

## LEO ROSNER: A MAN OF NOTE

*Anna Rosner Blay*

Is there anyone who was Jewish and lived in Melbourne during the 1950s and '60s who didn't know my father, Leo Rosner? At countless weddings, bar mitzvahs, balls and birthday parties, Leo's fingers flew over the keyboard of his piano accordion and his face beamed as he revived melodies of his birthplace, Krakow in Poland, as well as Viennese waltzes, Russian dances, French chansons, tangos, light classical music, Hebrew folk songs, gypsy tunes and many more. In later years he learnt English, Scottish and Irish melodies, and delighted in playing Australian football theme songs and folk tunes. As George Negus said, 'Leo ... has gained a reputation for coming up with the right tune for just about any event or occasion.'<sup>1</sup>

### Poland

Leo's career started early. Leopold (Poldek) was born on 26 June 1918 into a musical family; his father Chaim Rosner had been born in Zagorze near Chrzanow in 1883; his mother Freidel Grunberg (Franciszka Henryka), born in 1885, came from Skawina near Krakow. Leo was one of nine children, all musical, five of whom survived the Holocaust. After studying piano for just six months with a baroness, he began, at the age of twelve, to play in his father's orchestra at dances and weddings. By the age of sixteen he was playing tangos and foxtrots with his brothers across Poland.

When war broke out in September 1939, this comfortable life in Krakow



*The Krakowska Salon Orchestra in the 1930s, led by Poldek's father (front row, with violin).*

came to an end. The family had to move to a village outside Krakow, Tyniec, where they played in barns in return for potatoes or flour. But by October 1941 they were rounded up and confined in the Krakow ghetto, where they crowded together in one apartment with four other families.

Life went on in some fashion, and Leo played his

accordion in a coffee-house, 'Polonia', run by a Mr Förster, in the basement of their building. Each month the musicians had to submit to the German office of propaganda a list of the music they wished to play in the coming month in order to have it approved. One month, amid the usual waltzes and operettas they included the Jewish song *Eli Eli*<sup>2</sup>. The list was sent back with this song crossed off with an accompanying note in German stating: 'This is a complaint song. Jews are not allowed to complain.'

Leo's younger brother, Samek, was a violinist like his older brother Henry (Herman), who was married and had a son, Olek. Leo's youngest brother, Bill (Wilek), played the trumpet. A sister, Marysia, played piano beautifully and spoke five languages. Another sister, Mela, could play the piano accordion as well as Leo; she was married with a little boy, Juziu. (A younger sister, Bronia, had died before the war; Leo's older brother George [Jerzyk] had gone to America just before the war broke out.)

In June 1942, together with many other Jews aged over 55, Leo's parents were rounded up; he never saw them again. The children remained in the ghetto, living in poverty, fearful of being caught. During a regular search for children, Leo witnessed a Nazi who, ignoring Mela's pleas to save her child, grabbed Juziu and smashed his skull against a brick wall. He then pulled out a revolver and shot Mela in the head. (Leo was haunted forever by this event.)

In the ghetto, amidst all the terror, Leo met Helen (Hela) Haubenstein, his wife-to-be, who lived in the same building. When they decided to get married, Poldek's oldest

sister Regina thought they were crazy, but they were in love and wanted to be together, not knowing what the future would bring. They were married on 17 January 1943. The following day Poldek was sent, alone, to the Płaszów concentration camp. Soon the Krakow ghetto was liquidated and all remaining Jews, including Helen, were sent to Płaszów.



*Wedding of Leo's brother Bill (Wilek) and Erna Munich, 22 September 1947. Oskar Schindler (tall man at the back); his girlfriend Giza next to Helen and Leo.*

There are many detailed historical accounts of the fate of these Jews. Leo met the German industrialist Oskar Schindler at parties organised by Commandant Amon Goeth; Leo and Henry had to change from their camp uniforms into tuxedos to play for the Nazis. Schindler enjoyed music and was able to offer protection to the Rosners, eventually adding their names to his famous 'list'. He rescued the men from the Gross-Rosen concentration camp to which they had been deported in October 1944, and sheltered them in Brünnlitz where he had relocated his factory. Schindler also rescued the women who had been routed to Auschwitz, including Helen. It was in Brünnlitz that Leo was reunited with his wife. They were liberated on 9 May 1945 by Soviet troops. Before fleeing, Schindler gave each person a roll of woollen cloth; Leo had a navy-blue suit made from it, and kept it until he died.

