

because it was good dramatic entertainment'. The idea that opera might have political import or a social message was quite foreign to him. In justice to Dad, Menotti always maintained that *The Consul* was not specifically directed against the Eastern Bloc but was 'intended as a universal statement against political repression and inhuman bureaucracy', wherever it might occur.²⁰

By 1957, the Opera Company was no longer essentially a one-man show. Grim financial lessons had been learned from *The Consul*. It was a critical success, but the company had to be given a grant of £700 to cover production losses.²¹ At that point, Dad realised that he couldn't carry on as before. He needed a businessman's expertise and he approached Fred Turnovsky (1916–1994) to join the Board of Directors. Turnovsky had fled Nazi persecution in war-torn Czechoslovakia. He and his wife Lotte washed up in New Zealand, and he started his own business – Tatra Leather Goods. Realising that there was a shortage of watch straps, he made 10,000 from local leather, and never looked back. He was also a leading light in the Wellington Chamber Music Society.

My mother warned against the idea of Turnovsky joining the Board, and so did Alex Lindsay, who described Turnovsky as 'poison', but Dad disregarded their advice. The dynamics of Board meetings changed right away. Turnovsky and John Malcolm were repeatedly at loggerheads, and Turnovsky was vocal in expressing various dissatisfactions. In particular, he wanted a change in the allocation of the Opera Company's notional shares. The company was a non-profit-making limited liability company with a capital of £100. Mum and Dad held 51% of those shares between them. Turnovsky wanted to revise this arrangement, with the capital increased to £120 and divided equally between the directors – that is, £15 per director.²² In retrospect, this can be seen as Turnovsky's way of effectively controlling the company. If he could control the other Board members, which he did through his force of personality, then he could run the company. And this is how it panned out. I asked Dad why he agreed to such a readjustment. He replied that 'it was important to Fred'.

I suppose you could say that up until that point it had been Donald Munro's opera company. He founded it, and he largely made the decisions. Keeping the Opera Company up and running in its early years took a lot out of him, physically and emotionally. The run-ins with Turnovsky, and finding himself somewhat marginalised in the organisation he created, never ceased to upset him. Turnovsky himself seemed to have difficulty in acknowledging the contributions of others, and it is noteworthy that Dad receives only a solitary, passing mention in Turnovsky's autobiography. In 1984, in the interview with John Mansfield Thomson that I mentioned earlier, there were times when Dad clutched the microphone so tightly that Thomson feared he would inadvertently crush it – such was the extent of Dad's pent-up emotion.