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## ***Then and Now – Sorlie’s tour to Broken Hill in 1960***

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*This article draws on a survey of entertainments in a Broken Hill newspaper between 1955 and 1964 to consider historical change in the mix of entertainments attracting audiences in mid-twentieth century Australia. Located remotely in far-west New South Wales, Broken Hill became well-serviced with transport routes and communications to three capital cities. Commercial producers of live entertainments took advantage of these routes, touring successful productions from the capital cities for seasons in Broken Hill. In this article, the focus is Sorlie’s musical revue, the premier travelling show at the time, presenting world-class variety entertainment to audiences in regional Australia. Since regular television transmissions did not reach Broken Hill until the mid-1960s, audiences in Broken Hill continued to enjoy opportunities for live entertainments that were undergoing contraction in the capital cities, where television had already been. Sorlie’s 1960 tour to Broken Hill affords a distinctive vantage point from which to consider historical change in Australian entertainment, as touring entertainers relayed in performance narratives of progress from a ‘future’ already unfolding elsewhere. Jonathan Bollen is Senior Lecturer in Theatre and Performance Studies in the School of the Arts and Media at the University of New South Wales, Australia.*

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Changes in the mix of entertainments for audiences in mid-twentieth century Australia are evident in a survey of attractions in Broken Hill, as recorded in the *Barrier Miner* newspaper, between 1955 and 1964. Broken Hill is a mining settlement located in far-western New South Wales. Despite its remote location, the city was well-serviced in those years by transport routes and communications with Sydney, Adelaide and Melbourne. Commercial producers of live entertainments took advantage of these routes, touring successful productions from the capital cities for seasons in Broken Hill. The survey noted live entertainments, including the varieties of theatrical performance, travelling shows, musical concerts and social dancing; some attention was also given to cinema screenings, local radio and the arrival of television.<sup>1</sup>

The focus of this article is Sorlie’s musical revue, a travelling tent show presenting international variety to regional audiences in eastern Australia. The initial intention in undertaking the survey was to determine the date of Sorlie’s tour to Broken Hill. In the collection at the National Library of Australia, Jeff Carter’s photographs of Sorlie’s in Broken Hill are dated as having been taken between 1957 and 1962.<sup>2</sup> In fact, Sorlie’s toured to Broken Hill just once in those years, presenting a season of variety revue and pantomime from 13 to 24 September 1960. In the process, the survey revealed much more—about the mix of entertainments reaching audiences beyond the capital cities, about the intersection of commercial interests and technologies in producing entertainment for distribution in regional markets, and about the lived experience of modernity in the world of entertainment.

Richard Waterhouse records how travelling shows in rural Australia catered to markets in regional towns that had emerged with the gold rushes from the 1850s and developed further with the spread of pastoral activity, commercial agriculture and mining industries.<sup>3</sup> Improvements in transportation, in particular, the building of railways, enabled theatre companies to “access those markets efficiently and economically” and become “conduits for urban popular culture” to flow into rural Australia.<sup>4</sup> A further development was the integration of sideshow entertainments into agricultural shows which, as Richard Broome records, formed an annual circuit by the 1900s, with designated “show trains” providing transportation from the 1930s.<sup>5</sup>

Sorlie’s was a survivor of these developments, remaining a “rural cultural institution” until the early 1960s, conveying urban entertainments to regional Australians on an annual itinerary that coincided with the agricultural shows.<sup>6</sup> Crucially, since regular television transmissions did not reach many regions until the early 1960s, Sorlie’s provided regional audiences opportunities for entertainments that were undergoing contraction in the capital cities, where television had been introduced from 1956.<sup>7</sup> Sorlie’s 1960 tour to Broken Hill thus affords a distinctive vantage point from which to consider historical change in Australian entertainment, as touring entertainers relayed in performance narratives of progress from a future already unfolding elsewhere.<sup>8</sup>

### ***Mrs Sorlie’s memory—progress in entertainment***

“I remember I was on my way to the theatre from my hotel when a dreadful dust storm blew up,” Mrs Sorlie said in Broken Hill today. “I saw everyone rushing off the streets to shelter from the dust. I ran into a doorway to shelter from the storm and two dogs joined me. I don’t know how long I stood there. Eventually I made my way to the theatre.”<sup>9</sup>

Mrs Sorlie’s memory of bringing entertainment to the remote mining settlement, plagued by dust and lonely dogs, is from early in the century. Her husband, George Sorlie (1885–1948), founder of the company, had played in Broken Hill on various tours between 1907 and 1922. He and Grace were married in December 1915, and they began touring their tent-theatre in 1920. The Sorlies toured with success during the 1920s and 1930s, until fuel shortages

with the outbreak of war forced their touring to subside.<sup>10</sup> After George's death in June 1948, Grace Sorlie revived the operation in partnership with comedian Bobby Le Brun (1910–85). With a company of some forty or more artists, musicians and general staff, Sorlie's toured variety revue and pantomime to country towns in New South Wales, Queensland and Victoria, performing in a marquee theatre seating an audience of 600, from 1949 to 1961.

In their post-war incarnation, Sorlie's had not previously performed in Broken Hill, nor would they return. The local newspaper reports that Sorlie's season in 1960 was "the first time Broken Hill has been included in the itinerary."<sup>11</sup> Yet Mrs Sorlie's memory, recalled for the newspaper on the day the company opened, forges a relation with the history of the city. Dust storms in Broken Hill were frequently severe until the 1930s, when reserves were established on the periphery of the city to regenerate the vegetation that the mining had depleted. By the 1950s the regeneration reserves had grown into an effective dust-reduction measure, such that an unusually severe dust storm in 1953 was described by locals as "a real 'old-timer' – the worst since 1944."<sup>12</sup>

Mrs Sorlie's memory of the dust storm is thus a testament to progress. It testifies to the progress of the city's development as a mining settlement. And it testifies to Mrs Sorlie's survival as an "old-timer" in show business. By 1960 Sorlie's could regard itself as a purveyor of "old-time" entertainment. Yet the company's second change of program in Broken Hill—a musical revue called *Then and Now*—sought to venture beyond the "old-time" designation: "*Then* takes patrons back to the old music hall days with old-time songs and sketches, and *Now* gives the modern trend, with its rock 'n' roll and other crazy capers of today."<sup>13</sup> Within a year, Sorlie's had ceased touring, as had other travelling tent shows on the circuit; Mrs Sorlie died in December 1962. Were they victims of inevitable progress in entertainment towards the modern and the new? Or were they agents of historical change which *Then and Now* sought to narrate? How to write a history of change in entertainment when entertainment enacts the progress of history itself?

In the field of theatrical production in mid-twentieth-century eastern Australia, Sorlie's was a second-tier distributor of first-class entertainments, conveying to audiences in the regions acts and artists who had first appeared in metropolitan theatres.<sup>14</sup> In spatial terms, their distribution network was evenly displaced from the state capitals: seasons commenced in Newcastle, north of Sydney; traveled north to Ipswich, west of Brisbane, and northwards up the Queensland coast as far as Cairns; they toured throughout regional New South Wales, on a northern circuit (including Gunnedah, Moree, Tamworth, Armidale), a western circuit (including Bathurst, Orange, Dubbo, Wellington), and a southern circuit (including Griffith, Wagga, Albury, Canberra).<sup>15</sup> As managing producer, Bobby Le Brun visited the state capitals—Sydney, Brisbane, Adelaide and Melbourne—to attend to business and audition acts while the show was on the road. But Sorlie's circuit remained committed to the regions. By arrangement, the company did not compete for audiences with the metropolitan theatres, since many of Sorlie's acts had already appeared at the Tivoli theatres in Sydney and Melbourne, and at Brisbane's Theatre Royal. With this territorial

division, the rights to deploy imported talent were apportioned between metropolitan managements in the state capitals and tent shows touring the regions.

