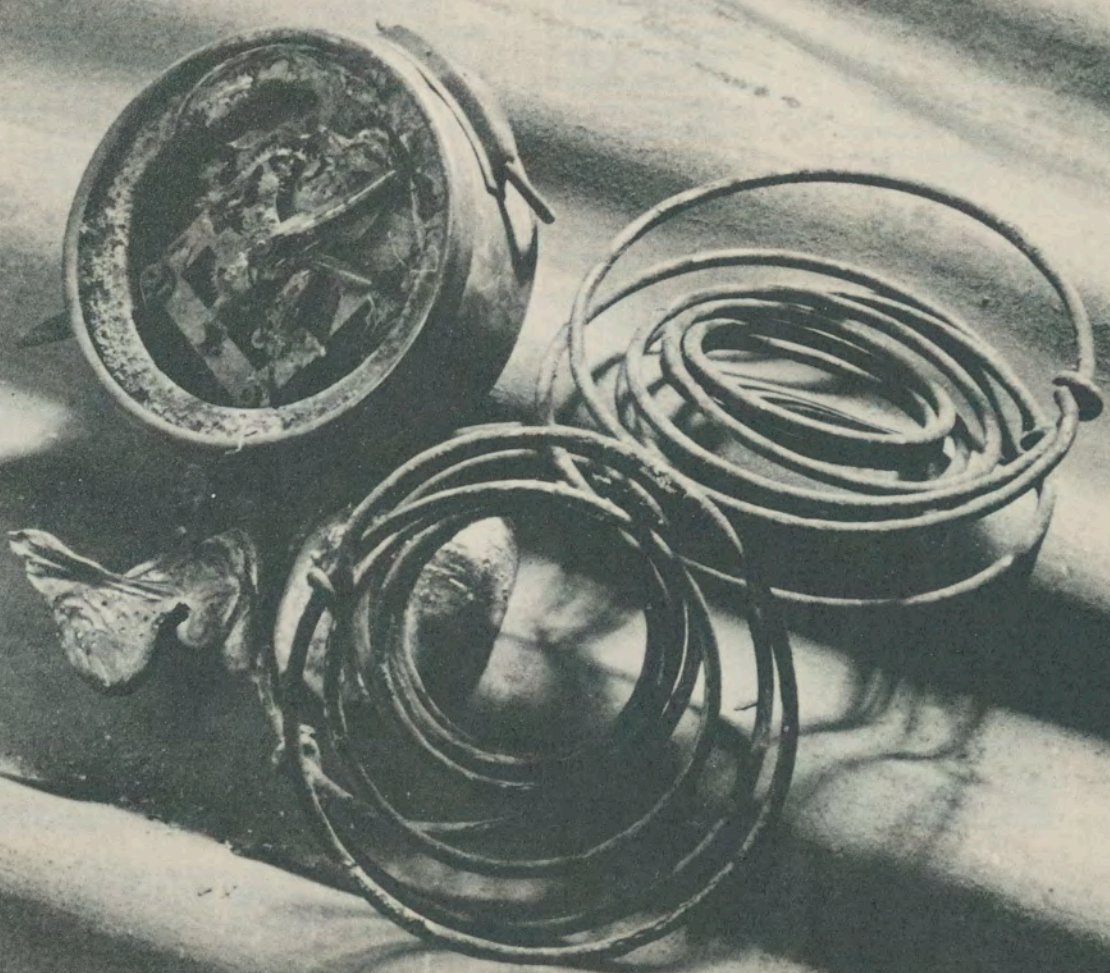


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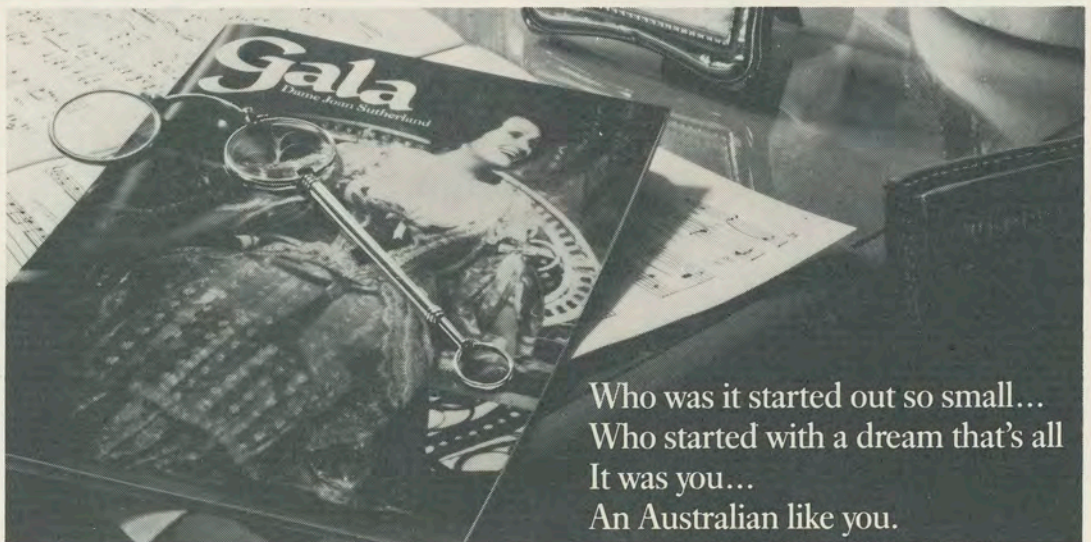
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THE AUSTRALIAN OPERA
RECORDING HALL, SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE
January 3, 7, 9, 11, 15

METAMORPHOSIS

By arrangement with Boosey & Hawkes (Australia) Pty Limited

Opera in Two Acts by Brian Howard
Libretto adapted from the Kafka novella by Steven Berkoff

Conductor: Stuart Challender
Producer: Graeme Murphy
Set Design: Robert Dein
Costume Design: Anthony Jones
Lighting Design: John Drummond Montgomery
Resident Producer: Brian FitzGerald
Stage Manager: Ann Hoban

CAST

| | |
|-------------|---------------|
| Gregor | John Fulford |
| Greta | Peta Blyth |
| Mother | Judith Saliba |
| Father | John Pringle |
| Lodger | Robert Gard |
| Chief Clerk | John Wegner |

MUSICIANS

| | |
|-------------------|------------------------------------|
| John Gould | <i>Violin</i> |
| Richard Tognetti | <i>Violin</i> |
| Deborah Lander | <i>Viola</i> |
| Susan Blake | <i>Cello</i> |
| Geoffrey Collins | <i>Flute and Piccolo</i> |
| Nigel Westlake | <i>Clarinet and Bass Clarinet</i> |
| Martin Woolley | <i>Bassoon and Contra Bassoon</i> |
| Colin Smith | <i>Soprano and Tenor Saxophone</i> |
| Darryl Poulsen | <i>Horn</i> |
| Raffaele Agostino | <i>Guitar</i> |
| Ian Bloxson | <i>Percussion</i> |
| Rebecca Legos | <i>Percussion</i> |

Casting correct at time of publication but subject to amendment on nightly castsheet

There will be one interval after Scene Two

Synopsis

We begin: as Gregor Samsa awoke one morning from uneasy dreams . . . uneasy indeed, because during the night he had been transformed into a giant insect!