### Post-war

After a few months in Poland, Leo and Helen realised there was nothing there for them, so in October 1945 they travelled to Munich where Leo's brother Henry had found work; they spent a year there, sharing an apartment with Oskar Schindler and his girlfriend Giza. But in September 1946 Leo and Helen made their way to Paris, when Helen's sister Joanna (Janka) and her husband Joseph Gross (Józek, a jeweller) were living.

They moved in with them into a small apartment in the 18e arrondissement, close to the Sacré Coeur. On his first evening there, Leo went out with his accordion (almost the only luggage they had brought with them) and played in a local café; he returned with bread and sausage to feed his family.

Leo went on to play in nightclubs; he featured on Radio Paris with such stars as Maurice Chevalier and Mistinguette, and played on stage with Django Reinhardt. There was only one bed in the apartment – Leo worked all night and slept during the day in the vacated bed. I was born in Paris in February 1947 at the Rothschild Hospital.

In March Leo was engaged to work for at least three months at Le Richelieu-Drouot Brasserie-Restaurant in Montmartre. He then worked at Le Petit Rancho, a cabaret run by Sigmund Berland (author of *Wu a hin sol ich gejn?*) in rue de Metz, Paris 10°. From 1 July 1948 Leo was engaged by Daniel Budowniczy, *Chef d'Orchestre*, to play at Le Colisée & Amiral in Aix-les-Bains in the French Alps for three months and then at Le Majestic in Chamonix.

In April 1949 Leo flew to London with a permit to work in the United Kingdom for one week. (The Aliens Order, 1920, specified: '... this alien must present this permit and his passport to His Britannic Majesty's Passport Control Officer ...') He was listed as 'Rosner, Leopold, Nationality: Stateless.'



*On board the Cyrenia: Leo, Helen and Anna*

(Among Leo's papers I found part of a tri-lingual dictionary – German, English, French ... obviously he was trying to learn to communicate in yet another foreign country.) A letter dated May 1949 (in Polish) from the *Association des Juifs Polonais en France* thanked Leo for his performance in Paris for their group.<sup>3</sup>

Helen's sister, brother-in-law and nephew had left for Australia in early 1949. By this time Leo had been trying for months to get permits for his own family to leave, like so many other Holocaust survivors who wanted to get as far away as possible from Europe. At last they received permits and boarded the ship *Cyrenia*, which arrived in Melbourne in late December 1949. Shipboard photos show that Leo continued to play his accordion, entertaining the passengers and crew on the long voyage. (One woman begged him to keep playing, as she didn't feel seasick when she was dancing!)

Meanwhile Leo's three surviving brothers, Henry, George and Bill, had settled in New York and New Jersey, US, while Regina stayed in Poland. The others had died in the Holocaust.

## **Australia**

Leo and Helen again moved in with Joanna and Joseph, in a large house in Glenhuntly Road. At first they had no furniture and sat on wooden packing boxes covered with towels, but Leo began to work almost immediately, despite not being a member of the Musicians' Union and not speaking any English. Music was a universal language.

Leo's first public performance in Australia was on radio 3KZ's 'Heidelberg Hospital Show', transmitted at 9 o'clock on 27 December 1949. This was followed by 3UZ's 'Radio Auditions', a talent show where contestants earned one, two or three gongs according to their talent. A review said that Leo 'took judges and listeners by surprise...' He 'received the unusual recognition of four gongs, for an act which was so effective as to be almost sensational in a program such as this. He gave a unique musical rendering of *Sonny Boy*, playing with fire and spirit, and a confidence which revealed him as master of his instrument. He was also a superb showman, and we should hear much more of this artist in the future.'<sup>4</sup>

A week later Leo appeared on 3UZ's 'Are you An Artist?' An article headlined 'PARIS RADIO STAR SHINES ON "ARTIST"' went on to say: 'Leo ... showed great virtuosity in Rubinstein's *Melody in F* and in the sparkling *Tea for Two*. He adds that little extra to his playing that stamps him above the usual "squeeze-box" exponent.'<sup>5</sup>

