

CHAPTER ELEVEN

ARTS AND SCIENCES

ARTS

Australia, in the days when it was still known as New Holland, was a strong pole of attraction for French scientists, Francois Peron being the first name that comes to mind, as we saw in Chapter Two. The French artists who arrived on the same expedition armed with their drawing-pads, Charles Lesueur and Nicclas Petit, left a more extensive pictorial record of this country than any British artist of the time. Thirty years later, Louis de Sainson, an artist who travelled on the Dumont d'Urville expedition, again made hundreds of sketches of the landscapes and peoples of the first half of nineteenth century Australia.

Most of the scientific inventions we draw on today were produced during ~~that~~ ^{the} same period by different people in different lands. And if you happen to be German you will have been told that most inventions were the work of Germans, while if you happen to be British ...

The French claim to the spawning of photography, however, is rarely disputed. Niepce and Daguerre invented the process in about 1826 and the first camera was called a daguerreotype, a name also given to the first photographs, on silver plates, produced in 1838. Another Frenchman, Felix Nadar, an artist, writer, pioneer of balloon flying and sympathiser of the Commune, became the world's first celebrated photographer as well as the first to take aerial photographs. Antoine Fauchery, described in Chapter Three, was a worthy disciple of Nadar.

Thanks to the French, photography, or daguerreotypie, came to Australia very early. Jack Cato, in "The Story of the Camera in Australia", says: "There is reason to believe that a Frenchman .. took the first photograph to be made in Australia". The event appears to have taken place in April 1841 in the store owned by Didier Joubert, also one of our earlier acquaintances (see Chapter Six). Cato further mentions Fauchery's 1857 Stereomonoscopes, as he used to call them, along with "the Argus art critic devoting

a full column to reviewing them in flattering terms". Indeed Fauchery's photos, some of which are reproduced in "Sun Pictures of Victoria" by Dianne Reilly and Jennifer Carew, are truly stunning

But after the great gold rush days, it seems that sciences and the arts somehow parted company ... at least as far as the French in Australia are concerned. Yet scores of French people were to arrive here and make a name in music, the fine arts, writing, sciences and, more recently, in theatre, radio and cinema.

MUSIC

The first French musician of some talent and renown who we were able to trace was violinist Joseph Gotrot, who came here with his soprano wife in the 1840s. Later on, performers would come and go, the next one to actually remain being Leon Caron. Born in France in 1850, Caron was shortlisted for a Prix de Rome, the top annual award for young French artists, before migrating to Australia when still in his twenties. He composed the "Victoria" cantata, which opened the 1880 Melbourne International Exhibition.

Caron's cantata was performed to a packed audience in December 1984 at the exhibition "The French Presence in Victoria", held to mark the 150th anniversary of the state. In a guide to the exhibition, editor Jim Davidson wrote: "Caron's cantata was in the grand tradition. With its choir of 1000 voices and an orchestra of 150, it was probably the last gasp of that French revolutionary tradition, going back through Berlioz to Mehul, which composed not so much for massed choirs as explicitly for armies". Leon Caron later moved to Sydney where his skill as a conductor was well appreciated. He described the Australian voices he admired as "the best in the world". Caron died in Sydney in 1905.

The next International Exhibition held in Australia, in 1888/9, attracted yet more French musicians. Oscar Comettant, mentioned earlier, himself a composer and music critic invited as a judge to the Exhibition, was impressed by compatriot Henry Kowalski, of Sydney. "Sydney has had the good fortune to possess for the last eight years an outstanding virtuoso pianist and composer who was among the most highly thought of in Paris and is much missed there", he wrote.

Comettant in fact seemed more interested in pianos than in musicians. Only a few of them were French-made, Government House had an Erard and some of Melbourne's best families owned Pleyels. But while France contributed in quality, it was well behind Germany in quantity, which supplied much cheaper "evil-sounding machines". Comettant's greatest source of amazement was to ascertain that "no country has more grand pianos per head of population: 700,000 have been shipped since settlement".

The possession of pianos of course did not signify Australia was the most musical nation on earth. But it DID mean there were opportunities for music teachers with the general public, far more than in our own times. As the century drew to a close, it seems that quite a few French musicians of talent had settled in Sydney. Leon-Paul Blouet, better known by his pseudonym Max O'Rell, wrote in John Bull & Co (1894) * that at a banquet in Sydney nearly all ^{the} musicians were French. Apart from Kowalski, he quotes "virtuoso violonist M. Poussard, barytone Deslouis, pianist Madame Charbonnet."

Those names are also the ones that ~~appear~~ most frequently in advertisements offering tuition, as the artists made a living not so much through performing in concerts than through giving lessons; Kowalski was the principal of a ^{private} school of music.

But by the end of World War One, French musicians had apparently vanished from the Australian scene, and there is no further trace of a musical family until the arrival in Adelaide in 1950 of the Dupuys, the father, who was without a trade or capital, the mother and six children, all aged under twelve. One of the children, Etienne Fennell née Dupuy, recounted her early life here in an ^hentralling seven-page letter we would have liked to have reproduced in full. While some of it bears no relation to music, her account communicates in a rare and poignant manner the feeling of depaysement, the loneliness away from the home environment, and the harsh life intertwined with strong hopes, of an exiled French family. Etienne writes:

* This book sums up with humour the author's impressions in various British colonies. The title signifies that O'Rell concluded they were all like branches of the one company.

"In the 1950s, a French family was a rarity here in Adelaide especially one like ours, with six lovely children usually dressed in white, smocked frocks, white shoes and socks and white gloves! Imagine, Australians had never seen such elegant children ... we became notorious and were asked to perform at the first concert for 'New Australians' sometime in 1951 or 52. My father was very musical and used to have us all sing. ... We stood in a row in order of size and sang our hearts out. We sang a pot-pourri of traditional French songs ... Next day, we had made the headlines of the Advertiser. "

After that Etienne's mother embarked on a ^{successful} teaching career. Her father, ^{following} ~~after~~ a succession of short-time jobs, went to try his luck in New Caledonia, taking with him all the money left to the family ... and losing every penny of it before disappearing from their lives. The older children were forced to go to work to support the younger ones, but Etienne's mother allowed her to keep 10 shillings from her first pay packet to pay for singing lessons. Thus a vocation was fulfilled and a career begun.