Scene 1 Gregor had been a pleasant, amiable young man who carried the burden of providing for his family: Father, a hard, selfish man, ill, unemployed and in debt; Mother, doting and ineffectual; and Greta, his adoring young sister. Gregor was a traveller in the cloth trade, working long hours, friendless, abused by his arrogant employer: a most dehumanizing existence. And yet there are hints of enterprise, even of personality, struggling to emerge.

One morning he fails to appear for the early train. The family panic. He must be sick, but what will the Chief Clerk say about his absence? At this point, Gregor knows how sick he really is, but remains calm enough to try to solve each problem in turn: what will he tell the family? Should he try to catch a later train despite his state? Above all, he must learn to master his new physical form: legs, belly, carapace.

The Chief Clerk arrives, seeking the truant and ready to make trouble. Gregor refuses to unlock his door: he couldn't even if he wanted to. With much anger and confusion, the family and the Chief Clerk try to coax him out. After great effort he succeeds in making an appearance. The others are horrified. The Chief Clerk flees in terror, the family in hot pursuit to try to protect their material interests. Gregor's pleas for help and understanding fall on deaf ears, and he retreats to his room, injured and exhausted.

Scene 2 Gregor and his family, variously, are trying to come to terms with the new situation. Accusations are made by the various family members, reflecting the guilt and shame each is feeling: none more than Gregor himself. The mood is, by turn, hopeful and despairing.