Another article gave this tribute: 'Leo Rosner, the challenger, played *Caravan* as a piano-accordion solo. Added to his technique he has a good understanding of the swing idiom, and in my opinion he is one of the best accordionists of this type that I have heard in an amateur contest. –SGD.'<sup>6</sup>

After three weeks Leo won the competition, carrying off the prize of £2/2/–, this time playing Liszt's *Rhapsody*, Dvorak's *Humoresque* and Kreisler's *Liebesfreud*.<sup>7</sup> Soon after, he won 'Talent Tote' on 3XY with the maximum of ten points (and earning £8/17/–, 'paid out' by compere Alwyn Kurts).<sup>8</sup>

Leo was soon introduced to prominent Melbourne musician Dennis Farrington and his Dance Band. He impressed Dennis with his musical ability and was soon working with him. With his broad repertoire of melodies from many countries, Leo was soon playing for many different audiences, but he was particularly beloved by fellow Jewish refugees who found in his music a taste of home, and memories of a time before their worlds fell apart.

With his own orchestra, Leo began to play every Sunday night at the New Empire Ballroom in Chapel Street, Prahran; he was listed as 'The world famous accordion player'. He played there for a 'Social Club Night',<sup>9</sup> and the Anglo-Jewish Society Grand Anniversary and Chanukah Ball. Other events included The Warsaw Jewish Centre 4th Annual Ball at the St Kilda Town Hall, on 2 May 1951;<sup>10</sup> the Mount Scopus 2nd Annual Ball, on 12 June 1951 with Dennis Farrington's Jazz Band and special items by Leo Rosner and his Continental Band.<sup>11</sup> At their 3rd Annual Ball (3 June 1952), there were over 700 people. 'Beautiful items by Rosner's Continental Band were an outstanding contribution to a very successful night.'<sup>12</sup>

At the Oran Coffee Lounge in Barkly Street, St Kilda, Leo led a 'four

piece all-migrant band' backed by piano, guitar and drums. 'Their repertoire comprises everything from folk songs, Viennese waltzes and Russian dances to modern dance music.'<sup>13</sup>

On 24 September 1954 he played at the Royale Ballroom in the Exhibition Buildings at a 'Gala Concert Ball with ensemble of 25 dancers, and Leo Rosner's Orchestra, dancing until 2 am, tickets 15/-.'<sup>14</sup> By 1954 Leo was engaged by Henry and Charlotte Kopel to play at Peter Low's Cabaret, Esplanade, St Kilda, with a weekly remuneration of £90 for a four-man band for three nights a week: Friday 8 pm–1 am, Saturday 8 pm–2 am, Sunday 8 pm–midnight.<sup>15</sup>

Leo also played in private homes, at functions like 'Kambea Kapers', in the 'spacious ballroom of Mr. & Mrs. Worth, 20 Kambea Gve., Caulfield, with Dennis Farrington & Orchestra featuring Leo Rosner ... including dancing, supper, refreshments and games, Men 7/6, Ladies 5/-.'<sup>16</sup>

Other venues were the Exhibition Building's Royale Ballroom (1954), The Dorchester (1955); Catherina Cabaret (Green's Cabaret), and the Pacific Cabaret & Coffee Lounge, St Kilda. At Scotts Hotel, Collins Street, Melbourne (1957), Leo's three-piece band was engaged for six months (with Stan Walker on piano, Lowel Morris on drums), seven days a week (from 4 pm to 12.30 am on Saturdays, earning £59 per week to be shared among the musicians.<sup>17</sup> In 1961 Leo played at the opening of 'Melbourne's first Mediterranean Restaurant at the Duke of Kent Hotel'.<sup>18</sup>

## Recordings

The earliest record Leo made, according to WorldCat.org, was a 78rpm record in Yiddish made in Paris called '*As men chapt hot men*' with Bernard Potok (a baritone) and Dave Cash.<sup>19</sup>