In 1968, Frenchman Philippe Beaussant, then a French university lecturer, became the conductor of a musical group called "The Armidians", of which Etienne was "a foundation member and its only soprano". The name was inspired by Lulli's opera Armide, the first work performed by the group. The Armidians toured extensively in Sydney, Canberra and Melbourne, where they delighted music-lovers. Beaussant returned to France in 1972 where he became a well-known writer and had several books published. Etienne married an Australian lecturer of French at Flinders University and teaches French and Italian as well as a French for Musicians course for the singing students at the Elder Conservatorium. She remains "the only person in Adelaide who is French and musically trained", ^{and is} therefore often in demand to help fellow singers perform French opera in what is considered to be the artistic capital of Australia.

The need to teach French to students of singing has also been manifest in other states. The Melbourne Conservatorium has employed Madame Moreau to that end for many years. More recently, at Melbourne Teachers College, French-born lecturer Daniele Kemp led a singing group mainly comprised of student teachers in

145

a class which has become a regular part of language teacher training. The group recorded a dozen songs on a cassette in 1981, one of them composed by Daniele Kemp, who also wrote an accompanying book "French Songs aux Antipodes", explaining their use in the classroom.

11-3 MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

Jean-Louis Coquillat arrived from France in 1968, imbued with a strong desire to live for and by music. To finance his ambition of taking organ lessons, he began by driving a taxi. And now, and for the past 15 years, he has made a living from making harpsichords in Melbourne. The instruments are manufactured, in the real sense of the word, with the greatest attention and care. It takes Jean-Louis three to four months to complete just one, usually on a "made to order" basis, with every component perfectly finished before assembling the whole.

Since 1981, French organ-builder Michel Alcouffe has also been settled in Melbourne, with his wife and four children. Alcouffe practised the rare trade of organ-building in France, where he was a specialist in the restoration of organs housed in old historic buildings. In Australia, he runs his own business with success due to the use of methods different from those practised here. His organs, he says, are made or restored "the French way", according to a method of harmonisation known in French as à l'identique. Adaptable to any style of music, it enables an organist to use a wide repertory, whereas the English style of "romantic" harmonisation is only suitable for a smaller repertory.

FINE ARTS

It is hardly surprising that the migration of artists between France and Australia has generally been French-bound rather than the other way around. France in general, and Paris in particular, has for the best part of the last two centuries served as a pole of attraction to artists from across the world. At a recent French-Australian research seminar, one member asked: "Nearly all Australian artists at some time went to France to study or to look, and many stayed there. Have there really never been any French artists who took the opposite direction?" The reply is not entirely negative, and in fact the trend has been changing recently.

A few of the nineteenth century French artists who migrated here finally turned to other fields. Maurice Carton, for example, already mentioned, was first listed in a state directory as a "teacher of drawing" but later turned to the teaching of the French language and its literature. Berthe Mouchette, a painter of real talent, also moved into the field of education when she opted to run a school.

The only fulltime French-born artist last century seems to have been Lucien Henry, a communard deported to New Caledonia who decided to settle in Sydney after being pardoned in 1880. He was an instructor in modelling at the Mechanics School of Arts in Sydney, and became the first lecturer in fine arts of the Sydney Technical College. Among the designs he left behind were the stained glass windows of the Sydney Town Hall. But perhaps his greatest legacy was to foment interest in the vast decorating potential of Australian wildflowers. In the July 1986 issue of "Explorations", Miles Lewis said: "Henry was particularly interested in the use of Australian floral motifs in decoration, at a time when this ran counter to all contemporary Australian fashion ... the actual means of promoting the idea is French, for, in the long French tradition of invented orders of architecture ... Henry invented an Australian order based on the waratah". The fascination of the flower was so great for Lucien Henry that he wrote the "Legend of the Waratah".

Mora

In contemporary times, Mirka^A is a living contradiction of the idea that Australian artists are forced to emigrate because this country offers neither recognition nor economic self-sufficiency.

Mirka was born in Paris in 1928, and as a child endured life in a Nazi concentration camp near Paris, where she was one of the lucky few to be freed, escaping transportation to the death camps. It was the story of Antoine Fauchery (see Chapter Three) which spawned her attraction for Australia, she told us, and which finally brought her here.

She was an adult, with a husband and two-year-old son when she arrived in 1951. But she was also an artist at heart who had hardly stopped painting since the age of 14. Yet her craftsmanship, she said, only really began in Australia.

Through sheer determination to become a "real" artist rather than a mere brush-pusher, Mirka at age 27 engaged in the most thorough learning of the art of drawing. For a year or two, she also made dresses for the best fashion houses in Melbourne, where her work was highly praised. Yet she now admits (should we believe her?) she had no prior experience: at night, when her husband was asleep, Mirka borrowed his suits, sometimes unstitching them, so as to study how they were made and master the techniques of finishing.

She believes that sewing was excellent training for drawing. But as soon as it became possible, Mirka began to work seven or eight hours a day "in search of a style". Indeed, she certainly captured a very personal style, and one can tell a "Mirka Mora" at first glance without being a professional art critic.

After sewing, other commercial ventures followed in Melbourne, largely on the initiative of husband George Mora. The "Mirka Cafe" in Exhibition Street, then the Balzac Restaurant in East Melbourne, finally the Tolarno Art Gallery and Restaurant in St. Kilda, where Mirka painted the murals still adorning the walls. The couple gave an especially French and artistic flavour to these establishments, which at the time were unique and highly popular on the Melbourne social scene.

In the late 1960s, Mirka separated from her husband and three sons. A long period of sadness pervaded her life, and with it the realisation that she must perfect her art and live entirely from it.

In 1970 she designed "Mirka's Colour Book", which proved to be a sales success and marked the beginning of her financial independence. Around the same time she embarked on making dolls in addition to her painting. Asked what had prompted the idea, she said that during her days of sadness she had begun to cut out drawings at random, only realising later that they looked like dolls. That inspired her to make original dolls herself.

