

# **A City for Music Lovers:**

## **Creating a classical music culture in Sydney 1889-1939**

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A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy of  
The Australian National University

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## Declaration

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university. To the best of the author's knowledge, it contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Fiona Fraser', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Fiona Fraser

13 June 2018



With thanks for many years of friendship

to

Dr Ross McGregor Mitchell

(1954-2018)

a maker of music and other fine things for, and with, family, friends and  
community.



# Acknowledgments

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In the centre of my family home stood a single cultural artefact, an upright Beale piano. It embodied distant memories of a mother (my grandmother) who would entertain her children around the piano in a small rural town in Queensland and spoke of family aspirations that the next generation might fulfil unrealised dreams. Neither of my parents or my aunts and uncles could actually play an instrument. They acted as custodians, preserving a piano and a violin which I eventually inherited. I owe a debt of gratitude to grandparents I never met, my Aunt Averil (on my mother's side) and my Aunt Dorothy (on my father's side), who kept these instruments for me. My parents made considerable sacrifices to ensure I might enjoy the benefits of a musical education.

I would also like to acknowledge and thank my supervisory panel for their strong support for this project and their patience with the various delays and detours I managed to find during the course of this project. I consider that I have had an exemplary supervisory panel.

When I began this research, I did not appreciate the resonance it would have with my own family's experience. The Chairperson of my supervisory panel, Emeritus Professor Jill Matthews, patiently allowed this realisation to

unfold in its own time. She has an uncanny knack of always being able to ask just the right question at just the right time, enabling me to find a feasible way forward whenever I felt overwhelmed by the enormous array of material documenting Sydney's musical development.

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While all credit goes to my supervisors and friends for their ideas and input into the final product, any inadvertent mistakes or errors are solely my responsibility.

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**Claus family Australian made upright Beale piano dating from early 20<sup>th</sup> century.**

# Abstract

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Through the efforts of thousands of dedicated men and women classical music obtained a privileged position in Sydney in the early twentieth century. This neglected area of Australia's cultural history was part of a transnational phenomenon which has divided historians and musicologists. Does it demonstrate the imposition of elite culture from above or did it emerge from the combined energies of those who believed that classical music might provide genuine benefits for the whole community?

Contributing to a body of literature on the social history of classical music in Europe and the United States, this thesis incorporates a Bourdieuan analysis examining the creation of classical music in Sydney from the perspective of key stakeholders: entertainment entrepreneurs, musical institutions, performers, composers and audience. It focuses on the interaction between these stakeholders to consider the field of classical music as a dynamic, constantly evolving arena of interaction where the personal and political intersect. It takes into account social, economic, political and technological developments as Australia established itself as an independent nation grappling with a rapidly expanding population, modernity and the rise of a politically engaged working class.

Such an approach brings into question previous accounts of the development on classical music in Australia which have focused on the role of the government owned Australian Broadcasting Commission (ABC) rather than the efforts of multiple stakeholders, community groups and committed individuals. It provides a new perspective that demonstrates the complex and iterative nature of social change and suggests ways in which our musical choices have come to define who we are.

## Abbreviations

Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC)

*The Australian Musical News* (AMN)

*Australian Musical Times and Magazine of Art* (AMTMA)

Australian Natives' Association (ANA)

British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC)

*The Australian Town and Country Journal* (ATCJ)

*The Australian Star* (Star)

*The Daily Telegraph* (Telegraph)

*The Evening News* (EN)

National Archives of Australia (NAA)

National Library of Australia (NLA)

New South Wales (NSW)

New South Wales State Archives and Records (NSW SAR)

Noel Butlin Archive (NBA)

State Library of NSW (SLNSW)

*The Sydney Morning Herald* (SMH)

*The Sydney Mail and NSW Advertiser* (M & A)

University of Technology Sydney (UTS)



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# 1.

## Introduction

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“Are we a musical people?”<sup>1</sup> The question was always asked rhetorically in the Sydney press for to answer in the negative implied a lack of civilisation and an underlying barbarity that was both feared and denied by most Australians. Yet it was an important question, one that was the subject of many *fin de siècle* newspaper articles and editorials and it was often difficult to answer unreservedly in the affirmative. Inevitably it led to more questions: “What sort of a people are we?”, “What is meant by being musical?” and who are “we”, “the people”? Such questioning revealed how embedded musical culture was in questions of nationhood, personhood and community in Sydney during the Federation era. Typical responses might detail notable musical performers, the size and enthusiasm of the audience, the fame of visiting artists from overseas, the musical associations, bands and orchestras of the city, local musicians, singers and composers of note, the number of students sitting for musical examinations, the size and magnificence of the Sydney Town Hall and its organ and, as time progressed, the standard of musical taste.<sup>2</sup> The creation of a classical music

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<sup>1</sup> *SMH*, 13 February 1889, 6.

<sup>2</sup> See for instance F.C. Brewer, *The Drama and Music of New South Wales* (Sydney: Charles Potter, Government Printer, 1892). See also *SMH*, 16 November 1889, 10–11; *AMTMA*, 10 December 1897, 3–4; *Watchman*, 1 March 1902, 2; Alfred Johnstone, “Are the Australians a Musical People”, *AMN*, 1 July 1920, 297–8; *Sydney Mail*, 16 March 1921, 8; *SMH*, 27 August 1932, 12; and *Sun*, 14 May 1933, 3.

culture was widely debated as Sydney marked one hundred years of European settlement with the opening of the Sydney Town Hall in 1889.<sup>3</sup> It continued to be debated throughout the Federation period into the 1930s.

This thesis examines the way in which classical music came to be differentiated from and privileged above other forms of music in Sydney between 1889 and 1939. It will explore this cultural transformation process taking into account the role of various agents and stakeholders. It considers ways in which classical music became symbolically important as a means of defining national, community and personal identity. By placing the spotlight on music-making in Sydney this study promises to enhance our understanding of social and cultural life during the pivotal years when Australia forged its national identity during a time of rapid urbanisation and population growth.

In this chapter I will first outline the European context in which classical music developed and its key features. I will then consider ways in which classical music spread outside Europe and the implications drawn by cultural historians and theorists about this phenomenon before moving onto the Australian context. Finally, I will outline my own methodology and provide an overview of this thesis.

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<sup>3</sup> The Centenary was celebrated in 1888 but the Town Hall opening, which was to be one of the features of the celebrations, did not occur until 1889.



## European Background

In Europe, the term “classical music” had been coined by 1870 to describe music of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, particularly that of Mozart, Haydn and Beethoven, as well as the music of subsequent generations of composers writing in that tradition, including Schubert, Weber, Schumann, Mendelssohn, Brahms and Liszt.<sup>4</sup> By dint of regular performance and acceptance by leading musical institutions and music critics, works by these composers became recognised as constituting a western musical canon.<sup>5</sup> This marked a significant change from previous eras when different standards of music-making applied.

Goehr<sup>6</sup>, Bonds<sup>7</sup> and Cook<sup>8</sup> have convincingly argued that until the latter part of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries music was associated with rhetoric, dialectics and grammar rather than the fine arts. As such, music was most often deployed in partnership with words ensuring vocal music was usually given priority over instrumental music.<sup>9</sup> Musical events typically took place in well lit venues where the audience was on

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<sup>4</sup> Leon Botstein, "Music and Its Public: Habits of Listening and the Crisis of Musical Modernism in Vienna, 1870–1914" (PhD diss., Harvard University, 1985), 229.

<sup>5</sup> William Weber, "The Rise of the Classical Repertoire in Nineteenth-Century Orchestral Concerts," in *The Orchestra: Origins and Transformations*, ed. Joan Peyser (New York: Scribner, 1986), 361.

<sup>6</sup> Lydia Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works: An Essay in the Philosophy of Music* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 130; and Andrew Bowie, "Music and the Rise of Aesthetics," *The Cambridge History of Nineteenth-Century Music* (2002): 30.

<sup>7</sup> Mark Evan Bonds, *Music as Thought: Listening to the Symphony in the Age of Beethoven* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2006), 30ff.

<sup>8</sup> Nicholas Cook and Nicola Dibben, "Emotion in Culture and History," in *Handbook of Music and Emotion: Theory, Research, Applications*, ed. Patrik N Juslin and John A Sloboda (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 53.

<sup>9</sup> Goehr, *Imaginary Museum*, 133, 43–4, 49.

display as much if not more so than the performers and played a functional role as an accompaniment to other activities.<sup>10</sup> There was no necessity for audiences to be quiet or pay attention to the music, although, as recent studies in the early modern European period have shown, many chose to listen, particularly those who considered themselves musical connoisseurs. Moreover, music performed in religious contexts might be an essential component of a spiritual experience which should be appreciated in silence.<sup>11</sup> The essential point here is that the way people listened to music began to change at the end of the eighteenth century as the musical canon began to be defined. This established a “major new form of musical authority” which imposed an “ideology of silence”.<sup>12</sup> Diverse forms of behaviour tolerated in the earlier periods were no longer acceptable, although they continued to exist in more informal venues and in other contexts such as promenade concerts.<sup>13</sup> Instruction manuals<sup>14</sup> and program notes<sup>15</sup> evolved in the first half of the nineteenth century designed to train audiences how to listen to the works of the musical canon. Responsibility was now placed on the listener to

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<sup>10</sup> Johnson, *Listening*, 11.

<sup>11</sup> Tim Carter, "Listening to Music in Early Modern Italy: Some Problems for the Urban Musicologist." In *Hearing the City in Early Modern Europe*, edited by Tess Knighton and Ascensión Mazuela-Anguita, 25-49. Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols Publishers, 2018; and Andrew Dell'Antonio, *Listening as Spiritual Practice in Early Modern Italy* (Berkeley: Univ of California Press, 2011), ProQuest Ebrary.

<sup>12</sup> William Weber, "Did People Listen in the 18th Century?". *Early Music* 25, no. 4 (1997): 689-90.

<sup>13</sup> Katharine Ellis, "Researching Audience Behaviors in Nineteenth-Century Paris: Who Cares If You Listen?". In *The Oxford Handbook of Music Listening in the 19th and 20th Centuries*, edited by Christian Thorau and Hansjakob Ziemer, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018.), Oxford Handbooks Online.

<sup>14</sup> Mark Evan Bonds, "Turning Liebhaber into Kenner: Forkel's Lectures on the Art of Listening, Ca. 1780-1785." In *The Oxford Handbook of Music Listening in the 19th and 20th Centuries*, ed. Christian Thorau and Hansjakob Ziemer. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), Oxford Handbooks Online.

<sup>15</sup> Christina Bashford, "Concert Listening the British Way?: Program Notes and Victorian Culture." In *The Oxford Handbook of Music Listening in the 19th and 20th Centuries*, edited by Christian Thorau and Hansjakob Ziemer. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), Oxford Handbooks Online.

discipline themselves to listen to the works of the great composers in accordance with such guides.

During the course of the nineteenth century, as orchestral concerts became increasingly popular, instrumental music became elevated in status, and words were no longer required to make it meaningful. This change was advanced by philosophers and music critics who claimed instrumental music could move the listener beyond earthly objects and emotions and promote “spiritual and universal” experiences.<sup>16</sup> In this understanding the musical work was a serious non-representational form of artistic expression complete within itself<sup>17</sup> and not dependent on extra-musical references or words and for its meaning.<sup>18</sup> During the course of the nineteenth century as classical music became more popular, music which might elicit a cathartic response that would purify the soul “through affective experience” became more highly valued than music with a communicative function.<sup>19</sup> The composer of such transcendent music acquired a priestly status<sup>20</sup> and performers were obligated to represent the composer’s wishes to the best of their ability rather than improvise or add any variation to the music as had

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<sup>16</sup> Goehr, Lydia, *Imaginary Museum*, 153. For an interesting discussion regarding the way a discourse evolved between musicians and philosophers in nineteenth century Germany, see Applegate, Celia. “How German Is It?: Nationalism and the idea of serious music in the early nineteenth century.” *19th-Century Music* 21, no. 3, (1998), 274–296.

<sup>17</sup> Nicholas Cook, “Theorizing Musical Meaning,” *Music Theory Spectrum* 23, no. 2 (2001): 174.

<sup>18</sup> Bonds, *Music as Thought*, 10.

<sup>19</sup> Cook, Nicholas, and Nicola Dibben. “Emotion in Culture and History.” In *Handbook of Music and Emotion: Theory, research, applications*, ed. Patrick N. Juslin and John A. Sloboda. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 47.

<sup>20</sup> Goehr, *Imaginary Museum*, 208.

been the practice in the past.<sup>21</sup> Concert halls were redesigned with the stage as the focal point and the lights dimmed reducing the awareness of other members of the audience and enhancing the individual subjective experience of each audience member.<sup>22</sup>

As the interface between music makers and music consumers, symphony “concert” events were and still are the focal point for the expression of classical music culture. As Peter Burkholder, a leading musicologist, has suggested, the concert hall was the place where classical music culture developed.<sup>23</sup> Historian Simon Gunn has argued that by 1870, “music ... came to the forefront of cultural attention” and the classical music concert stood at the “apex of a new cultural hierarchy”, representing “the model of aesthetic value against which other public forms of cultural expression ... could be judged and ranked”.<sup>24</sup> This study will focus on the evolution of the classical music concert in Sydney. Opera is a related, although different, form of entertainment which, over time, followed a slightly different, although not unrelated, trajectory.<sup>25</sup> It will therefore

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<sup>21</sup> See Goehr, *Imaginary Museum*, 232–3 who notes that while extemporisation remained popular for much of the nineteenth century this was typically a separate part of the performance that did not interfere with the faithful rendition of the existing musical works.