In 1953 Leo Rosner and his Gipsy Band were invited by Homecraft Recordings, a new Australian label, to make some 78rpm records. 'Its first standard disc ... is *Russian Pot Pourri* by Leo Rosner and Gipsy Band.'<sup>20</sup> This was followed by other records: 'The shortage of recorded gipsy music has been eased by the issue of three local 10-inch standard discs with the Homecraft label. They feature Leo Rosner and his orchestra in Hungarian, Rumanian, Russian and itinerant gipsy music. It is a bright, lively band, and the recording is good.'<sup>21</sup> These records included songs like *La Habanera*, *Oczy Czarny*, *Tabou Lequona*, *Besame Mucho*, *Classic Samba* and *Serce* (Heart). Leo arranged the music and Peter Kotek was the baritone.<sup>22</sup> Another recording made on the Homecraft Label was *Dark Night; Girls Farewell to a Soldier* – Russian tangos.<sup>23</sup>

This was followed by recordings on the W&G label. Leo made a 10-inch



LP record titled ‘A Jewish Pot Pourri: with Leo Rosner and his music’ (1956). In the W&G catalogue it was described as ‘Jewish folk tunes ... Yiddish tunes in dance tempo, including *Galiciane Holerito*’<sup>24</sup> (the only time Leo sang on a recording). It was described as ‘authentic sounding music, and a tribute to the versatility of local modern jazzmen Jimmy Allen, Stan Walker, and Lowell Morris, who combine with Rosner’s squeezebox and the violin of Harry Hurst.’<sup>25</sup>

In a circular dated 29 November 1956, W&G released news of a ‘wonderful new recording’ entitled An International Medley. They wrote: ‘This disc carries the traditional and favourite tunes from various countries of the world. The arrangements are thoughtful, musicianship excellent, the result being a great new recording for both listening and dancing. Australia can be proud of this record. It should create wide interest amongst Olympic visitors.’<sup>26</sup> It consisted of Rumanian, Spanish, Viennese, Russian, Jewish and Irish melodies, with Leo Rosner (accordion), Harry Hurst (violin), Jimmy Allen (alto, clarinet, flute), Stan Walker (piano), Lowell Morris (drums) and Maria D’Esposito (vocals). It included Liszt’s *Rhapsody*, *Valencia*, *Waltzing Matilda*, *Irish Washerwoman*, *Dark Eyes*, *Can Can*, Cuban rhythm, traditional melodies and an up-tempo modern arrangement of *Don’t Be That Way*.

An article described it thus: ‘Made in Australia, the record is first-class light entertainment for listening, dancing, or “background”. Sound is terrific ...’<sup>27</sup>

Later recordings were ‘Cantor Aariah Braun accompanied by Leo Rosner’ with folk songs in Yiddish and Hebrew<sup>28</sup> and ‘A Sabra Sings: Israeli Folk Songs’, featuring Shulamit Livnat with Leo Rosner and the Mt Scopus College Choir.<sup>29</sup>

### Childhood memories

I understood little about my father’s work while growing up, but knew that my parents loved to invite friends and welcomed any opportunity to have a party. They would roll up the rug in the living room, Leo would pick up his accordion and couples danced and sang until the early hours of the morning.

On summer weekends we often went to the beach; Leo’s accordion came with us, to the grassy area adjoining Elwood beach or among the tea-trees in Seaford, or else to Sherbrooke Forest among the gum trees. After sumptuous

picnics, friends would recall old songs from their childhoods, from the happy times before their lives were torn apart. Some would sing; others recited poetry – not always for children’s ears! I was taught to sing songs in Polish that I didn’t understand, but which made the audience laugh. Whenever we went for holidays to guesthouses in Hepburn Springs, Mt Buffalo, Lakes Entrance or Lorne, the accordion was brought out in the evenings to entertain other guests.

Leo was always generous with his time and talents. Over the years I remember dozens of musicians coming to our place, asking my father to write out some music for them, often transposing from one key to another. It never occurred to him to charge for his time.