Sorlie's was not the only tent show touring eastern Australia in the 1950s. Other shows on the circuit include Barton's Follies, Coles' Variety, Stanley McKay's Gaieties, Max Reddy's Follies and Carols' Variety. But Sorlie's was, by all accounts, the class-act and its reputation second to none. The regular talents on Sorlie's bill were Australian artists who had enjoyed capital-city success earlier in their careers. As seasoned entertainers, they sustained the "old-time" traditions of Sorlie's revue from year to year. Bobby Le Brun and his wife, Gracie (Boyd), were vaudeville artists from Sydney, who had toured with George Sorlie in the 1930s. Le Brun had interspersed seasons at the Tivoli theatres in Sydney and Melbourne, with regional touring for Barton's Follies in the 1940s. They were joined on every tour by Neil O'Brien, tenor vocalist and straight man, who had also performed with George Sorlie in the 1930s and at Brisbane's Theatre Royal in the 1940s. Other regulars on Sorlie's tours include the versatile husband-and-wife team, Val Jellay and Hal Lennon (1955–60), who also took on responsibilities for choreography and production; the soubrette Micky Carolan (1953–54, 1959); the tenor Chung Doo (1953–54; 1958–60); the singer Gloria Dawn and her husband Frank Cleary (1950–51); and the comedians Lucky Grills (1954–56) and Maurie Fields (1959–60).<sup>16</sup>

Then there were the "specialty acts," usually three newer, fresher, younger artists, either recently discovered in capital city nightclubs or imported from overseas by theatre managements like the Tivoli.<sup>17</sup> Having completed successful seasons in the capitals, the specialty acts found onward engagement by joining Sorlie's for a season of regional touring up to ten months, which was a longer contract than offered by managements in the capital cities. The specialty acts kept the Sorlie's line-up fresh with musical feats, spectacular stunts, and erotic appeal. Most of these were acrobatic, balancing and juggling acts like the Kwam Brothers (1950), the Rovitas, the Muracs, the Three Leotards (1952), the Flying Warrens (1953), the Sadler Twins, the Skating Merenos, the Amazing Brittons (1954), the Eltons, the Nicoli Brothers (1955), the Amazing Myrons (1956), Jimmy Jeff and Bambi (1958), the Flying de Pauls (1959), the Randows, and Leo Bassi and June (1960). Other couples like the Arnedis (1955–56), Rita and Roberto (1956), Neal and Newton (1957), Medlock and Marlowe (1958), and Margaret and Maurice (1960) performed adagio dance and erotic stunts. There were also magicians like Ken Littlewood (1957), musical comedians like the Flat Tops (1958), and solo acts like the male impersonator Nellie Kolle (1951) and the contortionist Bouna (1958). All these acts had performed previously at the Tivoli Theatres in Sydney or Melbourne or at Brisbane's Theatre Royal. Most were international acts imported to Australia from recent touring in the nightclubs of Hong Kong, Singapore, Tokyo and Manila; others were Australian acts who also toured overseas.<sup>18</sup>

Sorlie's mix of entertainers supplied the talent for a narrative of progress in entertainment from seasoned old-timers to fresh young faces. In their company effort as an ensemble, Sorlie's addressed a broad audience, offering a

mix of the familiar and the new that would appeal across the generations to old and young alike. With the temporal progression of their touring, Sorlie's enlivened the evergreen field of old-time entertainments by incorporating the latest acts imported from overseas. These acts, acclaimed by prior success in metropolitan centres elsewhere, were distributed to the regions as novelties, freshly imported by theatre managements in the capitals and, by virtue of their international reputation, guaranteed to please. If there is a temporal contradiction in Sorlie's narrative of progress it may be illuminated with Meaghan Morris's observation that "the modern" in Australia, rather than implying "the future, youth, originality, innovation, rupture, the unknown, and so forth," is "much more commonly a known history, something that *has already happened elsewhere* and needs to be reproduced with a local content"<sup>19</sup>—or, as in Sorlie's line-up, with a mix of local content and locally-available imports.

Although theorists of history have largely dispensed with the idea of history as progress, Morris' study of history in popular culture explores how the rhetorics of progress and development (including "evolution, elevation, advancement, 'upward mobility,' and cohesively linear time") continued to animate public debate about social change in Australia.<sup>20</sup> Analysing evidence in the 1980s and 1990s, Morris finds that "progress is still invoked as a foundational value" and continues to have "an intensely practical resonance for local politics as well as national historiography." She also recognises the performative dimension of debates about progress in examining how "mass-mediated but niche-marketed (rhetorically directed, socially pitched) images and stories about 'great changes' can, in definite circumstances, help to bring those changes about."<sup>21</sup> Following Morris, this article attends to the "practical resonance" of narratives of progress performed as popular entertainment in mid-twentieth century Australia. It seeks to incorporate this rhetorical interest in progress within the broader approach to studying performance as an embodied practice of history, a repertoire of acts that transmits culture through the present by transforming past practice into the future.<sup>22</sup>

The particular circumstances in which Sorlie's toured to Broken Hill in 1960 are historically informed by Australia's engagement with international modernity from the late nineteenth to the mid twentieth century. Robert Dixon and Veronica Kelly describe the dynamics of spatial vectors and temporal dislocations as cultural products and performances were transported from "metropolitan centres" and remade in "provincial cultures." In particular, they ask: "Were provincial cultures doomed always to be belated, or did modern urban entertainments allow them to be coeval with metropolitan centres and to experience or imagine simultaneity?"<sup>23</sup> Dixon and Kelly adopt the metaphor of "temporal folds" or "pleated time" in which time in modernity is imagined as "drawing together past, present and future into constant and unexpected relations."<sup>24</sup> From this perspective, Sorlie's tour to Broken Hill in 1960 may be analysed as a distributed performance of "vernacular modernity" that addresses the "sensuous and emotional effects upon everyday life of technology-driven, mass popular consumer culture."<sup>25</sup> How then did Sorlie's *Then and Now* traverse the historical distance between regional Australia and the centres of world entertainment in anticipation of the space-bending, time-pleating future of

instantaneous simultaneity that television promised—and, indeed, was already delivering elsewhere?

To analyse Sorlie's tour as a narrative of progress, the approach is not to travel with the company, as it were, on tour. Nor is it to trace the career biographies of the company's leading figures.<sup>26</sup> Rather, the approach is spatial and spectatorial. The analysis adopts the perspective of a spectator located within Broken Hill. It observes the progression of Sorlie's through the city, as part of the passing parade presented to entertain audiences in 1960, and as framed by the survey of entertainments in Broken Hill from 1955 to 1964. This vantage point is also personal. I undertook the survey in collaboration with Murray Couch. Our interest in the history of entertainment in Broken Hill is motivated by personal connections. Couch grew up in Broken Hill and attended many of the city's entertainments as a teenager and young adult, before moving to Adelaide in 1964. He was a competitive ballroom dancer in those years, and represented Broken Hill at contests in Adelaide, Sydney and Orange. He still has close connections with family living there. My connection is through my paternal grandfather, whose own grandfather had moved to Broken Hill with his family (and son, my great grandfather) by 1896. My grandfather's cousin was a cornetist and band leader, who lived in Broken Hill until 1922. He left Australia in 1927 to tour with a band through Canada, America, Bermuda, England and Scotland. He returned to Broken Hill in 1936 to lead the Zinc Corporation Orchestra. He also provided music for dancing at the Palais de Danse, and operated a music store on Argent Street selling records in the 1950s.

