The company’s sponsorships of the arts have included War and Peace for the Australian Opera (which it has not supported in such a big way since the mid-seventies), the 1977 tour of London Festival Ballet, Stars of World Ballet in 1978, the Tchaikovsky Ballet 1979, the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company the same year, and Evita.

Its Australian Ballet sponsorship is one of its biggest. It comes at a time when the protests of the anti-smoking lobby are becoming more volatile in both sport and the arts.

In Sydney six weeks ago, anti-smoking protesters confronted the first night audience arriving for the Sadler’s Wells Royal Ballet, whose tour was partly sponsored by Benson and Hedges.

RICHARD McGREGOR writes:

The sponsorship of the Australian Ballet by the Benson and Hedges company is the latest of the many cultural and sporting sponsorships embarked on by the tobacco companies.

The Peter Stuyvesant Cultural Foundation started in Australia in 1964, and the Philip Morris company began sponsoring the arts in the late sixties.