My father loved what he did and was never happier than when entertaining a grateful audience. He loved his adopted country and how it had welcomed him; he frequently praised the opportunities Australia gave him to bring up his family in a peaceful country, even though he was far from the rest of his family. He learnt all the footy club songs, just in case he was asked for a request. Although never into sport, in his younger years he loved fishing, going out all day on a boat from St Kilda pier or sitting patiently on a rock, waiting for a bite. One of my fondest memories is sitting with him at dusk on a little pier on the river behind Surfers Paradise (before any high-rise buildings, overlooking islands that were



*Anna and her father Leo*

only reachable by boat), our fishhooks loaded with flour-and-water dough, and catching small fish that he then cleaned and cooked for dinner.

Apart from his public persona as an entertainer, my father was a complex, fair-minded and honest person, but impatient and quick to anger if things didn’t go according to plan. He was deeply private, living with anxieties and fears he didn’t speak about. One symptom of this was his habit of hoarding – he never wanted to throw anything away, amassing countless suits, hundreds of ties, handkerchiefs, cummerbunds, cufflinks ... He also stored plastic bags, boxes, nails and tools in overstuffed cupboards and drawers, saying when questioned, ‘It might come in handy’, ‘Just in case’ or ‘I don’t have to feed it.’ And yet, he readily sold items like his double bass or a piano instead of

keeping them for posterity, perhaps from a mentality of wanting to ensure a ready source of cash.

Leo set high standards for himself and expected others to follow. He knew how to iron, sew and cook, unlike many men of his generation. He made his own bowties and insisted on his collars being perfectly ironed. He was scathing about men who wore trousers that didn't have a sharp crease down the front, and always wore a tie until the '70s.

He taught several students who came to our house to learn piano accordion, but being a good musician did not necessarily make him a good teacher! He couldn't understand why notes or chords that were so obvious to him were not so for others. With perfect pitch, he knew when I hit a wrong note while practising piano, and even during his sleep he would call out, 'E flat!' A favourite game during family dinners was filling glasses with water and trying to guess the correct note when hitting them with spoon.

## Venues

As Leo's reputation grew in the fifties, so did his horizons. He moved with his family to Surfers Paradise for six months in 1958, playing with his 'Continental Quartet' at Margot Kelly's Hibiscus Room. A newspaper article claimed: '... the party that's being thrown to celebrate the opening of the new-look restaurant is going to be one of those parties that is talked of with a nostalgic sigh for many a long year. With their incomparable cuisine and Leo Rosner, and the Continental Quartette [sic], playing for diners and dancers, it looks as though the Hibiscus Room is living up to its reputation as being a Surfers "must".'<sup>30</sup>

I was eleven by this time, and enjoyed going to the local school by walking barefoot along the beach.

Back in Melbourne, my parents decided to open their own nightclub, the



*A typical night at Moulin Rouge (retouched mural in the background)*

Moulin Rouge at 16 Dickens Street, Elwood. It became known not only for its good food and dance music, but the exotic floor shows. The murals on the walls displaying French can-can dancers caused some consternation to the authorities when Leo began providing kosher catering for private parties; he was told there was too much flesh showing, and

he had to paint over the dancers' legs with grey paint! The building was demolished in 1978.

Leo played for some time at the Troika Cabaret run by Jordan Bakaloff in Beach Road, Hampton, with Russian musicians and dancers, and also was engaged at receptions at Stanmark in Inkerman Street, East St Kilda.

Later Helen and Leo bought their own reception and catering business in Clarence Street, Elsternwick, which they renamed 'Dayan Receptions' in honour of the Israeli general and defence minister. (It continues as a reception venue today.) In the '80s Leo appeared regularly at the President in Queens Road.

Apart from public performances, he continued to play for private *simchas* in many venues for Melbourne's Jewish community – birthday parties, bar mitzvahs, engagements, weddings and more, as well as giving generously of his time and talent to many charity and fundraising events. He played not only his familiar piano accordion with the letters of his surname painted across the bellows, but also piano, double bass, mouth organ and later an electronic accordion that could mimic the sound of other instruments. He loved doing requests, and would need to hear only a bar or two of a melody to recognise and be able to play it. There must be countless photos in family albums, films and videos in the community that show Leo smiling, enjoying entertaining the crowds while he played.