### ***The mix of entertainments in Broken Hill—a timeline from the Barrier Miner***

Broken Hill developed as a mining settlement from the late 1880s. The city's progress is well-recorded in the *Barrier Miner*, a locally produced newspaper which commenced publication in February 1888. The *Barrier Miner* was a commercial publication, oriented around the entrepreneurial interests of the mining management and the proprietors of local businesses. A second daily newspaper, the *Barrier Daily Truth*, published by the Barrier Industrial Council from 1908, represented the interests of the workers' unions. With its commercial orientation, the *Barrier Miner* is the more extensive newspaper, with more advertisements and more pages than the *Barrier Daily Truth*. A survey of the *Barrier Daily Truth* in one year (1961) revealed rhetorical differences in class position, but substantive overlap in the newspapers' factual record of the city's entertainments. In comparison with the capital cities, the market for entertainment in Broken Hill was relatively small. Consequently, the volume of ten years' daily advertising and reportage in the newspaper yields a manageable data set. Yet entertainments in Broken Hill were never purely a local affair. The city's theatre managers embraced a mix of genres that was both varied and evolving, as the latest developments in the world of entertainment were translated to meet local opportunities and demands.

By the mid-1950s, the city of Broken Hill had grown to a population of 31,000, a level that was sustained into the mid-1960s.<sup>27</sup> With transport routes by road, rail and air to three capital cities, Broken Hill was linked administratively

to Sydney as part of the state of New South Wales; industrially to Melbourne, and thence to London, where mining company managements were located; and socio-economically to Adelaide, the closest capital city, commercial centre and holiday destination. Commercial producers of live entertainment, working in association with the city's theatre managers, toured successful productions from the capital cities for seasons in Broken Hill. In these years, entertainment in Broken Hill is linked directly to developments in the capital cities, to the directives of state and national policies, and to the global flows of commerce and technology. These developments may be observed with clarity in Broken Hill, where distance and discontinuous rates of progress filter local activity into patterns that manifest broad historical changes in the mix of entertainments attracting audiences in Australia.

Sorlie's tour to Broken Hill in 1960 was not an isolated event in the city's calendar of entertainments. The survey of the *Barrier Miner* records some 360 news items and advertisements relating to entertainment in Broken Hill during 1960. Roughly speaking, there was something to report each day, and something to attend each week. The following timeline represents a sampling of these. It is also an attempt to convey the range of genres comprising Broken Hill's mix of entertainments, with an emphasis on the people and productions, including Sorlie's, that link the city to the world beyond:

**15 January** – Don Vincent, a theatre manager, was farewelled by Vic Bindley, his employer and the director of BH Theatres. Also in attendance were Tom Powell, manager of Ozone Theatres, and Mr G. Cherry, the president of the city's Theatrical Employees' Union. During his time in Broken Hill, Vincent had also been involved in amateur theatricals, as actor and producer with the Repertory Society, which Bindley had founded in 1944. Vincent was leaving Broken Hill to take up a position as a manager with Tivoli Theatres Ltd in Melbourne, the nation's premiere producer of variety revue. Drawing a distinction with the filmed entertainment they screened, Bindley commented that "The legitimate theatre has always been closest to his heart."<sup>28</sup>

**6 February** – The *Barrier Miner's* column on local entertainment, "Across the Footlights," reports that the Broken Hill Repertory Society has received a letter from the NSW Arts Council regarding a forthcoming tour sponsored by the Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust; that two members of the Repertory Society attended a drama school at the University of Adelaide; and that the Ramblers' Revue, a troupe of local entertainers, presented a Hawaiian Night at the RSL Hall with "seven Hawaiian vocalists and hula exponents in a realistic island setting, complete with palms."<sup>29</sup> Subsequent evenings in the series were themed "Ranch Night" in country-and-western style, an "old-time" night called the "Naughty Nineties," and "Show Boat Night" with songs from the American "Deep South."<sup>30</sup>

**7 March** – The front page carries photographs from the Masonic Hall, where couples danced to music by the Premiers, a recently-formed, local rock and roll band. The headlines read "'Digged' it Most" and "Crazy Man, Crazy!"<sup>31</sup> Later that month, the Premieres were playing at the RSL Hall, and the *Barrier Miner*

“interviewed a cross section of Broken Hill people” who agreed that “rock ‘n’ roll dances are good outlets for exuberant teenagers, providing that they are well supervised.”<sup>32</sup> The Premiers’ introduction of rock and roll anticipates the arrival of Col Joye and the Joy Boys, Australia’s leading rock and rollers, who toured to Broken Hill with promoter Lee Gordon to play at the Town Hall in May.<sup>33</sup>

**6 April** – A story about the Silver City dancing convention, hosted in Broken Hill by Bridgewater’s School of Dancing over the Easter weekend, represents the city as a hub between three capital cities: professional and amateur dancers from Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide are expected to take part.<sup>34</sup> The following day, an advertisement from Ansett-ANA airlines is offering flights to Melbourne to see the Elizabethan Theatre Opera Company’s season of *Rigoletto*, *Madam Butterfly*, *The Magic Flute* and *Salome*.<sup>35</sup> Local interest in opera is buoyed by the overseas success of Broken Hill local, the soprano June Bronhill, and the prospect of her return on an Australian tour.<sup>36</sup>

**4 May** – The *Barrier Miner* publishes a review of the Broken Hill Repertory Society’s production of *The Wooden Dish* by Edmund Morris, a recent American play about inter-generational disharmony among in-laws living together in cramped domesticity. “Characterisation is a big feature,” noted the reviewer.<sup>37</sup> A fortnight later, theatre-goers in Broken Hill enjoy another American drama: Arthur Miller’s *A View from the Bridge*, in a production directed by Peter Summerton from the Independent Theatre in Sydney, taken on regional tour by the New South Wales division of the Arts Council of Australia, in association with the Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust.<sup>38</sup>

**15 June** – Bullen’s Circus opens for a four-night season at Block 10 flat on South Road. “Gay as laughter, bright as stardust,” Bullen’s “new 1960 edition” featured The Cordells, trapeze artists from the United States of America, Angela Hopgood, Sabu Wells and Jumbo the Elephant.<sup>39</sup> Bullen’s had presented seasons in Broken Hill in 1955 and 1958; and they would return in 1964. Another American entertainer—the actor, adventurer and entrepreneur John Calvert—visits Broken Hill in June as “managing director the Talco Company, which [...] formed to re-open the old Umberumberka mine, near Silverton” and “to invest the profits in making television films for distribution in here and overseas”; Calvert was accompanied in Broken Hill by the Filipino singer Pilita Corrales, who had sailed to Australia with Calvert on his yacht, the *Sea Fox*, which was shipwrecked off the coast of Darwin in July 1959.<sup>40</sup>

**9 July** – A musical reception for soprano June Bronhill is held at the Town Hall.<sup>41</sup> After five years singing with Sadler’s Wells at Covent Garden in London, June Bronhill had returned to Australia to perform in Garnet H. Carroll’s production of *The Merry Widow* which opened at the Tivoli Theatre in Melbourne on 16 July and then transferred to Sydney in October. With her stage name taken from the city of her birth and her travel to study in London supported by local fundraising, Bronhill embodies the pinnacle of the city’s cultural aspirations. The *Barrier Miner* publishes a four-page souvenir in celebration of Bronhill’s achievements.<sup>42</sup>



**6 August** – Following the celebration of June Bronhill’s achievements, and coinciding with a season of *Twelfth Night* and *Richard II*, presented at the Town Hall by the Trust’s Young Elizabethan Players on tour with the Arts Council of Australia, “Stroller” of the *Barrier Miner* advocates the establishment of an art centre in Broken Hill, encompassing the city’s four key cultural associations—the Philharmonic Society, the Quartette Club, the Barrier Industrial Unions Band, and the Repertory Society.<sup>43</sup> Although this particular proposal would not gain traction, Stroller articulates a civic discourse on government involvement in arts, which was gathering momentum elsewhere in Australia.

