.²³⁵

In 1976 her prospectus stated:

The aim of my school has always been to open the child's mind to those aspects of life which will uplift his soul; discipline his mind, through the discipline of his body, and to provide him with a hope that, with the security these accomplishments will provide, he may, more ably, reach his goal in life...

The world of art is one of the few things in this rapidly-changing world that remains constant. And the involvement in any one of the arts can be both a solace and an inspiration to the child throughout his life.²³⁶

The year 1977 brought a new enthusiasm and a new course. Joanna had decided to "introduce classes in performing techniques for film and television, with particular emphasis on speech. I shall conduct these classes myself." This was opportune, as she went on to say: "Undoubtedly you are also aware that South

²³⁴ Priest, "What I Present" Talk to Members of the Television Society in Melbourne, 1 June 1961 (File 25492).

²³⁵ Prospectus, 1975. (File 25504).

²³⁶ Prospectus 1976. It is interesting that here Joanna refers to a child in the masculine gender in spite of the great majority of her pupils being girls. Nearly twenty years earlier she had given a talk entitled "The Artistic Development of the Child", in which she had referred to a child throughout as feminine. Priest, talk 12 March 1958 (File 25492).

The change in gender may have been due to the fact that by the 1970s dance had become a more accepted profession for boys, several of whom had gone through Joanna's school and on to careers in dance, among them being Anthony Smith, Christopher Morley, Andrew Batten and Stephen Baynes.

Australia is spearheading this country's development in the art of film." This course ran for only two years, during which time it was compulsory for the full-time students to take part in these classes.²³⁷

A progression in Joanna's thinking was expressed in the 1979 prospectus:

In this age of material acquisition, what heritage do we pass on to our children, other than objects we have collected in some way or another...

A physical well-being is not always a well-being on a social level. Many, many people would be able to achieve a greater well-being in this world if only they had the means for expressing themselves - communicating! Art is communication. Education through Art has everything to do with the development of the individual; the development of...sensitive people with the capacity to be at one with themselves, and to live full, happy and rewarding lives. THAT is the aim and function of my school, and that is therefore part of the heritage you give to your children by sending them here.²³⁸

Two years later she expanded this by inserting a penultimate sentence:

Toward this end we strive to help the children to be:

Honest with themselves as with others

Loyal

Kind

and Creative.²³⁹

Her early prospectuses had been, like those of other teachers, a simple listing of the classes available and the fee of these. The publication of her thoughts about high moral ideals was totally unique, and goes a long way to explain the fulsome

²³⁷ Prospectus 1977.

In the Prospectus for 1980 it was stated that "Classes in [Film and television techniques] will discontinue in order to give Miss Priest a greater opportunity to observe and assist the classical classes on Saturday mornings."

²³⁸ Prospectus 1979.

²³⁹ Prospectus 1981.

praise lavished on her by the writer in Kalori.²⁴⁰

It is no reflection on the abilities of the teachers at the Studio Arts Centre to wonder how many parents were attracted to Joanna's school more by her philosophy, which was expressed in words, than by the observed technical attainments of their children.

²⁴⁰ See Chapter 1.

Chapter 3. The South Australian Ballet Club

On her first trip to England Joanna saw the birth of British Ballet. In 1930 both the Camargo Society, which developed into Ballet Rambert, and the Ballet Club, which led to the formation of the Vic-Wells Ballet, were formed, and the success of ballets by Ashton, de Valois, Howard and Tudor showed that a ballet company could evolve without leaning on the Russian repertoire, and that people other than Russians could produce fine choreography.

When the Royal Academy of Dancing's examiner, Felix Demery, made his first visit to Adelaide in 1937, he spoke of the ballet clubs which had been formed in many towns in England "probably because of the inspiration of the big Ballet Club in London, which was for professionals."²⁴¹ It might have appeared that the formation of Joanna's South Australian Ballet Club in 1939 was an attempt to copy what had been done in London - to collect talented people, develop an audience, and eventually form a professional company. But Joanna had no intention of forming a professional company at that time, and it was twenty years before events caused her to change her mind. At that period education, not performance, was of greater importance to her: one trained students to become teachers who then educated other students. Creativity in the classroom, not on stage, was for her an end in itself.²⁴²

Her Club was active for ten years and the last performance under its auspices took place in 1949, although meetings continued to be held sporadically until 23 April

²⁴¹ F. Demery, "Ballet Clubs in England Proving Popular," News 31 August 1937 (File No. 25501).

²⁴² "My greatest joy and fulfilment come with the creation of a Ballet - not, mark you, from the finished product necessarily." Priest, "Line and Form in Choreography," 8 May 1954 (File 25492).

1951.²⁴³ Those ten years, 1939-1949, were for Joanna a period of experimentation during which she practised the craft of choreography and encouraged others to do likewise,²⁴⁴ tried accompaniments other than music for her dances, arranged lectures so adult members of the Club, as well as her pupils, might have a greater understanding of the arts associated with ballet and an awareness of other dance techniques, while she herself developed from a teacher who composed pieces for her students into a professional choreographer.

It was also an era during which the concept of dance in Australia changed from something which had to be imported to something which could be produced locally, and in which Australian dancers could get professional employment in their own country, although for those in the smaller capital cities that still meant moving to Sydney or Melbourne for auditions and rehearsals.

Some members of Adelaide audiences in the 1930s might remember the first, great, "imported" dancer of the century, Genée, who visited in 1913, although this visit did not have the far reaching effects of Pavlova's tours in 1926 and 1929. These were the catalyst which released an explosion of balletomania that was fed further by the 1930s tours of the de Basil Companies. One difference between Pavlova and Diaghilev

²⁴³ Filed with the minutes is a letter dated 9th February 1953, in which the Deputy Commissioner of Taxation informed Miss Priest that the Ballet Club "is not entitled to exemption under Item 63A". H.C. Higgins, Letter to Miss Priest. South Australian Ballet Club Minutes of Meetings 16.5.39 - 23.4.51 (File 39297).

The last performance before the move to the Studio Theatre was at The Hut on 29-30 September and 1-3 October 1953, and was under the auspices of the Adelaide University Theatre Guild. The programme has no reference to the South Australian Ballet Club.

Although the April 1951 minutes are apparently the latest to survive, there is no indication in them that the Club was to be formally wound up. The impression gained from people who were working with Joanna at the time is that it just faded out.

²⁴⁴ Although there were some restrictions. It is recorded in the Minutes of the Club on 22 July 1940: "Miss [Dorothy] Slane had asked to be permitted to put on a dance, but several members present had seen this dance, and thought it not in keeping with the ideals of the Club." (File 39297).

- and his successor, the Ballets Russes - was that the latter presented, as well as great artists, a varied repertoire on which young companies could be based. García-Márquez has claimed that the 1936 tour of the Monte Carlo Russian Ballet "achieved in Australia what Diaghilev had brought about in England: it helped the public to understand the art of ballet and encouraged the formation of an indigenous school, which spawned future companies."²⁴⁵ While it may have been a little rash to claim that for the first tour alone, it was manifestly true of the three tours in 1936, 1938 and 1939-40.

Adelaide saw the Monte Carlo Russian Ballet in October 1936, its return season in July the following year, and, in April 1939, another de Basil company, now named the Covent Garden Russian Ballet. The arrival of this latter company in Australia has been assessed by García-Márquez to be

the most decisive event in the dance history of the continent. It placed Melbourne and Sydney, along with London, Monte Carlo, and New York, among the great ballet centers. For the first time a troupe of international repute was to remain in the country for a period of several months, encouraging the growing appreciation of ballet, the seeds of which had been planted by the earlier visits of a variety of individual dancers and troupes.²⁴⁶

Sydney and Melbourne gained immense benefits from those company members who remained in Australia, especially Hélène Kirsova, Edouard Borovansky, Raissa Kousnetzova, Valeri Shaievsky and Edouard Sobichevsky. Smaller cities such as Adelaide received no such legacy,²⁴⁷ and, with the the second world war cutting off the supply of overseas companies, its ballet-loving audience would have had to content

²⁴⁵ García-Márquez 156.

²⁴⁶ García-Márquez 217.

²⁴⁷ Although the Polish dancers Kousnetzova, Shaievsky and Sobichevsky helped Joe Siebert mount some of the classics. (See p.54)

itself with end-of-year student performances by the various local ballet schools, had it not been for two people working independently, who took steps to provide ballet throughout the year for Adelaide balletomanes. One was Joe Siebert, and the other, Joanna Priest.

Siebert had learned dancing from Vera van Rij and Dorothy Slane but was neither a professional dancer nor a teacher - he worked in his father's undertaking business. On 8 March 1938, he attended the inaugural meeting of the University of Adelaide Theatre Guild, after which he wrote to the Committee of the Guild suggesting that ballet be included in its programmes.²⁴⁸ The proposition was accepted and on 13 December 1938 his ballet Tchintya was included in a programme which also contained a one-act play, a song and a "lecturette".²⁴⁹

Because the University's small theatre, The Hut, was in demand by many groups, Siebert found an alternative venue in his father's work premises in Tynte Place, North Adelaide. He converted this former drill hall into a serviceable theatre which he named the Studio Theatre.²⁵⁰ As he had no students of his own, he invited dancers from different ballet schools to join his company, Les Ballets Contemporains, and some teachers, notably Walter Desborough, Dorothy Slane and Zell Sanders - who was also one of his leading dancers - gave considerable support. Some of

²⁴⁸ M. Bassett and C. Thompson, Les Ballets Contemporains (Adelaide: Lutheran Publishing House, 1987) 11.

The Committee at the time was: President, Mr. John Horner; Prof. E. Harold Davies, Prof. J. Innes Stewart, Dr. T.D. Campbell, Mr. Clive Carey, Mr. J. Cornell, Mr. E.R. Corney, Dr. Douglas Fenner, Miss Barbara Howard, Mr. J. Irwin, Mr. Frank Johnston, Mr. D.B. Kerr, and Dr. Eugene McLachlan. Mrs. D. Byrne was the Hon. Secretary, and Mr. B. Elliott the Hon. Treasurer. Bassett and Thompson, ll.

²⁴⁹ Bassett and Thompson ll.

²⁵⁰ The same name was used by Joanna for her theatre in Wellington Square, North Adelaide, which opened in 1954, but the two buildings were some distance apart and had nothing but the name in common. See map next page.

Joanna's students were invited to join Siebert, but Joanna would not allow their loyalties to be shared, and prohibited them from doing so.²⁵¹

She did not disregard Siebert's group entirely, and in 1941 Kester Berwick, on behalf of the South Australian Ballet Club, approached Les Ballet Contemporains, the Little Theatre and the University Theatre Guild "with the object of finding out how they would feel about a greater cooperation between them and the Ballet Club."²⁵²

All groups were willing to discuss the matter further, and a meeting was proposed for the following year but the only further reference to the matter is a letter from Berwick to the secretary of Les Ballets Contemporains, confirming the above.²⁵³

On at least one occasion Joanna wrote a critique of a Siebert programme for the Advertiser. In this she remarked on "the enormous difficulty that confronts a choreographer when he attempts the interpretation of a great symphony" - in this case Siebert's ballet White Fire to Tchaikowsky's Symphony No 6 in B Minor. But she commented favourably on some of the dancers and ended by describing this as "a company which must be congratulated on its conscientious desire to contribute

²⁵¹ M. Brewster-Jones, personal interview, 14 April 1991. One group of students who came to Joanna when their teacher retired had already worked with Siebert, and continued to do so while they were Joanna's students, and in spite of her prohibition. These included Maxine Aldrich, Merle Couch, Pauline Jones, Beth McInnes and Margaret Monson. Merle Couch Shanahan, personal interview, 29 January 1992.

²⁵² SABC Minutes of meeting on 25 August 1941 (File 39297).

Further references to the Club's minutes will be given as SABC Minutes, and the date.

²⁵³ Kester Berwick, Letter to Miss M. Humphrey 16 September 1941. The suggestion was that a fifty percent reduction on the entrance fee be permitted to any member of one group attending the performance of another group. It was hoped this would bring about " a greater mutual interest, and perhaps too it might lead later to a practical arrangement being made with regard to dates of performances so that there would not be clashes as is sometimes the case at present." Filed with South Australian Ballet Club Minutes of Meetings (File 39297).

something original in the world of ballet."²⁵⁴

Most of this original choreography was by Siebert, but he also mounted some of the classics, helped by Kousnetzova, Shaievsky and Sobichevsky. These dancers had formed the Polish-Australian Ballet (later known as the Kouznetsova Ballet) in 1939 and opened a studio in Sydney in 1940. They also appeared with the Kirsova Ballet. In July 1943 they came to Adelaide to dance in a vaudeville show at the Majestic Theatre. Ever-anxious to benefit his company and audiences, Siebert went backstage, introduced himself and asked if the three dancers would help him mount the classics for him.²⁵⁵ Which they did, setting Les Sylphides, Le Carnaval and Le Spectre de la Rose and reconstructing much of the choreography of Swan Lake which Siebert had already produced.

Les Ballets Contemporains performed in his Studio Theatre until 1946, when the building was sold. By then circumstances had changed - some dancers had left to marry, some had gone interstate for professional training or work. A final performance was given at the Norwood Town Hall in 1950 - the end of an era for some dancers, but a link with the future for others, as Mme Agnes Babicheva, a dancer from Latvia who had arrived in Australia the previous year, choreographed four ballets for the occasion. She opened her own studio and continued as a ballet teacher in Adelaide into the 1980s.

Joanna's ambitions for her Ballet Club extended beyond theatrical productions.

²⁵⁴ Joanna Priest, "Features of New Ballet", Advertiser 23 October 1944 (File 25501).

²⁵⁵ Raissa Kouznetsova, letter to the author 5 October 1987.(File Polish-Australian Ballet).

She wanted to educate an audience which would not merely enjoy ballet, but appreciate it and its associated arts. This may not seem radical half a century later, but ballet at that time in Adelaide was regarded as a social hobby for students, and light entertainment for audiences, rather than something that could demand thought and study. And although Joanna was not an "academic", during her years in Adelaide she met many people who were, and from whom she absorbed ideas avidly, leading to one of her colleagues referring to her as a "sponge".²⁵⁶

The inaugural meeting of the South Australian Ballet Club was held on 16 May 1939 in Freemasons' Hall, where Joanna had her studio. Those present were Mrs. Shorney (who became the first Chairman), Mrs. Fry (former dancing teacher Dorothy Deeley), Mrs. F.W. Cornell, who was a great benefactor to Joanna in many ways, and Misses Priest, Walkley, Reid, Rymill and Cameron, as well as Mr. Goldsmith. Apologies were received from Mrs. Barrett (who had since 1937 been Lady Mayoress, and whose daughters, Natalie and Rosemary, learned ballet from Joanna), Miss Patricia Hackett, and Mr. Pirie Bush.²⁵⁷ The aims of the Club were "to stimulate interest in and work towards the production of Ballet" and this was to be done by lectures, demonstrations, and full-scale performances.²⁵⁸

The Club was not exclusive, and at the second Committee meeting a letter to Adelaide's dance teachers was drafted, explaining the Club's aims, which included providing ballet classes for members, inviting their cooperation and requesting them,

²⁵⁶ Lesley Hammond, currently Programming Manager for the Victorian Arts Centre, and when she worked in Adelaide with the South Australian Film Corporation a close friend of Joanna. Lesley Hammond, personal interview, audiocassette, 11 July 1989.

²⁵⁷ At later meetings, the Committee was further augmented. SABC Minutes, 15 June 1939; 28 June 1939; 9 August 1939.

²⁵⁸ SABC Minutes 15 May 1939.

if they were interested, to contact the Secretary.²⁵⁹ By early August several teachers had replied, and five, Wanda Edwards, Phyllis Leitch, Dorothy Slane, Kathleen Short and Vera van Rij (Mrs. Spruhan Kennedy), became members.²⁶⁰ The only "inability to accept" recorded in the minutes was from Nora Stewart, on the grounds that she was "too busy."²⁶¹

Concern was expressed by some teachers that the instruction given by the Club might interfere with their own teaching.²⁶² There was, of course, the risk that the time of the Club's class might clash with another teacher's, or that a student might give up attending her regular teacher completely and take the Club's classes instead. But there was also the matter of technique. By the end of the 1930s most Adelaide teachers had adopted either the Royal Academy of Dancing, or the Cecchetti, syllabus, which differed in details such as the positions for port de bras and arabesques, and had different set enchainements. While older students might find these differences no problem, there was a possibility that younger members - and there were junior members of the Club - could be confused. In the light of this, the Committee debated whether students should join only with the consent of their teachers, but such a move was not approved. It was decided that any student should be free to join the Club "just as students of singing may join a choir".²⁶³

²⁵⁹ SABC Minutes 5 May 1939.

²⁶⁰ Mrs. Kennedy joined the Committee in July 1939.

²⁶¹ SABC Minutes 9 August 1939.

²⁶² SABC Minutes 21 August 1939.

²⁶³ SABC Minutes 21 August 1939.

This was not consistent, of course, with Joanna's stand against her students joining Joe Siebert's group.

There was further discussion about the policy of recruiting dancers for the Club. The minutes of 18 October 1939 state that, regarding the forthcoming performance, "Outside dancers, apart from Miss Priest's pupils, will take part." Later, during the same meeting, "It was suggested that prospective members of the

Mrs. Kennedy made the suggestion that, for full scale productions, there should be a corps of twenty-five "to be culled from all sources", and she would be willing to hold auditions to select these dancers.²⁶⁴ At a subsequent meeting it was proposed by Miss Priest, seconded by Mrs. Fry, that there should be four adjudicators.²⁶⁵ There is no record in the minutes that these auditions were ever held. In July, 1940, Miss Priest reported that "The five teachers who are working members of the Club would not work in co-operation with certain other teachers. This precludes the possibility of 'pooling' the best pupils and inviting various teachers to work with them."²⁶⁶

But if, in 1940, some teachers were unwilling to let their students be used in another teacher's choreography, there had been, in the previous decade, occasions when several teachers choreographed on their own students, and brought the groups together in large and spectacular shows, the common factor in all of them being Heather Gell.

Miss Gell was born at Glenelg in 1896, and was working as a kindergarten teacher when she learned from her piano teacher, Miss Agnes Sherry, about Dalcroze and his system of eurythmics. She persuaded her parents to allow her to study at the London School of Dalcroze Eurythmics where she completed the three year course in two. She then returned to teach in Adelaide for some years, later travelling to Geneva

Ballet Group should be approached through the teachers, who would be invited to take classes. The aim of the Club would then be to bring all activities under the Club's control, instead of under separate teachers; and teachers would collect dancers for a demonstration from the Ballet Group." This does not seem to have occurred.

²⁶⁴ SABC Minutes 21 August 1939.

²⁶⁵ SABC Minutes 13 September 1939.

²⁶⁶ SABC Minutes 22 July 1940.



Fig. 17 Heather Gell.
Photograph from Heritage programme, 23 September 1936.

to do the postgraduate diploma at the Dalcroze centre there.

A fine musician, she was selected by the Australian Broadcasting Corporation to organise Music and Movement broadcasts, which she did so successfully that they became a national programme, and in 1938 she moved from Adelaide to Sydney to be closer to the ABC's head office.²⁶⁷

The first of the corporate productions in which Miss Gell was involved was the League of Nations Pageant: The Warrior, presented in the Theatre Royal 7-14 December 1929, in which ballets were arranged by Leslie Bowman, Wanda Edwards, Heather Gell and Nora Stewart, and danced by their pupils.²⁶⁸ The theme expressed the futility of the Great War, and the hopes placed in the League of Nations. The deviser and producer of the pageant, an expatriate Australian named Kenneth Duffield, viewed the events with European eyes, and it appears from the programme that Australia was classified as just one among several other nations. This "cultural cringe" had, by the late 1930s, given place to increasing pride in Australia's uniqueness, as was seen in further cooperative productions.

Four years later another corporate event was organised for the "Bush Babies' Ball" which was held at the Exhibition Building on 29 April 1933, the title itself being uniquely Australian. On a stage

arranged to represent a woodland scene,.. each set did its little ballet in turn, starting with Miss Wanda Edwards' Blue Wrens, which were admirably carried out...Mrs. Lavington Bonython's corroboree set, in a frog totem dance round a bush fire, provided a most interesting entertainment...The Gum Blossom rondo arranged by Miss Heather

²⁶⁷Transcript of: "Recording of Miss Heather Gell," 3 July 1975, ABC Archives (Heather Gell File 40512).

²⁶⁸ Souvenir Programme, The League of Nations Pageant: The Warrior Adelaide, Theatre Royal, 7-14 December 1929 (File 40512).

Gell formed a large ensemble.²⁶⁹

The following year, on 14 April 1934, the Girl Guides presented a magnificent farewell tribute, The Girl Guides' Garden Festival, to their (state) Chief Commissioner, Lady Hore-Ruthven, the Governor's wife. Each of eight dancing teachers choreographed for her own group of students, each group representing different flowers (all of which, incidentally, were imported species).²⁷⁰ The event was described as "inspiring" and Lady Hore-Ruthven was "deeply touched" by the tribute.²⁷¹

In August of the same year, celebrations for the Ninth Birthday Festival of Toc H included a ball on 8 August. For this the Toc H Symbolic Pageant was arranged by Heather Gell, the Dance of the Debutantes by Nora Stewart, and a Ballet was given by Dorothy Slane and her pupils.²⁷²

Joanna may have been invited to work in these earlier productions but declined, or she may not have been asked. The first such cooperative show in which she was involved was Heritage - A Pageant of South Australia, which was sponsored

²⁶⁹ "Bush Babies' Ball", Advertiser 1 May 1933.

The full programme comprised: Blue Wrens - Wanda Edwards; White Rabbits - Dorothy Lawes (although one might question the validity of including rabbits of any colour as native to Australia); Wattle Ballet - Joy Parsons; Boronia Babies' Ballet - Miss le Cornu; Corroboree - Mrs. J. Lavington Bonython (Frog totem dance); Western Australian Everlastings - Alfa and Ruth Robinson; Sturt Pea Ballet - Nora Stewart; Kangaroos - Mrs. L.B. Bull and Mrs. H.J. Lipman; Gum Blossom Rondo - Heather Gell; Stock Riders - Nora Stewart; Magpie Ballet - Trixie Wilson; Flying Foxes - Mrs. J. Lavington Bonython; Butterfly Fantasy - Wanda Edwards; Grand March of sets and all children in Fancy Dress. Programme 29 April 1933 (File 40512).

²⁷⁰ Girl Guides' Garden Festival, 14 April 1934. The flowers represented were: Forget-me-nots and Rosebuds - arranged by Kathleen Short; Marigolds - Dorothy Slane; Poppies - Phyllis Leitch; Daffodils and Cornflowers - Lesley Bowman; Bougainvillea - Wanda Edwards; there were also a Water Lily Pond - Heather Gell; a Wisteria Trellis - Mrs. L.H.E. Hines, Butterflies - Mrs. R. Edwardes (a physical culture teacher), Spring blossoms, a Peach Tree Avenue, Dragonflies and Peacocks (File 40512).

²⁷¹ "Garden of Living Flowers, Guides' Farewell to Lady Hore-Ruthven." Advertiser 16 April 1934.

²⁷² Toc H Birthday Festival programme, 2-8 August MCMXXXIV [1934] (File 40512).

by the Women's Centenary Council. This pageant, which had its first performance on 23 September 1936, was "the collaboration of an Historical Pageant by Ellinor Walker and a Phantasy of South Australia by Heather Gell", with the indefatigable Miss Gell responsible also for the "Composition of Movement, Scenery, and Effects, Costumes for Movement."²⁷³

Several of Adelaide's dancing teachers appeared on stage as Spider Orchids, with Joanna being "Represented by Mem Hodge", the non-dancing Wanda Edwards by Isobel Cooke, Vera van Rij by Muriel Deere and Jean Bedford by Yvonne Saunders.²⁷⁴ Walter Dasborough was a Banksia Man.²⁷⁵ The other movement sequences were performed by Dalcroze students of Miss Gell, except in the scene portraying the laying of the telegraph line. For that she went to the GPO to get "the exact rhythm...right into me, for the Morse Code of the first message ever sent from Adelaide to London by means of the Overland Telegraph to Darwin."²⁷⁶ No doubt it was also she who had the imagination for that signal to be spelled out by Dorothy Slane, tap dancing.

²⁷³ Heritage programme, 23 September - 3 October 1936 (File 40512).

²⁷⁴ The teachers named in the programme were Joanne Priest, Dorothy Slane, Wanda Edwards, Kathleen Short, Phyllis Leitch, Vera van Rij, Helen George, Effie Edwards, Jean Bedford, Margaret Howard and Betty Rugless, with Joanna and Colin Ballantyne responsible for the make-up.

The reason that Joanna, Vera van Rij and Jean Bedford did not dance was because they considered they were too mature Lesley Cox, note to author, March 1992. (Lesley Cox was a student of Heather Gell, and is a leading eurythmics teacher in Adelaide).

²⁷⁵ See note 17 Chapter 2 for the reason Dasborough changed his name.

²⁷⁶ "Publicity." Account by Heather Gell of the preparation involved in this production t.s., (Heritage File 40513). The first message was sent on the overland telegraph on 21 October 1872 by the South Australian governor, Sir James Ferguson, to Lord Kimberley in England, and read: "Telegraphic communication established this day between Australian colonies and England. Landline working without interruption since 22 August."

Lord Kimberley's reply, sent on 23 October 1872, was:

"Most hearty congratulations on the establishment of telegraphic communication. South Australia may well be proud of the energy and perseverance which have brought this great work to success."

Lesley Cox, personal interview, March 1992.

This production was unashamedly Australian, expressive of pride in the country and its beauty. Children appeared as gumnuts, gumleaves, rosella parrots, magpies and wattle while the evils of the outback - dust, drought and bushfire - were also represented. Joanna never used bushland creatures in any of her ballets, but one wonders if the scene in Heritage, where well-known early settlers were portrayed by the actors, could have influenced her ballet The Lady Augusta which recounted the maiden voyage in 1853 of the paddle steamer The Lady Augusta, carrying members of Adelaide's society of the day.²⁷⁷

These large productions ended with the departure of Heather Gell and the onset of the Second World War, but the attraction of Australian wildlife had caught the imagination of many, and became established as something unique to the young country. And, although books such as Dorothy Wall's The Complete Adventures of Blinky Bill, and May Gibbs' The Complete Adventures of Snugglepot and Cuddlepie,²⁷⁸ were written for children, the flowers and animals of the bush, as represented in these books, became an important part of Australia's literary tradition; so much so that in 1991 a strong campaign by adults was successfully mounted to preserve May Gibbs's former home "Nutcote", as a memorial to the creator of the gumnut babies and other bush characters.²⁷⁹

²⁷⁷ The Lady Augusta, chor. Joanna Priest, had its première on 3 December 1946 at the Tivoli Theatre (File 25494).

²⁷⁸ Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1939; Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1946.

²⁷⁹ In 1988 Petal Miller Ashmole choreographed Snugglepot and Cuddlepie for the Australian Ballet, and the 1992 Adelaide Festival of Arts presented a musical version of Snugglepot and Cuddlepie directed by Peter Combe.



Fig. 18 The Lady Augusta chor. Priest, first performance 3 December 1946 at the Tivoli Theatre.
From left: Margaret Frayne, Hugh Murray, Helen Western, Nancy Scott, Kathleen Short, Maxine Aldrich. Lynette Tuck in front.
Photograph: D. Darian Smith.

During its ten active years, however, the South Australian Ballet Club did not consciously set out to celebrate Australia and its nationality. Although the ballet The Lady Augusta told of a trip up the Murray River, the costumes, story and style of dancing belonged to the European tradition. It was not until 1953 that Joanna used an Aboriginal legend as a ballet plot, and not until 1960 that she experimented with combining European cultural traditions with those of the Australian Aboriginal.