Greta takes the role of caring for Gregor. Even she however, finds the creature repulsive. Gregor's attempts to communicate are a failure.

Scene 3 Father is strutting about pompously in the uniform which comes with his new job as a bank messenger, enjoying the newly-won admiration of his wife and daughter. He leaves for work, with some fears for their safety. Gregor's presence in the next room is becoming a fearful, overbearing influence on their lives. He has begun to revel in his new form, and is taking strange pleasure in moving about, insect-like, over the walls and ceiling.

Mother and son, in Father's absence, begin to yearn for each other's company and comfort. Mother and Greta venture into his room and remove his furniture and make his existence even more unencumbered. Gregor, feeling the loss of his last vestiges of humanity, tries to prevent them. Father returns to protect them, and in his uncontrolled rage injures Gregor grievously by hurling apples. The women are horrified by Father's violence, and must restrain him from killing his son. Gregor, badly injured, returns to his room, greatly puzzled and hurt by his father's apparent transformation.

Scene 4 Greta, like Gregor before her, is trying to improve herself by studying. Father has returned to his idle, slovenly ways, and is scornful of her efforts. Mother is concerned that the apple embedded in Gregor's back has become infected.

Scene 5 Gregor is now quite ill. The apple is rotting, he is unable to eat the scraps they feed him, he is living in filth. Mother and Greta wish to help him, but Father has already disowned his son: he is nothing but a dung-beetle.

Gregor, his guilt at not being able to help his family overcoming him, has a vision of his former days as they almost were: Father whips him, as the whole family scream at him and demand more and greater efforts in his work. He relives the awful moment of his father's attack with the apples, sadistic and incomprehensible. The family seem totally unmoved by his plight. Finally Mother, impotent and hypocritical, takes him in hand with the promise of better things to come.

Scene 6 In need of money, the Samsas take a lodger. He is supercilious and demanding. They fear that he will encounter Gregor. They nevertheless continue to offend the insect by throwing the rubbish and unwanted furniture into his room.

Greta is practising the violin, rather badly. The lodger, nevertheless, is delighted. Gregor is extremely jealous: does his humanity not give him a keener appreciation of her music than anybody else? He appears before the lodger, who is not shocked but merely disgusted. Threatening legal action for the danger to his health, he leaves without paying his rent.

Greta, finally, disowns her brother: if the creature really was Gregor, he would have been more considerate. It must be disposed of. Gregor retreats once again, this time to die, relieved now of his suffering. The family are sobered, and sense the coming of spring and the dawning of a new phase in their lives.

Father and Mother become aware of Greta's beauty, the influence of her pubescence. She is undertaking a transformation of her own. Perhaps a suitable husband for her could be the solution to all their problems.

NEIL CLIFTON

Courtesy of The Victoria State Opera

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BRIAN HOWARD *Composer*

Brian Howard is regarded as one of the finest composers in Australia, having already gained a substantial international reputation. He studied composition with Peter Sculthorpe, Richard Meale and Peter Maxwell Davies and conducting with Georg Tintner, the late Willem van Otterloo and Michael Gielen. He has received two Composers' Fellowships from the Music Board of the Australia Council and in 1978 the highest award at the Trieste International Competition for Symphonic Composition for his work *Il Tramonto della Luna*. He has been resident composer at the Cité Internationale des Arts in Paris, at Queekhoven (Eduard van Beinum Foundation) in Holland, and with the Royal Danish Ballet in Copenhagen. In October 1983 he became Musical Director of the West Australian Ballet Company. Recent commissions include *A Midsummer Night's Dream* for the Queensland Ballet, *The Rainbow Serpent*, which was choreographed by Barry Moreland for the Seymour Group, and *A Fringe of Leaves*, for choir and chamber orchestra, for Musica Viva Australia and the Victorian Arts Centre Trust, to commemorate the official opening of the Melbourne Concert Hall.

STUART CHALLENGER *Conductor*

Tasmanian-born conductor Stuart Challenger commenced his music studies at the Melbourne Conservatorium. In 1968 he studied conducting in Hamburg and Vienna and was later appointed assistant conductor at the Nuremberg State Theatre. Appointments followed in Zurich, Lucerne and Basle, as well as guest appearances in Berne, Lugarno, Gelsenkirchen and Amsterdam. Mr Challenger joined The Australian Opera in 1980 conducting performances of *The Barber of Seville*, followed by *The Marriage of Figaro*, *Madama Butterfly*, *Falstaff*, *Die Fledermaus*, *Così fan tutte*, *Jenůfa*, *Don Giovanni*, *Otello*, *Lucia di Lammermoor*, *La traviata* and *Aida*.