**13 September** – Sorlie’s Musical Revue is one of a handful of touring productions attracted to Broken Hill at the time of the Silver City show. J. C. Williamson’s brings a West End comedy, *Odd Man In*, starring Derek Farr and Muriel Pavlow with Noel Ferrier for an eight-night season at the Crystal Theatre from 16 September.<sup>44</sup> The Silver City show, over the weekend of 23-25 September, presents entertainments from two variety troupes—Slim Dusty’s All Star Western Parade with “Slim Dusty, Australia’s No. 1 cowboy singer in person; Joy McKean famous cowgirl star; Princess Firecloud in her daring dagger dance of death; Lloyd Nairn, Australia’s premier juggler direct from the Tivoli circuit; [and] smooth rockin’ Johnny Cole direct from England”; and the Maori All-Stars with “a galaxy of performers from the South Pacific” in a show of “colourful entertainment, including vocal and instrumental items, featuring songs from the islands.”<sup>45</sup> On 30 September, the festival is brought to a close with an Australian Broadcasting Commission (ABC) concert, “Treasures of Music,” given by the South Australian Symphony Orchestra, at the Crystal Theatre.<sup>46</sup>

**8 October** – “Several hundred people today jammed Argent Street and brought traffic to a halt. The traffic block was caused by several teenagers under a hypnotic trance from visiting hypnotist, Rock Martin. At his show in the Town Hall last night, Martin had hypnotised several teenagers and had given them a post-hypnotic suggestion that at 1 o’clock today they would have an irresistible urge to rock ‘n’ roll when certain music was played.”<sup>47</sup> The music was Martin’s latest recording, “I’m gonna cast a spell over you.” The following week at the Town Hall, Rock Martin presents *A Night in Space*, “three hours of hilarious hysterical merriment” with “Flying Saucers, Purple People Eaters [and] Little Green Men, landing in Broken Hill.”<sup>48</sup>

**5 November** – “Topline Acts in Oriental Revue Show,” the *Barrier Miner* reviews *Oriental Cavalcade*, an “East-meets-West” revue presented by Tibor Rudas at the Crystal Theatre, following successful seasons in Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane, Newcastle, Bendigo, Ballarat, Perth and Adelaide.<sup>49</sup> The revue features troupes of Japanese and Australian dancers, juggling acts Che Chung Chong and Mana Koon from Hong Kong and Shanghai, the Ricman Duo from the Philippines, Joe Balangue from Singapore; and, from Australia, an adagio act called the Flying Michelles and comedians Max Reddy, his wife Stella and Eddie Edwards. This is the last show to play at the Crystal. The theatre was destroyed by fire on 29 November, providing an occasion to recall who had performed there in the past: magicians Harry Houdini, Long Tack Sam and Cinquevalli; Shakespearean actor-

manager Alan Wilkie; singers Gladys Moncrieff and Strella Wilson; comedian Bert Bailey and vaudevillian Stan Foley.<sup>50</sup>

**2 December** – Don Vincent, the theatre manager who left Broken Hill for Melbourne in January, returns as a representative of Garnet H. Carroll to make arrangements for soprano June Bronhill to give two concerts in Broken Hill, which were to be relocated to the Town Hall after the Crystal had burnt down. Bronhill arrives by plane, having concluded her season of *The Merry Widow* at the Tivoli Theatre in Sydney. After giving two concerts in Broken Hill, she returns directly to Sydney, and flies the following week to London, where she opens in Offenbach's *Orpheus in the Underworld* on 26 December.<sup>51</sup>

### ***Observing historical change in the mix of entertainments in Broken Hill***

Four observations may be drawn from this timeline to characterise the mix of entertainments in Broken Hill. Each observation also articulates a vector of change in entertainment from the “old-time” styles of “yesterday” to the “modern” styles of “today.” These vectors of change become significant in analysing Sorlie’s narrative of progress.

Firstly, the genre mix, which, in its breadth, encompasses a spectrum from “entertainment” to “art”—in theatrical performance: from circus, pantomime, variety and revue to Shakespeare, West End comedy and modern American drama; in dance and musical styles: from Country and Western, Hawaiian/South Pacific and rock and roll to symphony concerts, opera recitals and classical ballet. Touring productions in all genres attracted audiences across the city’s social strata; they could not afford to strongly segment the audience by social class. But, across the mix, lines of market segmentation, defined by generation, were starting to emerge: for example, touring productions of Shakespeare from the Young Elizabethan Players, performed with existentialist authenticity in jeans and t-shirts on a bare stage, could signify youth and modernity as much as the musical rhythms and dance moves of rock and roll.

Secondly, the global scope of local entertainment—the view from Broken Hill is outwards to an extensive entertainment network. Local capacities to produce entertainment for audiences in Broken Hill drew directly upon talent and resources from Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide. The state capitals, in turn, provided access to the driving sources of entertainment in a global distribution network, long dominated by production in London, New York and Hollywood, and now embracing the tourist destinations of Hong Kong, Manila, Singapore and Tokyo. Within the global scope of this vector, “old-time” entertainment may be designated by “dress-up” exoticism done “here”—such as the local amateurs of the Ramblers’ Revue, dressing up in grass-skirts to dance the hula for a Hawaiian night at the RSL.<sup>52</sup> On the other hand, modernity may be signified in the cultural authenticity of touring entertainers from “away”—such as acts from east Asian entertainers in *Oriental Cavalcade*, or the Maori All-Stars whose racial designation as Polynesian authenticated the appeal of their “colourful entertainment” from the South Pacific.

Thirdly, the economic modes of production—the city’s entertainment producers operated within a mixed-mode economy: for many years, an (a) amateur-community mode of local production, operating with the patronage of the mining management or the unions, and oriented towards fundraising for charities, sustained local audiences in between (b) commercially produced seasons presented by companies on tour from the capital cities, that were accommodated by the city’s theatre managers, who otherwise derived their income from screening films. By 1960 the entertainment economy was adjusting to the insertion of a (c) government-sponsored mode of professional production introduced from 1947 with musical concerts presented by the ABC at the Broken Hill Town Hall, and reinforced from 1958 with touring theatre productions presented by the Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust in association with the local Repertory Society. The Town Council played an increasing role in supporting productions as proprietor of the Town Hall, which was frequently leased to government-sponsored productions on tour, and as sponsor and publicity agent for the Festival of Arts, first held in 1958 in conjunction with the annual Silver City Show on the 75th anniversary of the city’s founding. One effect of government involvement in production was to distinguish subsidised *arts* from commercial *entertainments*.<sup>53</sup>