This is not surprising as, during the days of the S.A. Ballet Club, she was attempting to educate an audience in the European tradition of ballet. The Club's planned education programme was extensive, and, in order to divide responsibilities, several sub-committees were formed. Musician Spruhan Kennedy became Chairman of the Music Committee, in which he was assisted by Mesdames Shorney and Trew. Miss Priest was elected to be in charge of production, the sub-committee for costumes included Mesdames Fry, Trew, Cornell, Taylor, and Misses Walkley and Reid, and Mr. Goldsmith became Chairman for a sub-committee for décor.²⁸⁰ At a later meeting, Lady Bonython agreed to take charge of floral decoration, but said she would "not have time to cope with publicity work."²⁸¹ Dr. Fry and Mr. Downer formed the sub-committee for lectures, and Mr. Cornell agreed to become chairman for the finance committee.²⁸² Finally, Lady Sandford and Mrs. Fry took on the responsibility for publicity.²⁸³ Joanna's husband, Rob Wilson, declined an invitation

²⁸⁰ SABC Minutes 15 June 1939.

²⁸¹ SABC Minutes 10 July 1939.

²⁸² SABC Minutes 10 July 1939.

²⁸³ SABC Minutes 26 July 1939.

to join the committee,²⁸⁴ but was willing to be stage manager.²⁸⁵

The next task was to select representatives from the different arts to be guest lecturers. Orchestral music in Adelaide had a long history of group work in both amateur and professional fields. Part of that history had developed from the establishment of the Elder Conservatorium in 1897 and the appointment of E. Harold Davies as Professor in 1919. He made a successful appeal for funds to create a South Australian orchestra, which gave its first concert on 24 July 1920 under William Cade. Music as well as the other arts suffered in the Depression, and Julja Szuster has estimated that "Serious orchestral music...did not really recover until the Australian Broadcasting Commission undertook the establishment of a studio orchestra with the appointment of William Cade as Conductor in 1934".²⁸⁶ This orchestra was augmented for concerts in the Adelaide Town Hall, and named the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra. Cade was the permanent conductor, but others, such as Malcolm Sargent and Bernard Heinze, were visitors.

By the time the South Australian Ballet Club was established there was no lack of nominations for a guest speaker on music, and among names suggested were those of Clive Carey, Malcolm Sargent, Hooper Brewster-Jones, Spruhan Kennedy, William Cade and Bernard Heinze. Suggestions for lecturers in the visual arts included Mary Harris, with a tentative title of "Art and Drama", actress and founder of the Independent Theatre, Agnes Dobson, to talk on Decor,²⁸⁷ M.J. McNally on

²⁸⁴ SABC Minutes 8 June 1939.

²⁸⁵ SABC Minutes 28 June 1939.

²⁸⁶ Julja I. Szuster, "Concert Life in Adelaide 1836-1986," From Colonel Light into the Footlights, ed. A. McCredie (Adelaide: Pagel Books, 1988) 185.

²⁸⁷ SABC Minutes 25 May 1939.

"Art and Colour" and Louis McCubbin, who had been Director of the Art Gallery of South Australia since 1936.²⁸⁸

As with music, there was a number of potential speakers on dance. Apart from the local ballet teachers, eurythmics teacher Mary Jolly was nominated, as was Kathleen Danetree, due to visit Adelaide in July as examiner for the Royal Academy of Dancing. And, with the proposed 1940 visit of the Russian Ballet, enquiries were made as to whether Anton Dolin, David Lichine, Algeranoff and Olga Philipoff (the Publicity Secretary to Col.de Basil), would be willing to speak.²⁸⁹ In addition, members of the Committee variously suggested the subjects "Dissecting" a ballet;²⁹⁰ a "Question Bureau"²⁹¹ and a "Guest Night" as a possible "means of keeping other teachers and their pupils interested in the Club."²⁹²

The first lecture was given on 28 August 1939. It had been scheduled for the Claridge Theatre,²⁹³ but before it took place, membership of the Club had risen to 115 and it was clear that, with each member bringing a guest, a larger venue would be needed. The Australia Hall was chosen, and an audience of 220 attended a talk given by Mr. Clive Carey, a former teacher at the Conservatorium who had recently been in charge of opera at Sadler's Wells Theatre. He spoke on "Contemporary Ballet", tracing the history of ballet and its recent revival in London, and Joanna gave

²⁸⁸ Shirley Cameron Wilson, From Shadow into Light. South Australian Women Artists since Colonisation (Adelaide: Pagel Books, 1988) 108.

²⁸⁹ SABC Minutes: 25 May 1939; 8 June 1939; 28 June 1939; 21 August 1939.

²⁹⁰ Dr. K. Fry, SABC Minutes 6 September 1939.

²⁹¹ Joanna Priest, SABC Minutes 19 March 1940.

²⁹² Lady Sandford, SABC Minutes 11 October 1940.

²⁹³ The Claridge Theatre was in an underground arcade in Gawler Place, close to the present site of Allans.

"illustrations of the building up of a dance from the simplest positions and steps".²⁹⁴
This was done along the lines of the Royal Academy of Dancing's syllabus.

The second soirée, on 2 October, took a similar form. The well-known artist Miss Mary Harris "read a thoughtful paper on 'The Influence of Russian Ballet on Modern Art,' which influence, she said, 'had done more to bring people to the appreciation of modern art than anything.'" The dancing demonstration on this occasion was given by Miss Wanda Edwards who "spoke interestingly on the Cechetti [sic] method of dancing, assisted by a number of her pupils, who beautifully demonstrated the points in her address."²⁹⁵

For the next two months, all effort was concentrated in preparation for the December performance. The Tivoli Theatre, which seated over one thousand people, was booked for 16 December 1939. The Governor and Lady Muriel Barclay-Harvey were guests, together with the Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress, and proceeds were donated to the Fighting Forces Comforts Fund.

The programme consisted of three works, two of which Joanna had previously presented in 1937. These were the opening ballet, Variations on a Theme of Paganini by Brahms which Spruhan Kennedy arranged for two pianos (played by Mary Jolly and Betty Puddy), and the closing piece, The Young King, to music by Richard Strauss. This ballet was inspired by Oscar Wilde's story, The Young King, and was the first which Joanna based on a notable literary work. It was described by one reporter to be "probably the most elaborate balletic work yet given here by purely local effort, and deserves all congratulations for initiative and ability on the part of

²⁹⁴ First Nighter, "How Dance is Built Up," News 29 August 1939 (File 25501).

²⁹⁵ "Ballet Club Meeting," Advertiser 3 October 1939 (File 25501).

Miss Joanne Priest."²⁹⁶

The second work, L'Épreuve, was choreographed by the first of Joanna's male students, William Owen, and was possibly his first choreography. He was on the staff at the Weber Shorthose and Rice Physical Culture establishment, and, although fancy dancing was taught there, those who worked with him in Joanna's studio have said he had not learned classical ballet previously.²⁹⁷ His piece was considered "an inter-resting work, and one which showed originality and good use of material available."²⁹⁸ He himself danced the part of a demi-god who visits some vestal virgins, "but owing to an accident to his knee was unable to do the part full justice."²⁹⁹

²⁹⁶ First-Nighter, "Ballet Club's First Show," News 18 December 1939 (File 25501).

²⁹⁷ Lynette Tuck-Howard, personal interview, 13 September 1991.

²⁹⁸ "Interest in Ballet Work," Sunday Mail 16 December 1939 (File 25501).

²⁹⁹ Lady Kitty, "S.A. Ballet Club Stages Clever Programme To Aid Comforts Fund," Express and Journal 23 December 1939 (File 25501).



Fig. 19 Ted Shawn. "Osage Pawnee Dance of Greeting".
Photograph in Ted Shawn's Dance We Must 1950.
Photograph: John Lindquist.

He choreographed a further work, The Betrothal, for Joanna's performance in 1940, and some years later became her assistant in the remedial work she did with children who had suffered poliomyelitis.³⁰⁰

For the Club's first event in 1940, Kester Berwick, who had "lately returned [after three years] abroad",³⁰¹ spoke about the work he had seen at the Chekhov Theatre Studio, and by the Ballet Jooss at Dartington Hall.³⁰² This talk aroused great interest, as he was the first person in Adelaide to have studied at these schools, and had persuaded Joanna to see the work being done there by Jooss.

It was coincidental that, before Joanna visited Dartington Hall in 1935 to view Jooss's development of European modern dance, she had seen while in California the comparable generation of American modern dance: the work being done by Ted Shawn and his men dancers.³⁰³ In spite of her solid grounding in classical ballet, and the rebellion by modern dancers against it, she accepted both European and

³⁰⁰ See p.43.

During the 1920s and 1930s Several people working in physical culture establishments used not only exercises and massage, but also some forms of electrical treatment for various disabilities. When the Physiotherapists' Act was passed in 1945, these people were allowed to register as physiotherapists under the "Grandfather clause": this stated,

A person who applies for registration before the first day of February 1949 shall be entitled to be registered as a physiotherapist if he proves to the satisfaction of the board that -...

c) within the period of thirty-six months immediately preceding the commencement of this Act he was for at least twenty-four months in the aggregate practising physiotherapy in the State for fee or reward. (Physiotherapists' Act 1945-1973)

A telephone conversation with the Physiotherapists' Board, 9 July 1991, found that William Owen was not registered as a physiotherapist during the period he was working with Joanna in 1956. This does not, of course, give any idea as to whether he was or was not competent in the role of remedial gymnast.

³⁰¹ "Towards A New Theatre," Advertiser 11 April 1940 (File 25501).

³⁰² For the second part of this programme Dorothy Slane demonstrated a class in Russian Ballet. She had adopted the Cecchetti system for her school, but during the summer had spent some time with the de Basil company during its Sydney season. "Adelaide Girl in Russian Ballet," News 16 February 1939.

³⁰³ If Laban is considered the first generation of European Modern Dance, then Wigman and Jooss were the second. Similarly, if Shawn and Ruth St. Denis may be considered the first generation of American modern dance, Shawn's men dancers were the second.



Fig. 20 Pavane. chor. Kurt Jooss, 1929.
Photograph in A.V. Coton's The New Ballet.

American styles with an open mind,³⁰⁴ inviting Berwick to teach her students, and hosting a modern dance programme by the Polish dancer Ruth Bergner.³⁰⁵ When Ted Shawn visited Australia the same year, he gave an "interesting talk" to Club members on 18 August,³⁰⁶ and was also invited by Joanna as a guest teacher for her students. One of those students remembers Shawn making an impressive entry into the studio from Joanna's centrally placed office, wearing over his practice clothes a bathrobe which was removed by an attendant before he started the class.³⁰⁷

As a further token of her interest in modern dance, she encouraged Berwick to prepare a ballet based on Jooss's work, Pavane,³⁰⁸ of which A.V. Coton, an English writer and dance critic, noted:

The synopsis condenses the entire narrative into these few words: "Her spirit imprisoned by the cold and pompous ceremonials of the old Spanish Court, the young Infanta seeks in vain to free herself, and succumbs finally beneath the burden of its elaborate etiquette."³⁰⁹

³⁰⁴ Even if it may have been Shawn's "most magnificent young men" who were the immediate attraction in America!
Joanna Priest, personal interview, 11 April 1988.

³⁰⁵ This was at The Blue Door 15 June 1947 (Programme File 25492).

³⁰⁶ SABC Annual Report 1947. For background details about Ted Shawn, see: Ted Shawn, Thirty-Three Years of American Dance (1927-1959) (Pittsfield: Printed by Eagle Printing & Binding Co., 1959) 28; and Jane Sherman and Barton Mumaw, Barton Mumaw, Dancer (New York: Dance Horizons, 1986) 183.

³⁰⁷ The barre was along classical lines, and one of the dances taught was an Eskimo dance (Harry Haythorne, personal interview, Dec.1991). Shawn had a number of traditional dances of various races in his repertoire.

³⁰⁸ Pavane: chor: Jooss, music: Ravel, décor: Leeder, première October, 1929 at the Opera House, Essen. A.V. Coton, The New Ballet: Kurt Jooss and his work (London: Dennis Dobson 1946) 154.

³⁰⁹ Coton 51.



Fig. 21 Joanna Priest in Kester Berwick's production of
Pavane on the Death of an Infanta, 1941.
Photograph: D. Darian Smith for S.A. Homes and Gardens January 1942.

Joanna not only allowed Berwick to produce this piece, which he called Pavane on the Death of an Infanta, but took the role of the Infanta herself.³¹⁰ She wrote: "[This] is a gesture (hardly more) towards that combination of the classic ballet tradition and the Central European technique which, during the last few years, has come more and more into prominence both on the continent and in America".³¹¹

But this innovation in choreography was overshadowed for the general public by a more exciting innovation in the musical accompaniment. For the first ballet, Le Mariage de Colombine, Schumann's Scenes from Childhood was played as a two-piano version by Doreen Jacobs and Vivien Tuck, the arrangement having been made by Miss Jacobs. The other three works, Pavane on the death of an Infanta, (Ravel's Pavane for a Dead Infanta), The Triumphant Pilgrim (César Franck's Symphonic Variations), and Ballerina (parts of Haydn's Clock, Surprise, and London symphonies)³¹² were played by the thirty-one piece Adelaide Concert Orchestra, conducted by William Cade. That was not all. It was announced in the press that,

³¹⁰ This was the only ballet in which Joanna appeared but had not choreographed herself. The ballets she performed on stage in Adelaide were;
A Mime Play as the Moon-man (1934);
Pavane on the death of an Infanta as the Infanta (1941);
Ballerina as the Impresario (1941) and the Dancing Master (1944, 1945 and 1954);
The Grey Maid as the Grey Maid (1943 and 1944). This was one of her ballets choreographed to Patricia Hackett's verse;
The Real Princess as the Queen Mother (1944 and 1948);
Swan of Tuonela as the Mother (1944 and 1945);
Maria in which she took the title role (1945 and 1948);
Histoires as A Giddy Girl (1948).
The Real Princess, Swan of Tuonela and Ballerina were all in the programme in December 1944, when Bernard Heinze was conductor.

³¹¹ Programme note, Pavane on the death of an Infanta, the South Australian Ballet Club's Third Presentation, 5 and 6 December 1941, at the Tivoli Theatre (File 25494).

³¹² Lynette Tuck-Howard has said that when Joanna revived Ballerina in 1954, she used a movement of the Oxford Symphony instead of that from the London Symphony. Lynette Tuck-Howard, personal interview, 13 September 1991.

"Marking a milestone in Adelaide's artistic history, music from one of the biggest amateur ballet performances ever given in Australia, will be broadcast from Adelaide on Friday (December 5) and Saturday (December 6)." The Friday broadcast would "take in only part of the Haydn music... Saturday's national broadcast will introduce The Triumphant Pilgrim, with the Adelaide pianist, Peggy Palmer, as soloist in the Symphonic Variations."³¹³

This format was repeated in 1944 when the Adelaide ABC Augmented Orchestra was conducted by Professor Bernard Heinze for Peter and the Wolf (Prokofieff), The Real Princess (the first and third movements of Schubert's Trout Quintet), The Swan of Tuonela (Sibelius) and Ballerina (Haydn). Different parts of this programme were broadcast on each night of the performance which was given on 6,7 and 8 December. Conductor William Cade and well-known pianist Peggy Palmer gave their services free to benefit the "patriotic effort."³¹⁴

In 1944 the South Australian Ballet Club changed its name to the South Australian Ballet and Arts Club. At its first meeting that year, Miss Priest explained the reasons for the change and, although these reasons were not recorded in the minutes, it may be assumed that the change was made because of Joanna's increasing interest in the arts other than ballet, and in particular, the work of the writer, poet and actress Patricia Hackett.³¹⁵

³¹³ "Music for Ballet by Adelaide Orchestra: will be broadcast." It has not been possible to identify the Adelaide paper in which this cutting appeared, but the date would probably have been during the week ending 5 December 1941 (File 25518).

³¹⁴ "Ballet Show" Truth 29 November 1941.

³¹⁵ Miss Hackett had been elected to the first committee but resigned on 11 October 1940 as she "would be away for some time" (SABC Minutes 11 October 1940). She was re-elected 13 April 1943.

SOUTH AUSTRALIAN BALLET CLUB

Third Presentation

Under the Distinguished Patronage of His Excellency the Governor,
Sir Malcolm Barclay-Harvey, K.C.M.G., and Lady Muriel Barclay-Harvey

DIRECTOR AND PRODUCER:
JOANNE PRIEST



with
ADELAIDE CONCERT ORCHESTRA
by arrangement with Australian Broadcasting Commission

Conductor
William Cade

Tivoli Theatre ~ ~ December 5th and 6th, 1941

Fig. 22 Cover Design for the South Australian Ballet Club's
Third Presentation 1940.
Designer: Lorna Schlank.

There was no major production in 1942, most probably because of the birth of Joanna's baby, but in 1943 there were several stage presentations, beginning in June with a programme of Divertissements and Ballets given, at the invitation of the University Theatre Guild, at The Hut. In addition to seven items of solo and group dancing was one, The White Ship set to verses by Patricia Hackett and choreographed by Joanna Priest. In her introductory notes she wrote:

This ballet is an experiment in choreography to the spoken word. The movement of dance works in harmony with the beauty of rhythmic language. Changing poetic form here takes the place of changing musical theme to represent the different characters in their entrances and actions.³¹⁶

At that time Joanna was anxious to provide members of her Club with a generous mixture of the arts. During the next three years her programmes included ballets to verse³¹⁷ and straight plays³¹⁸ as well as an entire evening of music.³¹⁹

Patricia Hackett's close friend, Dr. Mildred Mocatta, joined the committee in May, 1946. However, due to some disagreement whose nature cannot now be remembered for certain, both Dr. Mocatta and Miss Hackett resigned at the end of that year, and in January, 1947, the Club reverted to its original name.

From the first year of its existence the Club had a continuing problem in finding a permanent home which could be used for meetings, ballet classes and

³¹⁶ Programme note The White Ship in Divertissements and Ballets 10 and 11 June 1943 (File 25494).

³¹⁷ Stories in Dance and Verse December 1943; Three Ballets April 1944; Variations May 1945; A Display of Work November 1945 (File 25494).

³¹⁸ Three Period Plays June 1944; Artists in the Making September 1944 (File 25494).

³¹⁹ Music Hath Charms July 1946 (File 25494).

storage of scenery and costumes. The studio at Freemasons' Hall was the first venue, but there were times when it was required for some other function. On such occasions the meetings were held variously at Mrs. Shorney's home, the Lady Mayoress's Room at the Adelaide Town Hall, or even at the ABC studios in Hindmarsh Square.

Enquiries and inspections were made concerning Patricia Hackett's Torch Theatre, the top floor of a garage, a room at the YMCA, and the Holden property in Halifax St., all without success.³²⁰ Further enquiries were directed to a Church building in Wakefield Street³²¹ and the Tivoli Theatre; this was leased by the Repertory Company, who advised there was no space for the Club there. When a committee member reported that Joe Siebert was "building a hall", Joanna hoped that the University Hut might become available, but the Theatre Guild decided against that.³²² Early in 1942 it was proposed that the Club hire the Panel room at Freemasons' Hall under terms which would ensure exclusive use on certain evenings, as well as use of a room to store scenery and for a workroom. This arrangement was to last until December of that year, and was greeted "with great relief".³²³

During December the search was renewed, and the following July, Joanna moved to Tavistock Lane, east of Pulteney Street. This was adopted as the Club's official address³²⁴ until a further move to "The Blue Door" in Porter's Lane early in 1944.³²⁵ This new "home" could be used not only as studio, clubroom and storage

³²⁰ SABC Minutes 8 June 1939.

³²¹ SABC Minutes 26 July 1939.

³²² SABC Minutes 11 October 1939.

³²³ SABC Minutes 27 March and 23 April 1941.

³²⁴ SABC Minutes 4 July 1942.

³²⁵ SABC Minutes 24 March 1944.

space but also as a theatre.³²⁶ Thus all needs were met - at least for a few years.

During the "Blue Door Era," 1944-1953, Joanna gave two or more presentations annually at either The Blue Door, The Hut, or, on one occasion, Elder Hall,³²⁷ and used the Tivoli Theatre for her end-of-year productions in which the ballets required a larger stage than the other venues could provide. In these programmes some of the ballets were accompanied by a live orchestra, or a chamber music group.³²⁸

³²⁶ The necessary alterations were paid for with money lent by Dr. Mocatta, Miss Hackett and Joanna (SABC Minutes 31 August 1944).

³²⁷ 3 July 1948. Concerts for Children with Joanna's students performing the ballets Peter and the Wolf, Maria, in which the dancing was accompanied by a narrator (Patricia Hackett) who introduced each scene, and National Dances.

³²⁸ Performances at the Tivoli Theatre with live musicians were:

1941 5-6 Dec. The Adelaide Concert Orchestra conducted by William Cade. Le Mariage de Colombine two pianos: Doreen Jacobs and Vivien Tuck.

Pavane no musicians identified.

The Triumphant Pilgrim solo pianist: Peggy Palmer.

Ballerina no musicians identified.

1942. No Tivoli performance. (This was the year Joanna's baby was born.)

1943. No Tivoli performance.

1944 6-8 Dec. The Adelaide ABC Augmented Orchestra conducted by Prof. Bernard Heinze. No musicians identified.

1945 4 Dec. The Adelaide ABC Augmented Orchestra conducted by William Cade. No musicians identified.

1946 3-7 Dec. Nursery Legend two pianos: Vivien Tuck, Alison Holder, Freda Franklin and Mary Painter.

The Real Princess Quintet in A Major by Schubert played by Vivien Tuck, Brenton Langbein, Clarice Gmeiner, Colin Fox, John Painter.

Arabesque Twelve of the Sixteen Brahms Waltzes arr. as a Quartet by Ludvik Schwab, and played by Brenton Langbein, Mary Pascoe, Clarice Gmeiner and Colin Fox.

The Lady Augusta Quartet in F. maj Op. 96 by Dvorak, played by Langbein, Pascoe, Gmeiner and Fox.

1947 25-28 Nov. Adelaide Concert Orchestra, conducted by Norman Chinner. No identification of musicians is given for any of the works on this programme.

1948 30 Nov.- 4 Dec. Nursery Legend Two pianos: Vivien Tuck, Margaret Ketley, Gwenda Knowling and Mary Painter.

The Listeners Dohnanyi's Quartet in Db major. Elder String Quartette [sic]: Lloyd Davies, Mary Pascoe, Clarice Gmeiner, Harold Parsons.

Histoires piano - Vivien Tuck

The Nymph and the Nobleman - The Elder String Quartette.

In July 1949 the financial position of the South Australian Ballet Club was sufficiently poor for the Treasurer to report that there was "enough money to carry us to the end of the year as far as Rent and the running of the Studio was concerned, but expenses for the performance would have to come out of the takings."³²⁹

Two months later the minutes recorded that Mr. Dimond, the owner of The Blue Door, had been offered £8/-/- (\$16) as weekly rent by a would-be tenant, in comparison with the £4/10/- (\$9) which Joanna was then paying.³³⁰ A compromise was reached, although no details have been given beyond the statement that "Mr. Hopkins letter on the raising of the Rent was read and the Committee decided to leave this matter until next year."³³¹

The following January, during Joanna's absence overseas, the Committee agreed that the Club could barely afford to pay more than the current amount of £4/10/-, but Rob negotiated with Mr. Dimond to accept £6/10/- (\$13) , with the possible figure of £7/10/- (\$15) to be discussed when Joanna returned.³³² Not until March 1951 was there any further report on this matter, and on that occasion "The Committee wished to record its appreciation of Mr. Dimond's consent to allow the matter of increased rental to remain in abeyance during Miss Priest's absence abroad."³³³ The members were hoping that, with the introduction of the handcraft classes that year, the Club's financial position would improve sufficiently to pay more

³²⁹ SABC Minutes 8 June 1949.

³³⁰ SABC Minutes 3 August 1949.

³³¹ SABC Minutes 2 November 1949.

³³² SABC Minutes 16 January 1950.

³³³ SABC Minutes 7 March 1951.

than the then current figure of £6/-/- (\$12) per week, £1/10/- (\$3) of which was subscribed by Joanna's studio. It was left to Joanna to discuss with Mr. Dimond what both considered to be a fair rental.³³⁴

In the one further meeting of which minutes have been preserved, which took place on 23 April 1951, there is no reference to the rent, and it is possible that Joanna's statement six years later, that she "had had a ballet school in town for many years, and...been told I must find another studio,"³³⁵ could refer to the fact that The Blue Door had become too expensive to maintain.

The only performances in 1949 were a short one for Children's Book Week in May, and an afternoon performance in the garden of the Cornell's house, St. Andrews. No end-of-year production was given, partly because Joanna's energies were directed to mounting her ballet The Listeners, for the National Ballet to perform in September, and partly, as noted in the Annual Report, because "the Poliomyelitis epidemic did not encourage us to give a theatre presentation."³³⁶

Nor is there a record of any major performance in 1950, 1951 or 1952. An enigmatic note in the 1954 Souvenir Programme for the Studio Theatre's opening explained that this hiatus "was due to the fact that to have a 'live' orchestra was far beyond the financial means available, and to the lack of smaller theatres. The quality of recorded music also left a lot to be desired."³³⁷ Obviously it is not necessary to

³³⁴ SABC Minutes 7 March 1951.

³³⁵ Joanna Priest, "Church on the Square", Talk for the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, n.d., but presumably given in 1957 as in it Joanna said "We have had the [Studio] theatre now for three years" (File 25492).

³³⁶ SABC Annual Report, 1949.

³³⁷ Souvenir Programme, Studio Theatre, October 1954 (File 25494).

have live musicians in order to give a ballet performance, of which Joanna had produced many without such accompaniment.

Most unfortunately, no written records for the years 1950-52 have been found, apart from the few Minutes of Meetings held by the Committee of the South Australian Ballet Club. There are no reports to Parents or Friends, no Prospectuses, no correspondence, and, in the absence of such material one can only guess as to the reason for this apparent gap in Joanna's artistic life. She spent more than six months overseas in 1950, but during that time the senior students, Lynette Tuck, Kathleen Short, Helen George and Helen Western, not only took all the classes, but also prepared and presented a studio performance on four nights in August, with a repeat performance given on Joanna's return.³³⁸

But the senior girls, who carried the load of teaching when Joanna was overseas, had also their own lives to consider. Lynette Tuck was married in February 1950 and Helen Western in 1951, and both had their first babies a year after their marriages. They both continued with their teaching, but there was little time for preparing and presenting ballet performances.

Perhaps Joanna's choreographic creativity during those years had been sublimated into her work with deaf children, with subsequent loss of interest in her school and the South Australian Ballet Club, the Committee of which met only twice in 1950 and twice in 1951.³³⁹ Perhaps she had not recovered from the loss of her

³³⁸ SABC Minutes 23 April 1951.

On an earlier occasion, during Joanna's absence in 1947, the same students had prepared and presented their first independent performance, Ballets and Divertissements, The Blue Door, 5-8 July 1947; and in 1948 Helen Western, Rosalie Ann Taylor and Lynette Tuck had produced a programme entirely by themselves, Fantasia, 7-10 June 1948 (File 25494).

³³⁹ SABC Minutes 16 January 1950; 26 April 1950; 7 March 1951 and 23 April 1951.

child. She had already tired of teaching: perhaps by 1950 she was already tiring of the Ballet Club and looking for something new?

And something new did arise in 1951 when she made her *début* as a producer of opera. By then her name was known to theatregoers in all states of Australia, since her ballet The Listeners had been performed by the National Ballet Company in its Australia-wide tours during 1949-51. One wonders if it was due to this alone, or to her friendship with Bernard Heinze, that she was invited to produce the first professional performance in Australia of Benjamin Britten and Eric Crozier's Let's Make an Opera. It was sponsored by the Arts Council of Australia (NSW Division) in association with Sir Benjamin Fuller and opened on 7 September 1951 at the Palace Theatre, Sydney.

One critic praised "The spontaneity, freshness and direct candour of the work, both in the music and in the writing...in a careful and friendly production by Joanne Priest." He also had some criticisms, including "Various points of detail [that] needed watching such as the plastic tumbler that found its way on to a Napoleonic table."³⁴⁰

Let's Make an Opera did not require Joanna to create any choreography, and this, together with the lack of performances in 1950-52, makes this period a "watershed" after her very productive first twenty years, and before another twenty in more varied activities.

