

THE THIRD ADELAIDE FESTIVAL OF ARTS

AT ADELAIDE, SOUTH AUSTRALIA

7TH MARCH, 1964

Official Opening by the Prime Minister, the Rt. Hon. Sir Robert
Menzies, KT, CH, QC, MP.

My Lord Mayor, Mr. Premier and Ladies and Gentlemen :

As her most inadequate substitute, I would like to read to you right away a message which Her Majesty The Queen Mother invited me to convey to you on this lovely and memorable occasion. She says this:

"As Patron of this, the Third Adelaide Festival of Arts, it is a great sorrow to me that I can't be with you today at this Opening Ceremony. I have learned with pleasure of the outstanding achievements of the two previous ventures. You may indeed look with pride on the results of your original idea, for the Adelaide Festival of Arts is no longer an experiment but an established feature in the cultural life of Australia with an ever-growing reputation overseas.

To all those who have been associated with this Third Festival, I offer my congratulations and my warmest good wishes for its success.

Signed ELIZABETH REGINA."

(Applause)

Sir, I have stated that I was an inadequate substitute. I had a little to do originally with the proposed visit of Her Majesty because your Premier asked me on one of my visits to London to find out, a little delicately, and of course I am famous for my delicacy, whether there might be a favourable response to an invitation. All I can tell you is that the well known and lovely eyes of Her Majesty The Queen Mother lit up with pleasure at the very thought of it. I know that she is genuinely tremendously sorry not to be here. She was looking forward to it. All I can say, as His Excellency the Governor-General said the other day in his speech at the Opening of Parliament, is that all of us will regard her visit not as cancelled but as merely postponed.

Her Majesty, I don't need to say to any of you, has an assured place in our hearts. Long long ago in this country, she captivated the hearts of millions of people and they still have the warmest place in their memories of her. She also challenges the mind, stimulates the imagination. She is really, if I may say so, with all humility, one of the very great women of the century in her own right. (Applause)

She, herself, in the Message that I have just read to you, indicates one reason why she wanted to be here. Of course there is a second reason. She really has a very soft spot in her heart for Australia. She has now, on at least two occasions, very happy memories of this country and of the people of this country and it is not to be wondered at because we, as a people, have always made it clear to her in what deep affection we hold her and this produces inevitably a feeling of warmth in her own heart, a feeling of pleasure in her own mind. She will indeed be desperately sorry not to be here.

She mentioned that this Festival is an imaginative effort. It began - this is the third occasion now - it began no doubt as an experiment. It was enormously to the credit of Adelaide and its citizens that it was an experiment made not in the largest city in Australia but in a city which had imagination, some understanding of what the arts mean in the history of the country. Those who began it must have wondered, just as those who began the Edinburgh Festival wondered. Edinburgh is not the largest city in the United Kingdom; it is not the largest city in Scotland, but the Edinburgh Festival now has a name that rings around the world, one of the great artistic events, not only in the history of Edinburgh or in the history of Scotland but in the history of the modern world.

And Sir, I speak without exaggeration when I say that this Festival in Adelaide is not only unique in Australia, is not only becoming extremely famous in Australia but that it attracts world figures, world names in the fields of art in all its various manifestations. And therefore this Festival has made the name of Adelaide, the spirit of Adelaide, the imaginative understanding of Adelaide well known all over the English-speaking world and I have no doubt that by the time the sixth Festival has been organised and put on, it will have a fame that extends to every continent in the world.

Now Sir, this is a wonderful thing for a city to achieve when it is not one of those cities with millions of people, with vast accumulated wealth, but a comparatively small city though the capital of a great State. And this, therefore, is a remarkable achievement. I hope that every person in South Australia has a just pride in it. I hope that we will all feel immensely grateful to the people who organised it, who have succeeded in the remarkable feat of bringing so many people from so many places. All I ask that you give to me is a slight suggestion of credit for the fact that whatever the other limitations on the powers of the Commonwealth may be, we have legislative authority over meteorology (Laughter) and since I know that there would be some people who would blame us if it were raining today, all I ask is a humble meed of praise for the magnificent day that we have brought with us. (Laughter) (Applause)

Sir, I myself am immensely sorry and so is my wife. She is even more sorry because she is what they call a balletomane. I am immensely sorry that we shall have to be away from here tomorrow, but so that you may understand some of the rigours of life from the point of view of a battered old Prime Minister, may I tell you that tomorrow night I have to deliver a most learned lecture lasting for forty-five minutes or fifty minutes out of Melbourne and that on Monday morning I go to Sydney to open the Annual Conference of the Graziers' Association, so that I may condole with them about the disastrously low price of wool. (Laughter)

Sir, I need to say no more. The procession waits; it is headed by the Scots Guards band, and I am told if I don't stop, it will start and once it starts, nobody will want to hear one word from me and nobody will. (Laughter) Therefore, Sir, in acknowledging the honour that you have done me in the regrettable absence of Her much-loved Majesty The Queen Mother, I declare the Festival open and in declaring it open and wishing it all success, I would rather like to be able to communicate with The Queen Mother, if I may, as her representative on this occasion and tell her that by their applause the people of Adelaide sent not only their humble duty but sent her their love.