GRAEME MURPHY *Producer*

Australian choreographer Graeme Murphy was appointed Artistic Director to the Sydney Dance Company late in 1976. His career in dance commenced with The Australian Ballet followed by contracts with The Sadler's Wells Royal Ballet in London and Ballets Felix Blaska in Grenoble, France. He returned to Australia in 1975 as a freelance choreographer. He has created a style of theatre that is a vivid reflection of Australian life, in works such as *Rumours*, *Beyond Twelve* (created for The Australian Ballet) and *Homelands*. His most recent work is *After Venice*, taking its inspiration from Benjamin Britten's *Death in Venice*, for which he created the choreography for The Canadian Opera Company in July of this year. *Metamorphosis* is Graeme Murphy's first collaboration with The Australian Opera.

ROBERT DEIN *Set Designer*

After completing studies at NIDA, Robert Dein travelled to England, working as assistant designer at the Watford Palace Theatre and as Associate Designer at the Liverpool Playhouse. He designed for a number of theatres in Great Britain, notably The Young Vic in London (*Charlie's Aunt* and *The Importance of Being Earnest*), and costume design for the Royal Court production of *Mother's Day*; *The Great American Backstage Musical* for the Regent Theatre, London; other assignments included *One Off* for the Almost Free Theatre, London; *Steve*, *Otherwise Engaged*, *Small Change*, and *Candida* at the Liverpool Playhouse; and in New York *A Life in the Theatre* and *The Father* at the Open Stage Theatre. Returning to Australia, he designed *General Macarthur in Australia* for the Marionette Theatre of Australia, and *Deadly Sins* for the Sydney Dance Company at Kinselas. He was Assistant Art Director on the film *Starstruck* and Art Director on the films *City's Edge*, *Molly*, *Street Hero* and *Emoh Ruo*. *Metamorphosis* is the first production Robert Dein has designed for The Australian Opera.

ANTHONY JONES *Costume Designer*

Anthony studied fine art and fashion design at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology followed by two years as a fashion designer in Melbourne. His work in the film industry commenced as a Wardrobe Assistant on *Gallipoli* followed by assignments as Assistant Costume Designer for *Heatwave*, *Starstruck* and *The Year of Living Dangerously*. He was Costume Co-ordinator for the film *Undercover*, and Costume Designer for *The City's Edge* and *The Disappearance of Azaria Chamberlain*. His first collaboration with Graeme Murphy was on *Some Rooms*, followed by the Sydney Dance Company's *Deadly Sins*. Recent film assignments include Kennedy Miller's *Cowra*, and the costumes for the feature film *Emoh Ruo*.

JOHN DRUMMOND MONTGOMERY

Lighting Designer

John Drummond Montgomery began working with The Dance Company NSW and NSW Theatre of the Deaf, The Conservatorium of Music in Sydney and the Bondi Pavilion Theatre as Technical Director. In 1979 he was appointed Technical Stage Manager for Australian Dance Theatre in Adelaide where he began lighting ballets and with whom he toured extensively within Australia and to the United Kingdom, Holland and Poland. He has also worked with the English National Opera North, and the Inner London Education Authority. In 1983 he was appointed Production Manager for the Bat Dor Dance Company, Israel and toured with them to Zaire, Kenya, New York and Los Angeles before returning to Australia in 1984, as Production Manager and Lighting Designer in residence for the Sydney Dance Company. Earlier this year he staged and lit the return season of *Some Rooms* at The Sydney Opera House and *Deadly Sins* at Kinselas.

STEVEN BERKOFF *Librettist*

London born Steven Berkoff has had a varied career as actor, director, writer, designer and mime in UK mainstream and repertory theatres and in film and television. The first production which Steven adapted, directed and performed in was Kafka's *In The Penal Colony* at the Arts Lab, Drury Lane in 1968 and in the following year a highly acclaimed production of *Metamorphosis*. Soon afterwards he formed his own company, The London Theatre Group with whom he performed his interpretations of *Metamorphosis*, *The Trial*, *Macbeth*, *The Fall of the House of Usher* and *Hamlet*, as well as his original plays *Agamemnon*, *East*, *Greek and Decadence*, in the U.K., Belgium, Austria, Israel, Holland, Germany, Australia and the United States. His film credits include *Clockwork Orange*, *Barry Lyndon*, *The Passenger*, *Joseph Andrews* and *McVicar*.