By 1953 Joanna had regained her energy, and in September 1953 produced three new ballets, Nerida and Berwain, Studies in Classical Style and Final Analysis, which were presented at The Hut. Significantly, there is no mention of the South

³⁴⁰ J.B., "Opera 'made' with Joy and Charm," Sydney Morning Herald 8 September 1951 (Opera File). The production was done again in Adelaide in 1957.

Australian Ballet Club in the programme. In an effort to explain the later history of the Club, one writer has stated that it was "later known as the South Australian National Ballet", but there was never any connection between the two groups.³⁴¹ Without Joanna's energy the Club had little raison d'être, and simply faded away, to be replaced at the end of 1953 by her next enthusiasm: The Studio Theatre.

³⁴¹ Edward Pask, Ballet in Australia, the Second Act (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1982) 238.

The South Australian National Ballet developed from the initiative of members of the South Australian National Opera Company, and was formed in 1961 as an independent body.

Joanna and her students had nothing to do with the South Australian National Ballet Company until early in 1973, when Cecil Bates auditioned some of her students for the leading parts of his ballet Requiem which he revived in July 1973 for that Company. In the next season, November 1973, two of Joanna's students, Stephen Baynes and Frances Slattery choreographed works for the South Australian Ballet Company (as it had been renamed in 1970), Baynes' being Rise up my Love and Come Away and Slattery's Misa Criolla. Both used Joanna's students in these productions.

Chapter 4. The Studio Theatre

At the end of 1953 Joanna announced her acquisition of a building which was to become the Studio Theatre. Describing it as "a dream come true," she continued, "All...my working life I have dreamed of a place of our very own which includes a small theatre where we can work and produce the sort of things that do not always appeal to the general public, but which are an experience, artistically and culturally, for all of us who take part."³⁴² She was embarking on another "first" for Adelaide.

This new studio, bought through the assistance of Joanna's long-time benefactor, Mrs. F.W. Cornell, was to be created from two former churches situated on the north-east corner of Wellington Square, North Adelaide. The first, Little Glory, was built in 1857 for the Primitive Methodists, and in 1881, when more room was required for a growing population, a second church was built immediately adjacent to Little Glory's western wall. Just as Joanna's grandfather and father had attracted crowds from outside parish limits by their stimulating preaching, so also did the Methodist Rev. Hugh Gilmore who came to Adelaide in 1889. During his two years as minister in North Adelaide - he died in 1891 - still more room was provided by the addition of a gallery which seated 90. Gilmore's successor, the Rev. J. Day Thompson, followed his predecessor in making "Wellington Square a pulpit [which practice] continued during the ministry of Rev. Brian Wibberley in 1899-1902."³⁴³

After Wibberley's retirement, the church "suffered the potential fate of any

³⁴² Joanna Priest, Principal's Report, 1953 (File 25492).

³⁴³ A.D. Hunt, This Side of Heaven: A History of Methodism in South Australia (Adelaide: Lutheran Publishing House, 1988) 139.



Fig. 23 Joanna Priest's Studio Theatre, 1960s.

church that depends for its support on the power of the preacher to attract his own following."³⁴⁴ Attendances declined and the church closed in 1929. Even with a gifted preacher the church might have become redundant. When the Primitive Methodists combined with the Wesleyan Methodists in 1900, it was clearly a waste of resources to have two churches only half a mile apart, the Wesleyan being in Archer Street, and it was the latter which was chosen for use by the now united Methodists.

In the meantime, the Lutheran congregation in North Adelaide had been meeting in the Rechabite Hall in Tynte Street, and they were happy to lease the original church, Little Glory, from the Methodists and, as their congregation grew, to expand in 1934 into the larger church. There they remained until 10 January 1954 when the building was sold.³⁴⁵

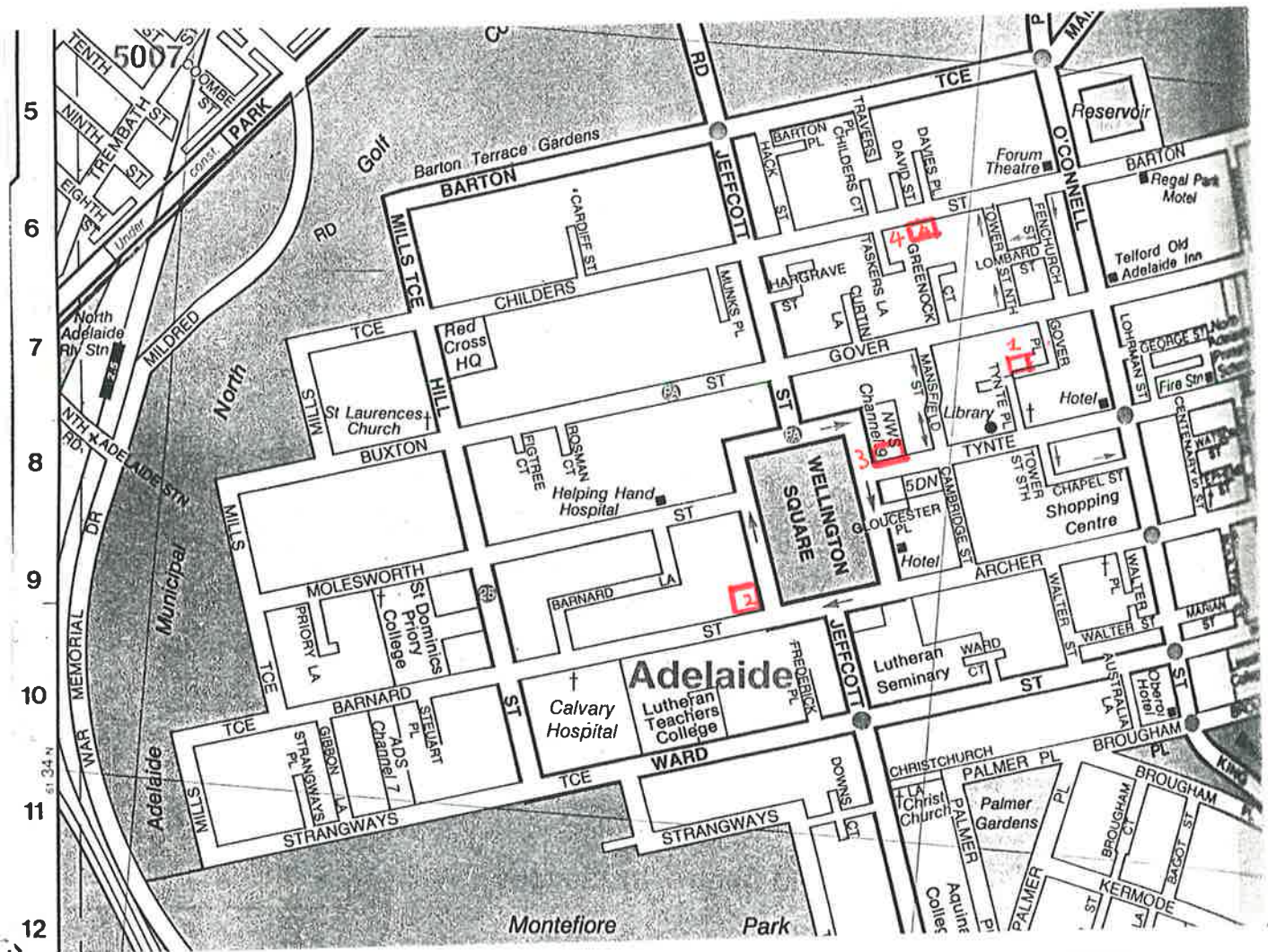
In 1950 Joanna and her husband moved from Walkerville to North Adelaide, where their new home was situated on the south-west corner of Wellington Square, diagonally opposite the former church, and the saga of how she came to own the Studio Theatre is best told in her own words:

We spent many moths [sic] searching [for a new studio]. One night [a friend] was having a drink with us, and the subject cropped up. He said "What you want is the Lutheran Church across the Square." I laughed "Yes! that's exactly what I want, but unfortunately it's a church and one can't go round buying churches." "Why not ask about it" he advised. "They can only say No"...

The next morning Padre Strange...came to take tea with me. I was well versed in, [sic] what I thought would be the attitude of a non-conformist parson; my father was one; my grandfather was on[sic]...Obviously one would be wise to keep off the theatrical side of our activities ...the subject of the cultural education of the child would be a strong point. I painted what I thought a charming picture of the

³⁴⁴ Hunt 139.

³⁴⁵ F. Kummerow, Lutheran Archivist, telephone interview, 3 October 1991.



Australian Map Grid. 1000m or 1km Intervals shown in red
 Gregory's Maps 1 & 2 cover parts of 1:10000 series maps 6628-39, 6628-40, 6628-41, 6628-42.

Fig. 24 North Adelaide.

1. Site of Joe Siebert's Studio Theatre.
2. The Wilson's home during the 1950s.
3. Joanna Priest's Studio Theatre.
4. The Studio Arts Centre, home of Joanna's school since 1967.

patter of little feet...and, at the end of my dissertation said with all the apparent calm I could muster - though quaking inside - "Padre Strange, I want to buy your church on the Square" and I waited for the bomb to drop. Padre Strange slowly put down his cup, just as slowly leaned forward in his chair, fixed me with a pair of unwavering candid eyes and quite quietly and just as emphatically said "How much?"³⁴⁶

Joanna had to possess her soul in patience for six weeks for the Methodist Council to discuss and approve or disapprove of her plan, but approve it they did.

So anxious were she and Rob to allay any anxiety that Padre Strange's colleagues might have about the proposed use of the former church that Rob wrote to him at Joanna's request, emphasising her plan to make it not only a dancing school but also a cultural centre in North Adelaide by continuing her work of the past twenty years. There would be classes in classical ballet only "(as distinct from Musical Comedy, tap dancing, or exhibition dancing, which are excluded at all times)." There would also be classes in handcrafts, appreciation of music and painting, classes or private lessons for children with various physical handicaps, and ballroom classes "for approved young people stressing correct social behaviour. (These classes are not open to the general public)." There would be theatrical performances of Opera, Drama, Ballet and Music "designed to encourage appreciation of a high standard of the Arts and not at any time influenced by the question of Box Office returns."³⁴⁷

No reply to this letter has been found, nor objection from anyone that a church should become a theatre. On the contrary, the Advertiser declared:

The conversion of a church into a theatre would once have been accounted positively scandalous. Nowadays, however, everybody knows that residential areas often undergo changes that render some old churches hopelessly redundant; and we have seen without much emotion

³⁴⁶ Joanna Priest, "Church on the Square", talk for the ABC t.s., 1957 (File 25492).

³⁴⁷ N.A.R. Wilson, letter to Padre Strange, 13 November 1953. (Studio Theatre 1953-56, File 51974).

abandoned places of worship turned into garages and stores. The emergence of a temple of art is a notable improvement on these other transformations.³⁴⁸

Joanna used the same phrase when asked if she thought it strange that a church had become a theatre. "No," she replied, "for when I was first told that this Church was for sale - it seemed quite logical that it should become a Temple of Art, as since early time Art and Music stemmed from the Church".³⁴⁹ Another journalist agreed:

It is fitting that the Studio Theatre was once a church. Theatre was religious in its origins; it still has a quasi-religious effect upon its devotees (of which balletomanes are the most vivid examples), and it looks as if its cult is in process of revival.³⁵⁰

It was a far cry from Joanna's childhood when dancing and theatre were forbidden fruits.

From the time of her marriage Joanna had been able to depend on Rob to relieve her of a variety of day-to-day chores, so that her energies could be concentrated on teaching, administering, choreographing and directing. One anecdote has it that a student, asked who Mr. Wilson was, replied, "He's the man who sweeps the paths." Although Joanna was consulted on every detail, it was Rob who undertook most of the voluminous correspondence, discussions and phone calls with those involved in the alterations and furnishings of the Theatre, among them the architect, the builder, the insurer, and the manufacturer of chairs for the auditorium.

³⁴⁸ "A Temple of Art," editorial, Advertiser 23 March 1954 (Studio Theatre Material, File 25516).

³⁴⁹ Joanna Priest, radio interview by Alec Regan for the ABC, t.s., n.d. but from the context, not long before the opening of the theatre in October 1954 (File 25516).

This suggests that she had been told the church was for sale before her discussion with Padre Strange, but she may have been referring to his willingness to sell it.

³⁵⁰ H. Stafford Northcote, "Church, theatre and cloister," Advertiser 2 October 1954. (File 25516).

He was also Honorary Secretary at meetings concerning the incorporation of a private, non-profitmaking company, Studio Theatre Limited, which conducted the business side of the venture.³⁵¹

There were some obstacles to be overcome with the civic authorities, although they proved tractable. The Adelaide City Council agreed to waive the provision of the zoning by-law to allow the Studio Theatre to function as a cultural centre and

be used from time to time for cultural plays and dramatic works by amateurs (in the main), subject to the following conditions:-

- (1) that the peace and rest of the inhabitants be not disturbed by the use thereof, and
- (2) that the building be not used after 10 p.m.³⁵²

These conditions were gladly accepted, but a problem arose the following year when plans were underway for the Festival season which would open the theatre in October. This was to include plays and musical recitals as well as performances of ballet and folk dance, but as all the performers were amateurs who worked during the day in other capacities, it was necessary for rehearsals to take place at weekends and this meant on Sundays as well. Permission was sought from the Chief Secretary to enable rehearsals to be held on Sundays.³⁵³ He was not willing to give this for all or any unspecified Sunday from July until September, but was prepared to consider issuing

³⁵¹ See papers in: (File 51974); (Studio Theatre Documents File 25515).

³⁵² W.C.D. Veale (Town Clerk of Adelaide), letter to Joanna Priest, 4 December 1953. (File 51974).

³⁵³ Unsigned copy of letter from the Studio Theatre to the Chief Secretary, 2 June 1954. It was explained that only those connected with the rehearsal would be present and the general public not admitted, those rehearsing would average about eight in number and not more than twenty, rehearsals would be generally during the afternoons but, should they run into the evening, the 10 p.m. limitation would apply. Also, the volume of any music would be kept to a minimum. (File 51974).

individual permits when the opening of the theatre was closer.³⁵⁴ This he did in September, giving consent for rehearsals to be held on Sundays 3, 10 and 17 October.³⁵⁵

Certain adjustments had to be incorporated in the alterations to satisfy the requirements of the Inspector of Places of Public Entertainment.³⁵⁶ These were made, and a licence for a place of public entertainment was granted on 28 July 1954.³⁵⁷

As well as coping with those matters, Rob's practical mind suggested to him certain steps that might avert what could be a potential danger. Parking (ranking) was allowed all around the square itself, and a child would have to cross the road to get to or from the studio and the family car parked there. As this road had a large volume of through traffic, Rob asked the Town Clerk if he would paint angle parking lines on the north side of Tynte Street from Wellington Square to the depth of the theatre.³⁵⁸ This was done,³⁵⁹ enabling the children to embark and disembark from cars parked at the side of the theatre, so avoiding the necessity of crossing the road.

More than ever, during the early months of 1954, Joanna had reason to be

³⁵⁴ The Chief Secretary's reply has not been found, but an unsigned copy of Studio Theatre's response to that reply, dated 6 July 1954, provided the above information. (File 51974).

³⁵⁵ M.A.F. Pearce, Under Secretary. Notice to Studio Theatre: "Consent to Licensed Place of Public Entertainment being open or used on a Sunday," 13 September 1954.(File 51974).

³⁵⁶ Ralph Turner, Inspector of Places of Public Entertainment, Letters to (1) Dean Berry (the architect responsible for alterations to the building) 8 February 1954.
(2) N. Wilson, 3 May 1954. (File 51974).

³⁵⁷ From Hon. Sir Alexander Lyell McEwin, Chief Secretary, Certificate addressed to N.A.R. Wilson, 28 July 1954, granting a licence to the Studio theatre for a Place of Public Entertainment (File 51974).

³⁵⁸ N.A.R. Wilson, Letter to the Town Clerk of Adelaide, 15 April 1954. (File 51974).

³⁵⁹ Veale, letter to Mrs. Wilson [sic] 4 May 1954 (File 51974).

grateful to Rob's support, as it enabled her to go to Melbourne to produce her second opera,³⁶⁰ Menotti's Amahl and the Night Visitors, knowing that the oversight of all activities involved in the creation of the Studio Theatre was in efficient hands. Well might a journalist write "Life is exciting just now for talented Joanne Priest".³⁶¹

The production of this opera was an Australian première, mounted at the Princess Theatre for the National Theatre Movement's Arts Festival which coincided with the 1954 Royal Tour.³⁶² Its first performance was on 16 February, and it shared the programme with Hansel and Gretel. The role of Amahl was taken by a thirteen-year-old Adelaide boy, Graeme Campbell, who was so successful in the part that he was offered another in the forthcoming Albert Herring.³⁶³ Reviews generally were favourable, although one critic considered "The ballet choreography would have shocked our Biblical friends of long ago."³⁶⁴

Meanwhile, in Adelaide, the extensive alterations necessary to make the Studio Theatre functional were continuing, and in the end were said to have cost more than the purchase of the building.³⁶⁵ Little Glory was converted into a stage twenty-eight feet deep by twenty-four feet wide, and the wall separating the two churches was

³⁶⁰ Her first venture in this field was Let's Make an Opera in Sydney in 1951. (See Chapter 3.)

³⁶¹ "Thursday Women's News," News 18 February 1954 (Amahl and the Night Visitors File 25517).

³⁶² The opera given for the Queen and Prince Phillip on Monday, 1 March 1954 was Tales of Hoffman.

³⁶³ Elizabeth Auld, "Ambitious opera shows have mixed notices," Advertiser 20 February 1954. (File 25517).

³⁶⁴ Linda Phillips, "Amahl impressed; but Hansel -," The newspaper is probably the Melbourne Sun, 17 February 1954. (File 25517).

³⁶⁵ Priest, interview with Alec Regan 1954. (File 25516).

partly removed, leaving the arch around it as a proscenium.³⁶⁶ An auditorium, fifty-four feet by forty-five, was provided by the body of the larger church, although some of this space was taken in the construction of an orchestra pit. Together with the balcony, there was seating for 350, and, when the chairs were pushed to the sides of the room, it became a spacious studio.

There was some urgency about getting this studio ready by the beginning of March so that classes could begin at the start of the first school term of 1954.³⁶⁷ As it happened, they had to be postponed for one month only, which was remarkable considering that the architect's conditions of engagement and scale of charges were not given to the Wilsons until four days before Christmas, 1953.³⁶⁸ Throughout the months that followed,

classes were taken under difficult circum-stances whilst the building of the actual theatre took place. Difficult, noisy months, but circumvented by patience and happy adaptability on the part of the children. These trials have been rewarded in our gaining the most lovely home for our school.³⁶⁹

The beauty of the building was evident even five months before the opening. C.B. de Boehme commented on "the graceful architecture...and beautiful cedar woodwork, especially in the balcony and the stairs leading to it."³⁷⁰ As work progressed, a new ceiling in the auditorium was painted white; the walls in the

³⁶⁶ C.B. de Boehme, "A dream theatre in the making," Sunday Mail 10 April 1954 (File 25516).

³⁶⁷ C.H. Speck (Director of Webber and Williams, builders and contractors), letter to D.W. Berry (architect), 22 January 1954. Also D.W. Berry, (architect) letter to Webber and Williams, 3 February 1954. (File 51974).

³⁶⁸ Dean Berry, letter to N.A.R. Wilson, 21 December 1953. (File 51974).

³⁶⁹ Joanna Priest, Principal's Report 1954. (File 25492).

³⁷⁰ de Boehme, April 1954. (File 25516).



Fig. 25 The North side of Tynte St., North Adelaide, 1992.
The former Studio Theatre is on the left and the former Primitive Methodist church,
Little Glory, is the smaller building immediately on its right.
Photograph: the author.

auditorium and foyer were done in two shades of green and pink, and the gothic church windows were draped with curtains which had been banners for the Royal Tour.³⁷¹ Dyed green, they blended with the wall and the stage curtain, which was also green. In the tiled foyer hung a brass chandelier from Mrs. Cornell's home, St. Andrews, and outside a wrought iron carriage lamp was placed over the façade. This had been presented to the church many years before "to guide those of the Methodist faith to worship in the Church called 'Little Glory' in the horse and buggy days."³⁷²

Joanna's enterprise gained her not only admiration, but also some practical help. The Managing Director and Chairman of Directors of the Advertiser, Sir Lloyd Dumas, was one of five members of a non-profit earning company called the S.A. National Theatre Movement Ltd.³⁷³ After its incorporation the directors

looked round for local theatrical ventures that we could help... We heard that Miss Joanne Priest, when she had taken over the theatre in Wellington Square, had found that the stage was old and uneven and unsuitable for dancing, and that the stage lighting was ineffective. The capital cost would at least have delayed the opening, so we paid for a new stage floor and improved lighting.³⁷⁴

Joanna's gratitude can be imagined.

One thing lacking in the new theatre was space for dressing rooms, but a solution was found by using the former manse next door. The Wilsons had bought this, intending to live in it themselves, but were dissuaded by the architect, who wrote:

³⁷¹ John Miles, "Dream built on a Theatre", News 23 September 1954. (File 25516).

³⁷² Miles, 23 September 1954. (File 25516).

³⁷³ The others were Sir Kenneth Wills, Sir Edward Hayward, Sir Roland Jacobs and Mr. Clyde Waterman. Lloyd Dumas, The Story of a Full Life (Melbourne: Sun Books, 1969) 196.

³⁷⁴ Dumas, 196.



Fig. 26. The Studio Theatre foyer 1954.

the best advice I can give you is not to spend any money on it. If you do, it will be a case of putting new wine into old bottles...The salt damp...is about shoulder high throughout...the floor level is below the yard level at the rear.³⁷⁵

They took his advice. But while the building might not be desirable as a permanent home, it could and did serve as office space, dressing rooms, greenroom and wardrobe, and a covered way was built over the short path from dressing rooms to theatre.

The opening night, 6 October 1954, was a gala occasion. Attendance was by invitation only, and the invitation cards, each containing an individual water colour of a dancer, were hand-painted by Helen George, who called on the hundreds of sketches she had made from the wings of the Theatre Royal during performances by the Borovansky Ballet. John Casson flew over from Melbourne to open the theatre and, following his speech, which was described as "commendably short" by one critic,³⁷⁶ and "stirring" by another,³⁷⁷ Joanna's junior and senior companies presented three ballets, all her own choreography although none of them new.³⁷⁸

Nerida and Berwain opened the programme. This had been performed for the

³⁷⁵ Dean Berry, letter to N.A.R. Wilson, 2 March 1954. (File 51974). After the church closed, the Minister, Revd. J.P.H. Tilbrook, continued to live in the Manse in the 1930s. Revd. W. Stafford, telephone interview, 1 October 1991.

³⁷⁶ C.B. de Boehme, "Fresh note as Studio opens," News 7 October 1954. (File 25516).

³⁷⁷ H. Stafford Northcote, "Thespis and Terpsichore", 9 October 1954 (File 25516). The full speech does not seem to have been preserved, although Harold Tidemann quoted part in his critique: "The new theatre has been born at a most appropriate time. In Australia as well as elsewhere, there is a desire for good theatre. It is up to the citizens of Adelaide to make this a success." H. Tidemann, "New 'Home' for Arts in S.A.," Advertiser 7 October 1954, (File 25516).

³⁷⁸ Joanna had formed senior and junior (amateur) companies of her students in 1953. Priest, Principal's Report 1953. (File 25492).

first time at The Hut on 29 September, 1953. With music by Arthur Bliss and a "beautiful backdrop" by William Salmon,³⁷⁹ it was Joanna's first essay into Aboriginal culture, and told the story of two young lovers, parted by Wahwee, the spirit of thunder. Joanna had a long standing interest in Aboriginal dance, and she had joined the dentist, Dr. T.D. Campbell, on at least one occasion when he visited the settlement at Yuendumu, where she watched and filmed a number of native dances. In Nerida and Berwain she did not attempt to copy those dances, and a programme noted stated that the choreography was "purely descriptive, except for the killing of the Kangaroos shown in an authentic 'Kangaroo Totem'".³⁸⁰

De Boehme considered this ballet was seen "to appreciably greater advantage than...last year."³⁸¹ he praised the "sincere dancing" of principals Alison Ketley and John Harmer, and judged William Salmon's backdrop as "harshly magnificent".³⁸² Harold Tidemann also admired this "backcloth of a Central Australian scene [which] was strikingly well painted and brilliantly lit."³⁸³

³⁷⁹ Stafford Northcote, 9 October 1954. (File 25516).

³⁸⁰ Studio Theatre, Souvenir Programme Opening Season, 6-23 October, 1954. (Programmes File 25494).

³⁸¹ On that occasion he wrote: "I cannot raise any enthusiasm for 'Nerida and Berwain'...Clearly much work and skill have gone into it, and the story of an aboriginal legend is carried through. But if this ballet entertains, or adds anything to any dance form, it is lost on me." de Boehme, News 30 September 1953. (File 25497).

³⁸² de Boehme, 7 October 1954. (File 25516).

³⁸³ Tidemann, "New 'Home' for Arts in S.A." Advertiser 7 October 1954. (File 25516). For the first production of "Nerida and Berwain" in September - October 1953, the décor was by Francis Figwer.



Fig. 27 The Listeners

Chor. Priest, first performance 30 November 1948.

From left: Merle Couch (a Circumstance) Lynette Tuck, kneeling, (The Woman he Loved), Rosalie Ann Taylor, facing, Maxine Aldrich, partly hidden and Margaret Frayne (Circumstances), Margaret Monson (the Woman who loved him) and Harry Haythorne (The Traveller).

Photograph: Colin Ballantyne.

The Listeners, based on a poem of Walter de la Mare, was performed next. Considered by some to be Joanna's best ballet,³⁸⁴ it was first seen on 1 December 1948 at Adelaide's Tivoli Theatre, and became her first professional choreography when it was taken into the repertoire of the National Ballet the following year. At its première the accompaniment, Dohnanyi's String quartet in Db major, was played by the Elder String Quartet, but by 1954 recorded music had reached a sufficiently high standard for that to be used for this revival. The original sets and costumes were by Kenneth Rowell, and, while the original costumes were worn again, the set was too large for the much smaller Studio Theatre, so a new backcloth was "adapted and painted" by Helen George.³⁸⁵

In the principal roles Glen Pearson was "excellent as the Traveller" and Lynette Tuck, dancing the role she had created, was "charming as the woman he loved"³⁸⁶ while Prudence Coffey's "flowing sympathetic appeal...would have shown to greater advantage had the stage been illuminated in tones of blue, instead of an inadequate 'spot.'"³⁸⁷

The final item, Ballerina, was the oldest ballet on the programme, having had its première on 5 December 1941 on the first occasion Joanna had used the Tivoli for a performance. The slight theme followed the development of a young and timid student into a ballerina. One critic called it

³⁸⁴ Edward Pask, Ballet in Australia: the Second Act 1940-1980 (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1982) 238; Tidemann, 7 October 1954. (File 25516).

This ballet will be considered further in Chapter 6.

³⁸⁵ Studio Theatre, Souvenir Programme, 1954.

³⁸⁶ Tidemann, 7 October 1954. (File 25516).

³⁸⁷ Stafford Northcote, 9 October 1954. (File 25516).



Fig. 28 Ballerina

Chor. Priest, first performance 5 December 1941.

Centre: Walter Desborough as the Dancing Master, Joanna Priest as the Impresario.

a cheerful piece, not without a hint of sophistication...containing some pleasant miming which Miss Priest [the dancing master] and Catherine Wall [the impresario] obviously enjoyed doing very much.³⁸⁸

Another described it as "madly Degas and far too long. It is made longer by lots and lots of symphonic music...Miss Priest must learn to cut ruthlessly."³⁸⁹ But in spite of that comment, the dancers received praise, "above all Miss Tuck [who] danced with the full sweet delicacy which she can so unassumingly command."³⁹⁰

Apart from Stafford Northcote's criticisms that "the lighting plan needs considerable revision...the sound machine needs adjustment" and that the floor of the stage was too noisy,³⁹¹ there was nothing but praise for the new theatre and the "two indomitable ladies" who had succeeded in providing Adelaide with an intimate theatre where "amateur groups of Drama, Opera, Ballet and music...will find themselves at ease."³⁹² John Horner, marvelling that it had taken Adelaide so long to create a small theatre, compared its opening with the recent announcement that "'a special effort'" was to be made to connect the Murray with the city reservoirs by Christmas. He asked:

If the Murray pipeline can be ready by Christmas, can anybody tell me why it couldn't have been ready by last Christmas, or the Christmas before...The Studio Theatre is a much smaller matter, but of much the same kidney...How does it happen that only now...we find ourselves with an accoustically [sic] and artistically satisfactory small hall in

³⁸⁸ de Boehme, 7 October 1954. (File 25516).