Leo seemed to have boundless energy and didn't mind standing, carrying that heavy accordion and pumping the bellows for hours at a time. But age began to take its toll. His knees began to hurt. In 1986 he had a health scare. In 1986 *The Australian Jewish News* reported: 'Café Belair, The President Melbourne, 63 Queens Rd, Saturday nights dine and dance ... Mr Rosner, recovered from major heart surgery, has made a confident return ... he is now seen and heard with his electronic synthesiser and piano accordion ...'<sup>31</sup>

### **Schindler's List**

In the 1980s and '90s Leo became well known not only for his music but also as one of the *Schindlerjuden*, Schindler survivors. After Thomas Keneally revealed the story of Oskar Schindler's rescue of 1,200 Jews during the Holocaust in his book *Schindler's Ark* (1982), Leo was invited to London to record a documentary about the book on Thames Television. Later he and Helen were involved in the making of Steven Spielberg's hugely successful film *Schindler's List*. In a letter to my father Spielberg wrote: '... *Schindler's List* is not merely an overview of an event in history. It is a story about people, as relevant now as it was when it happened fifty years ago. In making this film, it has been very important to me to emphasize *names* and *faces*, not just



*On the set of Schindler's List, with Steven Spielberg and Ben Kingsley*

dates and places. Which brings me to the reason I am writing to you. I will be traveling to Israel with my crew to film an epilogue scene at Oskar Schindler's gravesite. I would be deeply honoured if you would appear in the scene and allow me to include your important face in the film ... to be part of this important message of peace for the world; the reminder that "He who saves a single life, saves the world entire," a tribute that must never be forgotten. All my best, Steven Spielberg.<sup>32</sup>

The film was a set text for Year 12 English for three years (coinciding with his grandson studying it at school). Leo began to give public talks about his war experiences. He had first-hand knowledge of those dark years and knew well the man who had saved him and his family, all because he loved music. Leo always showed compassion for all races, religions and colours; he would often say, 'There were good Germans and bad Germans, like any other race – Schindler was a cheat and a womaniser, but he was a good German.'

Leo spoke to over one hundred schools, church groups and community organisations during this time and was an active volunteer at the Melbourne Holocaust Museum and Research Centre, his only reward a bulging box of

thank-you cards and letters, and the knowledge that he was able to impart stories about his unique first-hand experiences to the wider community. He never wrote out a speech; although accented, his spoken English was accurate and clear, and he touched the hearts of many.

It is the first time in twenty years of teaching that I have seen a group of students spontaneously give a standing ovation to a visiting speaker. I feel that you managed to incarnate a basic humanity which will always ultimately triumph over evil and tyranny, and that you therefore made a contribution to those students' lives which went beyond your actual words ...

Nigel Jackson, Carey Baptist Grammar School<sup>33</sup>

Dear Mr Rosner

As always, being with you brings renewed hope and faith in the indomitability of the human spirit. I was not surprised that the girls responded so positively to your story and music, but I was delighted by their spontaneity and enthusiasm. You must live forever. I need, and we all need, to share in your infectious joy and celebration of life ...

With warm regards and much esteem,

Yours sincerely, (Mrs) Pam Chessell, Principal, Shelford<sup>34</sup>

Leo gave talks and played for many charities and organisations, among them the Montefiore Homes; Temple Beth Israel Friendship Club; JACI; the Immigration Museum; National Council of Jewish Women; Sheridan Hall; Jewish National Fund; Friends of the Jewish Holocaust Museum; WIZO State Council; Southern Community Church of Christ; Kilvington and Korowa.

### Later years

In 1999 Leo performed at the Immigration Museum with Klezmania members Lionel Mrocki and David Krycer, after rerecording 'Jewish Pot Pourri' at SBS studios with them for a compilation album to mark the International Day for Older Persons. It was his first recording in more than 40 years. With the prompting of his grandsons, he decided to give a public cabaret concert at the Caulfield (Glen Eira) Town Hall on 12 December 1999 and produced a CD, 'Leo Rosner Cabaret', in aid of Jewish Community Services. The concert was hugely successful, especially when Leo played *Caravan* with his three grandsons, Danny (guitar), Paul (percussion) and Ben Blay (saxophone).