<sup>22</sup> Johnson, *Listening*, 153–74; Sven Oliver Müller, “The Invention of Silence,” in *Sounds of Modern History: Auditory Cultures in 19th-and 20th-Century Europe*, ed. Daniel Morat (New York: Berghahn Books, 2014), 153–174.

<sup>23</sup> Peter Burkholder, “Museum Pieces: The Historicist Mainstream in Music of the Last Hundred Years,” *The Journal of Musicology* 2, no. 2 (1983): 116.

<sup>24</sup> Simon Gunn, *The Public Culture of the Victorian Middle Class: Ritual and authority and the English industrial city, 1840–1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), 134–5.

<sup>25</sup> See for instance Burkholder, “Museum Pieces” 117 who claims that the bifurcation process occurred later in opera than in the concert hall. See also Weber William, “Redefining the Status of Opera: London and Leipzig, 1800–1848,” *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 36, no. 3 (2006): 507–32 for a good discussion on the creation of an opera canon.

intersect with this history of concert-life at times. However unlike the concert, opera in Australia has also attracted other studies<sup>26</sup> so will not be covered in any detail here.

As classical music culture evolved in Europe, concert programs changed in ways that both shaped and reflected new understandings about the role and function of music. This has been extensively documented in numerous works by music historian William Weber, who argued that between 1780 and 1860 there was a move away from concert programs offering broad-ranging “miscellaneous” and largely contemporary<sup>27</sup> works drawn from a variety of genres—opera, oratorio, song, solo instrumental numbers, overtures, and symphonic works<sup>28</sup>—to more homogeneous programs focused on the works of the musical canon by composers who were no longer alive.<sup>29</sup> This did not happen in isolation. According to Weber this transformation reflected the decline of the aristocracy, the rise of the middle class, growing urbanisation and industrialisation, and associated economic, political and cultural developments, which contributed to a massive

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<sup>26</sup> Elizabeth Wood, "Australian Opera, 1842–1970; A History of Australian Opera with Descriptive Catalogues" (Phd diss, University of Adelaide, 1979); John Cargher, *Bravo! Two Hundred Years of Opera in Australia* (South Melbourne: Macmillan Co, 1988); Alison Gyger, *Civilising the Colonies: Pioneering Opera in Australia* (Sydney: Pellinor, 1999); Alison Gyger, *Opera for the Antipodes: Opera in Australia, 1881–1939* (Sydney: Currency Press and Pellinor, 1990); Murphy, Kerry. "Italy in Australia's Musical Landscape." In *Italy in Australia's Musical Landscape*, edited by Linda Barwick and Marcello Sorc Keller. Melbourne: Lyrebird Press, 2012; and Kerry Murphy, "Thomas Quinlan and The'all Red'ring: Australia, 1913." *Context: Journal of Music Research*, no. 39 (2014): 79.

<sup>27</sup> William Weber, "Canonicity and Collegiality: "Other" Composers, 1790–1850," *Common Knowledge* 14, no. 1 (2008): 109.

<sup>28</sup> William Weber, "From Miscellany to Homogeneity in Concert Programming," *Poetics* 29, no. 2 (2001): 127; Weber, "Canonicity", 109.

<sup>29</sup> William Weber, *The Great Transformation of Musical Taste: Concert Programming from Haydn to Brahms* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 35.

expansion of the musical marketplace.<sup>30</sup> The establishment of music institutions<sup>31</sup> and the professionalisation of musicians<sup>32</sup> aided the evolution of classical music culture. A range of studies has broadly confirmed Weber's findings and demonstrated a common cultural transformation process throughout Europe, although, as I will discuss, there is considerable debate about how these changes occurred and their significance.<sup>33</sup>

### **Non-European studies**

During the course of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries classical music spread to the United States and the outposts of the British empire as well as other settler societies around the world. In his wide reaching comparative history of settler societies, Canadian historian Gérard Bouchard has observed that colonial cultural elites were tormented by the idea of belonging to a "make-shift society" and of being "culturally impoverished beside Europe."<sup>34</sup> They were driven to fill the void through literature, the

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<sup>30</sup> Cyril Ehrlich, "The Marketplace," in *The Twentieth Century*, ed. Stephen Banfield (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), 39–53.

<sup>31</sup> Paul DiMaggio, "Cultural Entrepreneurship in Nineteenth-Century Boston: The Creation of an Organizational Base for High Culture in America," in *Rethinking Popular Culture: Contemporary Perspectives in Cultural Studies* ed. Chandra Mukerji and Michael Schudson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991).

<sup>32</sup> Cyril Ehrlich, *The Music Profession in Britain since the Eighteenth Century: A Social History* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1985).

<sup>33</sup> David Russell, "Provincial Concerts in England, 1865–1914: A Case-Study of Bradford," *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 114, no. 1 (1989), 43–55; Stuart Campbell, "Musical Life in the 'Second City of the Empire' During the 1870s as Reflected in T.L. Stillie's Contributions to the *Glasgow Herald*," in *Nineteenth-Century British Music Studies*. Vol. 1, ed. Bennett Zon (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999), 181–200; Antje Pieper, *Music and the Making of Middle-Class Culture: A Comparative History of Nineteenth-Century Leipzig and Birmingham* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008); Robert Demaine, "Individual and Institution in the Musical Life of Leeds 1900–1914" (Phd diss., University of York, 2000); Simon Gunn, "The Sublime and the Vulgar: The Hallé Concerts and the Constitution of 'High Culture' in Manchester c.1850 to 1880," *Journal of Victorian Culture* 2, no. 2 (1997), 208–228.

<sup>34</sup> Gérard Bouchard, *The Making of the Nations and Cultures of the New World: an essay in comparative history* (Montréal, Québec: McGill-Queen's University Press 2008), 12.

arts and through the construction of a “collective imaginary” to affirm the nation’s existence.<sup>35</sup> Links between various musical centres often transcended national boundaries.

The development of a classical music culture in Sydney must be told using a transnational history framework which considers the way in which the past has been shaped by “processes and relationships that have transcended the borders of nation states”.<sup>36</sup> Ideas about classical music were transmitted through international publications as well as international reports in local newspapers. Sydney’s musical development was also significantly influenced by migration and by the many touring musicians who visited Australia. Sydney was not only defined its identity in relation to other Australian cities, but monitored its musical development in relation to the great cities of the world. While the constant travel of international artists suggests intriguing connections not only with the United States and Canada but also Asia and South Africa tracing such linkages is hampered by the lack of existing studies in this area. This thesis will make some initial steps in tracing some musical interest communities<sup>37</sup> spanning across various nation states. The aim will be to discern “patterns of connection”<sup>38</sup> which linked musical groups, musicians, entrepreneurs and consumers in Sydney with a

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<sup>35</sup> Bouchard, 19–20.

<sup>36</sup> Ann Curthoys and Marilyn Lake, eds. *Connected Worlds: History in Trans-National Perspective*. (Canberra: ANU E Press, 2006.), 5.

<sup>37</sup> Patricia Clavin, "Defining Transnationalism." *Contemporary European History*, 14, no. 4 (2005): 427.

<sup>38</sup> Deacon Desley, Penny Russell, and Angela Woollacott, *Transnational Ties: Australian Lives in the World*. (Canberra, ANU E Press, 2008), xv.

diverse range of communities across the globe. Another key question for consideration is whether audiences in Sydney experienced the performances of the great works of the musical canon as a “transnational experience”<sup>39</sup> or whether there were unique facets to these performances which influenced the reception of such works in Australia? This promises to expose hidden connections that enhance our understanding of the world view of Federation era Sydney siders. Australia developed its cultural identity by considering its place not only within the British empire but within an imagined musical empire.

There are many parallels to the development of classical music not only in Europe, but in the United States which will be explored throughout this thesis. A number of studies have revealed the way in which classical music gained ascendancy in north American cities, mirroring developments in Europe.<sup>40</sup> This occurred first in the established eastern cities of the United States, taking hold in the western cities at a later date. Joseph Horowitz has claimed that during the Gilded Age classical music was embraced as the

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<sup>39</sup> Körner, Axel. "Transnational History: Identities, Structures, States." In *International History in Theory and Practice*, edited by Barbara Haider-Wilson, William D. Godsey and Wolfgang Mueller, Austrian Academy of Sciences Press, 2017, Accessed via JSTOR, 270.

<sup>40</sup> See for example Catherine Parsons Smith, *Making Music in Los Angeles: Transforming the Popular* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007); Kenneth H. Marcus, *Musical Metropolis: Los Angeles and the Creation of a Music Culture, 1880–1940* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004); Michael Broyles, *Music of the Highest Class: Elitism and Populism in Antebellum Boston* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992); Derek Vaillant, *Sounds of Reform: Progressivism and Music in Chicago, 1873–1935* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003); Gavin James Campbell, *Music & the Making of a New South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004); Steve Goodson, *Highbrows, Hillbillies, & Hellfire: Public Entertainment in Atlanta, 1880–1930* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2002); David Gramit, "The Business of Music on the Peripheries of Empire: A Turn-of-the-Century Case Study," in *The Idea of Art Music in a Commercial World, 1800–1930*, ed. Christina Bashford and Roberta Montemorra Marvin (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer Ltd., 2016), 274–96.



“queen of the arts” so much a part of everyday life that it was “centrally embedded in the culture at large.”<sup>41</sup>

The American cultural historian Lawrence Levine has argued that the development of a classical music culture in the United States was symptomatic of a bifurcation of culture reflecting increasing class and ethnic divisions in American society. This marked a shift from a “rich shared public culture” to one that was “fragmented into relatively rigid adjectival boxes” where different genres should not be mixed. Rather they became “hierarchically organised” as some cultural practices, such as classical music were ascribed a higher aesthetic value.<sup>42</sup> Similarly, the sociologist Paul DiMaggio argued that the distinction between high and popular cultures in America emerged during the nineteenth century as the urban elite built organisational forms like the symphony orchestra that first “isolated high culture” and then “differentiated it from popular culture”.<sup>43</sup> DiMaggio’s work was influenced by the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu who argued in his classic work *Distinction* that hierarchical distinctions between different cultural practices (including music) are negotiated by-products representing the outcome of struggles within and between different social groups seeking to assert their economic and political interests. According to Bourdieu, the

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<sup>41</sup> Joseph Horowitz, “New World Symphony and Discord,” *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (11 January 2008).

<sup>42</sup> Lawrence W. Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988) Kindle, Loc 165.

<sup>43</sup> DiMaggio, “Cultural Entrepreneurship”, 374.

creation of such cultural distinctions enables elite groups to symbolically assert and maintain positions of power within modern Western democratic nations.<sup>44</sup>

Critics of Levine and DiMaggio have justly accused them of providing “oversimplified portrayals—sometimes bordering on caricature—of the concert as an event created and controlled by a small social elite.”<sup>45</sup> Rather, according to musicologist Ralph Locke, America’s music patrons and concertgoers were motivated by “generosity and a democratizing spirit” and a genuine desire to educate the community and share what they perceived to be an “aesthetically rich culture” for the benefit of the entire community.<sup>46</sup> Such concerns reflect an underlying dissatisfaction with theories that emphasise the socially constructed nature of musical taste while ignoring the complex ways in which listeners might experience the particular aesthetic qualities of the music.

In his ground breaking study of the impact of Beethoven’s music in the nineteenth century, musicologist Scott Burnham argued that Beethoven’s music had the impact it did because it was simultaneously understood

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<sup>44</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1984), 223–27.

<sup>45</sup> Ralph P. Locke, “Music Lovers, Patrons, and the “Sacralization” of Culture in America,” *19th-Century Music* 17, no. 2 (1993): 150. For a good critique of Levine see also Borus H. Daniel, “Cultural Hierarchy and Aesthetic Reconsidered,” *Intellectual history newsletter* 23 (2001): 61–70; Joseph Horowitz, “‘Sermons in Tones’: Sacralization as a Theme in American Classical Music,” *American Music* 16, no. 3 (1998): 311–40; Joan Shelley Rubin, “Rethinking the Creation of Cultural Hierarchy in America,” *Reception: Texts, Readers, Audiences, History* 6, no. 1 (2014): 4–18.

<sup>46</sup> Locke, 154.

within a Romantic ethos and because the music itself had a rich, dramatic, heroic character that gave expression to that same ethos.<sup>47</sup> His work supports the findings of scholars who argue that people do not necessarily listen to music passively and that there is a complex interaction between the music and the social context in which it is heard.<sup>48</sup> Such studies reflect critiques that Bourdieu's approach is too mechanistic and ignores considerable variation in the way people practise and ascribe meaning to different cultural activities.<sup>49</sup> However it should be noted that many of these studies focus on cultural practices in the pluralistic post-modern era. They do not necessarily apply to historical practices in the *fin de siècle* period which are the subject of this thesis.<sup>50</sup>

## **Australian context**

To date, there has been no comprehensive study of the creation of a classical music culture in any Australian city. Historians of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) have championed the critical role played by the ABC in promoting classical music concerts and creating orchestras,

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<sup>47</sup> Scott G. Burnham, *Beethoven Hero* (Princeton, N.J.; Princeton University Press, 1995), 29.