³⁸⁹ Stafford Northcote, 9 October 1954. (File 25516).

³⁹⁰ de Boehme, 7 October 1954. (File 25516). Adelaide critics were well acquainted with the dancers in the companies of Joe Siebert and Joanna, and followed their progress with interest.

³⁹¹ Stafford Northcote, 9 October 1954. (File 25516).

³⁹² "The Studio theatre Ltd.," Forward in Souvenir Programme 1954. The "two indomitable ladies" were Marjorie Cornell and Joanna, so described by John Horner in "Are We balmy in S.A.?" Radio Call 27 October 1954. (File 25516).

Adelaide?...Are we really paralysed, or just plain balmy?³⁹³

A week after the theatre had made its début with ballet, the Adelaide Theatre Group, then in its ninth year, had the honour of presenting the opening play for the Studio Theatre. This was Dostoevsky's Crime and Punishment, produced by Francis Flanagan, and performed on 12 and 13 October. It was described by one critic as "a spectacular study in squalid poverty with a teeming atmosphere of milling, seething, sweating life which...despite its faults [is] a truly remarkable achievement".³⁹⁴

Joanna did not intend the Studio Theatre to be used solely as a theatre for children, but one wonders how she reconciled her philosophy of creating beauty and avoiding the ugly things of life with a play such as Crime and Punishment.

A sterner test of the theatre's acoustics came the following evening when Dorothy Oldham, Lloyd Davies, Max Worthley and Vivien Tuck presented a chamber music recital. The result was another triumph. One reviewer said "The auditorium proved to be ideal acoustically. Every note, whether sung or played, had perfect clarity."³⁹⁵ John Horner agreed: "Last night saw the happy and long-prayed-for solution of one of Adelaide's oldest and most tantalising artistic problems - where to hold a chamber concert". He praised the performers as well as the theatre, and could find only one thing to criticise: "The only flaw in a perfect ensemble occurred at the very end, where the piano might have matched the muted violin with a more veiled

³⁹³ Horner, 27 October 1954.(File 25516).

³⁹⁴ H. Stafford Northcote "Poverty, Hunger and Squalor" Advertiser 16 October 1954. (Studio Theatre Programmes, File 25502).

³⁹⁵ Nadra Penalurick, "Theatre makes pleasing debut," News 15 October 1954. (File 25516).

tone as the sonata sank slowly into silence."³⁹⁶

The season continued with more drama, White Cargo presented by Mr. K.D. Anderson's Group, and, three days later, Cradle Song by the Adelaide University Theatre Guild. Following this, there came an opportunity to show Joanna's long-term interest in the cultures of other countries: in earlier years she had conducted a weekly ABC radio session devoted to folk-dance for schools.³⁹⁷ On 20 October a programme of National Songs and Dances was presented at the Studio Theatre, and Joanna considered this to be "of more than usual interest because of the recent arrival in Australia of so many different nationalities".³⁹⁸ Two nights later the four-year-old Lithuanian Theatre-Studio presented three one-act plays, in English. The season came to a triumphant end with a recital by pianist Merle Robertson.³⁹⁹

1955 was a year in which two new teachers, trained in different ways, came to work for Joanna. The first of these was Valerie Maxwell. Joanna and Valerie met when Joanna went to Western Australia to produce Amahl and the Night Visitors for the third annual Festival of Perth, which was held from January to March 1955.⁴⁰⁰

³⁹⁶ John Horner, "Successful Recital in New Theatre" News 15 October 1954. (File 25516).

³⁹⁷ Joanna Priest, "Youth Education" Talk for the Australian Broadcasting Commission, South Australian branch, 13 May 1959. (File 25492). In this she says "Some of you may perhaps, remember the lessons we had together learning how to do Folk Dancing." It has not been possible to find the date when these lessons were broadcast. Geoff Harris (Document Archivist, ABC) letter to the author, 26 February 1992.

³⁹⁸ Joanna Priest, Souvenir Programme. Introductory note to the performance on 20 October 1954.

³⁹⁹ Throughout the Studio Theatre's lifetime there were many productions other than Joanna's. Of particular interest were three verse plays, presented in 1955, and written by South Australians Brian Medlin (Governor Bligh), Charles Jury (The Administrator), and John Bray (Papinian).

⁴⁰⁰ She used the same singers as had been in the Melbourne production, with the exception of Kasper who was sung by Ronald Austron instead of Raymond McDonald and the Page, who was sung by John Browne instead of Leslie Robertson. (See programmes in Amahl and the Night Visitors, File 25517).



Fig 29 A Villanelle for Four

Chor. Cecil Bates, first performance 27 October 1956 at the Studio Theatre.

From left: Cecil Bates, Valerie Maxwell and Mel Clifford.

The fourth dancer was Lynette Tuck.

The dancers she needed were chosen from the West Australian Ballet Company and among them was Valerie, who was hoping to become a professional dancer. By the 1950s the possibility of dancers in Australia getting professional work in their own country had greatly improved, with the Borovansky and National Ballet companies in existence, as well as musical comedy companies. But dancers needed to go to Melbourne or Sydney to audition for such work. Valerie decided that she would benefit from studying with Joanna before going further east and, when she asked Joanna about her prospects in Adelaide, was assured that there would be a place for her in Joanna's school and company.⁴⁰¹ She remained with Joanna until early in 1965, as dancer, teacher, wardrobe mistress - for which she had an innate talent, being not only able to sew, but also to translate a pattern on paper into a costume - and general factotum during the years of Southern Stars.⁴⁰²

In the same year Joanna met Cecil Bates, who became her second "outsider." Born in Maitland, New South Wales Bates had had his first ballet lessons from his mother, Freda Stach, a dancer; later he learned from Grace Norman and, when he began working as a metallurgist in Sydney, from H  l  ne Kirsova. When the war ended Kirsova returned to Europe, and arranged for Rambert to audition Bates when she brought her company to Australia in 1947. He was accepted as an extra, but by the time the rehearsal period was over, he appeared on the first night as a soloist, performing the Scotch dance in Fa  ade.⁴⁰³ When the company returned to England,

⁴⁰¹ Valerie Maxwell-Gwynn, personal interview, audio- cassette, 20 September 1990.

⁴⁰² A car accident made her give up the idea of dancing professionally, and instead she trained at the South Australian School of Art as a painter and sculptor. Maxwell-Gwynn, personal interview, 21 September 1990.

⁴⁰³ Cecil Bates, interview by Helen Pearce, audiocassette, 23 January 1986.

Bates went with it, dancing as a soloist and also trying his wings as a choreographer.⁴⁰⁴

In 1953 he joined the Walter Gore Ballet as principal dancer and ballet master, and in 1955 came back to Australia with Gore, who had been invited by Miss H.W.M. Wallace, of Melbourne, to form a small company.⁴⁰⁵ This company was named the Australian Theatre Ballet and toured Australia, giving its Adelaide season in July 1955 at Joanna's Studio Theatre. While Bates was there, Joanna said to him, "If for any reason you are at a loose end, come over - I'd love you to teach here."⁴⁰⁶

Although there were still prospects for him in London, Bates nevertheless found, like other Australians, that he missed the warmth and sunshine, so he accepted Joanna's offer and became a teacher, dancer and choreographer at the Studio Theatre, creating six new ballets⁴⁰⁷ and reproducing three works by English choreographers.⁴⁰⁸

While the school was being strengthened by the new teachers, Rob had been seeking ways of raising funds to improve the facilities in and around the Studio Theatre,⁴⁰⁹ and by mid-1956 a non-profit organisation named Studio Theatres

⁴⁰⁴ While he was with Ballet Rambert, he created The Ballad of Clerk Saunders and Ronde Finale for Ballet Workshop, and a new version of Carnival of the Animals for the Rambert Company. He also choreographed for the Welsh National Opera Company. Cecil Bates, interview, 1986.

⁴⁰⁵ Pask, 1982, 57.

⁴⁰⁶ Bates, interview, 1986.

⁴⁰⁷ Comme ci, Comme ça and Design for a Lament (later called Requiem) in June 1956; A Villanelle for Four Dancers October 1956; Serenade and A Fig for the King in August 1957 and Seven Dances in July 1958.

⁴⁰⁸ Façade by Frederick Ashton; Death and the Maiden by Andrée Howard and Czernyana by Frank Staff.

⁴⁰⁹ N.A.R. Wilson, letters to David Cornell 5 October 1955 and 5 February 1956. (File 51974).



Fig. 30 Cecil Bates teaching in the Studio Theatre, 1958.
From left: Jan Monten, Valerie Maxwell, Kendy Snowden, Josie Freeman,
Mel Clifford and Rae Spiers. Pianist: Mrs. Sparbier.
Photograph: Colin Ballantyne.

Productions Incorporated was founded.⁴¹⁰ A well-known actress, Iris Hart, was appointed Director of Drama and Joanna was Director of Dance.⁴¹¹

The policy of presenting high quality theatre was continued, but was now marketed much more energetically, especially by the Public Relations Committee of Joanna's Parents' and Friends' Association. Members of this association resolved to address Parents' and Friends' Committees of various schools, distribute brochures, and obtain names of persons interested in the activities of "Inc."⁴¹²

Parents were urged to give support:

If our Theatre is to serve the community by providing live theatre of high quality, it is imperative that you, who are the community, do your part in encouraging it and patronizing the performances.⁴¹³

People in business were encouraged to draw the attention of their Social Clubs to the advertising leaflets, and were offered advance information on forthcoming productions, if they so wished.⁴¹⁴ The request was heeded. In a speech from the stage at the opening performance of Amahl and the Night Visitors in April 1958, Joanna thanked the audience "for [their] part in helping us to establish our ideal of

⁴¹⁰ Certificate of Incorporation, 26 June 1956 (Studio Theatre Productions [STP] Minutes of Meetings, File 33610).

⁴¹¹ STP, Minutes of Meeting, 5 February 1956.

⁴¹² Studio Theatre Productions, Inc., was referred to as "Inc." STP Minutes of Meeting, 17 July 1957. (File 33610).

⁴¹³ Joanna Priest, Undated circular but prior to the first play of the year, The Gentle People, which commenced on 1 May 1956. (Studio Theatre Productions Inc. File 25520).

⁴¹⁴ N.A.R. Wilson, undated circular, referring to the forthcoming production of The Gentle People. (File 25520).

'entertainment of good quality.'⁴¹⁵ This had been done by organising groups from schools, by suggesting material for performance, by letters of encouragement, and constructive criticism.

Before the third production, The Pied Piper, opened, a circular was sent to principals of colleges informing them about the forthcoming presentation, and outlining plans for the future which included, for the older age groups, performances of plays set for examinations. But a caveat was added:

Whether this scheme comes about will depend entirely on the opinions of the Principals of the schools and colleges as to its worth in the education of the young people of our city...I feel if there is any way we can influence the children to become interested in 'live' Theatre, controlled and presented with the emphasis on a high standard in choice of subject and presentation, we should not hesitate to undertake the mighty task.⁴¹⁶

The concept of "Childrens' Theatre" was not, of course, new. At the turn of the century, Mark Twain had commented "It is my conviction that children's theatre is one of the very, very great inventions of the twentieth century and its vast educational value will presently come to be recognised."⁴¹⁷

During the early 1930s Adelaide actress and producer Brenda Kekwick had experimented with

⁴¹⁵ Priest, Speech on the opening night in Adelaide of Amahl and the Night Visitors, 19 April 1958. (File 25492).

⁴¹⁶ Joanna Priest, Children's Theatre, undated circular announcing the first performance of The Pied Piper which commenced on 28 July 1956. (File 25520).

⁴¹⁷ Quoted by Mavis Thorpe Clark in Strolling Players (Melbourne: Lansdowne Press, 1972) 126. The original reference is not given. Among the papers which have been preserved, there is no indication as to whether Joanna knew of Twain's claim or not.

one of the most interesting movements in the world of amateur theatricals [which] takes us right back to the seedling stage - the spontaneous fancies of childhood - where the "Let's Pretend" idea pervading all artistic work really germinates.⁴¹⁸

As well as presenting young actors and actresses in "plays [which] all draw their material from the magic realm of Fairyland,"⁴¹⁹ the performance on 16 June 1934 also featured the first appearance of the "Children's Orchestra" conducted by Miss Nance Cornell. From later references, it seems that this venture did not become established. The Adelaide University Theatre Guild, in a programme for Stories in Dance and Verse in December 1943, stated that it had

for some time desired to include in its activities...presentations which will help to cultivate an appreciation for the Theatre Arts in young folk...

The idea is, of course, not new; many will remember the wonderful pioneer work of Brenda Kekwick, whose aims came to a sad end all too soon.⁴²⁰

A later attempt to provide theatre for children was more successful. Joan and Betty Rayner in 1948 founded what was to be "the culmination of their life's work - The Australian Children's Theatre",⁴²¹ and Joanna would certainly have been aware of this; in October 1956 a cutting from the Advertiser announced both Joanna's programme for the same week, and that to be presented by the Australian Children's Theatre the following week at the Australia Hall. This was Stories in Dance,

⁴¹⁸ "Children's Theatre," Progress in Australia 7 June 1934; 13.

⁴¹⁹ "Children's Theatre" 1934.

⁴²⁰ Stories in Dance and Verse, Adelaide University Theatre Guild, at The Hut, 13-15 December 1943. (File 25494).

⁴²¹ Thorpe, 6.

performed by three dancers, Claudie Algeranova, her husband Algeranoff and Ronald Reay. A critic reported, "To say that two ballets, 'Cinderella' and 'Coppélia' - together with a series of divertissements - are performed by only three artists is almost unbelievable. It is, however, quite true and quite convincing."⁴²² No reference to either Kekwick's or the Rayners' work has been found among Joanna's papers.

The Pied Piper was the first production for her Children's Theatre, and the casting was notable in that Joanna took the speaking part of the Pied Piper, and a young John Bannon was Dirk, the lame boy. In her speech from the stage Joanna said, "In order to keep the Children's Theatre...a private affair between the children and us, the press has joined hands with me in agreeing not to review our performances."⁴²³ So there is no record of what may have been the acting début of a future Premier of South Australia.

From May 1956 until November 1958 Studio Theatre Productions Inc. mounted thirteen shows,⁴²⁴ five of which were ballet performances. Although Joanna contributed only one new work during those years, Joan of Arc,⁴²⁵ she had begun to explore different possibilities in theatrical production.

Six years after her successful Sydney production of Let's Make an Opera, she decided to present a trilogy on this theme, beginning with Let's Make a Ballet. This

⁴²² H. Stafford Northcote, "Ballet Goes to School," Advertiser 27 October 1956: 10. (File 15516).

⁴²³ Joanna Priest, Speech from the stage after the first performance of The Pied Piper, 28 July 1956. (File 25520).

⁴²⁴ The Gentle People, May 1956; A Season of Contemporary Ballet, June 1956; The Pied Piper, July 1956; In the Summerhouse, August 1956; Ballet, October 1956; Let's Make a Ballet, April 1957; Let's Make a Play, June 1957; Ballet, August 1957; Let's Make an Opera, October 1957; Amahl and the Night Visitors, May 1958; A Season of Intimate Ballet, July 1958; Enduring as the Camphor Tree, October 1958; and L'Enfant et les sortilèges, November 1958. (File 25520).

⁴²⁵ This ballet will be discussed further in Chapter 6.

performance began with three excerpts from Les Sylphides, the Prelude, danced by Valerie Maxwell, the Mazurka, by Cecil Bates and the Pas de Deux by Maxwell and Bates. Then came a demonstration of the preparations before and during the making of a ballet, in this case Frederick Ashton's Façade. This ballet and the excerpts were taught by Bates; the set for Façade was "After William Chappell by Ian Spurling", and the costumes "After William Chappell, executed by Valerie Maxwell." ⁴²⁶

Next in the series was Let's Make a Play which was written by actress Iris Thomas with the collaboration of Joanna and members of the cast. It was a story about four children who write and perform a play based on the "age old Harlequinade - the foundation of Drama and Mime".⁴²⁷ Each child writes a version: one to be done in mime, one in an old Roman setting, another in the medieval period and the fourth with an oriental theme. Christopher Ketley, one of the actors, recalls that this was done so the audience would see different styles of acting ⁴²⁸ as well as "giving them an idea of how the Play [was] born and produced."⁴²⁹ Ketley has also referred to the good audiences at the Studio Theatre Saturday matinées, which antedated the Adelaide Festival Centre's "Something on Saturday."⁴³⁰

In Let's Make an Opera, which opened at the Studio Theatre on 19 October 1957, four of Adelaide's well-known singers, Kathleen Steele-Scott, John Worthley, Wendy McMurtrie, and Taverner Miller, took the leading roles. In this work the

⁴²⁶ Programme; Let's Make a Ballet March 1957. (File 25516).

⁴²⁷ Joanna Priest, brochure: Mother, What can I do now? n.d. but advertising Let's Make a Play which was first performed 8 June 1957. (File 25520).

⁴²⁸ Christopher Ketley, personal interview, audiocassette, 4 July 1989.

⁴²⁹ Priest, brochure, 8 June 1957.

⁴³⁰ Ketley, interview, 1989. The good attendances are confirmed by records of takings. (Files in box STP Inc. Records.)

audience becomes the "chorus" and has to learn and perform four items. A critic for the Sydney production in 1951 commented, "It was a matter of high delight to see the more august citizens of this parish hooting like bronchitic owls, nagging like larynetic [sic] herons - just like a Parliamentary broadcast."⁴³¹ Mary de Crespigny and Rae Quick played the score on two pianos, and Joanna rehearsed and conducted the audience's parts. ⁴³² The Let's Make a Ballet/Play/Opera presentations were well attended; Joanna had succeeded again in providing education through entertainment.

Her last experiment at the Studio Theatre was a production of Colette's L'Enfant et les sortilèges, set to Ravel's music. This had been presented in other countries using puppets, but Joanna gave it "an entirely original interpretation - that of a dance spectacle."⁴³³ With a set by Toni Graham and costumes and masks by Janet Bird, it was described as a "magnificent achievement".⁴³⁴ Another critic commented on "such drolleries as an armchair, [Cecil Bates] partly on skates, dancing with a small chair on castors [Prudence Coffey]. The dancers concerned handle most skilfully this pas de deux (if such it may be called!)."⁴³⁵

Following L'Enfant, there were two further ballet performances at the Studio

⁴³¹ J.B. "Opera 'made' with joy and charm". Sydney Morning Herald 8 September 1951. (File: Operas Produced).

⁴³² R. Holmes, ed., Through the Opera Glass (Adelaide: printed by State Print, 1991) 150.
The news that the Governor and his wife would be attending a performance brought forth a headline "Bird songs for Governor". Advertiser 17 October 1957. (File 25520).

⁴³³ C.G. Kerr, "Colette, Ravel and Enchanted Child" Advertiser 6 December 1958. (File 25516).

⁴³⁴ Harold Tideman "Color [sic] and Music in Fantasy".
Advertiser 8 December 1958 (File 25516).

⁴³⁵ C.B. de Boehme, "Production Enchanting", News 9 December 1958. (File 25516).

Theatre; the first in August 1959 when former Royal Ballet dancers, Patricia Cox and Leslie White, took part in a charity appeal for the Adelaide Children's Hospital,⁴³⁶ and the second in 1960 when a group of soloists from the Borovansky Ballet gave a performance in aid of the South Australian Association for Mental Health.

During the late 1950s Joanna's conviction that professional dancing was not a desirable career for her students underwent a change. Far from not wanting them to dance, she conceived the idea of forming her own professional ballet company which would be composed not only of her students but also of any other promising dancers, and would be centred on the Studio Theatre when not touring, and also perform on television. She realised that Bates, with his extensive experience, was the right person to make this dream come true, and he was very interested in the idea.⁴³⁷

Whether she was conscious of it or not, this change of heart had brought her thinking into line with the new trend in Adelaide's dance world in the late 1950s - an increased emphasis on training students to become professional dancers. By then the opportunities to find work as a dancer in Australia had greatly increased, with the Borovansky Ballet, the National Ballet Company and various musicals requiring classically trained dancers.

There was nothing new in training students to become performers: several Adelaide teachers including Lesley Bowman, Jean Bedford, Herb Noye, Walter Desborough, Gwen Mackey, and Dorothy Slane had already done so. But in most ballet schools time for rehearsing has to be shared with work for examinations, and in

⁴³⁶ Musicians Thomas Matthews and Dorothy Oldham also appeared.

⁴³⁷ Cecil Bates, interview by Helen Pearce, 23 January 1986.

This was not the first attempt to provide professional work for ballet dancers in Adelaide. Joe Siebert had tried this in the late 1940s (see Joe Siebert File 26739), and in 1949 Walter Desborough had had plans to share profits from his shows with the dancers (see Walter Desborough File 45380).

most schools the only performing was done at the end-of-year "concert".

What was new was the formation of four student companies which differed from Joanna's in that hers had been outlets for creativity, an end in itself, while the companies of the late 1950s and early 1960s were merely a step on the road to a career, giving the students more stage experience than was normally possible in most schools of dance.

These new companies were established by four professional dancers who opened studios in Adelaide. The first to arrive was Maxwell Collis, a Victorian, who had danced with the Borovansky Ballet, Ballet Guild and the National Ballet Company before going overseas and working with Ballet Rambert and on English television. He returned to Australia in 1954 and shortly after began teaching in Adelaide with Dorothy Slane before opening his own studio in 1955 and, with his students, forming the South Australian Ballet Theatre.

The second was Cecil Bates. The advent of television, and Joanna's involvement in it, had caused her to put aside her plan for a company. Always willing to try a new challenge, she also realised that television, with its wide audience, would be the best medium to continue her crusade for the provision of uplifting entertainment for children. Bates was not interested in television, so he parted company with Joanna, opened his own studio and formed his South Australian Repertory Ballet Company. This group amalgamated with Collis' S.A. Ballet Theatre in 1960, but the augmented company did not survive after Collis closed his school and returned to Melbourne early in 1961.

That same year Bates became involved with the newly formed South Australian National Ballet Company, which was the longest lasting of the student companies.

From 1961 until the early 1970s⁴³⁸ it performed regularly, carrying out its original intention of providing stage experience for young dancers, many of whom went on to professional careers. In its later years the emphasis changed from performing to the provision of teachers for country towns. This was successful culturally, but not financially, and the company went into liquidation in 1981.⁴³⁹

The other two dancers who opened a studio in Adelaide during that period were Patricia Cox and her husband Leslie White, who had come to Australia with the Royal Ballet Tour in 1958 and decided to stay. Their Classical Ballet Academy, which began in 1959, was the base for the fourth student company, the Southern Ballet Group. This was established in 1962 and, like the other student companies, performed in Adelaide as well as going on country tours. It ceased as an independent group when its dancers became part of the Australian Dance Theatre, formed in 1965 with Leslie White and Elizabeth Dalman as Artistic Directors.

In time, the Australian Dance Theatre became South Australia's professional (modern) dance company and it is interesting, if futile, to speculate what might have happened in Adelaide if Joanna had not been distracted by television from her plan to establish a professional (classical) company in 1959.

There are no recorded minutes for Studio Theatre Productions Inc. between 2 December 1959 and 2 June 1964, when the company was wound up, and the property of the association transferred to the Adelaide Repertory Theatre Inc.⁴⁴⁰ That phase

⁴³⁸ In addition to performances specifically for schools, the S.A. National Ballet company gave at least two seasons each year until 1973. There was one performance in 1974, and apparently no more until the final one in 1977.

⁴³⁹ South Australian Ballet Company Correspondence File.

⁴⁴⁰ STP Minutes of Meeting, 7 September 1964. (File 33610).

of Joanna's creativity was over, and she now moved with enthusiasm into another medium which would give her access to a much larger audience.

Chapter 5. Southern Stars⁴⁴¹

From the beginning of her Adelaide career Joanna had preached the importance of education, beauty and excellence to an ever-widening audience: first to a classroom of students, then to members of the South Australian Ballet Club and those who attended her demonstrations and performances. Once in her own theatre, she could supervise the quality of all performances, not only her own ballet presentations, but also productions by others of drama, opera and music. The advent of television enabled her to reach a far greater population to whom she could communicate her thoughts and values.

The new medium began to operate in Adelaide in 1959, three years after it had been launched in the eastern states, where Sydney's ABN gave Australia's first telecast on 5 November 1956.⁴⁴² In October 1957 The Australian Broadcasting

⁴⁴¹ Only a fragment of material concerning Southern Stars still exists. NWS Channel 9 has destroyed its records, and the only scripts which have been found are those kept by Joanna. These, however, cover only the period from 26 October 1959 to 28 May 1961, and contain only Joanna's scripts. The other presenters wrote their own but were not required to hand them in. Sometimes a presenter had no fixed script, and "ad-libbed" around his/her subject.

In addition to the scripts, seven reel-to-reel tapes were kept and have been transferred onto cassette, and three films, which have been transferred onto videotape.

⁴⁴² Dates for commencement of television in Sydney and Melbourne:

National Station	ABN Sydney,	5 Nov. 1956
"	"	ABV Melb. 18 Nov. 1956
Commercial "	TCN Sydney	16 Sept. 1956
"	"	ATN " 2 Dec. 1956
"	"	HSV Melb. 4 Nov 1956
"	"	GTV " 19 Jan. 1957

Australian Broadcasting Control Board, Tenth Annual Report, June 1958, 21 (Government publication). All these papers relating to the ABCB are in the Australian Archives, South Australian Division. Further references to these Reports will be shown as ABCB and the number of the Report.

For details about the granting of commercial licences in Adelaide, see G. Campbell Sharman, "Television in South Australia: the allocation of the first two commercial licences," BA (Hons.) Diss., Adelaide, 1965. I am grateful to this author for directing me to the annual Reports of the Australian

Control Board, through the Postmaster General, invited applications for commercial licences in Adelaide and Brisbane, with the expectation that the Adelaide station would open in February 1960.

Applications in South Australia were made by: A.G. Healing Ltd., on behalf of Healing TV Pty. Ltd. (a company not yet formed; this application was later withdrawn); Australian Consolidated Press Ltd., whose Managing Director was Mr. D.H.(Frank) Packer, later Sir Frank Packer; Southern Television Corporation Ltd., of which the Acting Managing Director was Mr. K. R. Murdoch, also publisher of the News; and Television Broadcasters Ltd., whose Chairman of Directors was Sir Lloyd Dumas, also Chairman of Directors of the Advertiser.

The Board was looking for something uniquely Australian: a licensee who would commit himself to use Australian resources, Australians, and Australian writers for a substantial part of the station's programmes and not provide a regurgitation of American or English programmes. The standards of television overseas had been observed over the years, and not always with admiration. The Assistant General Manager of the ABC, Mr. A.H. Finlay, had visited America in 1953 and reported:

I went [there] with an open mind...[resolving] I would not allow myself to be guided by what I had read or heard about the bad influence and standard of American TV and radio. After 2 1/2 months...I came away with the impression that...I would hate to even consider the possibility of the introduction of the American System [of TV]...the amount of educational or cultural material which finds its way into either radio or TV programmes is infinitesimal.⁴⁴³

Standards for Australia were set out by the Australian Broadcasting Control Board (ABCB), which described "Typical children's programmes" as divided into

Broadcasting Control Board.