Fourthly, the advent of television as the future of entertainment—on several occasions during 1960, the *Barrier Miner* promised the reception of television broadcasts, only to relay disappointment. “TV in Broken Hill,” announced the front page headline on 15 February, then inside the following day, “No reception of TV in B Hill last night.”<sup>54</sup> In July, an enterprising resident, “who erected a 50ft high television antenna on his roof,” was reported to be receiving regular telecasts from Adelaide.<sup>55</sup> But then in November, an optimistic announcement, “Planning TV reception – testing reception for TV in Broken Hill,” was followed with the regrettable, “TV programs for BH – regular reception here is unlikely.”<sup>56</sup> Broken Hill residents would not receive regular television broadcasts until 1965, after the erection of a transmission tower behind the Post Office on Argent Street, and the construction of a chain of repeater stations between Adelaide and Broken Hill, the sixth at Rocky Hill on the north-west outskirts of the city.<sup>57</sup> Until then, local discourse on entertainment was enlivened by the novelty and allure of television: visiting artists, such as John Calvert and Pilita, were welcomed to the city as television stars;<sup>58</sup> two hundred local and inter-state dancers, competing in the Central Australian Ballroom Championship at the Palais de Danse, were to be televised by two stations;<sup>59</sup> and, on more than one occasion, the *Barrier Miner*’s theatre critic addressed television’s likely impact on “live” or “living” entertainment.<sup>60</sup>

### ***Sorlie’s Musical Revue in Broken Hill, 13-24 September 1960***

Sorlie’s set up their tent theatre near the Turf Oval on the corner of Iodide and Wolfram Streets and announced a week-long season with two “sparkling shows.” They opened with *Wot A Nite*, a “non-stop comedy and variety show” playing three nights from Tuesday 13 September 1960. The program changed on the Friday to *Then and Now*, with its “old-time songs and sketches” from “music hall days” giving way to “the modern trend with its rock ’n’roll and other crazy

capers of today,” repeated in evening performances on the Saturday, Sunday and Monday. On the Saturday, they also gave a matinee performance of the pantomime, *Jack and the Beanstalk*, and announced the extension of their season for another week. A third change of program, *Hi Giggle Giggle*, played for three nights from the Tuesday of their second week. They gave the pantomime again on the Saturday matinee, and brought their season week to a close with *Shower of Stars* on the second Friday and Saturday nights (23-24 September).<sup>61</sup>

Mrs Sorlie and Bobby Le Brun presented their season of revue with “overseas specialty artists” appearing by “arrangement with the Tivoli Circuit of Australia.” Sorlie’s line-up for Broken Hill included:

Leo Bassi and June from Paris, in a novel act “Feats with Feet”; “Margo the Parisian Bombshell” in her sensational Fan Dance; England’s Crazy Comics, Gordon and Colville; Margaret and Maurice from the Orient in Dances Exotic; The “Randows,” comedy jugglers; Frank’s Fabulous Foxies, clever performing dogs; “Royston Australia’s triple voiced Ventriloquist; “The Alvarados” in “Risks on a Roller”; Vikki Hammond, Britain’s Brigitte Bardot; [ballet mistress Val Jellay, vocalist Maurie Fields] and, of course, Aussie’s popular comedian, Bobby le Brun and his companion in comedy, Hal Lennon.<sup>62</sup>

As reported in the *Barrier Miner*, Sorlie’s received a rapturous reception: *Wot a Nite* was a “hit with the crowd” with “hilarious acts” that “nearly brought the tent down”—it was “one of the brightest live shows seen in Broken Hill for some time”.<sup>63</sup> Only the first program was reviewed in any detail, which tends to suggest that the subsequent three programs were primarily changes in name, with some substitutions in music, comedy and choreography, and some thematic variation in the sequence of acts, to keep the company fresh for returning patrons. Yet even without a review of the running order, the second program, *Then and Now*, lends itself to analysis as a narrative of progress. A report in the *Barrier Miner* the following day confirms the story:

A packed house greeted Sorlie’s last night when they staged their first change of program. The attraction was the revue “Then and Now” and laughs came all through this novel show, with the old-time songs and sketches which occupied the first half. After the interval, the audience were given “Now” and this was in the modern trend of entertainment.<sup>64</sup>

By the Monday, an advertisement in the *Barrier Miner* expressed the narrative of progress as a contest between “Old Time Music Hall v. Modern Rock ‘n’ Roll,” even though the same company played both sides of the historical divide. Music for the season was provided by Charles Sleet, a veteran bandleader with Sorlie’s since their 1950 tour; and, before that, with another tent show, Barton’s Follies, in 1938.<sup>65</sup> Evidently, in the second half, Sleet led his band in playing the latest rock and roll rhythms of the day. Likewise, entertainers Val Jellay and Maurie Fields, then in their mid-30s, may have lent their versatility to performing rock and roll for *Then and Now*. They had, apparently, “worked smoothly” with the “ballet girls” in “musical and comedy acts” for *Wot a Nite*.<sup>66</sup> Yet Sorlie’s rock and

roll must have felt like an approximation for any teenagers in the audience who had danced to Col Joye and the Joy Boys at the Town Hall back in March.

In Newcastle, at the outset of the tour, the “Now” act had been built around the Fabulous Flat Tops, two young Australian ex-radio announcers, Ross Edgerton and Tom Parker, who performed “Music for the Moderns” on their first tour with Sorlie’s in 1958.<sup>67</sup> For their second Sorlie’s engagement, the Flat Tops were tasked with delivering rock and roll as the musical destination of the show’s progression through time. The “Now” act opened with “We’re up-to-date now. Charles Sleet and the Boys get in the groove.” It progressed through, “When Bodgie meets Beatnik. Well, dig those crazy guys” and “Bob [Le Brun] and Hal [Lennon] are hep the jazz. Yer, man” before arriving at “These Rock and Rollers leave the others for dead. Yer, man, it’s the Flat Tops and they’re real smooth.”<sup>68</sup> After the efforts of Sorlie’s veteran entertainers to get “up-to-date,” the youthful energies of the Flat Tops must have struck a modern note. But they were unable to stay on for the 1960 tour. They were a popular act, in demand at the time, with capital city engagements on the Tivoli circuit throughout 1960.<sup>69</sup>

By the time Sorlie’s reached Broken Hill, the English starlet, Vikki Hammond, at 23 years of age, was the youngest leading artist of the company, and perhaps the company’s best chance of connecting with the teenage generation. Hammond sang in musical numbers for Sorlie’s. Her billing as “Britain’s Brigitte Bardot” suggests a repertoire of new wave French pop, although she may also have sung the kind of cry-baby love ballads styled in Australia by Judy Stone, who would join Col Joye and the Joy Boys on their return tour to Broken Hill in February 1961. Having recently appeared in “top television shows and several films in England,” Hammond’s main role in Sorlie’s was to convey the glamour of the screen.<sup>70</sup> With her blonde-bombshell looks, she served as an erotic foil to the British comedy duo, Gordon and Colville.

Vic Gordon and Peter Colville were the Flat Tops’ replacement on tour, although they were a generation older and British. They had arrived in Australia to perform in *Diamond Horseshoe* for the Melbourne Tivoli in April 1959. Hammond joined the duo performing in *Talk of the Town* at the Sydney Tivoli in December 1959. A month after performing in Broken Hill, the trio were back in Melbourne, appearing together in the Tivoli’s *Ladies, Lions and Laughter*. Photographs of the three performing with Sorlie’s in a sketch called “Medical Benefits” convey a comedy of sexual innuendo: a middle-aged man and a young woman are seated in a waiting room; a doctor stands beside them, and a sign reads, “Have your symptoms ready.” The doctor strikes the woman’s knee. But instead of her leg reacting, the old man’s leg swings out. The woman’s reaction is stilted—she holds onto her seat, sits upright, pulls in her chin. The old man’s reaction is reflexive—an erection at his age!<sup>71</sup> In appealing to paternal desire across the generations, such erotic comedy between a young woman and two old men—one bespectacled and balding, the other in a bowler hat—would have signalled “old-time” entertainment more readily than it signalled “crazy capers of today.”