Mirka's first "one-man" show took place in 1956 at the Contemporary Art Society, the first of many exhibitions since. In 1964, she created the designs for a ballet.

In more recent years, Mirka has been much in demand for large-scale works long to complete. One of Melbourne's famous painted trams was embellished by Mirka in 1978. Her first vast mural appears to have been commissioned by the Ayr (North Queensland) municipal library, completed in 1983. The same year she went to live and work for several months in Perth, where she created a 60-metre long mural painting for the Perth festival. In 1986, she created a mosaic relief at the Flinders Street station in Melbourne.

Mirka's works are on display in places such as the Canberra National Gallery, the Melbourne Performing Arts Museum and various galleries in Sydney, Ararat and Brisbane, as well as overseas. Several films have also been made on or around her work. A beautiful album simply entitled "Mirka" by Ulli Beier, with photos by Paul Cox, published in 1980, is a worthy reflection of her talent and of her personality. Beier writes: "the dark gypsy-like lady radiates a warm, bright light ... her presence literally makes the world light up ... no visitor can escape the impact of the world she has built".

We can only share this view. Mirka's art, she says, was influenced by the first painters she met here, Arthur Boyd, Charles Blackman, Don Laycock. An Eastern European influence is also detectable, a reminder perhaps of Russian icones. But her style is entirely her own. A reflection of her luminous personality perhaps? Or is the latter a reflection of Mirka's artistic achievements?

Another French-born painter who has lived in Melbourne for a good many years practises an art which bears no resemblance to either French or Australian art forms. His name is Andre Sollier, and he paints solely in the Japanese tradition of "Sumi-e", connected to Zen. Sollier, whose wife is Japanese, has held 10 Sumi-e exhibitions in Japan. Apart from painting, he directs his own Sumi-e Academy here and has produced a film, "The Magic Brush". His

works hang in Kyoto and in Melbourne and have been exhibited in at least 30 locations across the world. 149

Henry Lavie, initially an artist in France, divided up his working years here between the food industry and design. He created stage sets for Channel Seven ^{in Melbourne} during a long period of time and also left a mark as a cartoonist.

Before him, another French caricaturist, Emile Mercier, who was born in New Caledonia, left his mark in the Australian press from the 1920s to the 1950s. He contributed to Sydney's Daily Mirror, the Bulletin and other newspapers before working fulltime for the Sydney Sun, for which he produced the daily cartoon. He retired in 1968.

A few young French Australian artists also have appeared on the scene from time to time. Apart from Jean-Marc Le Pechoux, who we were unable to trace, there is Jean-Marc Dupré, for instance, who arrived in Australia in 1978 after studying in Morocco and France. After graduating from the Victorian College of the Arts, he began screen printing and etching on the theme of "Abstract Encounters". He then learnt photography as an additional skill, started a photographic business in 1984 and has become especially interested in theatre photography. He says he finds a greater scope for his field of work here than in France.

11-5 ART GALLERIES

George Mora's name was mentioned above, and we could not give a better résumé of his prestigious career and work on the Australian art scene than by quoting one of the current histories of Australian Art, where George has left a lasting impact:

"Born France. Patron of the arts and gallery proprietor. Member and founding chairman of the Australian Commercial Galleries Association. Director of Tolarno Galleries, Melbourne. Former vice-president of the Museum of Modern Art and Design, Melbourne, and president of the Contemporary Arts Society"

The Tolarno Galleries in St. Kilda, which he runs with his son William, is his principal activity in the contemporary arts field today.

While George Mora's activities go back to the 1950s, a more recent arrival is Sydney's Stanislas de Hautecloque, founder and owner with his wife Diana of Stadia Graphics Gallery.

In France, de Hautecloque is a most prestigious name, the real surname of Marshal Leclerc, the greatest soldier of the Free French Forces of World War Two. In fact, Stanislas revealed in an interview that he was a first cousin of the maréchal. Born in Normandy in 1939, Stanislas de Hautecloque graduated as ingénieur des travaux publics (professional engineer in public works or construction) and was employed by Dumez, a French company specialised in large-scale public works projects. Dumez had won building contracts in several Australian states and despatched Stanislas to this country in 1966. On completion of the works in 1973, the young engineer stayed on, opening his Paddington gallery only a year later, in 1974.

Stanislas did not take the easy road chosen by some gallery-owners of waiting to be contacted by artists eager to reach the public and taking a commission on their works. Instead he opted for a specialist field, graphic works by 19th and 20th century masters, usually limited edition etchings and original numbered prints - all obtained for exhibition for a few weeks only. Gathering the works must be a mammoth task, as most come from overseas although Australian exhibits are by no means excluded.

151

A separate catalogue is devoted to each exhibition, extremely well printed and prepared with meticulous care: any print offered for sale (NOTE - are they all?) is cross-referenced to books and catalogues concerning the artist, allowing prospective buyers to check they are "listed" prints.

Past exhibitions have included ^{among others,} Fine Prints of the Belle Epoque, Picasso: the Vollard Suite, Matisse, Jacques Villon, Bonnard (exceptionally these were watercolours and original drawings), and Masters of Printmaking. Among Australian artists John Olsen ranks high.

Several thousand visitors attend each exhibition and our impression was that most of the works displayed find acquirers. Hauteclouque ~~however~~ expresses ^{particular satisfaction} ~~his interest in the financial aspects of his ability~~ in "having educated a section of Australian public".

go to next page

6 WRITERS

We do not intend to include in this section authors of documentary, scientific or educational books, but only the authors of what can be considered to be genuine literature ... whether it be good, or not so good.

Writer Celeste Mogador, or Celeste de Chabrilan, was mentioned in Chapter Three on the goldfields. Her life in Victoria in the mid nineteenth century inspired three or four of her many novels and plays. Later Marie Lyon wrote Vers La Lumiere in Adelaide, a novel which was translated into English and published in Australia in 1911 under the title "The Black Pearl".

Nearer to our times came Paul Wenz, a member of the Wenz wool-buying family. Born in Rheims, France, in 1869, Wenz landed in Australia in 1892, working first as a jackeroo on grazing stations where he gained a wealth of knowledge and experience which would later surface in his writings. After some years spent earning his living as a wool-buyer, he again opted for country life, marrying and settling on a New South Wales station where he lived on until 1939.

