



Lyrebird Rising: Louise Hanson-Dyer of L'Oiseau-Lyre 1884-1962 (Miegunyah Press)

Jim Davidson

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Lyrebird Rising: Louise Hanson-Dyer of L'Oiseau-Lyre 1884-1962 (Miegunyah Press) Jim Davidson "Lyrebird Rising" is a study of the extraordinary life of Louise Hanson-Dyer (1884-1962), which began in the Melbourne of the Land Boom and ended in Grace Kelly's Monaco. Born into a wealthy family - her father was a parliamentarian and controversial doctor - Louise developed her interest in music early, and used her wealth (augmented by marrying a man 25 years her senior) to advance the arts in Melbourne. She assisted the poet Shaw Neilson and underwrote musical ventures, but increasingly felt the tug of Europe. In 1932, in Paris, she established Editions de l'Oiseau-Lyre (Lyrebird Press), and as a music publisher set about reviving baroque and medieval music, in rare editions notable for their scholarship and sumptuousness. Later (assisted by a second husband, 25 years younger) she began to make discs to illustrate these editions. From that original idea the recording venture grew and grew: in 1950 Louise made the first long-playing records in Europe, and by the time she died Oiseau-Lyre was a famous label, putting out some of the earliest recordings by such people as Dame Joan Sutherland, Sir Colin David, Sir Neville Marriner and the Academy of St Martin-in-the-Fields, and Dame Janet Baker. "Lyrebird Rising" re-creates the ambience of Melbourne in the 20s, Paris in the 30s and London in the 50s; it also discusses expatriatism, explores the paths open to a dynamic woman at the time, and examines the changes in musical taste that were set in motion by the rise of musicology, radio, and the gramophone. Indeed it doubles as one of the first histories of a recording company. But through it all the focus remains that vibrant, energetic woman who, while being a glamorous figure of the day, was well aware of the currents swirling around her, and who as an imaginative patron sought to tap them and give them shape.

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