

The Australian Women's Register

Entry type: Person

Entry ID: AWE3773

Hanson-Dyer, Louise Berta Mosson

(1884 - 1962)

Born 19 July, 1884, Melbourne Victoria Australia

Died 9 November, 1962, Monaco France

Occupation Musician, Patron, Publisher

Summary

A talented pianist, Louise Hanson-Dyer founded the music publishing company, Editions de l'Oiseau-Lyre, in Paris in 1928. With her first husband, James Dyer, she donated £10,000 to establish a permanent orchestra in Melbourne. Upon her death, she bequeathed over £200,000 to the University of Melbourne. The Louise Hanson-Dyer Music Library at the University is named in her honour.

Details

Born Louise Berta Mosson Smith, Hanson-Dyer was the daughter of Louis Lawrence Smith, son of Edward Tyrrell Smith and Magdeleine Nanette Gengoult. L.L. Smith came to Australia to search for gold, but his medical studies led him instead to produce medical almanacs and a variety of less than bona fide medical products. By 1880 he was earning £10,000 per year, and the *Bulletin* was referring to him as £.£. Smith. He became a member of parliament, representing South Bourke. In 1883, after the death of his first wife, Sarah Ann, Smith married Marion Jane 'Polly' Higgins. Their first child was Louise, followed by Louis, Harold and Gladys. The family lived in Collins St, Melbourne, where they entertained lavishly and moved in fashionable circles.

Louise was educated at the Presbyterian Ladies' College, and was later president of its Old Collegians' Association. She attended the Alliance Française, and took private piano lessons, becoming an accomplished player. In 1905, she enrolled at the Melbourne Conservatorium of Music and went on to win the gold medal of the Royal College of Music, London. At home she worked with the British Music Society of Victoria to support performers and composers, encouraging the publication of musical works.

In 1911, Louise Smith married 54-year-old Jimmy Dyer – the 'linoleum king'. In 1927, before moving to Paris, the Dyers donated £10,000 to support a permanent orchestra in Melbourne. In Paris, Louise established her musical publishing company, *Editions de l'Oiseau Lyre*, with the intention of publishing the works of Couperin le Grand. The first twelve-volume edition was immensely popular and the company grew quickly, later expanding business to include long-play recordings.

James Dyer died in 1938 and the following year Louise married 30-year-old Joseph Birch Hanson, 24 years her junior. The pair left Paris to live in Monaco, where the publishing business continued. Despite her years abroad, Louise Hanson-Dyer retained a distinct attachment to the country of her birth. When she died in 1962, she left the majority of her £241,380 estate to the University of Melbourne. University papers record a bequest of \$464,430 in 1988; by 1994 the value of the bequest had risen to over \$3 million. This figure comprises the original bequest of Louise Hanson-Dyer together with that of her husband Joseph Hanson on his death nine years later. The bequest was to go toward the publication of a music series.

Published resources

Book

The Complete Book of Great Australian Women: Thirty-six women who changed the course of Australia, De Vries, Susanna, 2003

Lyrebird Rising: Louise Hanson-Dyer of Oiseau-Lyre, 1884-1962, Davidson, Jim, 1994

Catalogue

Catalogue de la Collection Musicale Hanson-Dyer, Université de Melbourne, Herlin, Denis, 2006

Thesis

In Her Gift: Activism and Altruism in Australian Women's Philanthropy, 1880-2005, Lemon, Barbara, 2008

Resource

Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

Site Exhibition

In Her Gift: Women Philanthropists in Australian History, Australian Women's Archives Project, 2009,
<http://www.womenaustralia.info/exhib/wiph/home.html>

Archival resources

State Library of Victoria

Papers, 1926-1971. [manuscript]

The University of Melbourne, Special Collections

[Book of autographs of visitors to Louise Hanson-Dyer] [manuscript]

Author Details

Barbara Lemon

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