Although the French-educated Wenz chose to write entirely in French, his novels, culturally, are totally Australian, making them at the least fascinating literary curios.

Between 1910 and 1930, nine books of novels and short stories signed by Paul Wenz were published. But he had in fact begun writing earlier, under the pseudonym of Paul Warrego. Much of his work provides an extremely interesting illustration of what a French Australian writer could produce, with the help of a strong imagination, from such a mixed cultural background.

In a 1905 tale entitled L'Evadé (The Escapee), Warrego/Wenz recounts the plight of two sailors who find a man hiding in a barge. His name is Jardon and he is one of four political detainees escaped from New Caledonia, the other three having died at sea. The story explains that a French detective in Sydney has at the time been assigned to help Australian police return any such French escapees, against a financial reward. But it

transpires, by a quirk of fate, that one of the two sailors, named Coupin, is himself a onetime escapee who has since settled down as an apparent Australian. Jordan recognises Coupin but at first remains silent. The sailors write to the police in Cooktown, hoping to obtain the reward, and the plot subsequently thickens following Jordan's threat to denounce Coupin if he is captured by the Australians. The two Frenchmen finally decide to flee together, the police send in "black-trackers" on their footsteps, but five days later the bodies of the two escapees are discovered after their death at the hands of head-hunters.

Although this story could have been 100 per cent true, not in 1905 but twenty years earlier, the French readers at whom it was aimed, must have viewed it as being just as fantastic as the tales written by Jules Verne at the time. Jules Verne, by the way, never left his home town of Rouen, and was very interested in Australia.

Only one of Wenz's works was ever translated into English, under the title "The Diary of a New Chum". The English version, however, somehow lacks the charm and humour of the original French, just as a writer such as Henry Lawson, who is comparable to Wenz, would probably lose much of his flavour in anything but the original text.

11-7 THEATRE AND RADIO

Were we to include amateur theatre, the whole of this book would not suffice to list and briefly describe French theatre performances through the history of Australia. Performing plays in the language has been an essential part of secondary schooling for over a century, ^{especially} at the time when French was a compulsory subject and to a lesser degree since. Alliance Francaise centres and French university departments would have felt they were not fulfilling their duty had they failed to stage regular performances, destined to boost the self-assurance of the actors in French rather than to entertain their student public, on whom the gist of the plays was, and is, often lost, due to the atrocious accents of the performers.

This book is only concerned with French Australians - and not just French-speaking Australians - who have attempted to make a living on the stage, or in radio, whether it be in French or in English.

The most "professional" of them all, in our opinion, is young, alive and still working. Jean-Pierre Mignon, born in France in 1951, has brought to Australia something quite different to mere "French theatre". Rather it is a completely new and original style of directing plays and, typically, the enterprise he founded in 1980 and has led ever since, is called the Australian Nouveau Theatre ("ANT"). First and foremost he wants it to be "Australian", not just an import. In "Nouveau", the message is that the theatre is altogether new while being French-inspired.

r/ Mignon's press-book indicates his endeavour initially failed to rally a high degree of support and perhaps even attracted some measure of embarrassment. This is hardly surprising. His style of imaginative and highly challenging direction is exactly what some Australians would pay steep prices to see and praise in Europe and America, but have decided once and for all just cannot happen in their own country.

The young Frenchman's entire life has so far been devoted to the theatre. He began at the age of 16 to train with the Marc Renaudin Company in Paris, and was given his first chance as a director in Brecht's "The Exception and the Rule" in 1970, then aged 19. After more years acting, learning, directing and teaching drama at theatre workshops, Mignon left France, trekked across Asia and arrived in Sydney in June 1978. It was there that he directed his first play in this country before moving to Melbourne the following year.

Only the occasional production put on by the theatre has been in French. The majority are in English, including several plays translated from the French, in particular Moliere's Tartuffe, Don Juan and Le Misanthrope, and the contemporary works of Raymond Cousse, translated especially for Mignon's theatre.

11-15
155

Mignon has constantly stressed his hopes of staging as many Australian plays as possible but says it is difficult to find the right one at the right time. He did direct an *avant-garde* dramatisation of the "Summer of the Seventeenth Doll" however. But classic playwrights, such as Shakespeare and Chekov, continue to lure more spectators to his theatre, Anthill in South Melbourne, than do as yet completely unknown dramatists.

Yet the hard work and innovation of Jean-Pierre and his company has progressively carved out a place for Anthill on the Australian artistic scene.

Another onetime stage performer now turned broadcaster to have made a mark on Australia is Jacqueline Lesage. From Montluçon in central France, Jacqueline studied at the Clermont-Ferrand university, where Michel Foucault was one of her professors, and emigrated to Australia in 1969. She was an amateur actress in France and pursued the calling in Australia with then companion Igor Persan, founder of the bilingual English-French theatre group which occupied the Claremont Theatre of South Yarra for some four years from 1970 to 1974. Persan, also French-born, directed and managed the theatre, producing five plays a year and gathering together enough subscribers to defray all costs. After 1974 he joined the University of Newcastle on a semi-teaching semi-theatrical stint, but has now left Australia again.

The players meanwhile were forced to take extra jobs to supplement their incomes and Jacqueline for a while was a partner in a French restaurant in Melbourne, the "Bull-Frog" and one year taught at Prince's Hill High School. It was during a craze to burn down schools, and at Prince's Hill cramped temporary mobile units were set up, with pupils taught in shifts and teachers grossly overworked. Jacqueline recalls she was forced to teach Australian history ... in her strong French accent.

Lesage impressed theatregoers with highly gifted performances in the plays of Ionesco and Beckett, and certainly could have had a good stage career in a French-speaking country. In 1972,

she joined Actors' Equity and began to play small roles in A.B.C. programmes. She was also occasionally asked to stand in at Radio Australia, the A.B.C.'s international broadcasting department, and in 1974 was finally appointed a "broadcast officer" at the network. On the day of her return from a two-year overseas trip in 1978, she was appointed head of the French section of Radio Australia, a post she has held down ever since.