<sup>48</sup> Georgina Born, "The Social and the Aesthetic: For a Post-Bourdieuian Theory of Cultural Production," *Cultural Sociology* 4, no. 2 (2010): 31–56; Tia DeNora, "Music as a Technology of the Self," *Poetics* 27, no. 1 (1999); Jacques Attali, *Noise: The Political Economy of Music*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985); Douglas W. Shadle, *Orchestrating the Nation: The Nineteenth-Century American Symphonic Enterprise*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016, Kindle Edition.

<sup>49</sup> Tony Bennett, "Culture, Class Distinction," (2009); Tak Wing Chan and John H. Goldthorpe, "Social Stratification and Cultural Consumption: Music in England," *European Sociological Review* 23, no. 1 (2007): 1–19; Koen Van Eijck, "Social Differentiation in Musical Taste Patterns," *Social Forces* 79, no. 3 (2001): 1163–85; Tony Bennett et al., *Culture, Class, Distinction* (Abingdon, Oxon.: Routledge, 2009).

<sup>50</sup> See Richard A. Peterson, "Taste as Distinction," in *The Routledge Reader on the Sociology of Music*, ed. John Shepherd and Kyle Devine (New York, NY: Routledge, 2015), 158 who argues that additional work is required to better understand historical developments in relation to cultural taste.

but pay scant attention to classical music developments prior to and contemporaneously with the establishment of the ABC.<sup>51</sup> Other studies focus on the role of specific musical institutions, choirs or orchestras, but largely ignore the creation of a culture that made their existence relevant.<sup>52</sup>

Australian cultural historian Eileen Chanin has aptly demonstrated the limited nature of institutional histories which catalogue an array of facts and achievements about the institution in question, but fail to trace the disparate paths “by which cultural institutions became established before and shortly after Federation.”<sup>53</sup>

Over fifty years ago, music critic and historian Roger Covell noted that was a tendency to regard anything that occurred in relation to classical music prior to the establishment of the ABC as “ante-diluvian”.<sup>54</sup> Little has changed since that time. Many recent studies have been undertaken by people who were, at one time or another, employed by the ABC. They continue to valorise the ABC’s role in the creation of a classical music

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<sup>51</sup> K.S. Inglis, *This Is the ABC* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1983); Alan William Thomas, *Broadcast and Be Damned: The ABC’s First Two Decades* (Carlton, Vic: Melbourne University Press, 1980).

<sup>52</sup> Clare Thornley, "The Royal Philharmonic Society of Sydney: The Rise and Fall of a Musical Organisation" (M. Mus. diss., Sydney Conservatorium of Music, University of Sydney, 2004); Phillip Sametz and Corporation Australian Broadcasting, *Play On!: 60 Years of Music-making with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra* (Sydney: ABC Enterprises, 1992); Stella M. Barber, *Crescendo: Melbourne Symphony Orchestra: Celebrating 100 Years* (Melbourne: Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, 2007); Rita Crews and Julie Spithill, *One Hundred Years: Music Teachers’ Association of NSW 1912 to 2012* (Wollongong: Wirripang, 2012); Brenton Broadstock and et al, *Aflame with Music: 100 Years of Music at the University of Melbourne* (Parkville, Vic.: Centre for Studies in Australian Music, University of Melbourne, 1996).

<sup>53</sup> Eileen Chanin, Cultural Philanthropy: David Scott Mitchell and the Mitchell Library (Phd diss., University of NSW, 2012), 12.

<sup>54</sup> Roger Covell, *Australia’s Music Themes of a New Society* (Melbourne: Sun Books, 1967), 108.

culture, often ignoring or even belittling attempts to create a classical music culture prior to the existence of the ABC.<sup>55</sup>

Australian cultural historians generally have a much broader focus. However, few have considered the development of classical music in Australia in any detail. Richard Waterhouse tested Levine's thesis in the Australian context by exploring how popular culture was "formed and re-formed as a result of interaction with other forms of culture".<sup>56</sup> He concluded that, compared to the United States, the bifurcation process in Australia took place much later and followed its own trajectory. In addition, he found that the gap between high and low culture was never as wide as in Europe or the United States.<sup>57</sup> However, although Waterhouse's work did include some consideration of the development of classical music, this was not the main focus of his work. Rather, he relied largely on the secondary source material alluded to above.

The relative neglect of music in Australian cultural studies is a notable and regrettable gap that stands in stark contrast to the voluminous scholarly

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<sup>55</sup> See especially Martin Buzacott, *The Rite of Spring: 75 Years of ABC Music-Making* (Sydney: ABC Books for the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, 2007); David Garrett, "The Accidental Entrepreneur – How ABC Music Became More Than Broadcasting" (PhD diss., University of Wollongong, 2012); Phillip Sametz and Australian Broadcasting Corporation, *Play On!: 60 Years of Music-Making with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra* (Sydney: ABC Enterprises, 1992); Charles Buttrose and Australian Broadcasting Commission, *Playing for Australia: A Story About ABC Orchestras and Music in Australia* (Sydney: Macmillan, 1982).

<sup>56</sup> Richard Waterhouse, *Private Pleasures, Public Leisure* (South Melbourne: Longman, 1995), ix.

<sup>57</sup> Richard Waterhouse, *From Minstrel Show to Vaudeville: The Australian Popular Stage 1788–1914* (Kensington, N.S.W.: NSW University Press, 1990), 142–3.

work on Australian literature<sup>58</sup>, the visual arts<sup>59</sup> and other forms of entertainment in the Federation era.<sup>60</sup> This thesis is the first social history exploring the way in which classical music gained a following and developed a physical and cultural infrastructure within an Australian city.

## **A holistic approach**

This study builds on the work of Bourdieu while taking into account the need to consider the differing ways people interact with music as suggested by some of Bourdieu's critics. My underlying premise is that the creation of a classical music culture in Sydney was a complex process involving many different stakeholders. Bourdieu has suggested that cultural "fields" such as classical music are sites where key stakeholders struggle to maintain or

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<sup>58</sup> See John Docker, *Australian Cultural Elites* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1974); Geoffrey Dutton, *The Innovators: The Sydney alternatives in the rise of modern art, literature and ideas* (South Melbourne: Macmillan, 1986); Laurie Hergenhan, ed. *The Penguin new literary history of Australia* (Ringwood, Vic.: Penguin, 1988); Leonie Kramer, ed. *The Oxford history of Australian literature* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1981); Peter Kirkpatrick, *The Sea Coast of Bohemia: Literary life in Sydney's roaring twenties* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press 1992); Peter Pierce, ed. *The Cambridge History of Australian Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); David Walker, *Dream and Disillusion: A search for Australian cultural identity* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1976); and Elizabeth Webby, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Australian literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

<sup>59</sup> See for instance, Leigh Astbury, *City Bushmen: The Heidelberg School and the rural mythology* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1985); Robyn Brady, *Twentieth Century Australian Art* (Woolahra, N.S.W.: Robyn Brady, 1989); Eileen Chanin, Steven Miller, and Judith Pugh, *Degenerates and Perverts: The 1939 Herald Exhibition of French and British Contemporary Art* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2005); Deborah Edwards, *Margaret Preston* (Sydney: Art Gallery of New South Wales, 2005); Richard Haese, *Rebels and Precursors: the revolutionary years of Australian art* (Ringwood, Vic.: Penguin, 1968); Jane Clark and Bridget Whitelaw, eds., *Golden Summers: Heidelberg and Beyond* (Sydney: The Corp., 1986); Mary Eagle, *Australian Modern Painting Between the Wars 1914–1939* (Sydney: Bay Books, 1989); Lou Klepac, ed. *Australian Painters of the Twentieth Century* (Sydney: Beagle Press, 2000); Bernard Smith, *Australian Painting 1788–1990* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1991); Nick Waterlow & Annabel Pegus, *Colour in Art: Revisiting 1919: 22 August–27 September 2008* (Paddington, N.S.W.: Ivan Dougherty Gallery, 2008); and Nancy Underhill, *Making Australian Art 1916–49: Sydney Ure Smith patron and publisher* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1991).

<sup>60</sup> See for instance Waterhouse, *Minstrel Show*; Veronica Kelly, *Empire Actor: Stars of Australasian Costume Drama 1890s–1920s* (Strawberry Hills, N.S.W.: Currency House, 2010); Diane Collins, *Hollywood Down Under: Australians at the Movies, 1896 to the Present Day* (North Ryde, N.S.W.: Angus & Robertson, 1987); Jill Julius Matthews, *Dance Hall & Picture Palace: Sydney's Romance with Modernity* (Sydney: Currency Press, 2005).

improve their social position.<sup>61</sup> Those operating within a particular cultural group or field do not act as isolated agents. Rather, through ongoing interaction and negotiation they develop a kaleidoscope of alliances and allegiances that create social forces or “power lines.”<sup>62</sup> Thus a more holistic approach to studying the creation of a classical music culture is possible by considering the field of classical music as a dynamic, constantly evolving arena of play involving multiple stakeholders.

This thesis significantly exceeds the scope of the few previous studies of classical music in Australia which focus on one or perhaps two particular agents. Instead, after surveying a sample of concert advertisements in early twentieth century Sydney<sup>63</sup> I identified five key agents or stakeholders concerned with the creation of a classical music culture: entertainment entrepreneurs, performers, musical institutions, composers and the listeners or audience. I have represented this group diagrammatically below (**See**

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<sup>61</sup> Bowen Paulle, Bart van Heerikhuizen, and Mustafa Emirbayer, "Elias and Bourdieu," *Journal of Classical Sociology* 12, no. 1 (2012): 80.

<sup>62</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, "Intellectual Field and Creative Project," *Social science information* 8, no. 2 (1969): 89.

<sup>63</sup> Fiona Fraser, "Entertainment or Enlightenment: The Development of Concert Life in Sydney 1900 to 1936", Unpublished paper presented at ANU School of Music, 20 March 2013.

Figure 1.1).

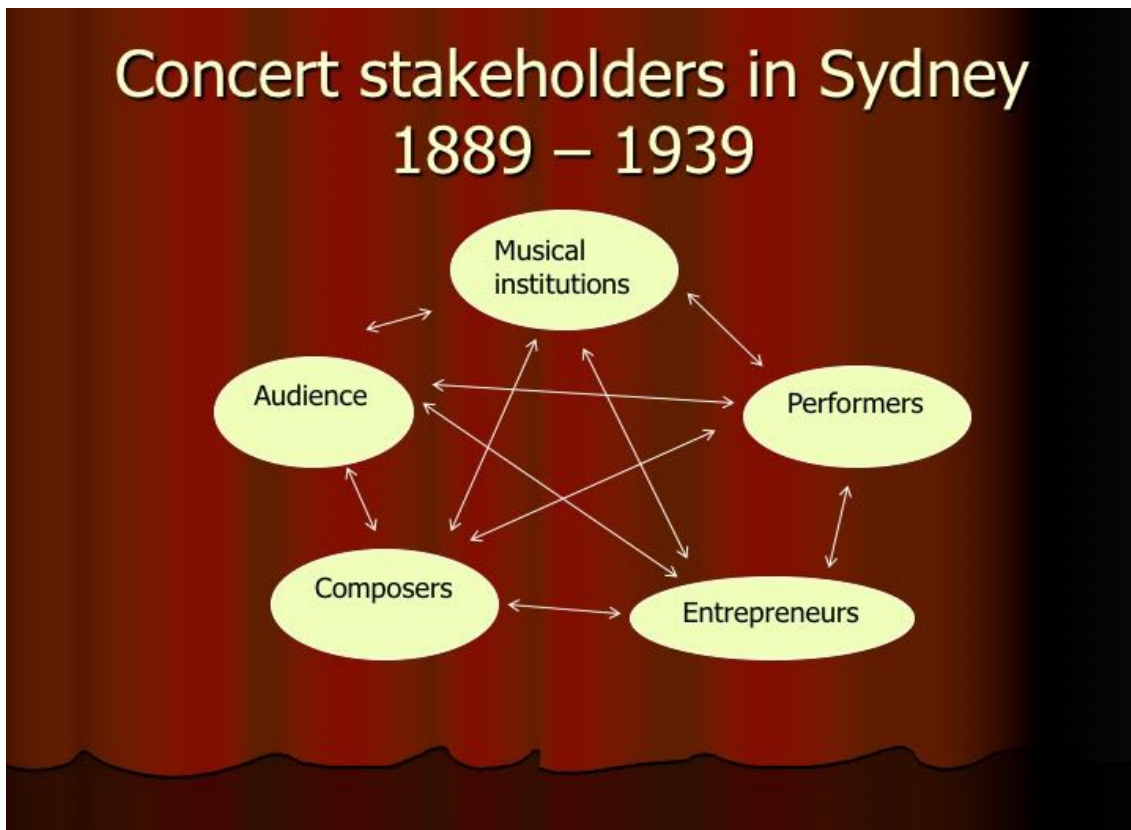


Figure 1.1: Key stakeholders with a vested interest in classical music in Sydney between 1889-1939

Taking into account critiques of Bourdieu, I consider these stakeholders as historically contingent active agents with their own complex motivations. Take for instance entrepreneurs, the term I use to broadly describe those who focused on concert promotion as a business enterprise.<sup>64</sup> During the course of the nineteenth century, with the decline of older forms of patronage, music became subject to the vicissitudes of market forces.<sup>65</sup> With the increase in leisure time resulting from urbanisation, the expansion

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<sup>64</sup> William Weber, "The Musician as Entrepreneur and Opportunist, 1700–1914," in *The Musician as Entrepreneur, 1700–1914: Managers, Charlatans and Idealists*, ed. William Weber (Bloomington In.: Indiana University Press, 2004), 3–24.