Aside from references to rock and roll, the one act which seems to signal “modernity” with confidence is “Feats with Feet” by Leo Bassi and June. The couple appear to have been young and close in age—in family terms, more brother-and-sister, than father-and-daughter. (They were, in fact, husband and wife, as were Colville and Hammond). Leo Bassi was from an Italian circus family, via Paris and London; June’s father was the English comedian Jimmy Wheeler, who was also touring Australia. The three had been brought out by the Tivoli to appear in *Starlight Roof*, which opened in Melbourne in June 1959 and transferred to Sydney in August. Lying on their backs, feet in the air, on purpose-built stands, their specialty was a Risley act, juggling with their feet. What signals the modernity of their act is that, among the objects they juggled—which included balls, tables, a piano and a life-size dummy of the pianist Liberace—is that Leo Bassi and June juggled televisions.<sup>72</sup>

Juggling televisions may have been a “crazy caper” in its day. As daughter Joanna Bassi explains, “my parents were in the category ‘novelty act’ which meant they were permanently in search of some kind of modernism. [...] Juggling televisions seemed a natural thing to do as it was a ‘modern’ new object, and actually a box which could be juggled.”<sup>73</sup> In retrospect, juggling televisions looks like a metaphor about progress, innovation and the future of entertainment. Realising the prospect of that metaphor, Leo Bassi and June also juggled televisions on television, performing on HSV-7’s *Bandwagon* in Melbourne and on *Cafe Continental*, the cabaret variety show broadcast from the ABC television studios in Sydney.<sup>74</sup>

### ***Epilogue—television, tourism and the future of entertainment***

Not just a repertoire of “old-time” entertainment from the past, Sorlie’s season in Broken Hill records a history of entertainment’s transformation through performance in the present. In particular, *Then and Now* indicates a capacity among Sorlie’s entertainers to historicise their performance within a narrative of progress through the “now” which they were living. In progressing from the past of “old-time” entertainment into the “crazy capers” of today, Sorlie’s revue presented the international currency of touring acts from overseas and used the “hep” talk and “jive” rhythms of rock and roll to appeal across the generations. More broadly, Sorlie’s entertainment signified local participation in a global modernity that, as Meaghan Morris puts it, had “already happened elsewhere.” Juggling televisions was a metaphor of adaptation to the technological innovation that was transforming the production and distribution of entertainment around the world. *Then and Now* was Sorlie’s rehearsal for this transformation, in anticipation of its happening.

*Then and Now* was not the first production that Sorlie’s sought to infuse with the currents of innovation. Topical reference was routine practice. Sorlie’s presented *Command Performance* when Queen Elizabeth toured Australia in 1954; *Olympic Dames* when Melbourne hosted the Olympic Games in 1956; and *Out of this World* in anticipation of the space satellites launched in 1957. For their 1956-57 summer season in Newcastle, Sorlie’s presented three revues: *Rockin’ the Town*, *Television Variety* and *Peep Show*—although, the programs

suggest that none of these sustained the novelty much beyond an opening reference to the music (“‘Rock, rattle and roll’ at the ‘Squirt Counter’ with Sorlie’s ‘Jacks’ and ‘Kittens’”), broadcast television (“Sorlie’s are Televising on Channel 5”) and erotic revelation (“Val Jellay and the Sorlie girls take a peep”). Yet, with its evocation of television as the future of entertainment, Sorlie’s capacity to transform itself may have reached a limit. In the first act of *Television Variety*, subtitled “A Modern Revue,” Bobby Le Brun and Neil O’Brien, the veterans of the company, “vanish into the Ether.”<sup>75</sup>

On the 1960 tour, box office takings in Broken Hill were disappointing, despite an enthusiastic reception and upbeat press. “House not good” but “great audience” are the refrains in Bobby Le Brun’s diary.<sup>76</sup> After Broken Hill, Sorlie’s toured onwards through south-west New South Wales and northern Victoria, with (mostly) one-night shows in Mildura, Griffith, Wagga, Albury, Wangaratta, Canberra, Young and Cootamundra, then headed north through Grenfell, Cowra, Forbes, Mudgee and Singleton, and onto Newcastle for a two-week season to close the tour. The final show in Newcastle on 21 November 1960 is annotated “Last Night of Sorlie’s (possibly for good),” in Le Brun’s diary. He did not reconvene the company to launch the 1961 tour with a December-January season in Newcastle. Instead, the Le Brun took a four-month holiday, including a three-week cruise on the SS Orsound to Tasmania, New Zealand, Tonga, Fiji and Noumea. Sorlie’s 1961 tour commenced in April from Lithgow, west of Sydney, and from there the company toured their regular route, north as far as Cairns in Queensland, west as far as Hay in New South Wales, south to Shepparton and Wangaratta in Victoria, and back north through Albury, Gundagai and Canberra, to finish in Singleton, Muswellbrook, Maitland and Cessnock, west of Newcastle.

Sorlie’s final show in Cessnock was on Saturday 4 November 1961. In a diary entry for the day, Le Brun indicates that he was “pleased that this will be the last appearance of Sorlie,” although the following day, his mood had clouded over:

A humid day. I had sleepless night. Worried about mum and the future. Felt awful. Bit to eat. Packed up. Farewell to [name]. To tent and saw boys. All packed up. Good as storm was imminent. Got petrol. Started awful drive from Cessnock to Sydney via Morisset. Feel exhausted. Had to force my self to keep going. Couldn’t even feel up to cup of tea. Took Mrs S[orlie] home to Bondi Junct[ion]. Home at last. And so ends an era. The end of Sorlie’s. 12 years of hard work. Made money but earned every penny. Can take it easy now. Watched *Revue 61*. Head for bed, 11pm.<sup>77</sup>

*Revue 61* was a variety show on Sydney television. Le Brun had watched it before and admired the compere, Digby Wolfe.<sup>78</sup> Wolfe (1929–2012) was a British entertainer, who came to Sydney to appear at Chequers nightclub in 1959. He soon moved onto television, hosting a series of variety shows at Sydney’s ATN-7 in the station’s modern, all-white, “infinity-look” studio.<sup>79</sup> A generation younger than Le Brun, Wolfe’s success on television must have looked like entertainment’s future. Yet audiences in regional Australia did not stop attending

Sorlie's because they could watch television at home. In fact, when Sorlie's ceased touring, television broadcasts had not yet reached many regions. Nevertheless, the introduction of television in Australia coincided with other changes in the economy of production. One of those was government involvement in cultural production that distinguished the performing arts, especially those appreciated live in concerts and at the theatre, from variety entertainments that moved more readily into commercial television.

Sorlie's *Then and Now* was a narrative of progress, performed as a rehearsal for the change it brought about. For the entertainers, it was both a metaphor for modernity and a way to get there, a mode of tele-transportation that pleated-time to bring the future of entertainment into the present so that what had happened elsewhere would happen here and now. Many who toured to Broken Hill with Sorlie's found ongoing work in television, among them Val Jellay, Maurie Fields, Vikki Hammond, Vic Gordon and Peter Collville. In making this transition, they outlived the travelling show's demise by juggling television's prospects for their future. Bobby Le Brun also performed on television, appearing on *Royal 69*, a variety show revival of Brisbane's Theatre Royal, which was reconstructed in the television studio at Brisbane's BTQ-7.<sup>80</sup> His mainstay in the 1960s, however, was the Coolangatta Hotel, south of Brisbane, where he hosted the floor show from 1961 to 1967. In this transition, Le Brun moved into tourism, entertainment's other prospect for the future.<sup>81</sup> Instead of touring entertainment to the regions, Le Brun concluded his career by entertaining tourists on the Gold Coast, where some were no doubt taking holidays from the regions, as far afield perhaps as Broken Hill.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The survey was conducted using original newsprint at the State Library of South Australia. The *Barrier Miner* is digitised by the National Library of Australia (NLA) between 1889 and 1954; but neither the *Barrier Miner* nor the *Barrier Daily Truth*, the city's second daily newspaper, has been digitised for the period 1955 to 1964.