Radio Australia's brief is to broadcast abroad, through Asia and through the Pacific and Indian Oceans. As French-speaking listeners are spread right across these regions, Radio Australia has always maintained programmes in French, simultaneously with others in English and in the Asian languages. Lesage's staff are necessarily "francophone", some of them from France, such as Jean-Jacques Portail, Jean-Gabriel Manguy, Christian Seruzier and Pascale Wagner, others from Mauritius, Jean Roche and Arline Noyaux, and others still from the Pacific. They write, edit and read their own texts, on current affairs, music, agriculture or literature. But this does not prevent the odd complaint from French officialdom over what is occasionally seen in Paris as yet one more instance of Australian governmental interference in France's internal affairs. For the editorial line taken by the A.B.C. can at times differ from the one aired by Paris in its Pacific territories.

Among French Australians who made inroads into English-language broadcasting are Michel Petit, who emigrated to Australia in the early 1950s on the heels of relatives who had taken up farming in northern Tasmania. Petit worked as a part-time broadcaster in Launceston before joining AWA in Melbourne for a seven-year stint as a radio producer. With his wife pining to return home, he left for France in 1960 but, as a compromise, took a job at the Australian Embassy in Paris where he has for many years now played a vital role in the trade section, a post he is likely to keep until retirement.

More recently, French-born Isabelle Rosemberg was the writer, interviewer and producer of a four-times weekly current affairs programme on Melbourne's Community Radio, 3CR, called the "Stick Together Show". Sponsored by a number of trade unions, it

chose a refreshingly different approach than the mainstream media, presenting the ordinary worker's point of view on subjects of debate or situations of industrial conflict, instead of focusing primarily on union leadership or official spokespeople.

The path which led Sydney's Jacques Delaruelle to become involved in broadcasting as well as in writing is an unusual one. A recent immigrant, who arrived in Australia in 1982 at the age of 29 with his Australian wife, Delaruelle came to both fields not by way of first producing radio programmes in French, nor of creative writing in his mother tongue, but through an independent and active interest in multiculturalism, and the development of writing abilities in the English language. He says his inspiration to write was born via the use of a foreign language, English, but rejects for the moment the label of "creative" writer.

Delaruelle has written a number of in-depth studies, including 60 to 90 minute features for the A.B.C.'s Radio Helicon on French writers and thinkers such as Stendhal, Rimbaud and Montaigne, as well as scripts for "Books and Writing". Apart from his radio work, he has had over a score of articles published in The Age Monthly Review and also in other magazines.

11-8 CINEMA

More French Australians have left a mark in this field than in any other artistic or scientific endeavour.

Their role goes back almost as far as the birth of cinema, which like photography was by and large a French invention. The first public showing of the cinematographe invented by the brothers Lumiere, who discovered how to project their own moving pictures on a screen, took place in Paris on 28 December, 1895. Only eight months later, a representative of the Lumiere brothers, Sestier, disembarked in Sydney to organise a series of demonstrations of the new art, which immediately became the rage in the town. In November 1896, Sestier, aided by French ~~man~~ ^{*Australian Alfred} Perrier, ~~who was to stay on in Australia,~~ filmed the Melbourne Cup, laying the foundations of the Australian cinema industry. Said the Bulletin newspaper

at the time: "It is something beautifully appropriate that the first Australian picture produced by the new machine should be a horse-race".

Almost on the heels of the Lumiere Brothers, two other Frenchmen were to take cinema to the four corners of the globe. Charles Pathé (1863-1957) was the first manufacturer of celluloid cinema films. Léon Gaumont (1863-1946) in 1902 became the first to produce sound recordings to accompany the films, and later was to set up a cinema company still thriving today.

During the first decade of the century, the fledgling film industry was almost totally French-dominated, the largest place taken by the Pathé Brothers, Charles and Emile. Even in the United States, generally viewed as the "home of the movie industry" Pathé Bros sold twice as many films in the year 1908 than all the American producers put together.

In Australia, the Pathé company made some 300 to 500 short newsreels between 1909 and 1914 on almost every conceivable topic of interest to the upper and middle classes, and even acquired the rights to film all of the nation's football matches. *Their main director was Maurice Bertel (French born) who became an Australian.*

In more recent years a new generation of French Australian film-makers and film people has emerged, names such as Henri Safran, Philippe Mora, Patric Juillet and Daniel Chambon, and perhaps coming years will see new names added to the list.

Henri Safran, born in Paris in 1932, came to Australia in 1960 to work with the ABC as a producer of television documentaries and dramas. He returned to Europe in 1966, interrupting his Australian career, only to return in 1975. It was only a year later that he was to be widely acclaimed by critics and filmgoers alike as the director of "Stormboy", the story of a young boy's friendship with a wild pelican. The following year he directed "Listen to the Lion", described as "the best hours in the life of a Sydney dentist". In 1982, his "Norman loves Rose", an unusual

love story set amid Sydney's wealthy Jewish community, won him several awards. Safran may have failed ^{so far} to duplicate the success of his first film "Stormboy" but has nonetheless gained an international name as an Australian film-maker and is still involved in the cinema. At the start of 1987 he was engaged in the production of "Business as Usual", a major mystery feature.

Philippe Mora came from France as a child, the son of painter Mirka Mora and George Mora, gallery director, both mentioned above. He too began painting, with budding success, but was to shrug aside a potential career as an artist, fleeing the strain of the family environment at the age of 17 to try his hand as a film director in England. In a fifteen-year career in cinema, Mora has become one of Australia's most international young directors, with two films made in England, three in Australia, two in the U.S.A., one in Canada and one, U.S.-financed, in Czechoslovakia. Mora's themes and style, his early stated bent for comic-strip aesthetics, have brought a mixed response from the critics who consider him, however, as a force to be contended with on the celluloid scene. His feature films include "Swastika", "The Return of Captain Invincible" and "Howling II", with a third "Howling" on the way. He is young and talented enough to generate films which can move a wide audience, and one of his latest, "Death of a Soldier", is certainly a step in that direction. The film was inspired by the true story of an American soldier in Australia in 1942, who was tried and executed for a series of murders.