⁴⁴³ Australian Broadcasting Corporation Central Registry, D2554: ABD 25: "Overseas visit by Assistant General Manager A.H. Finlay, Aug.-Dec. 1953," Australian Archives, South Australian Division.

three categories - "Adventure, real or fictional; entertainment for its own sake; and the attempt to provide something constructive along with entertainment". The second category it described as merely "time-filling matter [which] includes inept conversations, protracted birthday calls, attempts at humorous sketches or patter (often impromptu) and 'talking down' to the children."⁴⁴⁴

The Board required programmes which would observe "ordinary good taste and commonsense, respect for the individual opinions of the public, proper regard for the special needs of children, and regard for the law and social institutions."⁴⁴⁵

There were further requirements concerning children's programmes, among them being that all scripts must be carefully written having in mind the needs of the particular age groups for which the programmes are intended... all stories must reflect respect for law and order, adult authority, good morals and clean living... Cowardice, malice, deceit, selfishness and disrespect for law must be avoided in...any character presented [as] a hero.⁴⁴⁶

No-one, at the brink of the 1960s, could foresee that in the next few years youth, with its increased freedom (to which "The Pill" contributed) would first question, and, in some cases, dare to brush aside, adult authority. For Joanna adult authority, asserted in a non-aggressive manner, gave the children guidelines, a discipline without which she considered they had no security.⁴⁴⁷

Another recommendation of the Board was that

⁴⁴⁴ ABCB Tenth Annual Report, June 1958 17.

⁴⁴⁵ ABCB, Ninth Annual Report June 1957, 39.

⁴⁴⁶ ABCB, Tenth Annual Report 1958, 56.

⁴⁴⁷ Joanna Priest, "What I Present and why I Present it." Talk, 1 June 1961. (File 25492).

there be regular sessions for children designed to impart a broader knowledge of the history and potentialities of [Australia]...to encourage the habit of reading...to encourage active participation in sport and an interest in hobbies, and...by the use of the great examples from the Bible, and from history, biography and literature, to impart a real appreciation of the spiritual values and of the qualities of courage, honour and integrity which are essential to the full development of the individual and of national greatness.⁴⁴⁸

These requirements could have been written by Joanna herself, so closely did they reflect what she aspired to do, but, as the Board pointed out, they were not new, having been in force as guidelines for radio programmes for fifteen years.⁴⁴⁹ Nor were they merely window dressing. In 1960 the Board reported that some programmes had been shown which were considered to be not in the children's best interests, and two stations had been asked to make changes in "the time, frequency or nature of the problems concerned."⁴⁵⁰

Described by the first General Manager of NWS-9, Mr. W.L.C. Davies, as the "flagship" of Southern Television Corporation's licence application, was the proposal for a children's programme which would embody all the recommendations given above. There was no doubt in Rupert Murdoch's mind who should be in charge of such a programme. He had known Joanna for many years, and was anxious to have her take the position because of the high regard he had for her in all fields of cultural endeavour with young people.⁴⁵¹ Early in 1958, before Murdoch's licence application had been lodged, she was approached by Southern Television Corporation

⁴⁴⁸ ABCB Tenth Annual Report, 1958, 56.

⁴⁴⁹ ABCB, Tenth Annual Report 1958, 17.

⁴⁵⁰ ABCB, Twelfth Annual Report, Advisory Committee on Children's Television Services, 1960, 36.

⁴⁵¹ W.L.C. Davies, personal interview, audiocassette, 16 May 1989.

to become the Director of children's programmes⁴⁵² - should the station be granted a licence - and was asked to establish a policy and a plan for two years' programmes.⁴⁵³

Joanna was in a unique position, having a pool of potential performers in her students, many of whom had been trained at her school not only in dancing but also in music, singing, acting, speaking and handcrafts. Nor was this all. All her staff were people with considerable experience in a variety of arts, and who were able to prepare and present the majority of segments which made up the show.

She had in addition a wide circle of friends and acquaintances with varied talents on whom she could call for assistance. Among these were the actress Iris Hart, who was at various times narrator for Turn Back the Pages, elocution teacher and producer of some segments; the poet and author Colin Thiele; Christopher Ketley, a writer and actor; and several musicians, including David Cubbin, a flautist with the Adelaide Wind Quintet and South Australian Symphony Orchestra and also Director of the Adelaide Philharmonic Choir, and Barbara Howard, who had trained and worked in England as singer, teacher and stage director before coming to Adelaide where she had joined the staff of the Elder Conservatorium as a teacher and opera producer.

Hearings for the granting of licences were held in Adelaide in May 1958. Rupert Murdoch's trump card was his provisional retainment of Joanna as Director of Children's Programmes, but her ingenuity and imagination were unknown to some outside South Australia. Dr. Darling, Headmaster of Geelong Grammar School and a

⁴⁵² In spite of this title, the only children's programme which she did eventually direct was Southern Stars.

⁴⁵³ Joanna Priest, Principal's Report, 1958 (File 25492).

member of the Australian Broadcasting Control Board, asked what experience Miss Priest had of television, adding, "people successful in other fields of entertainment may not necessarily succeed in [the new medium]."⁴⁵⁴ Murdoch gave a brief outline of her career - which was reported in the News the next afternoon, with a large headline "TOP BALLET TEACHER"⁴⁵⁵ - and answered other questions put to him by Dr. Darling in a manner which showed that he and Joanna were of one mind as to the quality of show they had planned. Yes, he would be "prepared to use a licence as an educational force in the community rather than for mere entertainment", and yes, he did regard television as an instrument of potential power in the community, "but I realise that carries responsibilities, too". When Mr. Larkins Q.C. asked him, "You would not hesitate to let standards down if there was danger of being crippled financially? Murdoch replied, "I would hesitate. I would resist any reduction in standards as long as conceivably possible".⁴⁵⁶ One of the most remarkable decisions of this man (whom Joanna called "the young master")⁴⁵⁷ was that there would be no advertising during the hour-long programme because it would break the continuity.⁴⁵⁸ Paying him tribute in 1961, she commented, "It [the programme] does not bring the station any material return. But it does prove that there are some hard-headed businessmen who are willing to sacrifice material gain for the welfare of the

⁴⁵⁴ "Third day of TV hearing," Advertiser 9 May 1958: 7.

⁴⁵⁵ "Top Ballet Teacher," News 9 May 1958 (Start of TV File).

⁴⁵⁶ Advertiser 9 May 1958. Mr. Larkins Q.C. and Mr. C.J. Leggoe appeared for Australian Consolidated Press Ltd.

⁴⁵⁷ Priest, "What I Present", 1961.

⁴⁵⁸ Davies, interview, 1989.

future generation."⁴⁵⁹

In its Tenth Annual Report the Australian Broadcasting Control Board recommended to the Government that fresh applications be invited for a single commercial television licence in both Brisbane and Adelaide. The Government did not accept this recommendation, determined that two commercial licences should be granted for both cities, and, on the Board's recommendation, issued these to Southern Television Corporation Ltd. (Director K.R. Murdoch), and Television Broadcasters Ltd. (Director Sir Lloyd Dumas) in Adelaide.

A race began with NWS-9 and ADS-7 working frantically to be the first to go to air, and in the meantime Joanna and Mr. Davies visited television stations in Sydney and Melbourne to observe children's programmes there. What they saw consisted of "entertainment" requiring no mental effort from the children, and no stimulation to be creative.⁴⁶⁰ There was no model from which they could develop their prospective programme which aimed to inculcate a love of beauty and aspiration to high ideals - a totally new standard for commercial television in Australia. But Joanna relished the coming struggle:

I'm having a great deal of fun! My proposed programme is causing great consternation among the commercial natives...'Too cultural' (Lord save us!)...'No entertainment value' (we'll see)...My object, in sticking to my guns, is to make it virtually impossible for the children in South Australia, at least, to be fed an undiluted diet of muck.⁴⁶¹

In preparation for the proposed show, meetings were held with Rupert

⁴⁵⁹ Priest, "What I Present", 1961.

⁴⁶⁰ Davies, interview, 1989.

⁴⁶¹ Joanna Priest, Letter to Mr. Charles Moses, Australian Broadcasting Commission, 8 October 1959. In this letter Miss Priest asked Mr. Moses to comment on her planned programme. He commented favourably. Charles Moses, letter to Joanna Priest, 16 October 1959. (File 25508).

Murdoch and those whom he had appointed to senior positions. These included Davies, who came to television after extensive experience in radio and was General Manager of the new station, and Rex Heading, who was appointed Programme Manager. One matter which needed early settlement was where the new Channel would be situated. Channel 9 owned the building immediately to the east of the Studio Theatre, which it was anxious to buy, and the solution was favourable to both parties: Channel 9 bought the Studio Theatre, thus freeing Joanna from worries about its structural problems including salt-damp, and enabling her to continue using it as a studio.⁴⁶²

None of the staff at Channel 9 were experienced in the new medium, and Davies, Heading and fellow staff member Tom McCarthy went to Melbourne to study it. While there, Mr. Davies was able to lure Lorie Dankel, who had worked in television in both London and Melbourne, to join NWS-9.⁴⁶³ Among the discoveries made by the newcomers was that, in those days of black and white television, the designers had to paint in colours which would appear on the screen as different shades of grey. And Joanna, so confident in a theatre, found that she had to turn to Dankel for advice, and, if it was a shock at first to defer to a younger but more experienced colleague, she accepted the reversed student-teacher role gracefully.⁴⁶⁴

In spite of a fire which caused much damage,⁴⁶⁵ Channel 9 won the race

⁴⁶² Davies, interview, 1989.

⁴⁶³ Lorie Dankel, personal interview, 28 February 1991.

⁴⁶⁴ Dankel, interview, 1991.

⁴⁶⁵ Dankel, interview, 1991.

against Channel 7, giving its first telecast on 16 October 1959, and, in spite of "hitches and bugs and minor problems" (which included two out of three cameras out of action at one stage and one transmitter being off the air for a time) it was described as "a tremendous success by a team of young enthusiasts".⁴⁶⁶

The original plan was for Southern Stars to be a half-hour show on Monday, Wednesday and Friday evenings, but it was realised that the amount of work required to produce three shows each week would be enormous, and virtually impossible for those who were full-time teachers in Joanna's school and had to prepare and rehearse their television segments as well as carrying out their teaching commitments. So the plan was changed and the programme became an hour long, going to air once a week on Sunday afternoons at 4.30, beginning on 22 November 1959.

The scripts for the proposed first two shows, which under the original plan would have been telecast on 26 and 28 October, indicate that Joanna had planned to form a "club" which the audience was invited to join as well as name, and to suggest a motto and an emblem for it.⁴⁶⁷ However, after the first programme there was no further mention of the "club", although in the third programme (6 December) Joanna drew the viewers' attention to the Southern Cross on the screen, which had been chosen as "Our Sign", and the words, "Look Wide", which was to be the motto.⁴⁶⁸

⁴⁶⁶ W.L.C. Davies, quoted in article "S.A. Hails Start of TV," News 7 September 1959 (Start of TV File).

⁴⁶⁷ Southern Stars Scripts: 26 and 28 October 1959 (Southern Stars Scripts File 25509. Further references to these will be given as "Scripts").

⁴⁶⁸ Joanna gave credit for the motto to Baden-Powell, who shared her belief that one should become interested in all aspects of life, but there is no record of who chose the Southern Cross as the "sign" (Script, 6 December 1959. Script File 25509).

The words "Look Wide" were typed on the front page of the scripts up to and including that for 23 February 1960.

There was some difficulty in deciding on a name for this show. Early in October 1959 it was referred to as Joanne Priest and the Channel Niners,⁴⁶⁹ four weeks later it was being called Joanne Priest's Children's Programme,⁴⁷⁰ and just after the first telecast it had been named Southern Stars⁴⁷¹ although no-one now is certain who suggested that. The format of the programme, which was worked out by Joanna and her colleagues, remained basically the same throughout the four and a half years of Southern Stars.⁴⁷² Two types of programme alternated, each composed of eight to ten segments, both beginning with a two- to three-minute talk by Joanna on a variety of subjects. All these talks were directed specifically to the children in her audiences, and were a continuation of her past practice of interrupting ballet classes for little homilies which could be about some aspect of theatre, but also included talks about moral values.⁴⁷³ Rosetta Cook, a former student, recalled that "she would always have a lot of things to chat about."⁴⁷⁴

Her themes varied greatly: after Southern Stars' first Christmas she extolled the importance of giving rather than receiving, and sharing the inevitable chores: "I hope you gave lots of happiness, and helped with the washing up!"⁴⁷⁵ Another day she deplored the tendency of the "modern young" to revolt against the age old

⁴⁶⁹ Rex Heading, memo, 7 October 1959 (Southern Stars Correspondence File 25514).

⁴⁷⁰ Lorie Dankel, memo, 10 November 1959 (File 25514).

⁴⁷¹ Lorie Dankel, memo, 24 November 1959 (File 25514).

⁴⁷² From the start of 1963 the programme was cut to half an hour, thus halving the number of segments.

⁴⁷³ Lynette Tuck-Howard and Jill Eve, personal (joint) interview, May 1988.

⁴⁷⁴ Rosetta Cook, quoted in "Veteran teacher keeps ballet star on her toes", Advertiser 20 September 1990: 5 (Rosetta Cook File 50260).

⁴⁷⁵ Script, 27 December 1959 (File 25509).

**Introduction
with
JOANNE PRIEST**



*Fig. 31. First page of the Southern Stars book.
Design by the staff of NWS-9.*

tradition of good manners, reminding her listeners that "Good manners in the old tradition don't hurt anyone and certainly the world is easier to live in."⁴⁷⁶ She also deplored the speed at which some people lived, causing them to miss out on "many of the beautiful things in life - calm, serene, quiet things."⁴⁷⁷ On the day the discussion panel was to consider the claim that "The best things in life are free,"⁴⁷⁸ Joanna took up the theme, naming courage, loyalty, kindness and beauty as the best things in life. She emphasised that it was the things of the spirit which last indefinitely, and that "works of art are works of the spirit...That's why Southern Stars encourages you to be artists...so that you may have a lasting happiness and fulfillment [sic]."⁴⁷⁹ She took every advantage of the opportunity television gave her to influence people by her words.

Although Joanna's own numerous students were the young people who appeared most frequently on television, she took every opportunity to involve others outside her school. Early in October 1959 the News announced that Joanna Priest was beginning to recruit children from nine years onwards who could sing, or play musical instruments.⁴⁸⁰ Children were asked to send in poems or questions for the discussion panel, and, if they would like "to act, or sing, dance or debate and appear in our Southern Stars," she asked them to write to her, saying "we'll have you in

⁴⁷⁶ Script, 17 April 1960 (File 25509).

⁴⁷⁷ Script, 24 July 1960 (File 25510).

⁴⁷⁸ Script, 31 July 1960 (File 25510).

⁴⁷⁹ Script, 28 February 1960 (File 25509).

⁴⁸⁰ Ted Smith, "Search opens for stars of tomorrow," News 12 October 1959 (Southern Stars File 25522).

our galaxy where you will shine most brightly".⁴⁸¹ Unfortunately, this rather grand invitation, given at the end of the first programme, was somewhat spoiled when Joanna continued: "Write to me, Joanne Priest, Channel Seven".⁴⁸² Happily, in spite of this blunder, she got many responses.⁴⁸³

Throughout the life of Southern Stars the original format was maintained, with two types of programme alternating weekly. The first type comprised:

"Boys' Talk" - a science demonstration.⁴⁸⁴

"The Next Step Forward" - an explanation and demonstration of some aspect of classical ballet.

"Track and Field" - dealing with athletics.

"Our Happy Heritage" - folk song and dance from various nations.

"Tell us a story" - a story read by one of the children. For the first programme it was "Mouse House", and while one of the children read it, artist Helen George, seated at an easel with a camera peering over her shoulder, drew different pictures suggested to her by the story as it progressed.

⁴⁸¹ Southern Stars tape recording, 29 November 1959.

⁴⁸² Throughout this tape, snippets of conversation by the production staff are heard. Joanna's blunder was followed by various exclamations, with one voice (Rob's) groaning "Oh, Mum!"

⁴⁸³ Southern Stars tape recording, 22 November 1959. This first programme contained parts of the proposed first and second programmes, but no written script for it has been found. It was one of the few tapes of Southern Stars which were kept.

On the first programme Joanna had some young guest musicians; on 27 December 1959, 3 January 1960 and 17 January 1960 she acknowledged the poems she had received, and on 31 January 1960 she had her first young guest poets read their works (File 25509).

⁴⁸⁴ Joanna apparently did not consider girls would be interested in science, which may have been a reflection of her own inclinations. However, the presenter, John Stearn, referred to his audience as "Girls and Boys".

"Discussion Panel" - author Colin Thiele selected the members of the panel, and chaired the discussions on questions sent in by viewers.

"Let's Make Music" - one of many music programmes, in this case, performances by young guest musicians.

"Botanic Gardens" - talk by Noel Lothian, Director of the Adelaide Botanic Gardens.

"Things other boys do" - On this occasion, a demonstration of some of the activities done by Wolf Cubs.⁴⁸⁵

The second type of programme covered the following topics:

"Puppet Theatre" - puppets made by Helen George, and worked by the children.

"Sports."

"Turn Back the Pages" - a dramatised story of some notable person, such as Louis Braille, Florence Nightingale, or Mozart.

"The Next Step Forward". At first this segment was concerned with classical ballet each week. Later other techniques, such as modern dance, were introduced on alternate weeks.

"What to Draw". Various arts and crafts were shown, and the audience taught how to do them.

"Our Happy Heritage".

"Jamie and Jo" - light humour.

"Anne in Search of a Tune".

"Information - A. Muggins" - light humour

⁴⁸⁵ Southern Stars tape recording, 22 November 1959.

"What other girls do" - Girl Guides.

Both types of programme ended with a "Close Down" when the children whom the staff judged to have performed particularly well in any segment were given a book. From April 1960, all children who appeared were given a Commonwealth Bank Book and 10/- (\$1).⁴⁸⁶

During the four and a half years of Southern Stars presenters and the names of segments changed from time to time, but the programmes continued to include regularly dance, music, drama and art, with the rest of the time given to "topics of interest in science, natural history or indeed anything else on earth," as Joanna stated in a talk to the Sydney Film Council in 1963.⁴⁸⁷

On days such as Christmas, Easter and Anzac Day the appropriate theme was carried throughout the show, and occasionally a large part of the programme was taken by a ballet of some length. These were original works choreographed by members of Joanna's staff, and on two occasions were revivals of Joanna's own ballets, The Nymph and the Nobleman and Joanna of Arc.⁴⁸⁸

Television gave Joanna an opportunity to expound her philosophies not only to her Sunday afternoon audiences, but also to those responsible for children's programmes on radio and television. She told the Sydney Film Council:

⁴⁸⁶ The bank books and money were first given out on 24 April, 1960 (Script, 24 April 1960. (File 25509).

Older participants, such as students at tertiary level, were given £2 (\$4) for a performance. Joanna Priest, untitled talk to Sydney Film Council, 3 May 1963 (File 25492).

⁴⁸⁷ Priest, Talk to Sydney Film Council, 1963 (File 25492).

⁴⁸⁸ The Nymph and the Nobleman was first performed on 25 November 1947 at the Tivoli Theatre, and shown on Southern Stars on 30 July 1961. Joanna of Arc was first produced on 27 October 1956 as Joan of Arc at the Studio Theatre; it was performed on Southern Stars as a masque on 19 November 1961.

The important thing surely is to determine what sort of programmes we can provide (1) to encourage young people to use their intelligence instead of dissipating it, and (2) to prepare them for the responsibility of being adequate citizens of the future. This we must do even in the leisure hour viewing, for I suggest these hours are every bit as important in the moulding of the young mind, as those given to purely scholastic work.⁴⁸⁹

Television also enabled her to broadcast her new enthusiasm: an attempt to combine the cultures belonging to the "Original Australians"⁴⁹⁰ with those brought to Australia by the newcomers from many lands. "Australia", Joanna said in a lecture to members of the Television Society in Melbourne,

cannot yet boast of any tradition in the arts...Yet, on its shores we have two separate and very old Arts. The one of our own aborigines and the other...brought to this country...by our own forebears and revitalised now again by the thousands of people who are coming here to make their home with us...Somewhere out of these two old traditions will grow something which will eventually emerge as a truly Australian folklore. What we do now may have some influence in bringing it about, which is an exciting thought.⁴⁹¹

Joanna's interest in the folk dances of Europe was of long standing, both because of their intrinsic beauty and also because they were part of the syllabus of the Royal Academy of Dancing.⁴⁹² She had included performances of these in

⁴⁸⁹ Priest, talk, 1963.

⁴⁹⁰ A.A. Abbie, The Original Australians (London: Frederick Muller, 1969).

⁴⁹¹ Priest, "What I Present," 1961.

⁴⁹² Joanna's script for the proposed first programme on 26 October included the words: "These older countries are abounding in the most lovely folk dance and music, and I feel we are very lucky to be able to see and appreciate some of their beauty," although she did not actually say this on the first programme. Priest, 26 October 1959 (File 25509).



Fig. 32 Joanna's students folk-dancing at a party at
"St. Andrews" December 1949.

programmes at the Blue Door and The Hut,⁴⁹³ and in 1949 presented them at an outdoor fête held at the Cornell's home "St. Andrews". For the first Adelaide Festival of Arts in 1960 she was co-producer with Keith Thomson of a Folk Festival of Song and Dance and during the second Festival she produced International Night which was a similar performance, both taking place in Elder Park.⁴⁹⁴ As Asian music and dance became a feature of Australia's multi-culturalism, Joanna embraced their folklore with similar enthusiasm and included it in "Our Happy Heritage".

She held the traditions of the Australian Aboriginals in equal esteem and, acknowledging their precedence in Australia's cultural history, she devoted the first presentation of "Our Happy Heritage" to them. It began with a song sung by Aboriginal girls, then a legend told by the Aboriginal Jeff Barnes was followed by the story performed in her ballet Aboriginal Legend. As in the original presentation of this ballet in 1953,⁴⁹⁵ the dancers were not Aboriginal but her own students, with dark make-up and dressed in all-over brown tights.⁴⁹⁶ No records have been found

⁴⁹³ These were, respectively, on 1-4 September 1947 at The Blue Door, and 8 and 10 September 1947 at The Hut. Both programmes were entitled "Dancing through Court and Country", the Court Dances being the Minuet, Gaillarde, Gavotte, Coronto and Pavane, and the Country ones from The Tyrol, England, Italy, Hungary and Russia.

The dances were repeated the following year at Elder Hall on 3 July 1948 and at The Blue Door 5-9 July at The Blue Door (File 25494).

⁴⁹⁴ For this programme on 21 March 1962, Joanna composed an "Australian Folk Dance" which "embraces steps and movements from many countries whose people are now sharing with us Australia's happy heritage". Henry Krips composed the music (Programme: International Night File 25494).

⁴⁹⁵ The first performance of Nerida and Berwain was at The Hut on 29 September, with music by Arthur Bliss. When it was performed for the Commonwealth Film Unit's film about Joanna's school, it was re-named Aboriginal Legend and new music was written by Henry Krips. Children's Theatre: A Film made by the Commonwealth Film Unit, Adelaide, 1959 and transferred to videotape.

⁴⁹⁶ No records have been found to show whether Joanna ever planned to have Aboriginal dancers perform on the programme. There is no mention of this in the existing scripts nor in the surviving memos and correspondence between 1959-63.

to show whether Joanna ever planned to have Aboriginal dancers perform "live" on the programme. Realising how little was known of the Aboriginal culture by most white Australians, she hoped to improve the situation by giving more than a cursory glance to their music and traditions, as she explained to the anthropologist Professor A.P. Elkin, an authority on Aboriginal music:

I am most anxious to encourage an interest in - and in time a knowledge of aboriginal music and folk lore here...I have just had the inspiration of listening to your Arnhem Land recordings and am most anxious to acquire them. Could you tell me how I can do this?⁴⁹⁷

Professor Elkin expressed pleasure that she would " have the opportunity of interesting the children in [her] State in Aboriginal music and folk lore", and advised where she could obtain the recordings.⁴⁹⁸

Among Joanna's other ideas for helping her audiences become more familiar with Aboriginal culture was to have Helen George make a marionette called Jimija,⁴⁹⁹ an Aboriginal boy who had supposedly been in the Adelaide Children's Hospital, and was recuperating. Against a backdrop of gumtrees, clouds and a camp fire he talked to a white child, telling her about life in the outback and the Aborigines' dreamtime.⁵⁰⁰ And, in a programme tracing the history of theatre presented by Dr. Alan Brissenden, dance historian and critic, films taken of Aborigines by the

⁴⁹⁷ Joanna Priest, letter to Professor Elkin, 25 September 1959 (File 25508).

⁴⁹⁸ A.P. Elkin, letter to Joanna Priest, 27 October 1959 (File 25508).

⁴⁹⁹ He was just one of several marionettes which Helen George made for various Southern Stars segments. Helen George, personal interview 3 November 1989.

⁵⁰⁰ George, personal interview.

anthropologist C.P. Mountford were used to show authentic Aboriginal dance.⁵⁰¹

Dance and song may be performed equally successfully on stage or on television, but without television Joanna's next experiment, an attempt to fuse European and Aboriginal visual art, could not have been seen to its best advantage. This was an attempt to fuse European and Aboriginal visual art. On the first programme for 1961 she introduced

what I think is an exciting gimmick... Now my theory is that something truly Australian may come - not solely from the old Australian art - and not solely from the old European art, but perhaps from a merging of the two.

So I am going to bring both these old arts before you and let you decide what you think of the theory.⁵⁰²

Each segment of the programme was introduced on a page of a book, each page showing the name of the segment and its presenter, and it was on these pages that Joanna planned to try her new idea.

On the programme one week later she explained that idea further: "Today I'd like you to give some attention to our sets... The designs are influenced by what is known as the most beautiful book in the world - The Book of Kells." ⁵⁰³ On 19 February 1961 she told the audience:

The two old traditional arts in Australia - the old Aboriginal art and the old European art - are brought together for you in our book... The designs you see on the page are old Aboriginal - and the capital letters at the beginning of the printing - are old European. I feel they mix most harmoniously, don't you?⁵⁰⁴

⁵⁰¹ Alan Brissenden, personal interview, January 1992.

⁵⁰² Script, 5 February 1961 (File 25512).

⁵⁰³ Script, 12 February 1961 (File 25512).

⁵⁰⁴ Script, 19 February 1961 (File 25512). If there was any disagreement it has not been preserved!

A few weeks later she responded to a letter she had received from one viewer, repeating her explanation for the combination of lettering in the segment titles:

we have three old traditions on each page of our book. The first is the designs on either side of the printing - they are old Australian. The Capital letters are old Celtic and the smaller letters old 11th century European.
I purposely mixed everything up and I did hope it was an agreeable mess.⁵⁰⁵

Joanna's attempt to force a combination of cultures, and to use white children to perform Aboriginal dances may now seem naïve and even patronising toward the Aboriginals whose arts, since then, have become much more widely known and appreciated. Nevertheless it was a sincere move, with the aim of drawing attention to a folk lore which at that time received relatively little attention in Australia, in comparison with the cultures of Europe. Just as Joanna had, in the past, worked to create an informed ballet audience, so she now hoped to educate her wider audience into an awareness of Aboriginal culture.

During all the activity demanded by the television production Joanna did not fail to keep an eye on her school, and in 1960 made the announcement that from then on, she would not be entering students for the Royal Academy of Dancing's Grade Examinations. The reason she gave was that "much of the examination syllabus is, to my mind, not necessary to fit the student for the important major examination, which comes after the last Grade V exam."⁵⁰⁶ She substituted internal examinations, claiming that it would relieve parents "of most of the expense [involved in examinations], the children the learning of unnecessary steps" and that [she] could

⁵⁰⁵ Script, 9 April 1961 (File 25512).

⁵⁰⁶ Joanna Priest, Principal's Half Yearly Report, 6 July 1960. (File 25492).



Fig. 33. The cover of the Southern Stars book.
This shows Joanna's mixing of Aboriginal design with European lettering.