<sup>2</sup> Jeff Carter, "Sorlie's Travelling Vaudeville Show, Broken Hill, 1957-1962," NLA, 19 photographs, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-146533422>

<sup>3</sup> Richard Waterhouse, "Travelling shows in rural Australia 1850-1914," *Australasian Drama Studies*, 35 (1999): 19-30.

<sup>4</sup> Waterhouse, "Travelling shows": 19, 26.

<sup>5</sup> Richard Broome with Alick Jackomos, *Sideshow Alley* (St Leonards: Allen and Unwin, 1998), 17-50.

<sup>6</sup> Richard Waterhouse, *The Vision Splendid: A Social and Cultural History of Rural Australia* (Fremantle: Curtin University Books, 2005), 143-54, 243-52.

<sup>7</sup> Television was introduced in Sydney and Melbourne from 1956; in Brisbane, Adelaide and Perth from 1959; and in regional centres such as Newcastle, Orange, Wollongong, Ballarat and Lismore during 1962. A local television station in Broken Hill, BKN-7, commenced broadcasting in August 1968.

<sup>8</sup> For Sorlie's musical revue in relation to changing audience relations to erotic entertainment, see Jonathan Bollen, "Don't Give Up the Strip!: Erotic performance as live entertainment in mid-twentieth century Australia," *Journal of Australian Studies*, 34:2 (2010), 125-40.

<sup>9</sup> "Mrs Sorlie Recalls Fierce Dust Storm," *Barrier Miner*, 13 September 1960, 4.

<sup>10</sup> Peter Spearritt, "Sorlie, George Brown (1885-1948)" *Australian Dictionary of Biography*: 12 (1990), 18; Clay Roden Djubal, "George Sorlie" in "What Oh Tonight: The Methodology Factor and



Pre-1930s' Australian Variety Theatre (with Special Focus on the One Act Musical Comedy, 1914-1920)," PhD Thesis, University of Queensland, 2005, Appendix D, Biographies of Practitioners, 847-852, <https://ozvta.com/dissertations/>

<sup>11</sup> "Mrs Sorlie Recalls Fierce Dust Storm."

<sup>12</sup> "Red dust storm covers city: Natural light almost shut out," *Barrier Miner*, 20 October 1953, 1.

<sup>13</sup> "Sorlie show change," *Barrier Miner*, 15 September 1960, 5.

<sup>14</sup> Clay Djubal describes Harry Clay's company in similar terms, as a "second rung management" touring on a "B-circuit" of suburban and regional areas from 1901 to 1930; "From minstrel to vaudeville showman: Harry Clay, 'a friend of the Australian performer'," *Australasian Drama Studies*, 34 (1999): 11-24.

<sup>15</sup> The itinerary for Sorlie's tours is similar to the route taken by Jimmy Sharman's boxing troupe in the 1950s, both coinciding with the agricultural shows; Broome, *Sideshow Alley*, 32.

<sup>16</sup> Programs for Sorlie's shows, 1949-60, Bobby and Gracie Le Brun collection, NLA, Ms. Acc. 11.137, Box 5.

<sup>17</sup> Grace Le Brun, oral history interview with Bill Stephens, 27 May 1985, NLA.

<sup>18</sup> Of the acts on this list, only the Kwam Brothers and Nellie Kolle (after arriving from London in 1912) appear to have had careers confined to Australia.

<sup>19</sup> Meaghan Morris, *Too Soon Too Late: History in Popular Culture* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1998: 16).

<sup>20</sup> Morris, *Too Soon Too Late*, 11

<sup>21</sup> Morris, 9, 22.

<sup>22</sup> Joseph Roach, *Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996); Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2007).

<sup>23</sup> Robert Dixon and Veronica Kelly, "Australian vernacular modernities: people, sites and practices," in *Impact of the Modern*, eds Robert Dixon and Veronica Kelly (Sydney: University of Sydney Press, 2008), xxi.

<sup>24</sup> Dixon and Kelly, "Australian vernacular modernities," xiv-xvi.

<sup>25</sup> Dixon and Kelly, xv-xvi.

<sup>26</sup> Dixon and Kelly, xix.

<sup>27</sup> Since the mid-1960s, the population of Broken Hill has steadily declined to 17,708 at the 2016 census.

<sup>28</sup> "Theatre farewell to Mr Don Vincent," *Barrier Miner*, 15 January 1960, 2.

<sup>29</sup> "Across the footlights," *Barrier Miner*, 6 February 1960, 11.

<sup>30</sup> "RSL Ranch Night," *Barrier Miner*, 9 February 1960, 14; "Show Boat at RSL," *Barrier Miner*, 17 March 1960, 6.

<sup>31</sup> "Digged' it Most" and "Crazy Man, Crazy!" *Barrier Miner*, 7 March 1960, 1.

<sup>32</sup> "They like the Rock! Rock 'n' roll good outlet for youth," *Barrier Miner*, 19 March 1960, 3.

<sup>33</sup> "Col Joye for local visit," *Barrier Miner*, 18 May 1960, 7; "Col sings a song," *Barrier Miner*, 24 May 1960, 16; "The cats were cool, the music was hot," *Barrier Miner*, 26 May 1960, 11.

<sup>34</sup> "Local dance competition," *Barrier Miner*, 6 April 1960, 8.

<sup>35</sup> "Flights to see opera," *Barrier Miner*, 7 April 1960, 16.

<sup>36</sup> "June Bronhill to visit Australia," 3 March 1960, 1; "June Bronhill for big Australian tour," *Barrier Miner*, 21 March 1960, 15.

<sup>37</sup> "Spotlight," "The Wooden Dish," *Barrier Miner*, 4 May 1960, 19.

<sup>38</sup> "Stroller," "Across the footlights," *Barrier Miner*, 21 May 1960, 7.

<sup>39</sup> "Bullens - Australia's largest circus," *Barrier Miner*, 10 June 1960, 18; "Bullens - The new 1960 edition," *Barrier Miner*, 11 June 1960, 14.

<sup>40</sup> "Visit from TV stars," *Barrier Miner*, 20 June 1960, 4; "This was royal Cadillac," *Barrier Miner*, 25 June 1960, 2; "Pilita pays visit," *Barrier Miner*, 28 June 1960, 15.

<sup>41</sup> "Musical reception to June Bronhill," *Barrier Miner*, 7 July 1960, 18.

<sup>42</sup> "June Bronhill souvenir," *Barrier Miner*, 14 July 1960, 9-12.

<sup>43</sup> "Stroller," "Across the footlights," *Barrier Miner*, 6 August 1960, 7.

<sup>44</sup> "Odd Man In is Scintillating," *Barrier Miner*, 17 September 1960, 2.

<sup>45</sup> "It's new at your show," *Barrier Miner*, 20 September 1960, 4; "One of the many sideshow attractions at the Silver City Show," *Barrier Miner*, 23 September 1960, 1.

<sup>46</sup> "Treasures of Music," *Barrier Miner*, 30 September 1960, 6.