Patric Juillet, who set up a successful restaurant in Sydney, shifted his interests towards film-making after settling down with top-ranking Australian actress Wendy Hughes. He is the script-writer of "Remember Me", shot in 1985 for television, joint producer of "Unfinished Business" and "Warm Nights on a Slow Moving Train". The Juillet-Hughes couple are planning their own series of co-productions.

Daniel Chambon was a high school French teacher for several years, bothered by an irresistible itch for the cinema. He focussed first on French films, starting his own company, "Film Nouveau", in 1984, which imported a number of recent French releases that otherwise would probably never have been screened in Australia.

But the problems of penetrating the Australian distribution channels prompted him to establish instead, along with partners John Tatoulis and Colin South, a company named Media World Pty Ltd which mainly produces television films. The trio, who are intent on maintaining the international flavour of the enterprise, produce films for SBS multicultural television, with coming productions to include "The Australian Cameleers" and "Poor Rich Girls".

SCIENCE

The greatest French contribution in this field was undoubtedly the work carried out by Francois Peron and his colleagues in the years 1801 and 1802, a contribution already covered in our second chapter.

If the Frenchman Peron was indeed the father of modern anthropology, ^{this} could help to explain why there appear to be a far greater number of adepts and followers of the science in France than in any other country. In contemporary times, French anthropologists such as Claude Levi-Strauss and Jacques Soustelle have done more to unravel the lives of the Indian peoples scattered across the American continent than researchers closer to base, while other French anthropologists have delved deep into the mysteries of the Kalahari^{or} of New Guinea as well as into those of other "primitive" or vanishing races.

The Australian Aborigines in consequence have aroused great interest in France ever since the white man set foot on this continent. Among the early photographers, Antoine Fauchery, as said earlier, was so keen to amass a photographic documentation on the Aborigines that he travelled to several "reserves" in the country to take his pictures. In early French books on Australia the Aborigines occupy a much larger space than their numbers would warrant, and this interest has grown even further in recent years. Apart from Francoise Dussart, we cannot quote, unfortunately, the names of all those French anthropologists who over the last 30 years have travelled to Australia on assignments of one or two years to study the lives of the Aborigines, generally in Darwin or in Alice Springs.

But before their time, French scientists also contributed to extend the body of knowledge available on Australian flora, fauna, and nature in general.

21

see page 1
Consul in
Paris

Francois, Comte de Castelnau, arrived in Melbourne in 1866 and was to remain there until his death in 1880. He too is buried in the Melbourne General Cemetery. Castelnau had been despatched as the Consul for France, but was essentially a scientist with some 80 to 90 books and papers to his name. His consular appointments - prior to Australia he had been posted in South America and Siam - were therefore largely a token of support from the French government for his work as a naturalist. In Australia, he concentrated especially on fish and insects, publishing books on the Australian Coleoptera and on native fish. He was also an active member of the Zoological and Entomological societies.

Collecting specimens for his work obviously forced Castelnau to devote much of his time to travel. It was on a trip from Melbourne to Brisbane, with a return hook through Sydney, that he was accompanied by his secretary Edmond Marin La Meslee, also a scientist, with a specialisation in geography. A veteran of the Franco-Prussian War of 1870/71, who also lived for a spell in Mauritius, Marin La Meslee was at the time involved in writing what would be one of the most refreshing and informative works on Australia. First published in Paris in 1883 under the title l'Australie Nouvelle, the book was translated into English and published in 1973, with an introduction by historian Russel Ward, as "The New Australia".

A quarter of a century after Fauchery, Marin La Meslee paints a far more optimistic portrait of the land, where he finally decided to settle after leaving Castelnau in Sydney and marrying an Australian. He was "bored to death" by Brisbane, but seemed to delight in Melbourne and Sydney, singing the praises of the city parks and giving a lively and almost poetic description of Melbourne Cup Day. He claims there is less crime and bad manners than in French cities and says that: "strongly independent by nature ... the Australians believe themselves every bit as good as they are ... simple and forthright in manner themselves, they cordially detest the affected fops".

In Sydney, Marin La Meslee played an active part in the foundation of the Royal Geographical Society of Australia, spending most of his subsequent ^{time} ~~career~~ as secretary of the Society. He did

11-22
162

not live to an old age, however, dying from drowning in Sydney Harbour with his wife in 1893, at the age of 42.

The last century also saw the unfolding of one of the most interesting French Australian scientific adventures, that of the Sydney Pasteur Institute.

The story began with a Government of New South Wales notice dated 31 August, 1887, published in every leading newspaper across the world, offering the sum of £ 25,000 to any person capable of ridding the colony of a pest of rabbits, while not harming any livestock.

We do not know how many people responded, but one of the replies was signed "Louis Pasteur" and was written to the Editor of "Le Temps", one of the newspapers which had published the original notice.

In his reply, Pasteur suggested the spreading of a disease to rabbits alone, by inoculating a number who then would transmit the deadly illness to others. The French scientist also wrote that he had already experimented with such a disease, called choléra des poules (chicken or fowl cholera), and therefore was interested in helping New South Wales solve its problem, adding that larger livestock would be immune to the ailment.

Pasteur at the time was a scientist of international repute, with his discoveries in the field of micro-biology already behind him. So it is hardly surprising that an agreement was quickly reached and that an Institut Pasteur was opened in Sydney the following year. To direct it, Pasteur sent his nephew Adrien Loir. And even before the institute had been fully set up, on Rodd Island in an arm of the Parramatta River near Leichhardt, Loir's team had demonstrated successfully that a devastating Australian sheep disease known as Cumberland disease, was in fact the already-known "anthrax". Pasteur had in the past developed a vaccine against anthrax, and some 250,000 sheep were inoculated throughout the infected area, stopping further spread of the ailment. A cattle disease known as "blackleg" was also identified as a form of

anthrax and likewise, and most successfully, treated with vaccines.

A list of Dr Loir's works shows that among 15 of them, 12 were the result of research carried out in Australia, most having started as papers or reports actually published either in Sydney or in Brisbane.