"incorporate in our own syllabus more free work, such as dances".⁵⁰⁷

As 1960 progressed, Southern Stars received warm praise from several writers: "one of the finest TV programmes for children anywhere in the world," wrote John Miles.⁵⁰⁸ Another author, for TV Times, considered:

It has set a standard of viewing for children unequalled in Australia, and reflects great credit on its founder and producer...Through [it] thousands of young people, who might otherwise not have had the opportunity, have had an introduction to the fine arts with some science and sport thrown in.⁵⁰⁹

It benefited not only the viewers, but also the performers: "In its first year [it] has given dozens of talented young people the opportunity to prove again and again that 'teenage' is not necessarily synonymous with 'bad'".⁵¹⁰

There were also criticisms, and in March 1960 Joanna told her young audience:

It has been said that Southern Stars is inclined to be too grown [up], too advanced for you children...I have never found any one of you who needs, or in fact likes being talked down to...If you think I am wrong, you must write and disillusion me.⁵¹¹

Her confidence in young people was never shaken. In her talk to members of the Television Society in Melbourne she argued, "we do not give the child enough incentive or opportunity to develop his individuality...We are apt to tolerate far too

⁵⁰⁷ Priest, Report 1960.

⁵⁰⁸ John Miles, "These stars, too, have a lustre" News 24 November 1960 (File 25522).

⁵⁰⁹ TV Times 30 November 1960: 19.

⁵¹⁰ TV Times 30 November 1960: 19.

⁵¹¹ Script, 27 March 1960 (File 25509).

readily, what is called the average child."⁵¹² Her long term plan was, in fact, for the television programme to be produced almost exclusively by the children themselves,⁵¹³ but this project did not eventuate.

At the end of the first year "Focus", a section of the South Australian Truth, awarded Joanna a "TV Oscar" for "the woman who has given most for the year...I would like to see [Southern Stars] more than once a week and also as a national show."⁵¹⁴ More importantly, she received high praise from the Australian Council for Children's Films and Television. In a letter to Channel 9's general manager, the president said:

At the council's general meeting...excellent reports were received of the children's programme presented by your station...May we congratulate you on the high standard of this entertainment...We do hope it is being recorded for use in other Australian States.⁵¹⁵

Naturally, Rupert Murdoch was delighted, and sent a telegram of congratulations.

When Southern Stars celebrated its second birthday, its high standard had been maintained. One writer considered it was

"like an oasis in an intellectually barren desert of children's TV...Thanks again, Miss Priest for the work you are doing to give our children something substantial in their diet."⁵¹⁶

⁵¹² Priest, "What I Present", 1961.

⁵¹³ Edward Smith, "Joanne Priest - TV Crusader," News 21 November 1961: 25 (File 25522).

⁵¹⁴ Focus, "TV Oscars [and Owls]: Focus makes awards for 1960," South Australian Truth 24 December 1960 (File 25522).

⁵¹⁵ Lady Paton, President of the Australian Council for Children's Films and Television, letter to W.L.C. Davies, printed in part in TV Week 6-12 July 1960 (File 25522).

⁵¹⁶ "The Viewer," TV Times 22 November 1961, 17.

But a decreasing number of children was enjoying the "oasis". In 1960 the rating had been 14, in 1961 it was 8, and over the following three years it continued to have the lowest rating of any children's television programme in Adelaide. (See table next page.)

At the end of 1962 Joanna went overseas on a fact-finding tour to see what was being done on children's television in other countries. From each place she visited she sent home a tape-recording of her activities. Some of these tapes were made for her television audience, and were played during the telecasts, while others were sent to her staff and husband, Rob. She told of the excitement she saw in Perth as people arrived for the Commonwealth Games, spoke from a school in Singapore,⁵¹⁷ and gave a detailed account of her visit to Kalekshetra, the College of Fine Arts in Madras.⁵¹⁸ The television studios in Rome impressed her greatly, especially the space allowed for wardrobe and set building, and she also remarked on the way TV was used there to teach children who were unable to get to a school, for various reasons.⁵¹⁹

Her main purpose was to visit the BBC, where she hoped to learn more about children's television programmes, but there she was bitterly disappointed. Those shows she watched she considered "bloodless", and she was surprised that very few children took part in them.⁵²⁰

⁵¹⁷ Priest, Tape collection - TV Tour 1962, side A.

⁵¹⁸ TV Tour, sides B and C.

⁵¹⁹ TV Tour, sides D and F.

⁵²⁰ TV Tour, side H.

Fig 34 CHILDREN'S PROGRAMMES
1959 - 1964 RATINGS

MARKET DEMOGRAPHIC	ADELAIDE HOMES	YEARS					
		1959	1960	1961	1962	1963	1964
PROGRAMMES							
Southern Stars		16	14	8	6	8	6
Woody Woodroffe Show		24	22	-	-	-	-
Channel Niners		25	17	15	17	17	19
ABC Children's TV Club		-	2	3	-	-	-
Seventeeners		-	-	-	19	17	7
The Happy Show		-	-	-	10	8	7
Woodies' Teentime		-	16	18	23	24	-

Notes:

- 1959 > Data only available for December
- 1960 > Data only available for March, August, November & December
- 1961 > Woody Woodroffe Show was included as part of the Channel Niners
- 1964 > The Homes Rating of 7 was for a Special for Seventeeners

Fig. 34. Children's Programmes 1959-1964 Ratings.

She had taken with her two films - one the Commonwealth Film documentary about her school, and the other a one hour programme of Southern Stars. She showed these to Owen Reed, Head of Children's Programmes, Television, and Ursula Eason, Assistant Head of Children's Programmes, Television, who were surprised and delighted by both. On her next tape recording Joanna reported that they said they could never do anything similar because of the red tape, because no-one in England had a school like hers, and because there was no-one capable of doing such work.⁵²¹ Joanna's response was that she had come to England hoping to perhaps make a change in format, get more material to use or some new inspiration. It appeared that she could gain nothing. Ursula Eason said, "You've got this one on your own...there isn't anybody that can...do anything to help you."⁵²² Joanna said later: "My trip abroad was disastrous - no one is trying to do the same sort of thing as I am. The BBC wondered if I could stay and establish a school such as mine in order to provide programs...No one has any conception how long these things take".⁵²³

On her return to Australia in January 1963, Joanna announced that Southern Stars would be cut to half an hour - "the general opinion of people she met is that half hour programmes are unquestionably the best. In fact most live children's programmes

⁵²¹ T.V. Tour, side H.

Trevor White, Archivist of the BBC, wrote: "The comments concerning lack of schools to train children for both Television and stage work is puzzling. The two most famous schools which readily spring to mind are the 'Italia Conti Stage School' and the 'Barbara Speake Stage School' both of which have been established for many years." Trevor White, letter to the author 28 January 1992.

Had Joanna misconstrued their reply? Was this another example of her imagination distorting reality? It cannot be explained by loss of memory as Joanna made these tapes within a day or so of her visit to the BBC.

⁵²² TV Tour, side H.

⁵²³ Quoted in Betty Rankin, Australian Council for Children's Films and Television - a History 1957-1989 (Melbourne: The Council, 1990) 77.

run between fifteen and twenty-five minutes."⁵²⁴ The alteration was regretted by the writer of "Looking in with the Viewer", a regular feature in the TV Times. She had enthusiastically supported Joanna's work and expressed the hope that, following the success of her full-length ballets on a children's programme, she might be persuaded to stage something similar for adult programmes.⁵²⁵ But that was not to be. "The Viewer" wrote:

My children enjoyed it when it was an hour show, now they seldom watch it. Too much has been lost in streamlining it to half an hour. Most of its character was in the number of young people who took part in it...Make the show an hour Miss Priest. Let it ramble a bit and bring back some more little people - and warmth - into it.⁵²⁶

But the show continued to be half an hour long, and, while this saved time for all involved, it was probably to Joanna's regret as she later claimed that she had not "mastered the change over from an informal program to a formal program, and one of half the time".⁵²⁷

In 1961 Southern Stars was the first live television show made in another state to be screened in Melbourne, where it was shown on GTV-9 on Saturday mornings at 10 a.m. Although this was "a feather in our caps" as Lorie Dankel told Iris Hart,⁵²⁸ it was unwise to screen it at a time when many children would be playing sport, or going to music or ballet classes. Not surprisingly, it was a failure, being shown only

⁵²⁴ TV Times 30 January 1963.

⁵²⁵ "Looking in with The Viewer", TV Times 22 November 1961.

⁵²⁶ "Looking in with the Viewer," TV Times 16 October 1963.

⁵²⁷ Rankin, 77.

⁵²⁸ Lorie Dankel, memo to Iris Hart, 26 January 1961 (File 25514).

four times between 1-22 April,⁵²⁹ and its rating being less than one.⁵³⁰

Two years later it was the first Australian commercial TV series purchased for the national television network. It was shown on Channel 2 in Sydney, Channel 3 in Canberra and Channel 5 in Newcastle.⁵³¹ But, in spite of the better time of 5.30 p.m., it also failed: it was shown on 15 and 22 September only, and averaged a home rating of 2.⁵³²

These findings tended to support the observations of Bill Davies and Lorie Dankel that the greater part of the audience for Southern Stars was composed of the performers' friends and relatives.⁵³³ One other factor could have played an important part in the show's failure on ABC-TV interstate: the ABC was interested in scripted segments only, "which were the most boring bits."⁵³⁴ Much of the show had been "ad-libbed" so the more spontaneous segments - which had the most life - were not included.⁵³⁵

In May 1964 both Channel 7 and 9 cut their transmission hours, beginning their programmes each weekday at 2.30. Bill Davies reported that this had been caused by the Commonwealth Government's demand for an increased percentage of

⁵²⁹ Christopher Bowen, Manager: Community Relations, General Television Corporation, Victoria, letter to the author 4 December 1990.

⁵³⁰ David de Horne, letter to the author, 17 October 1991.

⁵³¹ Peter Jackson, Program Co-ordinator, Children's Television, Australian Broadcasting Corporation, letter to the author, February 1991.

⁵³² de Horne.

⁵³³ Davies, interview 1989, and Dankel, interview 1991.

⁵³⁴ Lesley Hammond, interview, 1989.

⁵³⁵ Rankin 77, and Hammond, interview, 1989.

local production.⁵³⁶ But Southern Stars was by then nearing its end. As one writer later reported, "after five and a half years the 49-year-old Joanne Priest was exhausted. Her 'best days of creation were over' and so was the show."⁵³⁷ The rest of her staff were equally exhausted, and received the news of the programme's ending with relief.

On 28 June 1964 Davies announced that this would be the last programme in the current format. He and Miss Priest had decided to produce each year four one-hour shows instead of the short, weekly ones.⁵³⁸ But these did not eventuate. At the end of 1964 a Christmas play called A Time to Keep was presented, and Southern Stars came to an end.

The ABCB Advisory Committee, which had regarded Rupert Murdoch as "'a knight in shining armour'" for his contribution to children's television with Southern Stars,⁵³⁹ continued to request good quality in children's programmes, but with no success. Rankin reported:

Children's programs declined [in quality], and when channel personnel failed to respond to their suggestion, the members of the Advisory Committee turned their attention towards educating parents, in the hope that better informed parents would exercise more control, and limit the viewing of their children.⁵⁴⁰

A study by members of the N.S.W. Association of University Women

⁵³⁶ TV Radio Guide 10 May 1964.

⁵³⁷ Rankin 77. Joanna (b. September 1910) was actually 53, not 49, when Davies made the announcement and Southern Stars had run for four and a half, not five and a half years.

⁵³⁸ Southern Stars tape recording, 28 June 1964.

⁵³⁹ Rankin, 77.

⁵⁴⁰ Rankin 77.

Graduates found an

'immense ignorance' of the existence of any program standards...and it appeared from their monitoring...that no attempt was being made by the television channels to strike a balance between sheer entertainment and 'enrichment' as specified by the ABCB.⁵⁴¹

Joanna had kept to the rules set out by the Board, but, singlehandedly, had been unable to abolish the "diet of muck" from which she had sought to free the young people of the television era.

⁵⁴¹ Rankin 77.

Chapter 6. Choreographer and Producer

The crusade carried on by Joanna throughout her career had two principal aims: the maintenance of high moral standards and the creation of beauty. The weapons she used in the struggle for high standards were words, and for the creation of beauty she chose ballet, that composite art which requires not only the use of movement, in her case, aesthetically pleasing movement, but also music and design.

And "creation" was the important word: beautiful as the classics are, she had no interest in reviving them, and included excerpts from them in only one, early, performance when her senior students danced the Mazurka and Waltz from Les Sylphides, and four variations from Aurora's Wedding⁵⁴². She considered that "the Creative side of our work is of course the highest form of the art,"⁵⁴³ and was incessantly urging her students to exercise their own creative abilities, in fact all of them had to enter a choreographic competition every year. She referred to the "everlasting stream of creativity" which needed to be constantly drawn out of each person,⁵⁴⁴ and it seems that Joanna choreographed as much for her own satisfaction as for that of an audience: "I like to think of myself as a Choreographer if only because my greatest joy and fulfilment come with the creation of a Ballet - not, mark you, from the finished product necessarily."⁵⁴⁵

Nevertheless she knew her audience and their likes and dislikes well. During

⁵⁴² In the 1957 production Let's Make a Ballet two solos and a pas de deux from Les Sylphides were produced by Cecil Bates.

⁵⁴³ Priest, Principal's Report 1957. (File 25492).

⁵⁴⁴ Lesley Hammond, personal interview, audiocassette 11 July 1989.

⁵⁴⁵ Priest, "Line and Form in Choreography", talk, 8 May 1954 (File 25492).

the 1930s they had all flocked to see the de Basil Ballet companies whose repertoires were largely composed of the Fokine and Massine works, many of them light, beautiful and bordering on fantasy. This was the style preferred by Joanna and, although she used dramatic themes, she at no time used her choreographic talent deliberately to point a moral. That was reserved for her speeches. Classical Ballet had yet to be used to convey a "message".⁵⁴⁶

In her early days in England, Joanna had asked Marie Rambert "how one should go about this business of Choreography," to which Rambert replied, "'there are no rules...get an idea...find some music and a competent designer,'" and, as an afterthought she added, "'make your exits and entrances poignant.'"⁵⁴⁷ Apart from the last comment, there was nothing radical about such advice, and, many years later, Joanna repeated it, in essence, saying that a choreographer hears music "which conjures up a picture of movement in his mind... or the Choreographer has the idea in his mind and must find appropriate music to set it alive in movement."⁵⁴⁸

She went on to say that she found her most satisfying creations had been those for which the idea had come first. While that claim may be true of some of her works, and most notably The Listeners, her dependence on music was profound. "In my...reverence for music", she said, "I find all the discipline and subsequent inspiration I need." Movement and music must "embark on the perfect marriage",

⁵⁴⁶ Interestingly, Joanna's first ballet teacher, Linley Wilson, choreographed The Immortals, a comment on the Second World War, in 1939, thus becoming one of the very early classical choreographers to use that technique for a moral statement. Lynn Fisher, "Working as an Historian in Dance," Dance Forum (J. of the Australian Association for Dance Education) Autumn 1992: 9.

For further details about this ballet, see also "'The Immortals' Story" Dance Australia 60, Jun/Jul 1992, p.66.

⁵⁴⁷ Priest, "Line and Form" 1954. (File 25492).

⁵⁴⁸ Priest, "Line and Form", 1954. (File 25492).

both must remain "malleable" throughout the process of creation, and it was the music which would have "the great responsibility of providing [the original idea] with its form, its shape and its colour, and last...its arrangement of steps."⁵⁴⁹

This may give the impression that Joanna created her ballet at the same time as a composer was working on the score for it, but, with two exceptions, she used music that was already composed. The first exception was the score commissioned from Henry Krips for the film Children's Theatre,⁵⁵⁰ and the other, music by the same composer for an Australian Folk Dance which Joanna arranged for International Night in the second Adelaide Festival of Arts, 1962, which was another of her efforts to combine the various cultures of people who had come to live in Australia. Her programme note reads:

So far as we know, Australia has not yet been able to boast of a Folk Dance. It seemed to us that our Arts Festival should be the appropriate occasion for the birth of such a dance. As you will see, the dance embraces steps and movements from many countries whose people are now sharing with us Australia's happy heritage.⁵⁵¹

Joanna had no difficulty in finding music for her ballets as she had free access to the Australian Broadcasting Corporation's music library. When Lynette Tuck-Howard and Helen Western were senior students they would select several records at a time from that library and bring them back for Joanna to listen to, and use, if any seemed appropriate for the ideas she had in mind at the time. If none were, further

⁵⁴⁹ Priest "Line and Form" 1954.

⁵⁵⁰ Children's Theatre, Commonwealth Film Documentary, 1959. (Film transposed onto videocassette 1990).

⁵⁵¹ Programme: International Night Adelaide, Elder Park, 21 March 1962. (File 25494).

records would be borrowed,⁵⁵² and one consideration Joanna bore in mind when choosing music was to give her dancers "a different experience" with each new production.⁵⁵³ With the exception of Henry Krips, she used no Australian composers for her ballets and made no excuses regarding her preference for classical music.

It was no harder to find a designer in Adelaide than it was to find music, as Adelaide had had a lively population of artists from its early days. The South Australian Society of Arts - the first such society in Australia - had been formed in 1856, and was for some time the principal body for art shows outside the main Art Gallery, while the School of Design, under the direction of the Society, became "a vital art centre" from 1887.⁵⁵⁴ Women were well represented, especially after the First World War when large families were no longer the norm, and some of the hours which had been spent in housework were shortened, thanks to modern appliances. More time was thus available to develop personal interests, although it was not "until the 1930s that the artistic achievements of South Australian women began to be apparent."⁵⁵⁵ And it was also in the 1930s that both male and female artists became involved in Adelaide's world of ballet. The de Basil Ballet companies with their striking sets and costumes showed Australia the vitality that was possible with stage design and it is not surprising that local artists became enthusiastic workers with Joe

⁵⁵² Lynette Tuck-Howard, personal interview, 12 April 1988.

⁵⁵³ Priest, "Ballet's Contribution", 1953. (File 25492).

⁵⁵⁴ Shirley Cameron Wilson, From Shadow into Light: South Australian Women Artists since Colonisation (Adelaide: Pagel Books, 1988) 27.

⁵⁵⁵ Shirley Cameron Wilson, 40.



*Fig. 35. "Ballet Rehearsal" by Dorrit Black, 1947.
From Shadow into Light by Shirley Cameron Wilson.
This is a painting of Joe Siebert's Les Ballets Contemporains dancers.*

Siebert's Les Ballets Contemporains and Joanna's South Australian Ballet Club.⁵⁵⁶

Joanna's association with well-known artists possibly began in 1940 when a scene from Les Sylphides, drawn by Lorna Schlank, was used as programme cover for the end of year performance,⁵⁵⁷ and the sets and costumes for Le Mariage de Columbine, a ballet in that programme, were by Lorna Woolcock and Helen George. Helen, as well as being an artist, was also a dancer and choreographer.⁵⁵⁸

Two artists other than Helen danced in Joanna's productions before turning to stage design as their chosen profession. One was Ian Spurling, who became a theatrical designer in London, and who designed the décor and costumes for Joanna's ballet Barbe Bleue and Prudence Coffey's Sentimental Journey in 1955, as well as for a revival of The Nymph and the Nobleman in 1956. The other, Mel Clifford, later a fashion designer in Sydney, had worked with Cecil Bates when both were in Walter Gore's Australian Theatre Ballet in 1955; he came to Joanna's studio when Bates began teaching there the following year. Among Clifford's early works were the sets and costumes for Bates' ballets Comme ci, comme ça and Design for a Lament in June 1956, and A Villanelle for Four Dancers in October of that year.

Kenneth Rowell was another young designer who began his career as a dancer - in his case with the Borovansky Ballet Company - before deciding that that was not

⁵⁵⁶ Bassett and Thompson, 1987.

See also Stephanie Schrapel, A Brush with the Stage: Catalogue for the exhibition South Australian Visual Artists involved with the stage 1930-1991, a joint venture by the Royal South Australian Society of Arts with the Performing Arts Collection of South Australia, Adelaide, 1992.

⁵⁵⁷ The same design was also used on the programme for 1941.

⁵⁵⁸ She choreographed and designed Fête Champêtre in 1955, Come Away Down in 1956, and designed for Cecil Bates' Serenade in 1957 and Seven Dances in 1958. Like Joanna's other ballet teachers, she also choreographed for Southern Stars.

In addition to many designers, Joanna was fortunate in having as an assistant Mrs. Compton Trew, whose name appears repeatedly as designer or maker of costumes, or, in some cases, both.

his field, and turning to the visual arts and, in particular, stage design. In the 1940s it was very difficult to get such work in theatre, and Rowell devised projects for himself, including costumes and a stage set for an untitled ballet.⁵⁵⁹ These he brought to Joanna, who choreographed a ballet with the designs as her stimulus - a notable occasion, as it was the only time her idea for a ballet was inspired by a designer. She later described the figures he had created as:

weird and wonderful...There were the male and female human animals - odd creatures with sort of furry tops...a girl dressed in black holding a rose in her hand... lovers in elegant white and a pair who looked for all the world like a skating couple. His background was the familiar-at-that-time Rowell ruin - with snow and ice - and cobwebs!!
560

From these evocative pictures, Joanna created a ballet to music by Sibelius, called Winter Landscape. The programme notes read:

Against the background of a winter landscape move shadowy forms, half human, half animal, uneasy, apprehensive, with a strange sense of foreboding. Lovers enshrouded in mist and a girl with a rose seek shelter from the rain which heralds the approaching storm.

Great clouds are swept across the sky, and the storm breaks in all its fury. The lovers and the girl with a rose retreat - only the shadowy forms, half human, half animal, return to find once more peace and calm in the solitude of their wintry domain.⁵⁶¹

These words set the mood for a ballet expressed entirely in movement, music and design, without the necessity for the long programme notes in which Joanna frequently indulged, a point which will be discussed later.

⁵⁵⁹ Kenneth Rowell, personal interview, 8 May 1991.

⁵⁶⁰ Priest, "Line and form," 1954. (File 25492).

⁵⁶¹ The ballet was first performed on 25 November 1947, and reproduced in September 1955.



Fig. 36. Winter Landscape
Chor. Priest. Kenneth Rowell's first stage décor.
First performance 25 November 1947.
Helen Western as the Girl with the Rose enters the landscape
peopled with half-human Animals and leafless Trees.
Photograph: D. Darian Smith

As well as good music and designers, a choreographer needs a vivid imagination, and Joanna had that in abundance.⁵⁶² But she was selective about the subjects on which she would allow her imagination to play:

Since the whole of theatrical dancing is fantasy the only satisfying subject [for a ballet] must be fantasy....young choreographers are trying to say something which should be left to the other arts to say. I have an enormous objection to seeing young and immature minds grappling with for instance the old eternal problem of sex...There is plenty left for the choreographer to deal with...even things to make one go home thinking.⁵⁶³

In spite of her statement: "If...Art is the reproduction of life around us, it must embrace all facets of life...be they beautiful or ugly,"⁵⁶⁴ she would not use subjects she considered unpleasant, and severely criticised choreographers who did.

In an effort to justify herself, she considered any choreographer who used "shock tactics" in a ballet was failing to "realise the limitations of the art form." Choreographers should "find the exact medium for the exact idea. There are things that can only be said...things [shown] only in movement."⁵⁶⁵ Modern ballet, Joanna continued, tried "to say more than its medium is capable of putting over."⁵⁶⁶ She went on to describe a ballet which she did not name, by a choreographer whom she did not identify: "A young wife...takes unto herself a lover. The jealous husband...catches up with her in a wood. Here he settles down methodically and

⁵⁶² See comments in the "Introduction" for some examples of Joanna's fantasy.

⁵⁶³ Joanna Priest, talk on "The Listeners," t.s., n.d. and, unfortunately, with page 1 missing (The Listeners, File No. 40514). See her comments below on Gore's Antonia for what she considered an example of "the old eternal problem of sex."

⁵⁶⁴ Priest, "The Artistic Development", 1958 (File 25492).

⁵⁶⁵ Priest, "Ballet's Contribution". (File 25492).

⁵⁶⁶ Priest, "Ballet's Contribution".

technically to rape her and finally strangle her...some of us," Joanna continued, "who have been true followers of the gentle Terpsichore went away with heavy hearts and a filthy taste in our mouths."⁵⁶⁷ It would seem that, in spite of Joanna's protestations, movement was the very medium in which this story could be, and was, told clearly. The choreographer had selected theme and medium correctly, and the fact that Joanna found the subject unpleasant was an entirely different issue from whether he had tried to say more than the medium of dance was "capable of putting over."

Joanna preferred the world of make-believe: "Our birth-right is fantasy, our aspirations beauty,"⁵⁶⁸ she said, and, although she composed several dramatic ballets, most of her works were light or abstract.⁵⁶⁹ To be successful, a dramatic ballet should be clearly understood by the audience without a programme synopsis, but for many years Joanna did not have the courage to rely on movement alone, and her programme notes could be extensive, even for a ballet such as Peter and the Wolf,⁵⁷⁰ where the sequence of events is abundantly clear, and which, in any case, has a narration running through it.

⁵⁶⁷ Priest "Ballet's Contribution". The ballet to which she referred was Walter Gore's Antonia.

⁵⁶⁸ Priest, "Ballet's Contribution". (File 25492).

⁵⁶⁹ Joanna's light or abstract ballets were: Variations on a Theme of Paganini, Le Mariage de Columbine, Ballerina, Monday's Child, Peter and the Wolf, Three Studies of Chopin, Moon Man (this, done in September 1944 as a ballet, appears to be a revised form of the Mime Play which Joanna presented first in 1934), The Real Princess, Nursery Legend, The Lady Augusta, Arabesque, The Nymph and the Nobleman, Histoires, Studies in Classical Style, Final Analysis.

Her dramatic ballets were the Young King, The Triumphant Pilgrim, Swan of Tuonela, Maria, Winter Landscape, The Listeners, Nerida and Berwain, Barbe Bleue and Joan of Arc. It should be noted that Pavane was set by Kester Berwick, not Joanna. See Appendix A for full details of these ballets.

⁵⁷⁰ Peter and the Wolf, choreographed by Joanna, was performed in Stories in Dance and Verse, 13-15 December 1943; Three Ballets, 24-29 April, 1944; and Ballet Presentation, 6-8 December 1944. (File 25494).

Her first dramatic ballet was The Young King, based on Oscar Wilde's story of that name, and first performed on 24 September, 1937. In this she attempted to "convey, within the formalised compass of the ballet, the infinite subtleties of the written word, without losing the poetical quality of the story."⁵⁷¹ But the programme notes for this ballet fill a page; it appears that Joanna did not sufficiently trust movement to achieve her stated aim.

Her obsession with words was to some extent gratified in the period 1943 to 1947 when she experimented with spoken verse as an accompaniment to movement, but this did not stop her from producing ballets which, she apparently believed, would be incomplete if the movement were not augmented by further detail in the programme. Thus for her 1944 ballet Swan of Tuonela, the synopsis states that the Swan, sailing majestically on the river that separates life from eternity, "waits to receive those whose time has come to pass into the world beyond...Four souls are set upon their long journey; then comes a mother with her dying child.

The mother with a sudden fierce protection
Faced the shadowed and unmoving form.
But the Swan spoke gently and with quietness,
Asking the woman for her wasted child.
She besought and prayed death not to steal
The only thing that mattered in her world,
To leave her this, the child her pain had borne.
The Swan in pity bade her raise her eyes
To watch the images that floated past,
And see the earthly future of her child.
The years of life stretched out in sad array,
Sordid poverty, despair and fear,
With many an ugly thought and withered hope.
The woman's love rose up against this sight,
And the Swan took up the child and went away.
Then all her aching misery cried out;

⁵⁷¹ Programme: The Young King in The Poetry of Dance and Mime, Adelaide, Tivoli Theatre, 24 September 1937 (File 25494).

'Death has asked a fearful thing of me,
And I am broken in the answering.'⁵⁷²

Joanna took the part of the mother, and when this ballet was choreographed, her own severely handicapped daughter, who died of pneumonia at the age of four, was two years old, and often in danger because of her breathing problems.