- <sup>47</sup> "Several hundred people today jammed Argent Street and brought traffic to a halt," *Barrier Miner*, 8 October 1960, 1.
- <sup>48</sup> "Rock Martin presents *A Night in Space*," *Barrier Miner*, 25 October 1960, 25.
- <sup>49</sup> "Topline Acts in Oriental Revue Show," *Barrier Miner*, 5 November 1960, 2.
- <sup>50</sup> "Burnt out shell of oldest city theatre," *Barrier Miner*, 29 November 1960, 1; "Crystal had live shows for 60 years: Old stars recalled," *Barrier Miner*, 29 November 1960, 15.
- <sup>51</sup> "June Bronhill to sing on Dec 13 – theatre problem," *Barrier Miner*, 2 June 1960, 5, and advertisement, 17; "June Charms Audience: Citizens given feast of song," *Barrier Miner*, 13 December 1960, 7; "June for Sydney," *Barrier Miner*, 14 December 1960, 8.
- <sup>52</sup> "Hawaiian Night," *Barrier Miner*, 5 February 1960, 11.
- <sup>53</sup> One motivation for government involvement was to promote production that prioritised artistic standards over commercial appeal; see Richard Waterhouse, "Lola Montez and high culture: The Elizabethan Theatre Trust in post-war Australia," *Journal of Australian Studies* 21:52 (1997): 148–58.
- <sup>54</sup> "TV in Broken Hill," *Barrier Miner*, 15 February 1960, 1; "No reception of TV in B Hill last night," *Barrier Miner*, 16 February 1960, 3.
- <sup>55</sup> "Higher antenna proved success with telecasts," *Barrier Miner*, 23 July 1960, 2.
- <sup>56</sup> "Planning TV reception – testing reception for TV in Broken Hill," *Barrier Miner*, 10 November 1960, 4; "TV programs for BH – regular reception here is unlikely," *Barrier Miner*, 11 November 1960, 2.
- <sup>57</sup> "Preparations for TV in Broken Hill," *Barrier Miner*, 1 November 1962, 1; "Change of plans for TV repeater," *Barrier Miner*, 26 July 1963, 6; "Access road to TV station site," *Barrier Miner*, 3 February 1964, 1; "Building for TV repeater station," *Barrier Miner*, 14 May 1964, 1; "Work at PO for erection of TV tower," *Barrier Miner*, 19 May 1964, 1; "Cable Line for TV," *Barrier Miner*, 3 September 1964, 4.
- <sup>58</sup> "Visit from TV Stars," *Barrier Miner*, 20 June 1960, 4.
- <sup>59</sup> "Star Dancers for B. Hill Festival," *Barrier Miner*, 20 September 1960, 9.
- <sup>60</sup> "Stroller," "Across the footlights," *Barrier Miner*, 10 September 1960, 7; see also 26 November 1960, 6.
- <sup>61</sup> "Sorlie Show Opens Tuesday," *Barrier Miner*, 10 September 1960, 4; Advertisement for Sorlie's, *Barrier Miner*, 13 September 1960, 10; "Sparkling Show by Sorlie Revue Coy," *Barrier Miner*, 14 September 1960, 23; "Sorlie Show Change," *Barrier Miner*, 15 September 1960, 5; "Sorlies' Term Extended," *Barrier Miner*, 17 September 1960, 11.
- <sup>62</sup> "Sorlie show opens Tuesdays," *Barrier Miner*, 10 September 1960, 4.
- <sup>63</sup> "Sparkling Show by Sorlie Revue Coy," *Barrier Miner*, 14 September 1960, 23.
- <sup>64</sup> "Sorlies' Term Extended," *Barrier Miner*, 17 September 1960, 11.
- <sup>65</sup> "Sorlie's Review," *Goulburn Post*, 20 October 1950, 2; "Show week entertainments," *Muswellbrook Chronicle*, 29 March 1938, 3.
- <sup>66</sup> "Sparkling Show by Sorlie Revue Coy.," *Barrier Miner*, 14 September 1960, 23.
- <sup>67</sup> The Flat Tops appeared in *Happy Go Lovely, Clowns and Gowns* and *C'est Si Bon* for Sorlie's in 1958; they had previously performed at Sydney's Celebrity Club and Brisbane's Theatre Royal from 1956.
- <sup>68</sup> *Then and Now*, program from Sorlie's Newcastle season, December 1959, Bobby and Gracie Le Brun collection, NLA, Ms. Acc. 11.137, Box 5.
- <sup>69</sup> The Flat Tops appeared in *The Good Old Days* at Andre's nightclub, Sydney, from 18 January 1960, *New Faces of 1960* at the Tivoli Melbourne, from 16 March, *Artists and Models* at His Majesty's, Perth, from 20 August, Her Majesty's, Brisbane, from 30 September, and the Tivoli, Sydney, from 16 November.
- <sup>70</sup> "Versatile Artist," *Barrier Miner*, 24 September 1960, 2.
- <sup>71</sup> Jeff Carter, "Have your symptoms ready, Sorlie's Travelling Vaudeville Show (1)," photograph, NLA, nla.pic-an23365767, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.pic-an23365767>; "Have your symptoms ready, Sorlie's Travelling Vaudeville Show (2)", NLA, nla.pic-an23365728, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.pic-an23365728>.
- <sup>72</sup> Jeff Carter, "Juggling together, Sorlie's Travelling Vaudeville Show," NLA, nla.pic-an23366097, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.pic-an23366097>
- <sup>73</sup> Joanna Bassi, personal communication, 1 September 2014.

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<sup>74</sup> “Juggling television on HSV7’s Bandwagon revue at 9:30 tonight,” *The Sun*, Melbourne, 28 July 1959; *Cafe Continental*, unidentified episode, ABC Television, Sydney, c. 1959, National Film and Sound Archive, Title No 746820.

<sup>75</sup> *Rockin’ the Town*, *Television Variety* and *Peep Show*, programs from Sorlie’s Newcastle season, December 1956–January 1957, Bobby and Gracie Le Brun collection, NLA, Ms. Acc. 11.137, Box 5.

<sup>76</sup> Box office takings ranged from £111 to £396 per show, yielding an average daily income of £240 over 12 days in Broken Hill.

<sup>77</sup> Bobby Le Brun, diary entries, 4 and 5 November 1961, Bobby and Gracie Le Brun collection, NLA, Ms. Acc. 11.137, Box 2.

<sup>78</sup> Bobby Le Brun, diary entry, 29 October 1961.

<sup>79</sup> John Byrell, *Bandstand – and all that!* (Kenthurst, NSW: Kangaroo Press, 1995), 101.

<sup>80</sup> Jonathan Bollen, “From Theatrical Nostalgia to Modernist Design: Nightclubs as Venues for Live Entertainments in Mid-20th-Century Australia,” in *A World of Popular Entertainments*, eds Gillian Arrighi and Victor Emeljanow (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2012), 68-82.

<sup>81</sup> Susan Bennet, “Theatre/Tourism,” *Theatre Journal*, 57:3 (2005): 407–28.

<sup>82</sup> In the survey of entertainments in Broken Hill, the Gold Coast appears twice as a holiday destination: “Dancing their way to the top in show business with winter appearances on the Gold Coast” about two showgirls from Adelaide and Melbourne (*Barrier Miner*, 27 July 1960, 8); and “Python bites dancing woman”: about dancer Rani Bouquest who was “savagely bitten by her partner, a nine-foot rock python” while “performing her ‘kiss of death’ routine at a Gold Coast nightspot” (*Barrier Miner*, 1 October 1960, 7).