But meanwhile, the project to eradicate ^{the} pestilential rabbit failed to get off the ground. Public opinion was mounting in opposition to the experiments, and Rodd Island slowly but surely began to acquire a most sinister reputation. One letter to the editor published in the Sydney Morning Herald in August 1892 said the experiments "provoked fear among quite a few locals ... MICROBES in Australia ... terrible danger to New South Wales ... why don't they make their experiments in France?"

Even though the scheme had been initiated by the Australians and not by the French, the government of New South Wales apparently chose the easiest solution, washing its hands of the whole affair and blaming the foreigners. Before the year 1892 was up, the Pasteur Institute had closed and was packing to return.

It is interesting to note, however, that while the idea of inoculating rabbits with a contagious disease may have been unacceptable in 1892, it would be adopted around a half century later, when myxomatosis was introduced to kill off Australia's rabbit population.

In more recent years, the scientific field which apparently has attracted the largest - although still very small - number of French people to Australia has been marine biology.

The Australian Institute of Marine Science^c in Townsville generally has a few French scientist/divers on its staff. But the doyen in the field, at the time of writing, was Paul Henry Fisher, a recognized world authority on marine life in general and on Saxostrea (oysters) in particular. Because he married into one of the French Australian wool-buying families, Professor Fisher, now in his eighties, chose to take his retirement in Mosman, Sydney. He had the chair of zoology at the Saigon university

when the country was still under French rule.

Upon his arrival in Australia from France in 1964 to begin his retirement, Fisher was given a job connected with the setting up of the Marine Biology Research Station at Heron Island. He also became at the time the editor/publisher of an international journal in French on the continuous study of shellfish. He abandoned the Journal de Conchyliologie in 1979 but, thanks to Fisher, Sydney for some years was the world centre for the gathering, publishing and transmitting of findings related to that particular group ~~(spec.~~ of marine life.

Aside from specialist publications in that area, Paul Henry Fisher also wrote, in French, les Animaux d'Australie: la faune la plus étrange du monde. (Animals of Australia: the strangest fauna in the world), published in Paris in 1959.

It is a pity this highly readable book was never translated into English. A first chapter on "Living Fossils", animals extinct all but here, is followed by one on the mythical animals of the aborigines, the Bunyip, the Moha Moha (great snake), the Kadimakara and other reptiles. Fisher also notes the homage paid by Australian zoologists to French discoveries of fauna in this country. The book in fact contains a mass of information on the "strangest fauna", from tree-climbing fish to white ants, parrots and flying possums, and even dwells on the taming of dingos.

His conclusion is that Australia is certainly "Among all the countries of the world, the one where friendship between humans and animals has reached the highest level".

X Les Animaux d'Australie: la faune la plus étrange du monde.

CHAPTER TWELVE

SPORTS

2. MANY SURPRISES BUT ONE GREAT PLUS

Other books about migrant groups in Australia, especially those in this ^{Heritage} series, devote a section to sports which examines the major contribution made by the national group in question to Australian games and sports, such as the arrival of European soccer coaches or Eastern bloc athletes.

At the time that work began on this book France ranked as one of the world's top soccer nations, having won European and Olympic championships and boasting some of the best international players, men such as Michel Platini. We were therefore convinced that alongside the many Yugoslav and Hungarian soccer coaches working in Australia there had to be a few French ones.

But to our great disappointment we could not find a single one, either in the past or the present. Neither had French migrants distinguished themselves as coaches or participants in the fields of tennis, cycling, athletics or a wide variety of other sports.

The sole French-born sportsman to have emerged as a champion in his field this century appears to have been boxer Johnny Famechon, who told us his story:

"I was born in Paris in 1945 and arrived in Australia with my mother and younger brother in 1950. My father André Famechon, who had been lightweight champion of France, had been here since 1948. All of his six brothers were also professional fighters, the most successful being Ray, who became European champion.

My father in fact had come on a contract for a series of fights with some of his brothers. He liked it here, so decided to stay. He retired from the ring in 1952, by which time we were well established in Melbourne. My parents split up in 1956, and my mother returned to France with my younger brother, where they still live. As my father worked

on the docks, in shifts, he sent me to boarding school at the Salesian College in Sunbury. It was there, when I was only 12 or 13 years old, that I got the bug for boxing. At the age of 15 I began to take intensive tuition from Ambrose Palmer and fought my first fight a year later, much to the disapproval of my father. No fighter ever wants his sons to follow in his tracks and I'm glad my own boy shows no interest.

Under the guidance of Ambrose Palmer, I won the Victorian Featherweight title in May 1964, then aged 19, and later went on to take the Australian and British Empire titles. On 21 January 1969, in London, I defeated Jose Legra to become World Featherweight Champion.

I defended the title three times, twice successfully. But when I lost it on 9 May 1970, I decided to call it a day. For another couple of years I did the usual things, refereeing, training boys, then I quit boxing altogether and never regretted it."

Famechon was one of only three Australians at the time to have ever won a world professional boxing title. ^{After quitting boxing, he} worked for eleven years for a record company and has spent the last couple of years as a sales representative for Morris wines. Happily settled in Melbourne with his wife and two children, Famechon still feels strong ties with his native land and says he can "get by" in French. He recalls with some pride that when he was contracted to fight in Paris in 1968 against a local boy he was agreeably surprised to see that the crowd was not hostile but was split in its support, barracking fifty-fifty in favour of either opponent.

12.2 AN UNUSUAL CHAMPION

Gustave Blanc distinguished himself early this century by excelling in a sport which could not be more obscure or unusual for the French - wood-chopping. Blanc was born in 1876 at Alberton, Victoria, the son of a French-born vigneron and farmer who worked first at Alberton and then at Binginwarri.

"Gus" Blanc, as he came to be known, showed talent as an all-round athlete but developed his skill as an axeman while clearing the virgin bush on the Binginwarri selection. In 1901 he won his first world championship at Burnie, Tasmania, when he clinched the two-foot underhand contest and in 1903 again took a world championship title in the two-foot standing block event in a record time still unbroken at his death in 1959.

He later captured Australian and New Zealand titles in wood-chopping and acted for many years as official handicapper and starter for local axemen's events, while heading a local football club and playing competitive cricket, into his fifties, during time off from his dairy farm.