<sup>65</sup> Christina Bashford, *The Pursuit of High Culture: John Ella and Chamber Music in Victorian London, Music in Britain, 1600–1900* (Woodbridge, UK ; Rochester, NY: Boydell Press, 2007), 4.



of the middle class<sup>66</sup> and new employment patterns,<sup>67</sup> music became big business with cheap sheet music and musical instruments produced on an industrial basis.<sup>68</sup> Concert management was a logical extension of the sheet music and instrument manufacturing industries. Many early concerts were organised by music proprietors who benefitted from the flow-on effects of sheet music and instruments sales. But by the latter part of the nineteenth-century concert promotion became incorporated within the broader entertainment industry and theatrical agents keen to attract a middle class clientele became more actively engaged in concert promotion.

Performers are also treated as active agents who, like other stakeholders here, actively manipulated the musical market to advance their position.<sup>69</sup> To date there has been little focus on Australian performers apart from biographical examination of the most notable individuals, with those who were recognised internationally—such as Percy Grainger<sup>70</sup> and Dame Nellie Melba<sup>71</sup>—receiving the most attention. It is therefore timely to

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<sup>66</sup> Colin Campbell, *The Romantic Ethic and the Spirit of Modern Consumerism* (Oxford, UK: B. Blackwell, 1987), 26.

<sup>67</sup> Peter Bailey, *Leisure and Class in Victorian England: Rational Recreation and the Contest for Control, 1830–1885* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1978), 1.

<sup>68</sup> William Weber, "Mass Culture and the Reshaping of European Musical Taste, 1770–1870," *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music* 8, no. 1 (1977): 10; Cyril Ehrlich, *The Piano: A History* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1990); Cyril Ehrlich, *Harmonious Alliance: A History of the Performing Right Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).

<sup>69</sup> Weber, "Musician as Entrepreneur", 3.

<sup>70</sup> There are numerous books and articles about Grainger. Some more recent publications include: Suzanne Robinson and Kay Dreyfus, *Grainger the Modernist* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2014); Malcolm Gillies and David Pear, *Portrait of Percy Grainger*, Eastman Studies in Music (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2002); Malcolm Gillies, "Percy Grainger and Australian Identity: The 1930s," in *One Hand on the Manuscript*, ed. Peter Campbell Nicholas Brown, Robyn Homes, Peter Read & Larry Sitsky (Canberra: The Humanities Research Centre, The Australian National University, 1995).

<sup>71</sup> See for instance Ann Blainey, *I Am Melba: A Biography* (Melbourne: Black Inc Books, 2009); Thérèse Radic, *Melba: The Voice of Australia* (Melbourne: Macmillan, 1986); Agnes G. Murphy and Nellie Melba,

consider the musicians who remained in Australia, particularly those not previously examined in other historical studies, including amateur musicians, who were actively involved in promoting classical music as a means of promoting their own interests as performers. In particular, I will consider the important role that musicians played in collectively organising bands and orchestras and promoting concerts through the creation of a Musicians' Union. A key focus will be the way in which amateur musicians were increasingly differentiated from professional musicians.

The roles of the NSW State Conservatorium<sup>72</sup> and the ABC in establishing orchestras and undertaking celebrity concerts<sup>73</sup> has been the main focus of Australian musical histories to date, to the neglect of other stakeholders. These musical institutions will be considered here as arbiters of aesthetic standards<sup>74</sup> which, like other stakeholders, struggled to assert their cultural authority. Existing North American and European studies suggest that the way in which their gate-keeping role was established and exercised differed from city to city. In a frequently cited article on cultural entrepreneurship in Boston, DiMaggio argued that cultural authority of the Boston Symphony Orchestra was tightly controlled by a not-for-profit body

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*Melba: A Biography* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1977); John Hetherington, *Melba: A Biography* (Melbourne: F.W. Cheshire, 1967).

<sup>72</sup> Diane Collins, *Sounds from the Stables: The Story of Sydney's Conservatorium* (Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2001); Peter McCallum and Julie Simonds, *The Centenary of the Con: A History of the Sydney Conservatorium of Music 1915–2015* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2015).

<sup>73</sup> Buzacott, *The Rite of Spring*; and Garrett, "The Accidental Entrepreneur".

<sup>74</sup> See Pierre Bourdieu and Richard Nice, "The Production of Belief: Contribution to an Economy of Symbolic Goods," *Media, Culture and Society* 2 (1980): 263 discussing the importance of a stakeholder who has the power to assert the aesthetic value of artistic products.

governed by a self-perpetuating board of trustees that had the power to determine aesthetically acceptable musical works.<sup>75</sup> In a separate study, DiMaggio observed that unlike Boston, New York had a more diverse and fragmented upper-class with rival cultural associations that competed to assert cultural authority which resulted in a more diverse approach in relation to the imposition of musical standards.<sup>76</sup> This led him to propose that the relative unity or fragmentation of elite groups determined the way in which cultural authority was established and maintained. Similarly, Weber has suggested that in cities like Paris, where rigid monopolies were established by musical institutions, there was less musical eclecticism than in cities like London where the fragmentation of municipalities and political groups allowed for a more diverse approach.<sup>77</sup> Sydney lacked a sizeable cohesive social elite and musical institutions were not established until the latter part of the nineteenth and early twentieth century. This study will consider the impact of the establishment of these institutions on the music market place in Sydney compared to the cities considered by DiMaggio.

Until recently, musicologists and music historians have typically focused extensively on documenting composers' lives and analysing their music. However, as with performers, they rarely consider composers as

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<sup>75</sup> DiMaggio, "Cultural Entrepreneurship", 380–1.

<sup>76</sup> Paul DiMaggio, "The Problem of Chicago," in *The American Bourgeoisie: Distinction and Identity in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Sven Beckert and Julia B. Rosenbaum (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 209.

<sup>77</sup> William Weber, "Art Music and Social Class," in *The Routledge Reader on the Sociology of Music*, ed. John Shepherd and Kyle Devine (New York, NY; Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2015), 223.

active agents, shaping and responding to their musical environment as they seek to earn their living. Yet few composers could ignore the music market of their day.<sup>78</sup> As the classical music canon became established in Europe during the course of the nineteenth century, it became more difficult for composers to have their works performed at concerts where programs were dominated by the works of dead composers.<sup>79</sup> They also had to contend with the growth of the popular music market which impacted on sheet music sales. In response, composers engaged in various strategies to promote their careers, many capitalising on the anti-German sentiment following the Franco-Prussian war of 1870 and the growth of nationalism to promote more nationally oriented music within a classical music framework.<sup>80</sup> In doing so, they were often able to align the creation of a classical music culture with nationalistic objectives. Unlike other studies, I will be focusing here on some of the lesser known composers who, despite their lack of recognition, contributed significantly to the debate about Australian music through their writings.

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<sup>78</sup> See F. M. Scherer, *Quarter Notes and Bank Notes: The Economics of Music Composition in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries*, The Princeton Economic History of the Western World (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004) who argued that composers made strategic decisions about whether to promote their career on the concert platform or to seek more immediate remuneration in the commercial sphere. Many composers, according to Scherer, did both. For an earlier period see Tim Carter and Richard A. Goldwaite, *Orpheus in the Marketplace: Jacopo Peri and the Economy of Late Renaissance Florence* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press), 2013.

<sup>79</sup> Burkholder, "Museum Pieces", 410.

<sup>80</sup> Philipp Ther, *Center Stage: Operatic Culture and Nation Building in Nineteenth-Century Central Europe*, trans. Charlotte Hughes-Kreutzmuller, Central European Studies (West Lafayette: Indiana Purdue University Press, 2014).

Jürgen Habermas has described the emergence of a “public sphere” in Europe facilitated by networks of manufacturers, merchants and administrators who gathered initially in coffee shops and clubs, but later at theatres, museums and concerts in what cultural philosopher.<sup>81</sup> In many European cities classical music concerts also acted as meeting places similar groups.<sup>82</sup> According to Habermas, whereas aristocratic society had gathered at court, the bourgeois public sphere formed itself around the audience<sup>83</sup> including the concert audience where ideas could be discussed and debated.<sup>84</sup> Scholars have since debated whether Habermas’s “public sphere” facilitated genuine discourse, open debate and empowerment or became co-opted by more repressive forces of state control or consumerism.<sup>85</sup>

Classical music concerts attracted an emerging middle-class audience in many European and American cities.<sup>86</sup> To date there has been little discussion on the impact of classical music on the Australian middle class. The available literature, however, suggests that as in Europe and North

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<sup>81</sup> Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, Studies in Contemporary German Social Thought (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1989), 43.

<sup>82</sup> William Weber, *The Rise of Musical Classics in Eighteenth-Century England: A Study in Canon, Ritual and Ideology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 16.

<sup>83</sup> Habermas.

<sup>84</sup> Habermas, 40–41.

<sup>85</sup> David Ingram, "Habermas on Aesthetics and Rationality: Completing the Project of Enlightenment," *New German Critique* 53 (1991): 73; See also Nancy Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy," *Social Text*, no. 25/26 (1990): 63.

<sup>86</sup> See for instance Gunn, Simon, *The Public Culture of the Victorian Middle Class*; William Weber, *Music and the Middle Class: The Social Structure of Concert Life in London, Paris and Vienna* (London: Croom Helm 1975); Pieper, *Music and the Making of Middle-class Culture*; Michael Broyles, "Bourgeois Appropriation of Music: Challenging Ethnicity, Class, and Gender." In *The American Bourgeoisie: Distinction and Identity in the Nineteenth Century*, edited by Sven Beckert and Julia B. Rosenbaum, 233–46. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010.

America, the Australian middle class cemented around shared values of moral decency and virtue<sup>87</sup> which were totally congruent with the self control and restraint epitomised by classical music audiences. This suggests a need to consider the role of classical music as a means of social reform. Scholars are currently divided about the role of public music-making activities, promoted as a means of moral development and “rational recreation” among working people during the course of the nineteenth century. Some believe they should be interpreted as a means of exerting “political control” by a newly enriched middle class<sup>88</sup> while others argue they were a vehicle for the empowerment, mobilisation and social mobility of working people.<sup>89</sup>

The music audience expanded and became increasingly fragmented with the introduction of new technologies such as the pianola and phonograph, which encouraged the proliferation of a range of musical styles as consumer products in their own right during the *fin de siècle* period. This further complicates scholarly debates about the extent to which the audience could exert agency and experience music as a liberating and self-

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<sup>87</sup> See Linda Young, *Middle Class Culture in the Nineteenth Century: America, Australia, and Britain* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003); and Judith Brett, *The Australian Liberals and the Moral Middle Class: From Alfred Deakin to John Howard* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

<sup>88</sup> Rachel Milestone, "'That Monstrosity of Bricks and Mortar': The Town Hall as a Music Venue in Nineteenth-Century Stalybridge," in *Music in the British Provinces, 1690–1914*, ed. Rachel Cowgill and Peter Holman (Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2007), 298.

<sup>89</sup> Bailey, *Leisure and Class in Victorian England: Rational Recreation and the Contest for Control, 1830–1885*, (1978): 181; Jonathan Rose, *The Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 23.

empowering experience, with scholars such as Lears,<sup>90</sup> Susman,<sup>91</sup> Crary<sup>92</sup> and Rose<sup>93</sup> identifying an increased focus on the inner subjective experience of individuals within the audience. Such a shift reflected new psychological theories which focused on an individual's inner psychic life. While on the face of it such developments promoted agency by encouraging self realisation as opposed to moral improvement, some scholars have argued they were a means of encouraging self-regulation and conformity within a range of socially acceptable choices.<sup>94</sup>

Sydney concert audiences are best described as multifaceted, complex amalgamations of people consciously or unconsciously influenced by a range of social, political, economic and psychological factors. A desire to enable all groups of society to participate in public life, to enhance moral development across society, to self-improve or give expression to the self, as well as a desire to assert cultural leadership and improve one's own position, were some of the motivations affecting different sections of the concert audience. Audiences also included critics who became increasingly influential during the period under study. While it is therefore difficult to

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<sup>90</sup> T. J. Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880–1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

<sup>91</sup> Warren I. Susman, "'Personality' and the Making of Twentieth-Century Culture," in *New Directions in American Intellectual History*, ed. John Higham and Paul Keith Conkin (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979), 218.

<sup>92</sup> Jonathan Crary, *Suspensions of Perception: Attention, Spectacle, and Modern Culture* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1999), 24.

<sup>93</sup> Nikolas S. Rose, *Inventing Our Selves: Psychology, Power, and Personhood*, Cambridge Studies in the History of Psychology (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 5–8.

