



PRIME MINISTER

FRIDAY, 10 APRIL, 1981

LAUNCHING OF A NEW RECORDING BY THE AUSTRALIAN CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

Mr. Chairman, members of the Orchestra, and ladies and gentlemen, I am delighted to have been asked to come here tonight to launch the new recording of the Australian Chamber Orchestra. The main reason I am pleased to be here is that it gives me an opportunity to say how delighted I am at the success of the Orchestra and with the way in which its quality has become so widely recognised in Australia and wherever it has visited overseas.

I do remember a concert in the Music Centre in Canberra in 1976 when the Orchestra was conducted by Neville Mariner and that the Orchestra would go from strength to strength was clear on that night.

Since then the Orchestra has toured in Japan and South East Asia, as the Chairman has told us, and next year I understand, it will be going to Europe. It is an orchestra of world standard of which all Australians can be very proud indeed.

There is of course another reason why I am pleased to have been asked to be here tonight. I welcome the role that private enterprise has played in supporting both the Orchestra and the record being launched this evening. I am always pleased to see private enterprise becoming involved in support for the arts in Australia. That is a habit that is catching. More and more corporations, I believe, are starting to be involved.

I congratulate 7 Records for releasing the record, and IBM for its sponsorship of the Orchestra. Thank you for giving me a copy of the record which both Tamie and I have listened to before this evening. It is beautiful music, beautifully played and very professionally recorded.

The Commonwealth Government has also assisted the Orchestra through some subsidies from the Music Board through the Australia Council. The N.S.W. Government has also provided some support.

Over the last five years, the Commonwealth Government has had to concentrate heavily on economic management. I think some people suspect that that is all we are interested in, but that is not true. But it would be entirely wrong to infer from that - as some people, as I have just suggested, might have done - that the Government is therefore not interested in the well-being of the arts and of the other broader and vastly important areas of life in Australia.

In fact, the Government's commitment to an Australia in which the arts will flourish is fundamental. We know full well what a barren country Australia would be without the Australian opera, without ballet, without art, without music, without the Chamber Orchestra. The way of life which the Government is promoting, and which I think most of us want in this country, is a way of life in which cultural opportunities in the widest sense are open to as many Australians as possible.

The Government's concentration on economic recovery over a number of years needs to be viewed in the context of that much broader commitment. If they are making profits, corporations will be more inclined to support the arts and to support the Orchestra. If they are making losses, I suspect they would find it harder to justify it to their shareholders. If the company is doing well, Governments themselves have greater revenue with which to support the arts and other areas of life in Australia. So in this sense, a sound and a growing economy is important to many of our aspirations and to many of our hopes.

We take the view that a weak economy shackles both Governments and private enterprise. Just as business will not contribute to the arts unless it is thriving, so Governments cannot contribute nearly so effectively unless the economy is sound and growing.

None of this means, however, that the Government has been inactive in areas such as the arts during the last five years. One of our objectives as a Government has been to encourage the participation of private enterprise in the arts in Australia. This helps both to civilise private enterprise and to strengthen artistic life in Australia. It encourages a diversity of endeavour which Government alone might be unable to achieve. I also believe that it provides a much greater sense of independence to areas of artistic endeavour if they know that resources are available from different corporations and private enterprise as well as from Governments. If Governments do not then do what they ought, there are other opportunities available. I think that is good.

It has never been our view that the arts in Australia should come to be dependent upon Government support and Government support alone. Wide support throughout the community is the best possible guarantee of continued freedom and development of art in Australia.

The Australian Chamber Orchestra is an excellent example of what can and has been achieved. Private support will be forthcoming for outstanding artistic quality. There are occasions when most can be achieved by Governments and private enterprise working closely together. I want to take the opportunity to mention briefly the International Cultural Corporation of Australia. That Corporation has been established recently to enable Government and private enterprise to be closely involved in the planning and presentation of international cultural projects in Australia. The Corporation brings together art administrators and business experts to manage large exhibitions and to attract large scale commercial sponsorships.

The Commonwealth Government role is to underwrite the ventures through the indemnification process. Though only recently established the Corporation has already made a significant contribution in this area. It has been able to secure sponsorship for the Chinese Classical Paintings Exhibition which is at present visiting Australia, and which has only recently opened in this great city. It has a number of future projects planned.

We welcome very much the ready and the generous response of companies and of business, foundations and individuals in providing sponsorship funds for the arts - a development which I think all Australians see as important for the future funding of arts, for the well-being and the strength of the arts in Australia.

But this evening is a celebration of the work of the Australian Chamber Orchestra, and an occasion for congratulating 7 Records and IBM on their good sense in supporting the Orchestra.

Australia is very proud of the Orchestra. I would like to wish all its members now and in the future the best of good fortune, and I am sure that the Orchestra will go from strength to strength in reputation here and overseas.

The recording of works by Mozart and Bach will further advance its reputation, and bring enjoyment of its work to a much wider audience.

Very many congratulations to the Orchestra and all of those who have contributed to its success, and may the record sell by the hundreds of thousands - however many it is meant to sell and then double the number. I have great pleasure in launching the record.