JOHN FULFORD *Gregor*

Baritone John Fulford was born in Swan Hill, Victoria, and studied singing in Melbourne for five years before winning the Melbourne Sun Aria, Shell Aria, Adelaide Aria and the ABC Quest. He made his operatic debut with the Victoria State Opera as Belcore in *L'elisir d'amore* and sang Mirovich in the world première of *Inner Voices*. Since joining The Australian Opera in 1980, Mr Fulford has sung many leading roles including Papageno in *The Magic Flute*, Tarquinius in *The Rape of Lucretia*, Lescaut in *Manon Lescaut*, Figaro in *The Marriage of Figaro*, De Bretigny in *Manon*, Guglielmo in *Così fan tutte*, Figaro in *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, Sonora in *La fanciulla del West*, Perchik in *Fiddler on the Roof*, the Counsel in *Ba-ta-clan*, Gaoler in *Dialogues of the Carmelites* and Demetrius in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

PETA BLYTH *Greta*

Brisbane-born soprano Peta Blyth studied at the University of Queensland, where she graduated with a First Class Music Honours Degree. She was awarded the Sir Henry Abel-Smith Travelling Scholarship and studied singing at the Royal College of Music, London, where she performed a number of roles, including Susanna in *The Marriage of Figaro*, Blonde in *The Abduction from the Seraglio* and Mrs Julian in Britten's *Owen Wingrave*. After returning to Australia, Miss Blyth joined The Australian Opera in 1983 and has performed the role of First Boy in *The Magic Flute*, the Plaintiff in *Trial by Jury* and Chava in *Fiddler on the Roof*.

JUDITH SALIBA *Mother*

Since joining The Australian Opera in 1976 Judith Saliba's roles with the company have included the Priestess in *Aida*, Laurretta *Dr Miracle*; Sandrina *La Buona Figliuola*; Molly Brazen *The Beggar's Opera*; Susanna *The Marriage of Figaro*; Urbain *Les Huguenots*; Marenka *The Bartered Bride*; Nella *Gianni Schicchi*; Pamina *The Magic Flute*; Nannetta *Falstaff*; Despina *Così fan tutte*; Javotte *Manon*; Clotilde *Norma*, and the Leitmetzerin in *Der Rosenkavalier*. In 1984 her roles included Mlle Jouve not in *Adriana Lecouvreur*, Wellgunde in *Das Rheingold* and Mother Gerald in *Dialogues of the Carmelites*.

JOHN PRINGLE *Father*

Formerly a pharmacist in Melbourne, baritone John Pringle won several major singing competitions before joining The Australian Opera in 1967. He made his debut as Frank in *Die Fledermaus* and since then his roles with the company have included Rossini's *Figaro*, Marcello in *La Bohème*, the Speaker and Papageno in *The Magic Flute*, the Forester in *The Cunning Little Vixen*, Don Giovanni, Figaro and the Count in *The Marriage of Figaro*, Guglielmo in *Così fan tutte*, Ford in *Falstaff*, Prince Andrei in *War and Peace*, Nick Shadow in *The Rake's Progress*, Macheath in *The Beggar's Opera*, Lescaut in *Manon Lescaut*, Mercutio in *Roméo et Juliette*, Michonnet in *Adriana Lecouvreur* and Germont in *La traviata*. He has appeared with Glyndebourne Festival Opera, Cologne Opera, at the Paris Autumn Festival and in Nancy, with Brussels Opera at the Flanders Festival, as well as on BBC TV and ITV for Glyndebourne Productions.

ROBERT GARD *Lodger*

Robert Gard was born in Cornwall and studied at the Guildhall School of Music in London. A tour of Australia with the Sadler's Wells *Merry Widow* led to an invitation to join The Australian Opera in 1963, and his roles with the company include Tichon in *Katya Kabanová*, the title role in *Fra Diavolo*, Rustighello in *Lucrezia Borgia*, Shuisky in *Boris Godunov*, Grosvenor in *Patience*, Eisenstein in *Die Fledermaus*, Siegmund in *Die Walküre*, Danilo in *The Merry Widow*, the Constable in *Fiddler on the Roof* and Loge in *Das Rheingold*. He scored a major success as Aschenbach in the State Opera of South Australia's *Death in Venice* for the 1980 Adelaide Festival, a role he later filmed.