<sup>94</sup> Rose, 17, 23.

define a singular audience view and there is a need to consider unconscious factors that might influence at least some individuals, it is nonetheless important to attempt the challenging task of trying to represent many diverse perspectives within various audiences and to consider the way in which audiences influenced the development of classical music culture.

## **Sources**

My creation of a unique methodology that focuses on the interactions between key stakeholders who actively participated in creating the “field” of classical music in Sydney between 1889 and 1939 necessitated casting a wide net to find a broad range of primary source materials. The digitisation of historical Sydney newspapers including *The Sydney Morning Herald* (*Herald* or *SMH*), *The Sun* (*Sun*) and *The Evening News* (*EN*)—accessible via the Trove database on the National Library of Australia website—has greatly facilitated this approach. To contextualise these sources,<sup>95</sup> I have also consulted the traditional archival sources accessed by previous music historians including the ABC archive at the National Archives of Australia, the NSW State Conservatorium Archives available at the NSW State Archives and Records and The University of Sydney, State and Commonwealth parliamentary records, as well as the archives of J.C. Williamson Ltd. and the Tait family, available at the National Library of Australia. I have also consulted less well utilised sources including the

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<sup>95</sup> Tim Sherratt, "Contexts, Connections, Access: The Glorious Possibilities of Getting It All Wrong," *Archives and Manuscripts* 42, no. 2 (2014), 209-10.



Musicians' Union Archive in the Noel Butlin Archive at the Australian National University, the PROMPT Collection of performing arts ephemera and the Frank Forrest collection of music programs at the National Library of Australia as well as the archives of key individuals including William Arundel Orchard, the Wentzel Family Archive (at the State Library of NSW), Phyllis Campbell's Archive (at the University of Technology Sydney archives) and William James Cleary's archive (at the Australian National Library).

Sydney and Melbourne both vied for musical supremacy within Australia during the period and both cities would be an excellent site for this project. A focus on one city, however, enabled an exploration of a fuller range of musical activities than would be possible if both cities were studied. It also made it possible to make comparisons with the European and American studies cited above which also focus on individual cities. I have therefore chosen to study Sydney where the establishment of the key institutions listed above happened within a relatively short time frame. This means that their impact on music-making should be relatively transparent. It also represented an opportunity to cover new ground given that many existing studies have focused on Melbourne despite the active competition between these two cities during the Federation era.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> In relation to music-making in Melbourne in this period see for example Thérèse Radic, *Bernard Heinze: A Biography* (South Melbourne: Macmillan, 1986); Anne-Marie Forbes, "An Expatriate Englishman: Fritz Hart in Australia," in *The Soundscapes of Australia: Music, Place and Spirituality*, ed.

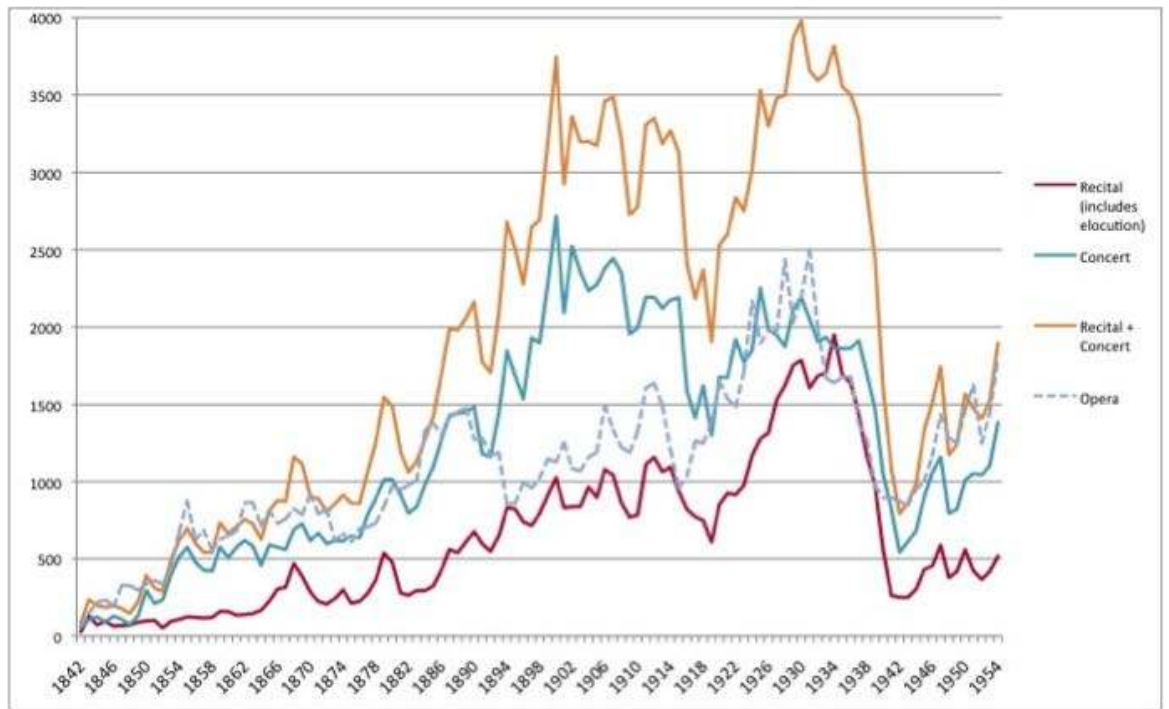
The opening of the Sydney Town Hall in 1889 marked the first significant public investment in public music-making activities. **Figure 1.2** indicates a significant increase in interest in concerts after the opening of the Hall as measured by mentions of the terms “concert,” and “recital” for the period 1842 – 1954 in the *Herald*.<sup>97</sup> Up until the Second World War, with some dips during the First World War and the early years of the Depression, interest in concert life continued to grow before again dipping significantly with the outbreak of World War Two, suggesting a significant cultural interest in concert life in Sydney between 1889 and 1939. This graph also

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Fiona Richards (Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2007); Jim Davidson, *Lyrebird Rising: Louise Hanson-Dyer of L'Oiseau-Lyre 1884–1962*, Amadeus Press (Portland, Oregon 1994); Thérèse Radic, *G. W. L. Marshall-Hall: A Biography & Catalogue* (Melbourne: Marshall-Hall Trust, 2002); Thérèse Radic, "Major Choral Organizations in Late Nineteenth-Century Melbourne," *Nineteenth-Century Music Review* 2, no. 2 (2005), 3-28; Jennifer Royle, "Musical (Ad)Venturers: Colonial Composers and Composition in Melbourne, 1870–1901," *Nineteenth-Century Music Review* 2, no. 2 (2005), 133-159; Peggy Jane Lais, "Chamber-Music in Melbourne 1877–1901: A History of Performance and Dissemination" (PhD diss., University of Melbourne, 2009); Janice B. Stockigt, "A Study of British Influence on Musical Taste and Programming: New Choral Works Introduced to Audiences by the Melbourne Philharmonic Society, 1876–1901," *Nineteenth-Century Music Review* 2, no. 2 (2005); Kieran Crichton, "Resisting the Empire? Public Music Examinations in Melbourne 1896–1914," in *Music and Institutions in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, ed. Paul Rodmell and Professor Bennett Zon (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012); Andrea J Baker, "Melbourne (1835–1927): The Birth of a Music City," *Journal of Australian Studies* 42, no. 1 (2018): 101–15, and Radic, Thérèse, and Suzanne Robinson, *Marshall-Hall's Melbourne: Music, Art and Controversy 1891-1915*. (North Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2012.)

<sup>97</sup> The period 1842–1954 represents the entire period of the *SMH* available online in the Australian National Library's newspaper data base contained in *Trove*. The underlying assumption here is that the relative occurrence of such terms reflects the overall level of discourse about them, which in turn is a general measure of the interest in and relative participation in such activities. It is not designed to measure the number of events or amount of interest. The data is not exact. For instance it includes mention of concerts that happened overseas and elsewhere in Australia. It may also include multiple references to single events. It may also partly reflect an increase in newspaper size. However the occurrence of peaks and troughs mitigates against a crude correlation with newspaper size. If there were no concerts occurring or they weren't considered important, there would presumably be very little discussion about them. If my assumptions are correct, I would predict that as the level of discourse changes over time, a trend will emerge. The focus is therefore the overall trend not the actual raw numbers. Sherratt provides good insights on the limitation of such searches in Tim Sherratt, "Seams and Edges: Dreams of Aggregation, Access & Discovery in a Broken World," *ALIA Online*, Accessed 26 March 2018 Available at <http://discontents.com.au/seams-and-edges-dreams-of-aggregation-access-discovery-in-a-broken-world/> (2015).

records interest in “opera” as recorded by mentions in the *Herald* over the same period. While there are similarities there are also significant differences revealing both connections and disconnections with concert history that will warrant occasional mention.



**Figure 1.2: SMH References to “concert” and “recital” and “opera” 1842 – 1954**

During this period, concert making was considered such a significant part of community life that large numbers of people mobilised to raise funds and promote munificent public investment to make classical music performances possible. This included the building of the Sydney Town Hall and its organ (opened in 1889); the establishment of musical institutions such as the NSW State Conservatorium (1915); the establishment of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra (1908); and the establishment of the ABC (1932). The Musicians’ Union (initially established as the Professional Orchestral Benefit

Association in 1897), the Australian Music Examinations Board (1918), and the Australian Performing Rights Association (1926) were also established during the period under study. With the later addition of the Sydney Opera House in 1973, these organisations and institutions formed the basic infrastructure for classical music culture in Sydney as it currently exists.<sup>98</sup>

## **Overview**

My account of the creation of a classical music culture in Australia is told over the next eight chapters with the main agents or stakeholders coming to the fore at different parts of the story.

Chapter two provides demographic information about Sydney and establishes the rich and diverse musical landscape that existed prior to 1889. It details the way in which classical music became a part of a nationalist agenda. The Centenary celebrations (commencing in 1888) included a tour by English conductor Frederick Cowen and his orchestra, and the opening of the Sydney Town Hall in 1889 which, together with its centrepiece the great pipe organ, symbolised hopes and dreams for a modern, cultured, urban future. Capitalising on such dreams, entertainment entrepreneurs began to bring some of the most revered international classical music artists of the

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<sup>98</sup> The Sydney Opera House was the ultimate icon of classical music in Australia. It was not officially opened in 1973. However, many people were proposing the construction of such an opera house during the period of my study. Accessed 19 September 2017. See <https://www.sydneyoperahouse.com/our-story/sydney-opera-house-history.html>

day to perform in Sydney, making music a source of ongoing national pride as the nation moved towards Federation.

In chapter three the role of the audience comes to the fore, and music can be seen as one of the sites where conflicts around changing gender roles, class and religion came to be played out. I will focus particularly in this chapter on the key role of the middle class who came to feel an affinity between their own values and classical music aesthetic standards. What becomes significant in this chapter is the way in which some people who described themselves as “music lovers” began to identify emotionally with classical music as a means of expressing their identity as men and women, as members of a particular social group, as proud members of the Sydney metropolis, and as Australians.

In chapter four performers take a leading role as the newly formed Musicians’ Union sought to expand opportunities for members and increase the status of the music profession by establishing bands and orchestras. Its most ambitious project was the establishment of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, which it undertook in cooperation with civic-minded members of the middle class and music lovers. The orchestra held a regular series of concerts between 1908 and 1917. The diverse interests of the music profession and music lovers inevitably resulted in tensions which revealed underlying anxieties about the rise of a politically engaged working class in Federation era Australia.

In 1915, as detailed in chapter five, Sydney finally established its first government-funded musical institution, a Conservatorium, which soon usurped the Musicians' Union as the key focus of orchestral concerts. Almost overnight the Conservatorium overrode the authority of the union in relation to professional standards and musical expertise. The first director of the Conservatorium, the charismatic Belgian violinist and conductor Henri Verbrugghen, temporarily united Sydney's musical community with his vision of making Sydney a musical mecca that would be the envy of the world. Unfortunately, the unity of purpose that welcomed his arrival had been torn asunder by the time he finally departed in 1921 amid controversy about the funding of his orchestra, which revealed deep rifts within the musical and broader communities: should priority be given to raising musical standards and creating an elite group of performers or should the authorities educate and promote musical engagement more generally within the community?

After Verbrugghen's departure, the cause of classical music faltered for two reasons—increased competition from other forms of entertainment and a lack of enthusiasm for all things German, including music. In chapter six, composers take a leading role. They wedded their ambitions to the cause of creating a morally uplifting national music within the classical tradition. During the resulting period of musical experimentation, Sydney composers targeted the classical music audiences to promote their music. In their turn

classical music lovers embraced Australian music as a means of promoting the cause of classical music as part of Australia's cultural development.

The establishment of the ABC in 1932 marked a new era in the development of a classical music culture in Sydney. Its critical impact on classical music in Sydney, as well as its interactions with other stakeholders is analysed in chapters seven and eight. Chapter seven focuses on the impact of the ABC on orchestral concerts and the Musicians' Union, while chapter eight focuses on the way in which the ABC developed an alliance with middle class sections of the community, promoting attendance at orchestral concerts as an expression of middle class identity. In the process, the ABC controversially entered into the concert promotion business and fended off legal challenges from J. C. Williamson to create what was even then described as a "musical monopoly" unlike that held by any other broadcaster in the world.