When Swan of Tuonela was performed again the following year the poem was omitted from the programme note and replaced by a shorter abstract: "The Swan shows the mother the earthly future of the child fraught [sic] with poverty, fear, and despair. The mother's love rises above her misery, and she surrenders the child to death, that he may escape the sorrows of life."⁵⁷³ This was not an indication, however, that Joanna was discarding words as a necessary adjunct to a ballet. Another of her ballets in that programme was Maria, which was danced to music by Purcell, but had introductory verse by Pat Hackett, and the story was "unfolded in spoken rhyme by a narrator, who introduced each scene."⁵⁷⁴

The following year there was another new piece, The Lady Augusta, which told of a pioneer voyage up the Murray River in 1853. The programme notes consist of extracts from the "Journal" of James Allen, Jnr., but one wonders at the reason for including details such as "Wednesday, September 14th. At half-past ten o'clock we sighted the 'Mary Ann' steamer which was moored by the bank of the river, and

⁵⁷² Programme: Swan of Tuonela in Ballet Presentation, Adelaide, Tivoli Theatre 6-8 December 1944. (File 25494.)

The source of the quotation is not given, but presumably is from a translation of the Finnish Lemminkäinen Legends.

⁵⁷³ Programme: Swan of Tuonela, in 1945 Ballet Presentation, Adelaide, Tivoli Theatre 4 December 1945 (File 25494).

⁵⁷⁴ Programme: Maria, in 1945 Ballet Presentation, (File 35494).

continued steaming until midnight, when we anchored."⁵⁷⁵ Did words add anything to the production, which was "happily danced and mimed"?⁵⁷⁶

A later ballet, The Nymph and the Nobleman, was based on a story by Margery Sharp, and concerns an Englishman, Sir George, who falls in love with a Nymph he sees at a French garden party. She returns with him to England, to find herself neglected in favour of his "huntin', fishin' friends," and dominated by his mother. According to the programme: "She can endure life no longer. After a short struggle...the little dancer entered heaven sur les points [sic]."⁵⁷⁷ In spite of the sadness of the plot, the last phrase makes one smile, giving a light touch to something which might otherwise seem to be a tragedy. If this was the intention, then programme reading was essential for the appreciation of some of Joanna's works.

One exception was perhaps her best ballet, The Listeners, for which the programme note was brief:

This ballet was suggested by Walter de la Mare's poem. The Traveller arrives at an abandoned house which holds intimate memories of his past life, and here the conflict of his relationship with two women re-appear to him as phantoms of his imagination.

Dogged by the relentless interference of circumstance, he tries in vain to weave into an enduring pattern his longing for the woman he loves, and his loyalty to the woman who has borne him a child.

The harmony of the pattern is perpetually broken by inexorable forces, and, as in life, his struggles against them prove unavailing.⁵⁷⁸

⁵⁷⁵ Programme; The Lady Augusta, in Ballet to Chamber Music, Adelaide, Tivoli Theatre, 3-7 December 1946 (File 25494).

⁵⁷⁶ "Arts Club Stages New Ballets" Advertiser, 4 December 1946. ("Programme cuttings 1945-1949", File 25499).

⁵⁷⁷ Programme: The Nymph and the Nobleman, in Ballet with Orchestra, Adelaide, Tivoli Theatre, 25-29 November, 1947 (File 25494).

⁵⁷⁸ Programme: The Listeners, in Ballet: 1948 Season, Adelaide, Tivoli Theatre 30 November - 4 December 1948. (File 25494).



Fig. 37 The Listeners

Chor. Priest, dec and cos. Kenneth Rowell. Second production by the National Theatre Ballet in its season which opened 29 November 1949. Left: Rex Reid as the Traveller, two of six Phantom Listeners (introduced for this production) and right: Joyce Graeme as the Woman who loved him.

Arguably, as this ballet is a variation on the eternal triangle, it could be understood without programme notes except for the identification of the characters.

Joanna recounted how she had been attracted by the poem, and "tucked 'Phantom Listeners' into the back of my mind. I liked the sound of these two words, they moved my imagination, as yet in no particular direction."⁵⁷⁹ It was five years before she heard the right music, when her assistants brought from the ABC library Dohnányi's String Quartet in D flat major. She said that, as she listened to the music, "before my eyes the traveller entered the home of his past...and the other characters came to life."⁵⁸⁰

From a musical point of view, Joanna found this ballet "enormous fun to create. I used at least two of the instruments at a time and actually had the dancers step the notes of each instrument." For a designer she chose Kenneth Rowell because he "seemed to me to possess just the exact qualities of phantasy I felt this work required." The blending of dance, design and music gave Joanna "a glow of satisfaction on this triple wedding."⁵⁸¹

The Listeners was first performed in Adelaide by the South Australian Ballet Club at the Tivoli Theatre on 30 November 1948, and the following year was taken into the repertoire of the National Ballet, for which Rowell provided new costumes and set, and for which Joanna added six Phantom Listeners. A subsequent Australia-wide tour by that company brought, on the whole, favourable notices for the ballet, although one disgruntled balletomane wrote to the Editor of the West Australian:

⁵⁷⁹ Priest, The Listeners, n.d., talk (The Listeners File 40514).

⁵⁸⁰ Priest, "Line and Form" 1954.

⁵⁸¹ Priest, "Line and Form."

May I voice what will certainly prove a widespread regret that the Listeners is to be included in the pieces offered...by the National Theatre Ballet Company....That this incongruous performance should have pretended to interpret Mr. Walter de la Mare's mystic and most moving poem was less than tolerable.⁵⁸²

In 1991 Lynette Tuck-Howard revived this ballet, using students of Joanna's present school, the Studio Arts Centre.⁵⁸³ As well as calling on her own memory, she used the wordnotes in which Joanna recorded her ballets, illustrated with photographs of certain poses, and was further helped by Raymond Trickett, who had danced in the National Theatre Ballet production, and came from Melbourne to give his assistance. The original costumes were used, but both of the Rowell sets had been lost. Not all the steps could be remembered accurately and some had to be re-created in Joanna's style, but three characteristics of her choreography are distinctive: her penchant for having the steps follow the music notes exactly, pas de deux which consist mainly of a series of poses with simple linking steps and few lifts, and a paucity of arm movements. For this revival, arm movements were added, in keeping with the rest of the style, for those steps which lacked any set port de bras.⁵⁸⁴

It is perhaps not fair to assess Joanna's style from such reproductions, but only two of her ballets were preserved on film. Aboriginal Legend is shown in the film

⁵⁸²T.G. Wilshire, Letter to the Editor, West Australian 26 May 1951 (File 40514).

⁵⁸³ Joanna had ceased teaching by the 1980s, but the school continued to be run by some of her former students. One, Jillian Eve, was the principal teacher until 1990 when Christine Sears took over. Lynette Tuck-Howard continued her association with the studio as pianist for some classes.

⁵⁸⁴ Jill Sykes has written that The Listeners was added to the repertoire of the South Australian National Ballet, "formerly known as the South Australian Ballet and Arts Club." Jill Sykes in Bryce Fraser, (ed), The Macquarie Book of Events (Sydney: Macquarie Library, 1983) 537.

This is not correct. The Listeners was taken into the repertoire of the National Theatre Ballet Company, based in Melbourne, and was never in the repertoire of the South Australian National Ballet, which in any case was not at any time called the South Australian Ballet and Arts Club.

Children's Theatre, and Joanna of Arc in the film made of Southern Stars' second birthday on 19 November 1961.

The idea of using an Aboriginal theme for a ballet was not new. In 1945 Philippe Perrottet had choreographed Arckaringa for Mina Wallace's Australian Ballet Society; the following year Borovansky produced his allegory Terra Australis and a year later Jean Alexander composed Euroka for the National Theatre Ballet Company. Laurel Martyn's Mathinna, first performed in 1954, told the true story of an Aboriginal girl who "entered the white man's world only to be thrown aside and spurned by white and black alike,"⁵⁸⁵ and the largest and longest of all works on Aboriginal themes, Corroboree, was premièred with Rex Reid's choreography in 1950, and was choreographed four years later by Beth Dean.

Aboriginal Legend was a four-minute version of Joanna's earlier ballet Nerida and Berwain, first performed in 1953, and is the story of the eponymous lovers, Nerida and Berwain.⁵⁸⁶ Wahwee, the spirit of thunder, wants Nerida for himself, and threatens the tribe with flood and fire if she does not leave Berwain. To save the tribe, Nerida throws herself into the mud pool where Wahwee lives. Berwain follows her, and from the pool rise a waterlily and a clump of rushes. Joanna narrated the story as the ballet unfolded, ending with the same sentences that end the programme notes: "When you pick a water lily, pick also a clump of rushes. Do not divide them in death."⁵⁸⁷ Here is a "moral" that cannot be expressed in movement, and, while

⁵⁸⁵ Edward Pask, Ballet in Australia: the Second Act 1940-1980 (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1982) 167.

⁵⁸⁶ Programme: Nerida and Berwain in Three Ballets, Adelaide, The Hut 29 September-3 October (File 25494).

⁵⁸⁷ Programme: Nerida and Berwain. In the revival of this ballet at the Studio Theatre in 1954, the programme had this instruction written as one sentence.

the story of the ballet could be conveyed without the narration, these words must be included for it to be told in full. The steps used were simple, the suggestion of Aboriginal dance movement represented mainly by the corps de ballet, in line, doing series of jumps with feet slightly apart. The story was carried on principally by mime.

Joan of Arc was a theme which Joanna first essayed in 1943: in a programme of short works presented by the South Australian Ballet Club at The Hut, Lynette Tuck danced a solo, Voices and the Maid, choreographed by Joanna to music by Debussy. Although that dance was not performed again, Joanna kept the story of Joan in mind and, over the years, read and compared the different versions of it. She finally settled on Thomas de Quincey's essay, with its emphasis on the Bishop of Beauvais and his betrayal of Joan. For this part to be convincing she needed a strong male dancer who could also act, and she found him in Cecil Bates, who had joined her staff in 1956, the year she created Joan. She was unable to resist the "majestic phrasing" of de Quincey's words, and used a narrator, actor and writer, Christopher Ketley, to carry the story. The rôle of Joan was shared by his sister, Alison Ketley, and Prudence Coffey. The critic Stafford Northcote described the ballet as "Occasionally ...an impressive and imaginative work...Three sequences are particularly worthy of praise - the use of banners to suggest battle; the burning of Joan; and the dance and mime invented for the Bishop (brilliantly interpreted by Mr. Bates)."⁵⁸⁸

When Joan of Arc was revived as Joanna of Arc for Southern Stars' second birthday in 1961, Joanna enlarged it from a ballet with narration to a masque, with mime, acting and pageantry, and rejoiced in the benefits that television could give her:

⁵⁸⁸ H. Stafford Northcote, "Contrast In Dancing," Advertiser 28 October 1956. (File 25516).



Fig. 38. Joan of Arc
Chor. Priest, first performance 27 October 1956.
Cecil Bates as the Bishop of Beauvais, and Prudence Coffey as Joan.

close-ups of actors in their "poignant moments",⁵⁸⁹ the ability to change sets without interrupting continuity, the use of lighting to create the impression of many more people than the six who were in the battle scenes, and, in the final moments when Joanna leads the Bishop up to the Tribunal in the clouds, the superimposition of their ghostly bodies on the "earthly" bodies of peasants in the scene.⁵⁹⁰

Joan was danced by Christine Hambour, who also had some lines to say, Cecil Bates was again the Bishop, Christopher Ketley the narrator of de Quincey's words, and Joanna read short commentaries which provided links between the scenes. The force of the narration gave the piece much greater impact than could have been gained by movement alone. Joan's saintly forgiveness of the Bishop, for instance, is heightened by the words:

My lord, have you no counsel? Who is this that cometh from Domremy? Who is she that cometh with blackened flesh from walking the furnaces of Rouen? This is she, the shepherd girl, counsellor that had none for herself, whom I choose, bishop, for yours.⁵⁹¹

This production demonstrated again how clearly Joanna found words were the tools she needed to convey the most deeply felt emotions.

During the late 1940s Joanna had forged stronger links with Adelaide's musicians when she and her students became involved as choreographer and dancers in local opera productions. The first of these was in 1946, when she worked with the Elder Conservatorium Opera Group and the Australian Broadcasting Corporation in

⁵⁸⁹ Edward Smith, "Joanne Priest - TV Crusader," News 21 November 1961: 25. (File 25522).

⁵⁹⁰ Margaret Ellershaw, "Joanna of Arc: Joanne Priest's biggest TV venture ready for cameras," TV Times 15 November 1961: 9.(File 25522).

⁵⁹¹ Excerpt from the narration used in the 1961 production on Southern Stars of Joanna of Arc by Thomas de Quincey. Videocassette Joanna of Arc: Southern Stars' second anniversary, 19 November 1961.

Faust. In March of the following year she collaborated with the Adelaide University Theatre Guild in a presentation of Debussy's L'Enfant prodigue, and in 1948 she again joined the Elder Conservatorium Opera Group for their production of Carmen.

Three years later she had her first involvement in a professional opera company, not as choreographer, but as producer of Let's Make an Opera for the New South Wales Division of the Arts Council, as noted in Chapter 3. After its opening season in Sydney Let's Make an Opera went to Brisbane before a six week tour of New South Wales country towns. Although there was a financial loss, "the guarantors...without exception intimated that they were more than satisfied with the artistic result."⁵⁹²

Opera gave Joanna great pleasure to produce because it embraced all the arts - "all the galaxy drawn together toward a common end - Music, Drama, Painting, colour and Dancing."⁵⁹³ The opera that delighted her most was Amahl and the Night Visitors, possibly because it hovered on the brink of fantasy as well as pointing a gentle moral that virtue is rewarded. She enjoyed working out the characterisations of the main characters: Amahl, "not too pathetic - accepting his dingy lot in life with complacency, knowing no other"; the mother, "tired of struggling, acutely sensitive of her inability to provide the one beloved crippled boy the things necessary for his improvement." As for the Kings:

I had a lot of real joy making their acquaintance. Melchior...Quiet, dignified, not really patronising once you had got used to him...Balthazar...loose of limb, feline in movement, gentle of heart ... Kaspar...a little hard of hearing, not really stupid - deliciously

⁵⁹² Annual Report, Arts Council of Australia (N.S.W. division), 1951-52: 4. (Opera File).

⁵⁹³ Joanna Priest, untitled talk on opera, n.d. (Amahl and the Night Visitors File No. 25517). Dancing is not, of course, essential to opera.

exuberant and lovable in the extreme.⁵⁹⁴

The first opera commissioned for television, Amahl was written by Gian-Carlo Menotti and given its first performance in New York in 1952. Joanna became well-identified with it in Australia as she produced it first in Melbourne, at the Princess Theatre, in 1954, next in Perth in 1955, for television in Melbourne, on ABV-2 in 1957, and finally in Adelaide in 1958.

The praise she would have valued most after the Adelaide première was from her friend John Bishop. Bishop was then Elder Professor of music at the Conservatorium and one of the most influential figures in Adelaide's world of performing arts, being largely responsible for the establishment of the Adelaide Festival of Arts. After seeing Amahl he wrote to Joanna, "Bravo! Amahl and the Night Visitors was a most charming performance and reflects great credit on all concerned, particularly you. You are a blessed wonder, I am amazed by your terrific vitality...long may a Children's Theatre flourish."⁵⁹⁵ Joseph Post, Acting Director of Music for the Australian Broadcasting Commission, Sydney, was equally enthusiastic: "I was delighted to hear of the success of your 'Amahl'...Your next production - the Ravel Opera-Ballet - is exciting, but, I should think, difficult. However, I have no doubt that your enthusiasm will accomplish it."⁵⁹⁶

Post was referring to her forthcoming production of Ravel's L'Enfant et les sortilèges which was the last programme for the Young People's Theatre in 1958. It

⁵⁹⁴ Priest, talk on opera, n.d.

⁵⁹⁵ John Bishop, letter to Joanna Priest, 22 April 1958. (File 25517).

⁵⁹⁶ Joseph Post, letter to Joanna Priest, 26 June 1958 (File 25517).

had been presented elsewhere as an opera performed by puppets, but Joanna's conception was another "marriage of the arts." Dancers took the parts of humans, animals, insects and various inanimate objects such as chairs, a teapot and a clock, and carried on the action to the accompaniment of a French recording of the opera. Joanna spoke a short prologue to each scene, to ensure the story was understood, providing "just the right amount of interpretation,"⁵⁹⁷ and Toni Graham's décor and Janet Bird's costumes and masks added to the "brilliantly performed" Australian première.⁵⁹⁸ It was Joanna's last work in theatre for six years.

After the conclusion of Southern Stars in 1964 she was invited to choreograph and produce another opera-ballet, Catulli Carmina, a joint venture of the Australian Ballet and the Elizabethan Theatre Trust Opera Company. By this time she was not the only person who thought that the barriers between the arts should be broken down. Stefan Haag, director of the Elizabethan Theatre Trust, who had just returned from a trip overseas, "forecast the death of traditional opera and ballet. 'The future trend all over the world is towards total theatre - not opera, ballet, and drama in separate categories but in one combined art form.'"⁵⁹⁹

Catulli Carmina had a mixed reception. One critic was "spellbound...It was positively beautiful theatre, a perfect combination of song and dance."⁶⁰⁰ Another considered it "should be a feather in the Elizabethan Trust cap."⁶⁰¹ But in Sydney

⁵⁹⁷ "Enchanting make-believe," Sunday Mail 6 December 1958: 69. (File 25516).

⁵⁹⁸ Harold Tidemann, "Color And Movement in Fantasy", Advertiser 8 December 1958. (File 25516).

⁵⁹⁹ "Theatre will be 'total'", Courier-Mail 29 July 1964:11 (Catulli Carmina, File 25513).

⁶⁰⁰ David Rowbotham. "Playgoer's look at the Opera," Courier-Mail 31 July 1964: 5. (File 25513).

⁶⁰¹ Linda Phillips, "2 [sic] operas fascinate", Melbourne Sun 6 November 1964. (File 25513).

"R.C." wrote that "All the exuberant promises of 'total theatre' brandished about before last night's opening of two semi-operatic works by Carl Orff at the Elizabethan Theatre will have to be modified considerably." In his/her opinion, the work was "deprived of much of its point by the hygienic flavourlessness of its choreography."⁶⁰²

The rest of the 1960s was less eventful for Joanna. In March 1966 she produced Il Combattimento di Tancredi e Clorinda for the Elder Conservatorium Singers, with Gordon Foulds and Isobel Naylor, both members of her staff, miming the action.⁶⁰³ In December of the same year she choreographed Step-by-Step, Picnic, Queue and Harlequinade for the student performance which was the last to be held at the Studio Theatre. In 1967 the school moved to the Studio Arts Centre at 57 Childers Street where the Wilsons were then living. It was a deep block, and behind the house Joanna had built two studios, where her school was still in operation in 1993.

The next student performance was held in 1968 at the Arts Theatre, and for this the members of her staff, Jillian Eve, Helen George, Margaret Abbie and Christine Sears contributed ballets. There were also demonstrations by the Speech and Drama classes, which were still part of the curriculum, and Joanna contributed one work, Sugar and Spice. She was tiring; in her next venture, the Elder Conservatorium's Orpheus and Euridice in 1969, credit for the choreography is given

⁶⁰² R.C., "Orff Double bill at Elizabethan," Sydney Morning Herald 10 September 1964:100. (File 25513).

⁶⁰³ Robyn Holmes, ed., Through the Opera Glass: A Chronological Register of Opera Performed in South Australia 1836-1988 (Adelaide: Friends of the State Opera, 1991) 170.

in the programme as by Joanna Priest, assisted by Jillian Eve and Christine Sears.⁶⁰⁴

During the early 1970s Joanna made another attempt to form a professional ballet company, this time with the assistance of Harry Haythorne, who had been one of her students during the 1940s and was then Assistant Artistic Director of the Scottish Ballet. They approached the Premier of South Australia, Don Dunstan, to discuss the possibility of government support, but the government had committed itself to funding the Australian Dance Theatre, and was unable to support another company as well.⁶⁰⁵ The plan was dropped.

Joanna's last ballet for her students, Emeralds Are for Love in May, was performed in October 1971.⁶⁰⁶ The rest of the programme consisted of what must have been the most nerve-wracking of any of her competitions, as ballets choreographed by Frances Slattery, Jillian Eve, Phillip Hurley-Warrell and Christine Sears were to be judged by the Principal of the Australian Ballet School, Margaret Scott. Hurley-Warrell's ballet, The Outsider, won.⁶⁰⁷

Although it appeared that Joanna's "endless stream of creativity" was drying up, she regained her enthusiasm and energy two years later when she was invited to produce Tales from Noonameena for the Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust's Marionette Theatre of Australia in 1973. Her name had been put forward as producer

⁶⁰⁴ Programme: Orpheus and Euridice, Elder Conservatorium Opera Group, Adelaide, Union Hall 16,17,20,21 June 1969. (Opera File).

Holmes, ed. (164), lists this opera as having been performed in 1962 as well, but that is incorrect.

⁶⁰⁵ Don Dunstan, letter to the author, 12 May 1988 confirmed this, but neither he, Joanna nor Haythorne can remember for certain which year that discussion occurred. The South Australian Government gave its first grant to the Australian Dance Theatre in 1971, which suggests that Joanna's approach to Dunstan would have been in the early 1970s.

⁶⁰⁶ Programme: Fun is Creation, Adelaide, Union Hall, 16 and 17 October 1971. (File 25494).

⁶⁰⁷ Christine Sears, telephone interview, March 1992.

of this show by Lesley Hammond, then the Administrator of the Marionette Theatre of Australia. Lesley was a South Australian, and like all people in Adelaide interested in the arts, knew Joanna's work well and was struck by Joanna's extraordinary breadth of experience and ability in the performing arts. Joanna had presented many segments with puppets on Southern Stars, and, as puppetry could be presented with or without music, and as drama, opera and/or ballet, Joanna, with her familiarity in all these fields, seemed the right person for the job.⁶⁰⁸

Written by Hal Saunders, who joined Iris Mason in composing the music, Noonameena was another collaboration between Joanna and Kenneth Rowell, who was chosen as designer. Joanna flew to Sydney on several occasions to work with the composer, writer, musical arranger Herbie Marks and the puppeteers, and Noonameena had its première at the Sydney Opera House on 3 December 1973.

The plot was based on Aboriginal Dreamtime legends, but now, twenty years after Joanna had made her first incursion into Aboriginal lore with Nerida and Berwain, many people were no longer happy for a white person to interpret a native theme. Noonameena was "blasted" by the Australian Council for the Arts puppetry committee which claimed "the story is weak; the set design tasteless; the music banal; the puppets unconvincing and poorly constructed; and the Aboriginal content unacceptable."⁶⁰⁹ Considering Joanna's concern and respect for Aboriginal lore, it must have been a bitter pill for her to swallow. But her feelings would have been salved by the show's popular success: the Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust's Annual Report stated that the opening season at the Sydney Opera House from 3 - 22

⁶⁰⁸ Hammond, interview 1989.

⁶⁰⁹ The Australian Council for the Arts Puppetry Committee, quoted by Helen Covernton, "'Puppets tasteless and racist,'" Sunday Mail 10 February 1974.

December 1973 "was almost completely booked out prior to the opening night and we were unable to accommodate the demand for seats in the last fortnight."⁶¹⁰

The last professional production in which she was involved was the Australian Opera's Salome in 1979, which was rehearsed in Sydney. Joanna worked on the choreography in Adelaide with Jillian Eve, then principal teacher in her school, and a student, Lisa Heaven. But she no longer had the energy to fly to Sydney for rehearsals, and that fell to Jillian, whose name in the programme preceded Joanna's as choreographer.

During the late 1970s and 1980s Rob's health had begun to fail, and eventually he was admitted to the North Adelaide Helping Hand's Nursing Home, where he died in May, 1988. It became more and more difficult for Joanna to live alone and in the following year she moved into hostel accommodation at the Helping Hand.

Joanna Priest had been a trail-blazer in many ways: she had established the first dancing school in Australia which also provided training in the other performing and visual arts; she had formed a Ballet Club to educate a theatre-loving public and a "finishing school" to do the same for her senior students; she had developed a method of enabling deaf children learn rhythm through vibration; she had created an intimate theatre for Adelaide in which she mounted productions specifically for children and she had pioneered children's television shows in South Australia. She was also exceptional among Australian dance teachers in becoming a professional choreographer and producer of opera. In all these ventures she had energetically emphasised the importance of high moral values in all paths of life, using speeches,

⁶¹⁰ Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust, Annual Report 1973. (The pages of this are not numbered.)



Fig. 39. Rob and Jo at Maslin Beach, 1960s.

pamphlets, prospectuses and television to do so. Other teachers may well have thought the same about moral standards, but Joanna had the widest audience. She was not only very articulate but was called on to give talks to a variety of groups;⁶¹¹ from her earliest years she had an excellent press following⁶¹² and she made sure that Southern Stars not only showed arts, science and sport, but allowed time for a talk on any matters she felt important, and on some occasions these talks became little homilies. This was was another reason that the writer in Kalori spoke of the "name of Joanne Priest [which] shines out steadfastly"⁶¹³, and it is noteworthy that, once again, she relied on words, not movement, to expound her cause.

In an interview in 1982 Joanna remarked that one of Marie Rambert's virtues was the ability to see talent in others and bring it out of them.⁶¹⁴ She herself did likewise, encouraging her students to enter competitions in various of the arts taught at her school, encouraging young stage designers such as Rowell and Spurling, putting people in positions of responsibility, whether this meant the creation of a ballet or preparation of a segment of Southern Stars, and, by showing her confidence in them as people, developing their own self-confidence and awareness of their own talents.

As a choreographer she left no work in the repertoire of any ballet company, but by her encouragement of creativity in her students, she fostered a talent which has been used by, among others, Stephen Baynes, Sarah Blunden, Jacqui Carroll and Rosetta Cook as professional choreographers.

⁶¹¹ See Talks and Reports File 25492.

⁶¹² See in particular cuttings in Files 25501, 25518, 25516, 25522 and 25513.

⁶¹³ See p.1.

⁶¹⁴ Priest, videotaped interview by unidentified interviewer, probably 1982.

Of her other achievements, no-one followed the trails she had blazed except for the concept of Children's Theatre, although it was not until 1971 that this concept was reintroduced to Adelaide. In that year a mansion in North Adelaide named Carclew was opened as a centre for creative activities for children, and the South Australian Performing Arts Centre for Young People was created.

Four years later Adelaide was the city which saw a new departure in children's theatre, with the "Come Out" Festival, the first Youth Arts Festival in Australia. The second "Come Out" in 1977 introduced the public to the talent of another very innovative dancing teacher, Ariette Taylor. Born in Holland during the 2nd World War, she trained and began her career there before joining Ballet Rambert. When she retired from performing she developed her own method of teaching dance to children, and brought this with her when she came to live and teach in Adelaide in 1977 when her husband Jonathan was appointed Artistic Director of the Australian Dance Theatre.

Ariette was to her generation what Joanna had been to hers: a woman of immense imagination who built her pieces using the ideas of the students with whom she worked. But there was a great difference between the two generations of students. The children with whom Ariette worked were more sophisticated than those of Joanna's time, and, through television, much more aware of many different lifestyles and some unpleasant aspects of them, while also able to express their feelings concerning these aspects. Together with Ariette they could contemplate ugliness. Joanna, as noted earlier, preferred to ignore ugliness and deal with fantasy, thus her first viewing of Ariette's work was a shock.

Called Me and my Mum and Dad, the children in it carried large dummies,

representing their parents, and, during an episode when the children became angry with their parents, the dummies were kicked upstage. At that point one member of the audience, Joanna Priest, walked out. She, who had preached the necessity of adults teaching children discipline, could not accept the idea of children having power over their parents.⁶¹⁵

Later Ariette came to know Joanna quite well and, learning about her past work, developed a respect for what she had achieved.⁶¹⁶ She also recognised that they both worked in a similar way by involving children in creation as well as performance. But there was, of course, no direct link between Joanna's work and Ariette's. The difference in their styles was too wide.