THE SPORT OF KINGS

Horse-racing is not generally considered as a sport in France, as it is in Australia and in other English-speaking countries. The large number of French names listed on Totalizator and other boards might have pointed to a French influence in the sport. But research shows that the practice stems from the English custom.

However there have been, for some time, a considerable number of French people involved in horse training, especially among the affluent wool-buying families of past decades.

The year 1986 saw the inaugural race of the "French-Australian Handicap", at the Pakenham race course^{in Victoria.} The event was organised by the French Australian Association, formed in the heroic days of support for General De Gaulle's Free French Forces. Most members of the Association today are not recent French migrants but descendants of older established families of French origin. So for the space of a day the Association's flag, adorned with De Gaulle's wartime Croix de Lorraine, hovered above Pakenham's busy bookmakers and crowded TAB counters, while a horse with the totally non-French name of "Parslip" became the inaugural winner of the inaugural French-Australian handicap.

12-4 THE GAME OF PETANQUE

There is however one sport - or game, or entertainment - which is French and French^{alone} and is played in Australia by a wide number of enthusiasts, 95 per cent of whom are French. That

While people have thrown round balls at targets for many centuries, pétanque is a relative newcomer to the ball-throwing games. The dictionary dates its inception to 1880, but one of the most recent books on the subject, "Pétanque" by Foyot, Dupuy and Dalmas, published in Paris in 1984, says it was officially born in 1907.

The name was derived from the Provençal (of southern France) expression les ped tanco ("feet standing together"), and there are various legends on the origins of the game. According to one version it was conceived by a bowls player who had had both his feet amputated and was therefore only able to throw a bowl in a motionless position. Another story says it was spawned by a veteran bowler with ^erhumatism whose feet were riveted, so to speak, to the ground.

Once the feet are thus "riveted" on the starting base - a circle of a 35 to 50 centimetre diameter - each player throws his bowl as close as possible to a far smaller bowl called a cochonnet, which is the target. Obviously there must be at least two people to play the game, but most frequently it is played in doublottes (two opposing teams of two players each) or even triplettes (two teams of three players each).

One of the great advantages of pétanque is that unlike our own lawn bowls, it can be played on almost any terrain; in a yard, in a park, on a spare piece of wasteland. The practice is to choose an area four metres wide and 25 metres long, but the game ^{itself} is played on a length of 10 metres only. The ^{flat,}ground must be flat or almost ^{flat,} and the soil firm but not too hard (concrete is banned!), with a preference for an even but "natural" surface.

This latitude as regards the nature of the terrain is ^{not} matched by a similar latitude towards the bowls themselves. The Fédération has prescribed that they should be made of metal, generally steel, and have a diameter no smaller than 7.05 centimetres but no more than 8 centimetres, and a weight of between 650 and 800 grammes. The actual weight as well as the manufacturer's seal must be engraved on each bowl.

There ~~are~~ several manufacturers of pétanque equipment, but players are discouraged from buying anything but the better-known brands. In Australia, a firm called "Boules de France" of Victoria supplies top quality bowls from France.

For the benefit of non-European readers, the great difference between pétanque on the one hand, and cricket, lawn bowls, football or tennis on the other, is that NO UNIFORM IS NECESSARY! Light shoes and casual clothes may be easier to play in, but absolutely anything will do.

With no prior investment required for the terrain or the attire, and little to acquire the bowls themselves, plus the fact that lessons are strictly unnecessary, pétanque is one of the most democratic and accessible sports available to young and old people of both sexes. And ^{as} any visitor to France will attest, ^{of people can be} scores ^{the} seen playing the game at all times of ^{the} day, in city squares and on country roads throughout the nation.

Yet not every player performs equally well; there are champions of pétanque just like in any other sport.

The game is normally played for a 13-point win. ^{First the} ~~a~~ target, or cochonnet, is thrown haphazardly a few metres away from the starting base, ~~then~~ the players attempt to place their bowls as near as possible to it. Consequently there are two main throws possible: le point, which consists in throwing or rolling the bowl close to the target, and le tir, which is an arched lifted shot aimed at dislodging the bowls of the opposing team.

When the players have each thrown their three bowls (two in the case of triplettes) the distances on the field are measured - not always an easy or quiet task - with the nearest bowl to the target netting a point, and the next nearest, if it belongs to the same side, earning an additional point. The first team to reach 13 points wins the game.

Commentators and players alike, however, insist there is a lot more to the game than these apparently simple rules. ~~They say~~ ~~that the~~ right balance between physical and mental achievement, psycholog-

ical finesse in particular, determines ^(who are the really) first-class players.

While in France the game is generally played on a friendly and informal basis, over half a million French people have nevertheless found it attractive and challenging enough to join one of the 750 clubs officially authorised by the Fédération Française de Pétanque et de Jeu Provençal (French Federation of Petanque and Provençal Game). The Federation has issued regulations ^{governing the awarding} of pennants and championships.

PETANQUE IN AUSTRALIA

Petanque is played in some 20 countries outside France, with international tournaments organised on a regular basis. In Australia, the first club to be set up was the Melbourne Petanque Club, founded in 1981. Others followed soon after in Adelaide, Sydney and Wollongong.

Early in 1984 the Australian Federation was established, using the same rules as its French counterpart. It has since grown rapidly. President Tony Pico said there are now 12 petanque clubs in four states, with the total number of licensed players at around 350, including 25 juniors and 70 women.

The playing season runs from October to late May, each state holding at least four inter-club meetings during that period. A first-ever "national" championship was held in Melbourne in 1984, and a second in Geelong in 1985. The Federation gained the recognition of the Australian Commission of Sports in 1986, ^{thus} becoming an official Australian sport. But the members say that ^{at least} 95 per cent of the players are French. Pico feels the sport's greatest problems are the long distances and the cost of travelling. Travelling to other cities for inter-club meetings is no trouble in France, but is a costly affair in Australia. Yet the Australian Federation appears to have gained wider popularity than even its French parent. The French organisation's 500,000 members make up 1 per cent of the population. In three to four years, Pico's group has recruited twice that proportion of ^{French} Australians.*

* Tony Pico, Australian Federation, 123 Tucker Road. Bentleigh 3207