By 1939, the ABC had become the most powerful agent in the field of classical music. Yet the ABC was a late entrant in the classical music field in Sydney. It could not have assumed such a dominant position without the significant efforts and tacit compliance of other stakeholders which preceded it. While it is true that the ABC did significantly improve the standard of classical music performances in Australia, it failed to fully recognise the sense of community and empowerment people found as the various stakeholders worked together to create music and musical events. By 1939

many musical groups had folded or were struggling to survive. The rich and diverse musical landscape that had flourished through the early twentieth century became much narrower as people started to polarise in their opinions about their preferred types of music.

In this account of the creation of classical music in Sydney all stakeholders emerge as active participants, sometimes co-operating and sometimes competing with and against each other to achieve their own goals through classical music. Yet such negotiations did not happen in a vacuum and many groups had to compromise in response to economic and political developments, particularly the Depression. The entire Sydney community was heavily invested in developing a musical future which they hoped would provide a means of resolving many of the pressing problems of a growing urban society and a newly emerging nation. Debates between Sydney's musical stakeholders were important vehicles for participants trying to better understand Australia's place in the world as well as a means of imagining and defining their own national and personal identities.



## 2.

# Music for the Nation: 1889–1901

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During the latter part of the nineteenth century the role and function of music in Sydney underwent a significant transformation influenced by trends in Europe and North America. In this chapter I will briefly provide some demographic information about Sydney and outline the city's rich, multi-faceted musical landscape prior to 1889. Music-making was largely a community-based activity conducted by and for amateurs. I will argue that during the centenary celebrations the performance of classical music became linked to a developing sense of national pride as Sydneysiders sought to distance themselves from their colonial origins. Tacitly this lent support to the notion that some forms of music reflected a higher, more cultivated national character.

The number of international artists making their way to Australia increased during the 1890s. The second part of this chapter will detail the impact of visiting artists on the local music scene. I will argue that entertainment entrepreneurs and the music profession both capitalised on a growing sentiment that Australia could demonstrate its worth as a young nation by promoting classical music. Sydney was obviously an attractive destination for some international performers, many of whom remained in

Australia on a permanent or semi-permanent basis. Being able to hear and see visiting artists who travelled around the world on a regular basis made Sydney residents feel that they were becoming citizens of the world.

The commercialisation of classical music also had significant benefits for the musical profession which, as a result, became an organised and unionised professional group. For the first time, they also had to compete with a government-funded musician, the City Organist, who assumed an authoritative position that inevitably led to disputes with many local musicians and groups who were also trying to capitalise on the new interest in classical music by organising their own concerts and establishing orchestras and other performing groups. Alongside this, amateur groups continued to operate. The final part of this chapter will reveal an increasingly fragmented, competitive musical market, with all participants vying for support from a limited public. I will argue that conflict escalated as old understandings about music as a community building initiative collided with new beliefs about the superiority of the music of the great masters.

## **Sydney and the musical landscape before 1889**

Almost from the first day of their arrival on the First Fleet in 1788, regimental bands<sup>1</sup> and amateur musicians<sup>2</sup> performed European music at

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<sup>1</sup> See John Whiteoak, "Popular Music, Militarism, Women, and the Early 'Brass Band' in Australia," *Australasian Music Research* 6 (2001): 32; and Roger Covell, *Australia's Music Themes of a New Society* (Melbourne: Sun Books, 1967), 7-8.

<sup>2</sup> Roger Covell, *Australia's Music Themes of a New Society* (Melbourne: Sun Books, 1967), 5.

public gatherings, including ceremonial events, religious services and dances.<sup>3</sup> Typically such bands performed a range of instrumental music including military music, overtures and opera excerpts as well as dance music.<sup>4</sup> Music was rarely separated from its function as an accompaniment for marching, dancing or communal singing. Most of the audience would be actively engaged in a shared activity and few would be passively listening.

With the growth of the European population and concomitant entertainment venues, concert life became more formalised in the 1830s and 1840s. However, it remained a largely participatory activity facilitated by the formation of choral groups and Schools of Art and Mechanics' Institutes which conducted regular concerts by and for amateur musicians. Such choirs typically sang oratorios and cantatas favoured by the British choral societies.<sup>5</sup>

While amateur initiatives predominated, during the same period some professional concerts began to take place. These were typically organised by a small group of professional musicians who also began arriving in Australia in the 1830s and 1840s.<sup>6</sup> Some were able to make a

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<sup>3</sup> Trevor Herbert and Helen Barlow, "The British Military as a Musical Institution c.1780-c.1860," in *Music and Institutions in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, ed. Paul Rodmell (Farnham, England: Ashgate, 2012), 260. Herbert argues that at this time it was common for military bands to fulfil both military and civilian roles and that most important social events had a military band in attendance.

<sup>4</sup> Herbert and Barlow, 262.

<sup>5</sup> Covell, *Themes*, 17.

<sup>6</sup> F.C. Brewer, *The Drama and Music of New South Wales* (Sydney: Charles Potter, Government Printer, 1892), 56-8.

living conducting the newly established choirs, teaching music and playing the organ for church services. To supplement their income, they often sought patronage from those in better economic and social circumstances by organising concerts at theatres, hotels and club rooms. The repertoire was, according to Covell, “not that of the great instrumental schools.”<sup>7</sup> Rather they typically focused on a miscellaneous grouping of ballads, glees and solo vocal and instrumental works, most of which might have been equally performed in the drawing room or the concert platform.<sup>8</sup> While they certainly did not have the resources of the larger European cities, the repertoire was not inconsistent with the “miscellaneous programs” performed in Europe and American cities, as discussed in the introduction. For instance, in August of 1842, Monsieur and Madame Gautrot, who had remained in Australia after touring with a small operatic company in 1839,<sup>9</sup> held one of many farewell concerts described as a “grand concert”.

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<sup>7</sup> Covell, *Themes*, 16–17.

<sup>8</sup> Brewer, *Drama and Music*, 55.

<sup>9</sup> Graeme Skinner, “Joseph Gautrot and Madame Gautrot” *Australharmony*, last modified 23 March 2018, <http://sydney.edu.au/paradisec/australharmony/gautrot-joseph.php>.

**GRAND CONCERT,  
ROYAL HOTEL.**

UNDER THE PATRONAGE OF HIS EXCELLENCY  
SIR MAURICE O'CONNELL, K.C.B.

Wednesday, the 17th August, 1842.

**M**ONSIEUR AND MADAME GAUTROT most earnestly solicit the kind support of the gentry and inhabitants of Sydney on the present occasion, their last appearance in Sydney, when they trust that the programme will merit their approbation. They have obtained the valuable assistance of Mrs. Bushelle, Mr. Bushelle, Mr. Marsh, Messrs. Deane and Sons, Mr. O'Flaherty, and other professionals.

Leader of the Orchestra... MR. DEANE, SEN.

**PROGRAMME.**

PART I.

1. Symphony.....	Orchestra
2. Grand Air from La Somnambula ....	Madame Gautrot
3. Kathleen Mavourneen .....	Mrs. Bushelle
4. Rage thou angry Storm.....	Mr. Bushelle
5. Russian Air, with variations, a Sestett for Piano-forte, two Violins, two Flutes, Violoncello, and Double Bass, composed by Mons. Gautrot..	
6. Duet from William Tell	} Madame Gautrot and Mrs. Bushelle
7. Grand Quartett Concertante, for Piano-forte, Violin Tenor, and Violoncello ..	
8. The Tarantella la Danza.....	Mr. Bushelle

PART II.

1. Septett for Piano-forte, two Violins, two Flutes, Violoncello, and Double Bass; composed by Mons. Gautrot ..	
2. Beauty's Bower; composed by Mr. Nathan .....	Madame Gautrot
3. Solo Violin on the fourth string, à la Paganini.....	Mons. Gautrot
4. Grand Air from the Schiara in Bagdad; Violin Obligato, Mons. Gautrot ..	Mrs. Bushelle
5. Solo Guitar .....	Mr. O'Flaherty
6. Air, "Le Serment;" Auber.....	Madame Gautrot
7. Comic Duet .....	Mr. and Mrs. Bushelle
8. God Save the Queen!	Solo and Chorus.

By the permission of Colonel Baker, the Band of the 80th Regiment will execute a grand Orchestral Symphony.

Tickets 7s. 6d. each, to be had from Mr. Ellard, George-street; Mr. Sparke, Royal Hotel; and from Monsieur and Madame Gautrot, 105, Pitt-street, next door to Dr. Bland's.

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Image 2.1 SMH, 17 August 1842, 1.

The advertisement for this concert (Image 2.1) indicated a high ticket price of seven shillings and sixpence, suggesting the event was clearly

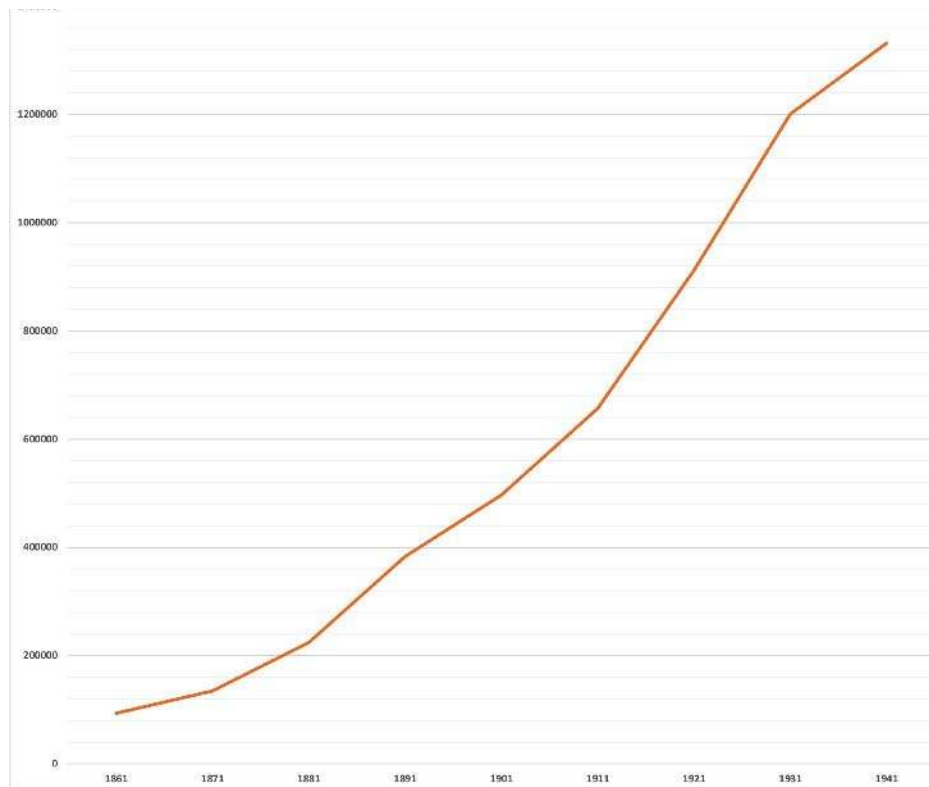
targeted at the colonial gentry. Nevertheless, it was not dedicated to the repertoire that would now be associated with a classical musical event. Rather, it included a mixture of orchestral or band works, solo vocal and instrumental items and even a “comic duet”. The first item was listed as a “symphony” although the program’s footnote indicates that it was to be performed by a “band” rather than an “orchestra”.<sup>10</sup> Indeed the program credits by name only performers (with little reference to composers) suggesting there was no desire to make a claim for the higher aesthetic value of the works performed. This suggests that the performer rather than the composer gave status to the musical event. It would have made little sense for anyone to identify themselves according to their musical taste as similar styles of music were on offer at most venues. For instance, in the 1840s similar concerts of songs, duets, “glees”, band music and instrumental works were regularly held at Coppin’s Large Saloon. Admission was free and advertisements contained no appeal to gentility, suggesting the event was targeted at a range of social classes.<sup>11</sup> What differed between the formal concerts conducted by and for the gentry and the more informal concerts conducted in saloons was not so much the style of music performed as the context and the resources brought to bear for the performance.

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<sup>10</sup> It should be noted that according to Whiteoak, the term “band” might be loosely applied to orchestras or bands and may include stringed instruments not usually today included in a “band”. John Whiteoak, *Playing Ad Lib: Improvisatory Music in Australia 1836–1970* (Sydney: Currency Press, 1999), 32.

<sup>11</sup> See advertisements *SMH*, 2 September 1844, 3 and 19 October 1844, 3.

Concert life was significantly buoyed in the second half of the nineteenth century by a rapidly growing population. As demonstrated in **Figure 2.1**, between the years of 1861 and 1931 there was a thirteen-fold increase in the population of Sydney. Thereafter, the population continued to increase until the beginning of the Second World War, albeit at a slower rate than previously.