JOHN WEGNER *Chief Clerk*

Born of Latvian parents in West Germany, John Wegner emigrated to Australia in 1955. In 1979 he won the Bendigo and Ringwood Arias as well as the Metropolitan Opera Auditions in this country and competed in the Pan-Pacific finals in Hawaii. He joined The Australian Opera in 1980 and as a principal artist with the company his roles have included Theseus in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Collatinus in *The Rape of Lucretia*, Micha in *The Bartered Bride*, Gazella in *Lucrezia Borgia*, Polonius in *Hamlet*, Pistol in *Falstaff*, the Duke in *Roméo et Juliette*, Melisso in *Alcina*, the Commendatore in *Don Giovanni*, Sparafucile in *Rigoletto*, the Prince of Bouillon in *Adriana Lecouvreur*, a Police Commissary in *Der Rosenkavalier* and Fasolt in *Das Rheingold*, and recently the Constable in *Fiddler on the Roof*.

Brian Howard traces the history of *Metamorphosis*

On the opening night in Melbourne of my first opera (*Inner Voices*) by the Victoria State Opera in October 1977, Graham Cox (Assistant to VSO's Musical Director, Richard Dival) came up to me in the bar and said he had an idea for my next opera. I half listened as he started talking enthusiastically about Kafka, beetles and Steven Berkoff. Another opera?

Some weeks later, when I was back in my apartment in Paris, I read the Kafka novella and decided Cox's enthusiasm was well founded. However, tracking down the Berkoff adaptation, at that time unpublished, took many letters to London; a copy finally reached me in Lund, Sweden where I was spending the northern spring of 1980. I read the Berkoff version several times during those months in Sweden and decided it had to become the libretto for my next opera.

Following further correspondence, the VSO agreed to commission the score of *Metamorphosis* from me and, in April 1981, I met Steven Berkoff in London and discussed the evolution of the libretto with him. I started sketching the opera in the southern spring of 1981 in Melbourne. However, for most of 1982 I was engaged in writing other works, so *Metamorphosis* remained as that folio of sketches for almost a year.

It was in late December 1982 that I moved into a wonderful house on Fairy Bower in Sydney, overlooking the Pacific Ocean. It was there that I really began to write the opera. By late February 1983, I had completed the first major part of the score, but again writing stopped when I flew to Adelaide for five weeks to conduct The Singers' Company production of *Inner Voices*. From Adelaide I flew to London in March for Anthony Besch's production of the same work with the New Opera Company. From London I went to France and began writing again in Provence: first staying with friends at Venasqué, near Avignon, and then in the Ventoux Mountains near Malaucène. I returned to London for six weeks and stayed in a house behind Portobello Road in Notting Hill, where I wrote much of scene three.

In June I flew to Melbourne to complete the score. During the weeks that followed, I also conducted the premiere of my *A Fringe of Leaves* for Musica Viva Australia in the Melbourne Concert Hall, with the Australian Chamber Orchestra and the Melbourne Chorale Chamber Singers and flew to Sydney to conduct a workshop with the Seymour Group. The month before the opera opened in Melbourne, I had eight copyists working on the parts. One of the copyist's girlfriends drove bits of the score around in her station wagon and collected the parts, while I acted as mission control from a Carlton telephone.

In September 1983, Graham Cox conducted the premiere of *Metamorphosis* with the VSO in a production by Nigel Triffit. In the bar, after the performance . . .

Producer's Note

It may be considered unusual to discover a choreographer credited as the producer of an opera. For me it is an exciting and inevitable progression. My interest in all forms of theatre, art, literature and, in particular, contemporary music, resulted earlier this year in an invitation from Lotfi Mansouri to create choreography for The Canadian Opera Company's production of Benjamin Britten's *Death In Venice*. This opera, like *Metamorphosis*, was inspired by a great piece of literature. Kafka's disturbing short story has been a source of inspiration for many; Steven Berkoff's notable theatrical interpretation convinced composer Brian Howard to commission him to write the libretto for this exciting work. This is indeed the first time I have been invited to produce an opera, allowing me the opportunity to reaffirm my commitment to Australian contemporary music and to work with a company and a composer I admire.

Graeme Murphy A.M.