During the 1970s other programmes of entertainment for children were set up. Magpie-in-education productions visited schools and country areas. South Australian Rex Reid returned to his native city in 1975 to take over the Australian Dance Theatre's school, then opened his own studio from which he developed a small classically based company called the Dance Centre Company. Its aim was to present "programmes of dance to both children and adults, with particular emphasis on fostering the education of children through their exposure to the live theatre".⁶¹⁷ The next year there was another contribution made to Children's Theatre when the Adelaide Festival Centre began a programme called Something on Saturday which was advertised as "an alternative to football".

⁶¹⁵ Ariette Taylor, personal interview 13 August 1987. There could be a link here with Joanna's wish to keep her students with her as teachers, thus maintaining control over them.

⁶¹⁶ By the time Ariette and her husband came to settle in Adelaide, Joanna was no longer doing any work specifically with children.

⁶¹⁷ Shirley Despoja. "Taking Dance to the People". Dance Australia 13. 1983, 38.

Although the link between these projects and Joanna's earlier work is not direct, the instigators of the above programmes who were living in Adelaide during the 1950s and 1960s would have known of her productions. As one of her colleagues remarked, it was not possible to live in Adelaide and be interested in the arts without knowing about Joanna, especially in the days of Southern Stars⁶¹⁸. She had, by demonstrating that there was an audience for children's programmes, provided a free "feasibility study", thus paving the way for the later developments.

How did she see herself? On one occasion she said, "If I consider myself nothing else, I do consider myself to be a teacher."⁶¹⁹ There is no doubt that is how she will be remembered by most, and, as she was associated with all the performing arts, she was in a position to benefit a large number of people in addition to dance students, while her provision of a rich curriculum made her a remarkable "educator" in the broadest sense. She fostered the folk-dances and arts of the different national groups which settled in Australia, and also worked to raise an awareness and understanding of Australian Aboriginal culture.

The esteem in which she was held by her fellow artists in Adelaide was demonstrated when she was appointed to the South Australian Arts Enquiry Committee, which was formed in 1951 to assess the condition of the arts and humanities in that state. And that same esteem was publicly expressed in 1970 when Joanna was awarded an OBE. The citation read:

Mrs. Wilson is widely known throughout Australia as a producer of ballet, opera and as a choreographer under her professional name of Miss Joanne Priest.

⁶¹⁸ Hammond, interview 1989.

⁶¹⁹ Priest, videotaped interview 1982.

She is dedicated to the training of children and young people in ballet and visual arts and has displayed outstanding devotion with rubella children, not only in ballet classes but in furthering their speech training.

Mrs. Wilson opened her own ballet school in 1932 and for some years it has been the largest school of its kind in Australia, embracing not only ballet but the theatre arts. At present approximately 500 children attend her school and a further 2000 receive tuition through her visits to private schools.

Mrs. Wilson has made a number of overseas study trips not only in furtherance of ballet but also for the teaching of deaf children.

That was the picture seen by "outsiders," but for her students and colleagues there were subtler values. One of her former students, Wendy Walker, then choreologist with the American Ballet Theatre, wrote in 1988:

The love, respect, passionate commitment to do things well and broad interest in all aspects of a Ballet performance (dancers, choreography, costumes, set design, the MUSIC, the conductor, lighting, stage management, props) that I have today stem from the atmosphere in which I was surrounded in my early years at the Studio Theatre!...how many artists she reached or influenced!⁶²⁰

Gillian Cave commented on "all those generations of lucky kids who went through her hands and even if they had three left feet I guarantee they have a lasting appreciation of music and dance."⁶²¹

One of the greatest sources of pride and satisfaction to a dancing teacher is to see a former student develop into an outstanding dancer. Joanna, like other dance teachers in Adelaide, produced several such dancers. Her most important legacy, however, lies in the thousands of her students who did not become professional dancers, but whom she influenced, directly or indirectly to become informed theatre-goers, and, among them, those who become the devisers, providers or supporters of

⁶²⁰ Wendy Walker, letter to the author, 27 June 1988.

⁶²¹ Gillian Cave, letter to the author, September 1990.

the rich entertainment programmes now offered to the children of South Australia.

Appendix A

PROGRAMMES OF DANCE PERFORMANCES PRODUCED BY

JOANNA PRIEST

Unless otherwise stated, choreography is by Joanna Priest.
Programmes of these performances are in File 25494.

- 1932 Informal performance in Dr. Kenneth Fry's garden
- 1933
Freemasons' Hall No programme has been found, but from a newspaper cutting it appears this included a demonstration of classroom steps and three mime studies:
 Frere Jacques [sic]
 Sur le Pont
 La Petit Navaire [sic]
- 1934 Nov.17
Australia Hall THE POETRY OF DANCE AND MIME.

 Frere Jacque [sic]
 Sur le Pont
 Le Petit Navaire [sic]
 Les Petites Litaines [sic] de Jesus
 A Mime Play mus.Schumann, Coates, Quilter, Grieg
- 1937 Sept 24
Tivoli THE POETRY OF DANCE AND MIME.

 A Mime Play
 Variations on a Theme of Paganini by Brahms
 The Young King mus. Richard Strauss

THE SOUTH AUSTRALIAN BALLET CLUB

NOTE: not all performances are dance programmes and some are by guest artists.

1939 Dec 16
Tivoli

Variations on a Theme of Paganini by Brahms L'Épreuve
chor. William Owen mus. Elgar cos. L. Stephens
The Young King mus. Richard Strauss cos. Dorothy
Harvie, painting of costumes R. Stokes and D. Harvie,
costumes made by V. Richards and others.

1940 Dec 14
Theatre
Royal

BALLETS AND DIVERTISSEMENTS.

Le Mariage de Columbine mus. Schumann dec. and cos.
L. Woolcock, H. George
Betrothal chor. William Owen mus. Handel cos. Mrs.
Compton Trew
Divertissements from Les Sylphides and
Aurora's Wedding.
The Triumphant Pilgrim mus. Cesar Franck cos. Mrs.
Compton Trew

1941 Dec 5,6
Tivoli

THIRD PRESENTATION. (with Adelaide Concert Orchestra)

Le Mariage de Columbine mus. Schumann
dec. and cos. L. Woolcock, H. George
Pavane on the death of an Infanta arr. Berwick mus.
Ravel cos. Mrs. Compton Trew
The Triumphant Pilgrim mus. César Franck cos. Mrs.
Compton Trew
Ballerina mus. Haydn cos. designs Mrs. Compton Trew,
L. Woolcock

1943 June 10,11
The Hut

DIVERTISSEMENTS AND BALLETS.

Adelaide University Theatre Guild.

Russian Dances mus. trad.
Shepherd's Boy mus. Grieg
Monday's Child mus. Mozart
Madrigal mus. Kreisler
The White Ship verse: Patricia Hackett
Voices and the Maid mus. Debussy
Deux Arabesques mus. Debussy
Les Petites Litanies de Jesus mus. Grovez dec. for all
items Alan Sierp

1943 Dec 13,14,15
The Hut

STORIES IN DANCE AND VERSE.
Adelaide University Theatre Guild.

Peter and the Wolf mus. Prokofieff
The Strolling Clerk from Paradise Hans Sach
The Grey Maid verse: Patricia Hackett
The Trees of the Master a Dramatic Poem dec. for all
items Alan Sierp, Gwen Walsh

1944 Ap 24,25,
28,29
The Blue Door

THREE BALLETS.

Peter and the Wolf mus. Prokofieff
Three Studies of Chopin mus. Chopin
The Grey Maid verse: Patricia Hackett dec. for all items
Alan Sierp

1944 Jun 12,13,15,16
The Blue Door

THREE PERIOD PLAYS.
produced by Patricia Hackett.

The Strolling Clerk from Paradise Hans Sach
(This includes a dance by "farm girls.")
Gild the Mask Again T.B. Morris
Renaissance Night T.B. Morris

1944 Sep 16,17,23,24
The Blue Door

ARTISTS IN THE MAKING.

The Impossible Test (Play)
The Land of Nursery Rhyme
Moon Man mus. Schumann, Quilter, Grieg and dec.
Alan Sierp

1944 Dec 6,7,8
Tivoli

BALLET PRESENTATION.

Adelaide ABC Augmented Orchestra cond. Bernard Heinze.

Peter and the Wolf mus. Prokofieff dec. Alan Sierp
The Real Princess mus. Schubert cos. Eileen Conrad
Swan of Tuonela mus. Sibelius dec. Alan Sierp cos.
Eileen Conrad
Ballerina mus. Haydn cos. Mrs.Compton Trew

1945 May 28,29,30 VARIATIONS.
The Blue Door

A Hymn to the Virgin mus. anon

A Carol mus. anon

Lullaby mus. anon.

David sings to Saul Poem: Robert Browning chor. and dancer Thomas Brown

Have You Seen but a Whyte Lilly Grow? Poem:Jonson

Sister Helen Poem: Dante Gabriel Rosetti (1945 May cont.)

Three Studies in unrehearsed Conducted Movement:

Erotik mus. Grieg

Sommeraband mus. Grieg

Nocturne mus. Chopin

Two Studies of Brahms

Suilven and the Eagle A poetic drama: Gordon Bottomley. dec. for all items Alan Sierp

1945 Nov 3
The Hut

A DISPLAY OF WORK.

Technique. (Demonstration of work by junior to senior students.)

Plastic and Creative Work.

Movement to the Music of the Spoken Word:

Have You Seen but a Whyte Lilly Grow? Jonson

Hymn to the Virgin anon

The Lady Poverty Evelyn Underhill

Three Studies in Unrehearsed Conducted Movement:

Erotik mus. Grieg

Sommeraband mus. Grieg

Nocturne mus. Chopin

Original Choreography by junior and senior students

1945 Dec 5,6
Tivoli

1945 BALLET PRESENTATION.
Adelaide ABC Augmented Orchestra cond. William Cade.

Nursery Legend mus. Quilter dec. and cos. Alan Sierp
Swan of Tuonela mus. Sibelius dec. Alan Sierp cos. Mrs.
Arthur Conrad
Maria mus. Purcell
Introductory verse: Patricia Hackett cos. Mrs. Compton
Trew
The Triumphant Pilgram mus. Franck cos. Mrs.
Compton Trew
Ballerina mus. Haydn cos. Mrs. Compton Trew

1946 Jul 3,6,8
The Blue Door

MUSIC HATH CHARMS.
(Complete Music Programme)

Juliet Savage (cello)
Jean Cook (Harp and Piano)
Stella Sobels (Soprano)
Max Worthley (Tenor)
Vivien Tuck (Piano)
Stanley Hunkin (Baritone)
Brenton Langbein (Violin)

1946 Dec 3,4,6,7
Tivoli

BALLET TO CHAMBER MUSIC.

Nursery Legend mus. Quilter dec. and cos. Alan Sierp
The Real Princess mus. Schubert cos. executed by Mrs.
Arthur Conrad
Arabesque mus. Brahms dec. Gwen Walsh cos. Mrs.
Compton Trew
The Lady Augusta mus. Dvorak dec. and cos. Jacqueline
Hick

1947 Jun 2,3,5,6
The Blue Door

BALLETS AND DIVERTISSEMENTS.

Prelude chor. Lynette Tuck mus. Chopin
The Lonely One chor. Lynette Tuck mus. Tcherepnine
Vogel als Prophet chor. Helen Western mus. Schumann
Warum? chor. Helen Western mus. Schumann
The Return chor. Helen Western mus. Grieg
Peter and the Wolf mus. Prokofieff

1947 Jun 15
The Blue Door

A RECITAL OF DANCE
by RUTH BERGNER.

Bells mus. Moussorgsky
Russian Dance mus:Peasant Song
Fate mus. Mahler
A Castanet Dance mus. Waldteufel Dancer: Walter
Desborough
Chinese Dance mus: Chinese
A Ghetto Song: "It Burns, Brother, It Burns"
mus. Gerbirtik
Russian Knife Dance mus. Strauss (Desborough)
Chassidic Motif mus. Engel
An Old, Old, Question: Jewish Song
The Toast of the Rabbi: Jewish Song
In Good Humour mus. Beethoven
Kol Nidrei mus:Jewish Prayer
The Cry mus. Shostakovich

1947 Jul 5,6,7,8
The Blue Door

BALLETS AND DIVERTISSEMENTS.

Viennese Waltzes chor. Kathleen Short mus. Strauss
Reverie chor. Helen Western mus. Tchaikowsky
Serenade chor. Lynette Tuck mus. Haydn
Ballade chor. Helen George mus. Chopin
The Doll chor. Anne Taylor mus. Schubert
J'Attendre[sic] chor. Helen Western mus. Debussy
Chimera chor. Helen Western mus. Cimarosa

1947 Sep 1,2,3,4
The Blue Door

DANCING THROUGH COURT AND COUNTRY.
Dances arranged by **The Royal Academy of Dancing**

*The same programme

was performed at
The Hut on
8,10

Dancing through the Court
Minuet, Gaillarde [sic], Gavotte, Coronta, Sept.
Pavane.
Dancing through the Country
Tyrol, England, Italy, Hungary, Russia

1947 Nov 25,26,
28,29
Tivoli

BALLET WITH ORCHESTRA.
Adelaide Concert Orchestra. Cond. Norman Chinner.

Arabesque mus. Brahms dec. Gwen Walsh cos. Mrs.
Compton Trew
Winter Landscape mus. Sibelius dec. and cos. Kenneth
Rowell
The Triumphant Pilgrim mus. Franck dec. Shirley Adams
cos. Mrs. Compton Trew
The Nymph and the Nobleman mus. Mozart dec. and
cos. Jacqueline Hick

1948 Jun 7,8,9,10
The Blue Door

FANTASIE

Waltzes chor. Helen Western mus. Schubert
Intermezzo chor. Rosalie Ann Taylor mus. Brahms
Polka chor. Lynette Tuck mus. Shostakovich
Outside the Unknown chor. Helen Western mus. Lekeu
Capricious Woman chor. Helen Western mus. Respighi
"I Walked with my dead living love" chor. Tuck mus.
Poulenc
Fantasia chor. Lynette Tuck mus. Vaughan Williams.

1948 Jul 3.
Elder Hall

The Elder Conservatorium of Music
Series "D" **Concerts for Children**

BALLETS AND DIVERTISSEMENTS.

Peter and the Wolf mus. Prokofieff dec. Alan Sierp
Maria mus. Purcell
Introductory verse by Patricia Hackett cos. Mrs.
Compton Trew
National Dances: Tyrolean, Sailor's Hornpipe Tarentella,
Hungarian, Russian.

1948 Jul 5,7,8,9
The Blue Door

FAMILIAR BALLETS.

Peter and the Wolf mus. Prokofieff dec. Alan Sierp
Maria mus. Purcell
Introductory verse by Patricia Hackett cos. Mrs.
Compton Trew
National Dances: Tyrol, England, Italy, Hungary Russia

1948 Nov 30,
Dec 1,3,4
Tivoli

BALLET 1948 SEASON.

Nursery Legend mus. Quilter dec. and cos. Alan Sierp
The Listeners mus. Dohnyani (Played by the Elder String
Quartette.) dec. and cos. Kenneth Rowell
Histoires mus. Ibert dec. and cos. Charles Bannon
The Nymph and the Nobleman mus. Mozart (Played by
the Elder String Quartette.) dec. and cos. Jacqueline Hick

1949 May.

Programme for Children's Book Week.

Peter and the Wolf
Court and Country Dances

1949 Dec 1.

GARDEN PARTY AT ST. ANDREWS, SPRINGFIELD.

Boys and Girls Come Out to Play
A Danish Song
Spring Summer Autumn Winter mus. Prokofiev
Arabesque mus. Brahms
A Round or Two
Our Waltz mus. Schubert
Polka mus. Shostakovich
German Dances mus. Schubert

1953 Sep.29,30.

THREE BALLETS

Adelaide University Theatre Guild.

Nerida and Berwain mus. Bliss dec. Francis Figwer
Studies in Classical Style mus. Chopin
Final Analysis mus. Saint-Saëns dec. and cos. Jacqueline
Hick

START OF PERFORMANCES AT THE STUDIO THEATRE.

This list is of ballet performances only, and includes some which were by companies other than the Studio Theatre Ballet Company.

- 1954 Oct 6,7,8,9
Studio
Theatre
- THE STUDIO THEATRE BALLETT COMPANY.
- Nerida and Berwain mus. Bliss dec. William Salmon
The Listeners mus. Dohnyani dec. and cos. Kenneth Rowell (dec. adapted and painted by Helen George)
Phantom headdresses Ian Spurling
Ballerina mus. Haydn dec. and cos. Joseph Choate
- 1955 Jul 4-9
Studio
Theatre
- AUSTRALIAN THEATRE BALLETT
- Conversazioni chor. Walter Gore mus. Rossini set Barry Kay cos. Paula Hinton
Peepshow chor. Gore mus. Françaix set Gore
Soft Sorrow chor. Gore Mus. Fauré dec. and cos. Kay
Street Games chor. Gore mus. Ibert dec. and cos. Ronald Wilson
- 1955 Jul. 11-16
Studio
Theatre
- AUSTRALIAN THEATRE BALLETT
- Hoops chor. Gore dec. and cos. Kenneth Rowell mus. Poulenc
Tancredi and Clorinda chor. Gore mus. Monteverdi dec. and cos. Wilson
Grand Pas de Trois Classique chor. Gore mus. Rossini dec. and cos. Harry Cordwell
Musical Chairs chor. Gore mus. Lord Berners cos. Mel Clifford
- 1955 Sep 19,20,
21,22,24,26,27,28
Studio Theatre
- THE STUDIO THEATRE BALLETT COMPANY.
- Final Analysis mus. Saint-Saëns dec. and cos. Jacqueline Hick
Winter Landscape mus. Sibelius dec. and cos. Kenneth Rowell
Barbe Bleue mus. Poulenc dec. and cos. Ian Spurling

1955 Nov 14,15,16, 17,18
Studio Theatre

THE STUDIO THEATRE BALLET COMPANY.

Monday's Child mus. Mozart
Fête Champêtre chor. Helen George mus. Chabrier dec. and cos. Helen George
Vortex chor. Claire Mills mus. Holst dec. and cos. Bryan Murray
Sentimental Journey chor. Prudence Coffey mus. Ravel cos. Ian Spurling

1956 Jun 16
Studio Theatre

A SEASON OF CONTEMPORARY BALLET.

Comme ci, comme ça chor. Cecil Bates mus. Françaix dec. and cos. Mel Clifford
Design for a Lament chor. Bates mus. Fauré dec. and cos. Clifford
The Nymph and the Nobleman mus. Mozart dec. and cos. Ian Spurling Nymph's costumes. Jacqueline Hick

1956 Oct 27
Studio Theatre

CONTEMPORARY BALLET.

Come Away Down chor. Helen George mus. Ravel dec. and cos. George
A Villanelle for Four Dancers chor. Bates mus. Rameau & Grétry dec and cos. Clifford
Joan of Arc mus. Berlioz

1957 Mar 30, Ap 1, 2,3,4,6
Studio Theatre

LET'S MAKE A BALLET.

Variations from Les Sylphides
Façade chor. Ashton, restaged by Bates. mus. Walton dec and costumes after Chappell

1957 Aug 17,19,21,
22,24
Studio Theatre

1957 SEASON OF BALLET.
(no programme has been found for this performance)

Serenade chor. Bates mus. Suk dec. and cos. George
A Fig for the King chor. Bates mus. Barber dec. and
cos. Ken Daniel.

Façade chor. Ashton, restaged by Bates. mus. Walton
dec. and cos. after Chappell

1958 Jul 12,14,
16,17,18
Studio Theatre

A SEASON OF INTIMATE BALLET.

A Villanelle for Four[sic] chor. Bates mus. Rameau and
Grétry dec. and cos. Clifford

Peasant divertissement from Giselle

Death and the Maiden chor. Andrée Howard mus.
Schubert cos. Howard

Czernyana chor. Frank Staff mus. Czerny dec. and cos.
Eve Swinstead-Smith

Seven Dances chor. Bates mus. Vivaldi cos. George

1958 Dec 6,8,
10-13
Studio Theatre

THE ENCHANTED CHILD.
(L'Enfant et les sortilèges) mus. Ravel cos.
and masks Janet Bird dec. Toni Graham

1959 Aug 29
Studio
Theatre

Studio Theatre Productions Inc. presents
AN EVENING OF MUSIC AND BALLET

A Performance by Patricia Cox and Leslie White~~with~~ with corps de
ballet of Miss Priest's students

Divertissement from The Sleeping Princess

Sonata for Violin and Piano - Franck:
Thomas Matthews and Dorothy Oldham

Excerpts from Coppélia Act. 3

Pas de deux from Don Quixote

1960 Mar 14
Elder Park

FIRST ADELAIDE FESTIVAL OF ARTS

FOLK FESTIVAL OF SONG AND DANCE
Prod. by Joanne Priest and Keith Thomson for the Good
Neighbour Council.

1960 Aug 16
Studio
Theatre

PRINCIPALS AND SOLOISTS OF THE
BOROVANSKY BALLET
In aid of the S.A. Association for Mental Health

La Sylphide pas de deux
Giselle peasant pas de deux
Journey to the Moon chor. Paul Grinwis. Pas de six
Journey to the Moon Dance of the Dragon Prince
Don Quixote Pas de deux
Sleeping Princess Pas de deux
Sleeping Princess The three Ivans
Sleeping Princess Blue bird Pas de deux
L'après-midi d'un Faune
Journey to the Moon Pas de quatre

1962 Mar 21
Elder Park

SECOND ADELAIDE FESTIVAL OF ARTS
INTERNATIONAL NIGHT.
Artistic Producer, Joanne Priest
Director: Murray George

1966 Dec 8,9,10,
13,14
Studio Theatre.
(The last
performance there.)

STEP BY STEP.
Bridget chor. Priest mus. Malcolm Arnold
Flower Polka chor. Jillian Eve mus. Brahms
Shepherd Boy chor. Eve mus. Grieg
Speech Class.
Lullaby chor. Eve mus. Grieg
Butterfly chor. Eve mus. Debussy
I can myself create my little world arr. Rosalind Powrie mus.
Baranovich
Picnic chor. J. Priest mus. Ibert
Modern Dance chor. Eve and Paul Saliba
Intermezzo chor. Christine Sears
A Tumbling Leaf chor. Wendy Walker Drama Class.
Queue chor. Priest mus. Rossini, arr. Benjamin Britten
Harlequinade chor. J. Priest mus. Fauré dec. and cos. Toni
Graham

1968 Oct 12.
Arts Theatre

SUGAR AND SPICE.

Circus chor. Jillian Eve mus. Kabalevsky

Toy Symphony

Creative Drama

The Little Match Girl chor. Helen George mus. Grieg

Dance studies from Italy and France

Penny Whistle Jive chor. Margaret Abbie mus: African
native

Items by Speech and Drama students

Epitome chor. Christine Sears mus. Schumann

Sugar and Spice chor. Priest mus. Richard Strauss

1971 Oct 16,17
Union Hall

FUN IS CREATION.

Emeralds Are for Love in May chor. Priest mus.
Schumann

The following ballets were
judged by Margaret Scott:

The Wars of the Roses chor. Frances Slattery mus.
Françaix

Fun with Bach chor. Eve mus. Bach

The Outsider chor. Phillip Hurley-Warrell mus. Rodrigo

Come see the City chor. Christine Sears mus. Ibert

(Phillip Hurley-Warrell's ballet won first prize).

Appendix B

OPERAS, OPERA-BALLETS AND MUSICAL SHOWS PRODUCED AND/OR CHOREOGRAPHED BY JOANNA PRIEST.

There are individual files for Amahl and the Night Visitors and Catulli Carmina.

- 1946 Mar 27-30 Faust chor. Priest mus. Gounod
Tivoli Theatre
Adelaide
Elder Conservatorium Opera Group in conjunction with
the Australian Broadcasting Commission with the
Adelaide Concert Orchestra and The South Australian
Ballet and Arts Club.
- 1947 Mar 17,18 L'Enfant prodigue
19,21,22 chor. Priest mus. Debussy
The Hut
Adelaide University Theatre Guild Adelaide in conjunction
with The South Australian Ballet Club
- 1948 Aug 19,20,21 Carmen prod. Barbara Howard chor. Priest. mus. Bizet
Tivoli Theatre
Adelaide
The Elder Conservatorium and Students of Joanna Priest
- 1951 From Sep 7 Let's Make an Opera prod. Priest mus. Britten
Palace Theatre
Sydney
The Arts Council of Australia (New South Wales
Division) in association with Sir Benjamin Fuller
Orchestra: "Musica Viva" Ensemble
- 1954 from Feb 16 Amahl and the Night Visitors prod. and choreographer. Priest
Princess mus. Menotti
Melbourne
Australian National Theatre Movement by arrangement
with Garnet H. Carroll with The Victorian Symphony
Orchestra

- 1955 Jan 16 - Amahl and the Night Visitors. producer and choreographer
Priest mus. Menotti
Somerville
Auditorium
U. of W.A.
Australian Broadcasting Commission Orchestra
- 1957 Oct 19,21
23,26
Studio Theatre
Adelaide
Let's Make an Opera prod. Priest mus. Britten
Studio Theatre Productions
Two pianos: Mary de Crespigny Rae Quick
- 1957 Dec 18
ABV-2
Melbourne
Amahl and the Night Visitors producer and choreographer Priest
mus. Menotti
- 1958 Ap 19 -
Studio
Theatre
Adelaide
Amahl and the Night Visitors producer and choreographer Priest
mus. Menotti
Studio Theatre Production.
- 1958 Dec 6,8,
10,11,12,13
Studio Theatre
Adelaide
L'Enfant et les sortilèges chor: Priest mus. Ravel
Performed by The Studio Theatre Ballet Company
accompanied by a French recording (no further details
available.)
- 1964 Jul 28 -
Her Majestys
Brisbane
Catulli Carmina chor. Priest mus. Orff
The Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust, by
arrangement with J.C. Williamson Theatres Ltd., the
Australian Ballet Foundation and The Queensland
Symphony Orchestra
- 1966 Mar 15-22
Adelaide
Il Combattimento di Tancredi e Clorinda Pennington Hall. chor.
Priest mus. Monteverdi
Elder Conservatorium Singers and Conservatorium
Musicians

1969 Jun 16,17
20,21
Union Hall
Adelaide

Orpheus and Euridice chor. Priest

assisted by Jillian Eve and Christine Sears
with The Elder Conservatorium of Music

1973 Dec 3-22
Music Room,
Sydney Opera House

Tales from Noonameena prod. Priest author Hal Saunders
mus. Saunders and Iris Mason

Marionette Theatre of Australia

1979 Sep 12-28
Oct 3,10
Opera House
Sydney

Salome chor. Eve and Priest mus. Richard Strauss

The Australia Opera and The Elizabethan Sydney
Orchestra

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ii. Theatre Programmes

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9. In Keith Glennon File.
10. In "Linley Wilson" File.
11. To the author.

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2. Interviews by interviewers other than the author.
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v. MINUTES OF MEETINGS AND ASSOCIATED PAPERS.

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2. Studio Theatre Productions.
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viii. SOUTHERN STARS SCRIPTS

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1. Talks

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x. SCHOOL MATERIAL FILE - PROSPECTUSES

xi. VIDEOCASSETTES AND AUDIOCASSETTES (other than interviews).

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xii. MISCELLANEOUS

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iii. UNPUBLISHED THESES AND ARTICLES

iv. CATALOGUE

v. REPORTS

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vii. PAPERS IN STUDIO THEATRE PRODUCTIONS INC. File 25520.

1. Roneographed circulars.

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2. Speeches from the stage. Studio Theatre Productions Inc. File 25520.

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viii. SOUTHERN STARS SCRIPTS.

1959. 26, 28 October; 27 December. File 25509

1960. 3,17,31 January; 28 February; 27 March; 17,24 April; 22 May. File 25509.

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ix. JOANNA PRIEST: TALKS AND REPORTS FILE 25492.

1. Talks.

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x. SCHOOL MATERIAL - PROSPECTUSES File 25504

Studio Arts Centre 1975; 1976; 1977; 1979; 1981.

xi. VIDEOCASSETTES AND AUDIOCASSETTES OTHER THAN INTERVIEWS.

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