**Figure 2.1: Sydney Population Growth 1861 to 1941.<sup>12</sup>**

Sydney's existing city infrastructure was simply inadequate to deal with it. The inevitable poverty and homelessness aroused concerns about crime and safety within the city. The feared savagery that colonists had

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<sup>12</sup> 1861 to 1896 data obtained at: <http://www.populstat.info/Oceania/australt.htm> Data from 1901 to 1939 obtained from the Australian Bureau of Statistics website: <http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/DetailsPage/3105.0.65.0012006?OpenDocument> Both datasets were accessed on 10 September 2016.

traditionally located within Indigenous people<sup>13</sup> could now be identified within the “slums and sinking sewers of the cities”.<sup>14</sup> Irish immigrants were also a source of tension, although, as Matthews has observed, compared to North America, Australia lacked significant ethnic diversity. Rather than replicating America’s “melting pot” experience, Australia aspired to create a racially, linguistically and culturally homogenous egalitarian nation.<sup>15</sup> This did not mean that Sydney did not experience ethnic and racial tensions, the most dominant of which was in relation to Irish Catholic immigrants. This played out through ongoing sectarian disputes that will be discussed in chapter three. These population pressures were exacerbated by an economic downturn in the latter part of the nineteenth century.<sup>16</sup> The development of musical standards in that period was underpinned by an ongoing discourse about crime control and the potential for civic unrest.<sup>17</sup>

Sydney’s new residents included British-born as well as some German-born bandmen<sup>18</sup> as well as music teachers and opera performers<sup>19</sup> who contributed to the formation of an informal but extensive network of

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<sup>13</sup> Notably frontier wars with Aboriginal people were ongoing throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. See Henry Reynolds, *The Other Side of the Frontier : Aboriginal Resistance to the European Invasion of Australia* (Ringwood; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1982).

<sup>14</sup> Penny Russell, *Savage or Civilised? Manners in Colonial Australia* (Sydney: University of NSW Press Ltd., 2010), 360.

<sup>15</sup> Jill Julius Matthews, *Dance Hall & Picture Palace: Sydney’s Romance with Modernity* (Sydney: Currency Press, 2005), 8–9.

<sup>16</sup> Garry Wotherspoon, "Economy," *Dictionary of Sydney* (2008), Accessed 25 April 2017, <http://dictionaryofsydney.org/entry/economy>.

<sup>17</sup> See for instance John Rickard, *Australia: A Cultural History* (London: Longman, 1988), 71–2.

<sup>18</sup> Duncan Bythell, "The Brass Band in Australia: The Transplantation of British Popular Culture, 1850–1950," in *Bands: The Brass Band Movement in the 19th and 20th Centuries*, ed. Trevor Herbert (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1991), 150.

<sup>19</sup> Roslyn Maguire, "'Pleasure of a High Order': Paolo Giorza and Music at Sydney's 1879 International Exhibition," *Context* (Spring 2001).



bands<sup>20</sup> and choral groups such as Sydney Liedertafel, a male choir founded in 1882, and the Sydney Philharmonic Society. In 1899 it was estimated there were about 10 000 bandsmen in Australasia and hundreds of bands.<sup>21</sup> With numerous instrumentalists and choral singers throughout the community, informal music-making was a common occurrence in the home and an adjunct to most social and religious occasions. Such music-making revolved around the piano which was a prized centrepiece in family homes across the social spectrum.<sup>22</sup> Rose claimed that eighty-six per cent of working class homes in Britain participated in some kind of family musical activity at the turn of the twentieth century.<sup>23</sup> With an estimated 700 000 pianos shipped to Australia by 1888 similar rates of participation might be expected in Australia.<sup>24</sup> German pianos were particularly popular in Australia, which was the second largest foreign market for exports: behind England, but ahead of Russia, Brazil and South Africa.<sup>25</sup> In 1893, Sydney business-man Octavius Charles Beale established a large piano factory in Annandale Sydney which by 1975 had produced 95 000 pianos.<sup>26</sup> Informal gatherings

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<sup>20</sup> Whiteoak, *Playing Ad Lib*, 38.

<sup>21</sup> *The Australasian Art Review*, 1 March 1900, 1.

<sup>22</sup> Jennifer Gall, "Redefining the Tradition: The Role of Women in the Evolution and Transmission of Australian Folk Music" (PhD thesis, Australian National University, 2008): 108.

<sup>23</sup> Jonathan Rose, *The Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 197, ProQuest Ebook Central, <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.virtual.anu.edu.au/lib/anu/detail.action?docID=3421599>.

<sup>24</sup> See Deborah Crisp, "The Piano in Australia, 1770 to 1900: Some Literary Sources," *Musicology Australia* 18, no. 1 (1995): 26. Crisp argues that this estimate by French critic Oscar Comettant, one of the judges of music and art at the 1888 Melbourne International Exhibition was probably exaggerated. However, such estimates do indicate the popularity of the piano in nineteenth century Australia.

<sup>25</sup> Cyril Ehrlich, *The Piano: A History* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1990), 69.

<sup>26</sup> Neville Hicks and E. J. Lea-Scarlett, "Beale, Octavius Charles (1850–1930)" *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University (1979), <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/beale-octavius-charles-5165/text8675>. See also <http://www.bealepianos.com.au/history/>. Both accessed 16 May 2018.

around the family piano were a means of cementing informal networks and familial bonds and stood in contrast to larger events intended to engage a broader public.

Various attempts had been made to establish a more formal Philharmonic Society in Sydney along the lines of the London Philharmonic in the latter part of the nineteenth century.<sup>27</sup> The first group to call themselves the Sydney Philharmonic Society formed in 1854. Unlike the London Philharmonic, they failed to establish an ongoing orchestra and instead joined with other choirs in 1873. The Sydney Musical Union, formed in 1876, was subsequently reformed as the Sydney Philharmonic Society in 1885. Significantly, the initial Philharmonic was one of the first groups explicitly to promote higher aesthetic tastes. Their stated objective was to perform the works of the “great masters”<sup>28</sup> and to further the “musical education of the city”<sup>29</sup>. Similarly, in 1887, the Orpheus Club was formed by some of Sydney’s leading professional musicians with the explicit goal of providing a “monthly musical entertainment of the highest class”, although importantly they aimed to do so “without the restraints or formalities of an ordinary concert”.<sup>30</sup> This was essentially a men’s club where “lady amateurs” were only admitted on quarterly “social nights”.<sup>31</sup> The remaining

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<sup>27</sup> See for example the announcement of the formation of the initial Sydney Philharmonic Society. *SMH*, 29 April 1854, 2.

<sup>28</sup> *SMH*, 5 July 1873, 4.

<sup>29</sup> *EN*, 2 May 1885, 5.

<sup>30</sup> *SMH*, 28 July 1887, 7.

<sup>31</sup> *SMH*, 24 October 1891, 5.

eight “regular concerts” held each year were only open to men. The group was initially limited to 200 subscribers (later increased) with Edmund Barton, then a member of the upper house of the NSW parliament, as president. Although the audience was seated informally around tables with food and drinks available, professional musicians were engaged to perform instrumental chamber music works by European composers. Nevertheless, concerts typically also included vocal items and opera excerpts.

While some agreed with efforts by the Philharmonic and the Orpheus Club to promote “higher class” musical tastes as a “softening influence” that cultivated “the taste for the pure and beautiful”,<sup>32</sup> others frowned on such efforts. In 1878 the critic from *The Australian Town and Country Journal* suggested “progress is ... retarded by too rigid and conservative adherence to standards of a period when high art was the exclusive property of the favoured few”.<sup>33</sup> In 1884 a long article appeared in the *Sydney Morning Herald* discussing the distinction between “popular” and “scientific” music. The author articulated the relative strengths and weaknesses of both kinds of music but showed a clear preference for more popular forms, particularly national songs such as the *Marseillaise* and *The Last Rose of Summer* as a means of creating cheer and promoting community cohesion:

In music the tinkling gavotte, the stop-and-carry-one sonata, the thunderous fugue, or even great concerto which requires as much training to hear as to play, may be marvellously clever;

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<sup>32</sup> ATCJ, 28 December 1878, 12.

<sup>33</sup> ATCJ, 1878.

but they are not great ... Bread and water are great, and he is the great musician who finding these elements takes them, and, by the divine unction that is in him, consecrates and gives them to the world— a true sacramental feast, whereby all are cheered and strengthened and blessed.<sup>34</sup>

The writer is suggesting that simple, elemental music in the hands of a good performer bonded the community in much the same way as a religious celebration of holy communion. Similarly, in 1883 the *Herald's* Music and Drama columnist concluded that works such as Wagner's opera *Lohengrin* might be admired in the "great musical schools of the world and the inner circles of musical talent", but that such groups were "as far removed from the music-loving public as the narrow aesthetic cult from the myriad worshippers of honest art".<sup>35</sup> He suggested that such works were usually kept to a minimum in concerts designed to please "all portions of music-loving people".<sup>36</sup>

Concert life quickened pace as visiting overseas artists began to appear in increasing numbers in the latter part of the nineteenth century. This followed the opening of the Suez Canal and the completion of the American transcontinental railroad in 1869 with steamships between California and Australasia commencing in 1874.<sup>37</sup> Rather than being an infrequent occurrence that happened a few times each decade, by the 1880s

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<sup>34</sup> *SMH*, 22 November 1884, 8.

<sup>35</sup> *M & A*, 17 February 1883, 320.

<sup>36</sup> *SMH*, 27 September 1884, 14.

<sup>37</sup> Desley Deacon, "Location! Location! Location! Mind Maps and Theatrical Circuits in Australian Transnational History," *History Australia* 5, no. 3 (2008): 81.5.

several artists began to visit each year. For instance, the French pianist Henri Ketten, the American violinist Camilla Urso, and the Italian operatic soprano Carlotta Patti (sister of Adelina Patti) all toured Australia in 1880. Attracting audiences of up to 6000 people,<sup>38</sup> such concerts could be very lucrative for concert promoters—so much so that several entrepreneurs, including James Cassius Williamson and George Musgrove chose to settle in Australia in the 1880s.<sup>39</sup>

As the 1888 centenary commemorations approached, Sydney could celebrate a rich and diverse musical life. While much of Sydney's concert life was still conducted by and for amateur musicians, signs of significant changes were emerging. In the latter part of the century the increased number of visiting artists and the establishment of groups such as a Sydney Philharmonic and the Orpheus Club signified an emerging interest by some music enthusiasts in promoting the higher aesthetic values attributed to some musical works in Europe and elsewhere. Despite this, few concert programs focused exclusively on what would now be regarded as the classical music canon. Rather, concert programs typically included a broad mix of music designed to cater to a range of musical tastes. These concerts were a source of civic pride, entertainment and a focal point for social gatherings of all kinds. In 1892 Francis Brewer, editor of the Sydney-based

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<sup>38</sup> *SMH*, 7 July 1887, 7.

<sup>39</sup> Ann Carr Boyd, *Music in Australia, 1788–1888* (MA Thesis, University of Sydney, 1963): 70.

newspaper *The Echo*, prepared a document on the authority of the NSW Commissioners for the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago. In this document, he described Sydney's musical life as follows:

Concerts are of nightly occurrence both in city and suburbs; there are a number of societies in existence for the cultivation of part-singing, more or less pretentious; in nearly every house votaries of instrumental music are to be found, and it is not inappropriate to call Sydney the "City of Pianos".<sup>40</sup>

Given the popularity of music among the general population, it is not surprising that music featured prominently in plans to commemorate the Centenary of European settlement.

### **The London of the Southern Seas**

Sydney's centenary celebrations in 1888 had a strong musical focus that awakened a sense of civic pride and promoted a vision that through music Australia would be able to shake off its convict past and become recognised among the "civilised" nations of the world. The centrepiece of Sydney's celebration was to be the opening of the Centennial Hall, within the newly built Town Hall complex.

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<sup>40</sup> Brewer, *Drama and Music*, 54.



**Image 2.2: Sydney Town Hall circa 1892.**

Picture: Fred Hardie, NLA Digital Collection. Bib ID 4556739.

However, in the long tradition of such projects, amidst delays and expenditure blow outs, the hall was not officially opened until the latter part of 1889. This left a musical vacuum for the actual centennial celebrations, which, following considerable debate, was filled by a variety of musical offerings. These included a “Grand musical celebration of the Centenary”<sup>41</sup> at the Theatre Royal on 22 January 1888, featuring both a specially arranged orchestra conducted by violinist Horace Poussard and the self-styled “Centennial Band” formed by an opportunistic group of wind

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<sup>41</sup> *SMH*, Advertisement, 20 January 1888, 2.

instrumentalists in 1887; the “Grand Centennial Band Contests” where eighteen bands competed at the Carrington Athletic Grounds between 26 January and 28 January 1888<sup>42</sup>; and a performance by a combined choir of children, adults and orchestra of a *Centennial Cantata* by Sydney-based composer Hugo Alpen at the Exhibition Building on 30 January 1888.<sup>43</sup> In addition, at the dedication of Centennial Park several bands joined together for a “grand musical performance” that was estimated to include 300 instrumentalists. Their performance included *The Centennial Grand March*, the *Centenary Quick March*, the *Hallelujah Chorus*, and the *National Anthem*.<sup>44</sup> The reliance on band music followed the long-standing tradition of the military band accompanying major events within the Colony since European settlement.<sup>45</sup> But to celebrate Sydney’s coming of age new ambitions began to emerge to hear a more prestigious ensemble of instruments, the symphony orchestra.