The following year he recorded a CD: 'Sing Gebirtig in English: The Yiddish songs of the outstanding Yiddish troubadour, Mordechai Gebirtig

(1877-1942)', adapted by Avram Cykiert, played by Leo Rosner with vocals by his daughter, Frances Sondheim (2000). Leo had known Gebirtig in Krakow in the late 1930s and was touched by his passionate lyrics of hope and resistance.

Leo continued to play in public well into his eighties. Little did the audience know that he had begun to suffer from Alzheimer's disease, and sometimes needed prompting about what to play next. Nevertheless, his fingers never forgot the melodies and rhythms of the music he continued to play, even when his short-term memory deteriorated. 'As long as I can move my fingers, and as long as the people want me, I will play.'<sup>35</sup>

Towards the end of his life, Leo was visited by a German musicologist, Jutta Raab Hansen, who was researching Jewish musicians. She asked questions about his life and music which were hard for him to answer, but he was happy to play his accordion for her. I sat in the living room watching and listening, painfully aware that time was finite and this might be the last time I would hear him play. One of Leo's accordions is now part of the renovated Australian History Gallery at the Jewish Museum of Australia.

My father, the musician, the man I had known and loved all my life, continued to share his joy in life, pride in his family and gratitude for small things until the day he died on 10 October 2008.

'Leo was a remarkable individual. He lived passionately and courageously, and I will always be inspired by his example ... Sincerely, Steven Spielberg'<sup>36</sup>



## Notes

- 1 Transcript of George Negus Tonight interview, broadcast on 12 July 1994
- 2 'My God, why has Thou forsaken me?'
- 3 personal correspondence
- 4 *Radio Times*, 25–31 December 1949
- 5 *The Listener In*, 7–13 January 1950
- 6 *Radio Times* 11 January 1950

- 7 *The Listener In*, 21–27 January 1950
- 8 *The Listener In*, 28 January–3 February 1950
- 9 flyer, personal papers
- 10 *ibid.*
- 11 *ibid.*
- 12 article, personal papers
- 13 Frederick Tee, ‘Music for Moderns’, *The Listener In*, July 21–27, 1951.
- 14 flyer, personal papers
- 15 contract, personal papers
- 16 flyer, personal papers
- 17 letter from Scott’s Hotel, 10 May 1957, personal papers
- 18 *Women’s Weekly*, 4 October 1961
- 19 <http://www.worldcat.org/title/as-men-chapt-hot-men/oclc/224979301>
- 20 Rupert Charlett, newspaper column n.d.; Homecrafts flyer: ‘Russian Pot Pourri’ – arranged by Leo Rosner, Leo Rosner and his Gipsy Band (Sides One and Two), H.C. 20, 7/6; <http://www.worldcat.org/title/russian-pot-pourri/oclc/224979355>
- 21 Rupert Charlett, newspaper column, n.d.
- 22 Homecrafts flyer H.C.23, H.C.24, H.C.25, each 7/6; <http://trove.nla.gov.au/work/21024820?q&versionId=25008047>
- 23 newspaper article n.d. H.C.22
- 24 Catalogue of W&G Selected Releases, first edition, WG-LM-179
- 25 ‘On the record’ newspaper column by Bill Patey, n.d.
- 26 Catalogue of W&G Selected Releases, first edition, WG-LM-180, retail price 37/3; Circular W&G
- 27 Bruce Kneale in *Australasian POST*, December 13, 1956, p. 44
- 28 <http://www.worldcat.org/title/cantor-ariah-braun-accompanied-by-leo-rosner/oclc/224979651>
- 29 Telefil, 1961: <http://trove.nla.gov.au/work/21024654?selectedversion=NBD40249319>
- 30 *Gold Coast Adviser*, 6 June 1958
- 31 *The Australian Jewish News*, 19 September 1986
- 32 Steven Spielberg, personal correspondence, 5 May 1993
- 33 Nigel Jackson, Carey Baptist Grammar School, personal correspondence, 18 October 1985
- 34 Pam Chessell, Principal, Shelford, personal correspondence, 28 February 1994
- 35 Lisa Tandler, *Australian Jewish News*, 24 April 1986
- 36 Steven Spielberg, personal correspondence, 25 November 2008