Orchestral music was a major focal point of the centenary celebrations in Sydney’s rival city, Melbourne, which had achieved something of a coup by engaging the leading English conductor and composer, Sir Frederic Hymen Cowen. His fee of £5 000 as conductor-in-chief and music director for the Melbourne International Exhibition held from 1 August 1888 until 31

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<sup>42</sup> *SMH*, 18 January 1888, 6.

<sup>43</sup> *SMH*, 31 January 1888, 6.

<sup>44</sup> *SMH*, Advertisement, 24 January 1888, 4.

<sup>45</sup> See Whiteoak, “Popular Music”, 34 who argues that in the nineteenth century amateur and military bands in Australia were historically integrated.



January 1889 was an exorbitant amount for the time.<sup>46</sup> Cowen brought with him fifteen leading orchestral players who, joining with fifty-eight local musicians, formed a substantial orchestra of seventy-three players. They gave 263 concerts over the six-month period, covering the standard repertoire of the time as well as some new works including Cowen's own cantata *A Song of Thanksgiving*.<sup>47</sup> Such an achievement was particularly galling for Sydney's musical societies who had tried to organise a joint musical event to celebrate the centenary. There had been difficulties in obtaining funds to pay for a suitable venue and because of differences of opinion about alternative options the proposed centennial musical festival had failed to come to fruition.<sup>48</sup>

Not to be bested by their Melbourne compatriots, Sydney's newspaper editorial columns were awash with fretful letters and newspaper reports insisting on the need to bring Cowen and his orchestra to Sydney. The problem was that a tour of this nature would obviously require significant capital and logistical organisation—how was it to be arranged? As a report in the *Herald* stated:

the difficulties seemed ... insurmountable, not only because of the enormous expense attaching to the undertaking, but also

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<sup>46</sup> Centennial International Exhibition et al., *Report of the Executive Commissioners for the Centennial International Exhibition of 1888, together with an account of income and expenditure* (Melbourne: Robt. S. Brain, Government Printer, 1891), 6.

<sup>47</sup> Kenneth Hince, "Cowen, Sir Frederic Hymen (1852–1935)," *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University (1979), Accessed 27 June 2012, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/cowen-sir-frederic-hymen-3272>.

<sup>48</sup> *SMH*, J.A. Delany, Letter to the editor, 26 March 1888, 9.

because of Mr. Cowen's personal unwillingness to do anything which might lead to the delaying of his return to London.<sup>49</sup>

Into the breach stepped renowned English-born Shakespearian actor George Rignold and theatrical manager James Allison, who, together with local musician, concert organiser, composer and music shop proprietor Charles Huenerbein, successfully negotiated a Sydney season of twelve "grand concerts" by Cowen and his orchestra from 2 February 1889. Ten concerts were to be given at the Exhibition Building, Prince Alfred Park, and two at Her Majesty's Theatre. The tour was also supported by the governments of Victoria and NSW, the Mayor and Councillors of Sydney, the Railway Commissioners and local musical groups, indicating the strong community ownership of the event.

The build up to the Cowen orchestra concerts excited considerable community interest. Described as no less than "the awakening of musical Sydney"<sup>50</sup> the audience reception was widely assumed to be a test of "national taste"<sup>51</sup>. Concert promoters and civic fathers promoted attendance at these concerts as a civic duty<sup>52</sup> and urged people to ensure concert promoters were not left to carry a loss.<sup>53</sup> Although attendance was initially disappointing, Sydneysiders obeyed such urgings and an enthusiastic audience of between 3000 and 5000 people attended each of the subsequent

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<sup>49</sup> *SMH*, 19 January 1889, 8.

<sup>50</sup> *SMH*, 11 February 1889, 5.

<sup>51</sup> *SMH*, 31 January 1889, 9.

<sup>52</sup> *SMH*, 5 February 1889, 5.

<sup>53</sup> *SMH*, 19 January 1889, 8.

concerts. There was palpable relief at such a positive reception. It meant that Sydney was saved from the “disgrace” of demonstrating cultural ignorance, or “lack of recognition of what is so deserving of notice”.<sup>54</sup> In particular, it was a matter of great pride that “the most classical of the work presented received the most marked approbation” and that “Mr Cowen was not slow in expressing a gratified surprise at the solid regard of the people for the highest work done by his orchestra.”<sup>55</sup>

The orchestra’s focus on German composers, particularly Beethoven, Schubert, Mendelssohn, Wagner, Weber, Mozart and Haydn, or as one reviewer described it, “grand music grandly performed”,<sup>56</sup> clearly created a profound effect on the audience. While many of these works were known to at least some members of the audiences, it was claimed they had “never before” been approached in quite the same manner in Sydney.<sup>57</sup> In particular, the large orchestra gave powerful renderings of Wagner’s music which gained many adherents.<sup>58</sup> Notably, the program advertised in **Image 2.3** still did not include a complete symphony, but instead focused on excerpts of some of the great works along with other miscellaneous items.

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<sup>54</sup> *SMH* 11 February 1889, 5.

<sup>55</sup> *SMH*, 13 February 1889, 6–7.

<sup>56</sup> *SMH*, 11 February 1889, 5.

<sup>57</sup> *SMH*, 12 February 1889, 8.

<sup>58</sup> See *SMH*, 12 February 1889, 6–7; *SMH*, 12 February 1889, 8 & *ATCJ*, 16 February 1889, 26.

**EXHIBITION BUILDING.**

PRINCE ALBERT PARK.  
Under the Management of  
Messrs. RIGNOLD and ALLISON.

BRILLIANT TRIUMPH  
BRILLIANT TRIUMPH  
and  
UNPARALLELED SUCCESS  
of  
Mr. FREDERICK H. COWEN,  
and  
THE FAMOUS CENTENNIAL EXHIBITION  
ORCHESTRA.

MANAGERIAL NOTICE.  
Owing to Mr. Cowen's departure for England on Monday  
next, February 11, these concerts cannot possibly be ex-  
tended beyond those now advertised.

For the convenience of the public in the country, the  
Railway Department have arranged to issue Return Tickets  
at EXCURSION RATES specially for these Concerts,  
tickets for which will be available at all the principal  
Railway Stations extending beyond Parramatta.

TO-NIGHT,  
TO-NIGHT,  
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 5,  
FIFTH GRAND CONCERT,  
again  
under the patronage and in the presence of  
His Excellency  
BARON LORD CARRINGTON, P.C., G.C.M.G.

PROGRAMME.

1. Overture—"Leonora," No. 3...	Beethoven
2. Andante—"Italian" Symphony ...	Mendelssohn
3. Overture—"Oberon" ...	Weber
4. Prelude and Entr' Acte—"Lohengrin" ...	Wagner
INTERVAL OF FIVE MINUTES.	
5. Ballet Music—(Tchaikovsky) ...	Rubinstein
6. "Entr' Act"—(Colombe) ...	Gounod
7. "Elf Land" ...	Barnett
8. "Turkish Rondo" ...	Mozart
9. Overture—"Le Lac des Fées" ...	Auber.

WEDNESDAY NIGHT  
WEDNESDAY NIGHT,  
FEBRUARY 6,  
at  
the EXHIBITION BUILDING,  
SPECIAL MONSTER PROGRAMME,  
in which  
THE FAMOUS MELBOURNE EXHIBITION  
ORCHESTRA  
will be augmented by  
THE SYDNEY LIEDERTAFEL.  
Conductor, Mr. J. A. Delaney.

THURSDAY NIGHT,  
FEBRUARY 7th,  
SPECIAL GRAND ORCHESTRAL CONCERT,  
augmented by  
THE METROPOLITAN LIEDERTAFEL,  
Conductor, Mr. J. Ashcroft Edwards.

THE LAST OPPORTUNITIES  
of hearing  
These MAGNIFICENT ORCHESTRAL CONCERTS at  
the Exhibition will be as follows:—

FRIDAY EVENING, February 8, at the EXHIBITION  
BUILDING.

SATURDAY EVENING, February 9, at the EX-  
HIBITION BUILDING. Special Programme.

NOTICE.—Arrangements of Entrances at the Exhibition.  
Entrance to the 5s Reserved Seats, first door on eastern  
side.  
To the 3s Seats and 1s Promenade, second door eastern side.  
To the 2s Balcony Seats, southern side.  
Reserved Seats, 5s. Second Seats, 3s.  
Balcony, 2s. Promenade, 1s.  
Doors open for Evening Concert, 7 o'clock. Concert to  
commence 8 o'clock. Carriages may be ordered for 10 o'clock.  
Doors open for Afternoon Concerts at 2.15. Commence at  
3. Carriages, 4.40.  
Box Plan at Charles Huenerbein's Pianoforte Warehouse,  
318, George-street. CHARLES HUENERBEIN,  
Business Manager.

Image 2.3: Advertisement for Cowen orchestral concerts, *SMH*, 5 February 1889, 2.

Effusive reviews and newspaper reports attested to the "soul  
stirring"<sup>59</sup> music that completely "absorbed the attention of all present".<sup>60</sup>

<sup>59</sup> *SMH*, 11 February 1889, 5.

<sup>60</sup> *EN*, 7 February 1889, 5.

The editor of the *Sydney Mail* enthused about the sensual pleasure that the audience derived from a high quality and large ensemble:

The wood wind ... is very far ahead of any to which our ears have become attuned; the presence of two bassoons and a harp is phenomenal; the horns are splendid; the roll of the drums as the National Anthem is played sets all one's pulses in motion; the castanets and tambourine made perfect the ballet music; whilst the clash of cymbals and the full blare of the brass instruments have contributed important and telling features in the grand *ensemble*.<sup>61</sup>

The effect, according to another reviewer, was to obliterate the individual, "merging his personality ... into the sensuous body of humanity".<sup>62</sup>

The Cowen concert series, with twelve concerts performed in just over a week, had an instant and almost immediate effect that profoundly affected Sydney's engagement with classical music. The orchestra aroused considerable enthusiasm among Sydney audiences and stimulated many to imagine the potential such music had to promote national traits desirable for an emerging country. An editorial piece in the *Herald* discussing initiatives to establish a standing orchestra in Sydney following the success of Cowan's visit stated:

We are a music-loving people, and a taste this way is already remarked as a probable distinguishing characteristic of the Australian social order of the future ... The better music we hear the better will be our appreciation.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> (*M & A*), 9 February 1889, 273.

<sup>62</sup> *SMH*, 6 February 1889, 4.

<sup>63</sup> *SMH*, 16 November 1889, 10.

In the rhetoric surrounding the Cowen concerts, it was apparent that music had become a symbolic yardstick against which Australia should henceforth assess its status against other countries. In February 1889 a strongly worded and emotional editorial in the *Sydney Morning Herald* insisted on the need for “national recognition of music”, which, like the visual arts, should receive government funding.<sup>64</sup> The article made an interesting comparison between Australia and Honolulu, “once known as the Cannibal Islands”, suggesting that great shame would accrue if Australia did not provide at least the same level of support that the Hawaiian Government provided for a high quality band with a German conductor.<sup>65</sup>

Interestingly the author of the *Herald* editorial indicated that a good quality brass band or a fine orchestra would be equally worthy of government support. This suggested that the tradition of ceremonial, military music was still strong and that there was some fluidity in what might be considered aesthetically superior forms of music. The author did, however, lean towards “an orchestral concert of a distinctly classical nature”,<sup>66</sup> suggesting that classical music, as represented by Cowen’s orchestra, had symbolically become a bulwark against barbarism and a signifier of national progress. In this way, music was emerging as a potential means of unifying a growing and somewhat chaotic city. As such it began to

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<sup>64</sup> *SMH*, 13 February 1889, 6–7

<sup>65</sup> *SMH*, 13 February 1889, 6–7.

<sup>66</sup> *SMH*, 13 February 1889, 6–7.

excite new ambitions for the nation as a whole and a proposition that classical music was worthy of government support began to gain momentum. A precedent for significant government investment in music had already been established in the design and building of Centennial Hall within the Town Hall complex which was opened, belatedly, on 27 November 1889.<sup>67</sup> Despite the delay of twelve months, the civic fathers declared a public holiday to celebrate the event and a grand concert ushered in the new era for Sydney's musical life with a combined choir of 400 and a 57-strong orchestra.<sup>68</sup>

The Town Hall's opening was an important symbol that Sydney had come of age and that Sydney was equal to, if not better than, any other city in the empire. Centennial Hall was larger than almost all of the great concert auditoriums within the British empire, including those of Birmingham, Liverpool and Glasgow. It was second only to the Royal Albert Hall in size.<sup>69</sup> But even the Albert Hall could not match the magnificent organ included in the Town Hall. In a move designed to draw international attention, the City Councillors planned a technological tour de force by building what was then the largest organ in the world at what many considered to be the exorbitant

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<sup>67</sup> Margo Beasley, *Sydney Town Hall: A Social History* (Marrickville: Hale & Iremonger, 1998), 16.

<sup>68</sup> Robert Ampt, *The Sydney Town Hall Organ* (Woodford: Birrale Publishing, 1999), 1.

<sup>69</sup> Ampt, *Organ*.

cost of £15 000<sup>70</sup> or \$12 million in today's terms.<sup>71</sup> In his speech at the opening of the Town Hall, the Lord Mayor roundly chastised those who had complained about the Town Hall's cost.

As a city we occupy the third position among the cities of Great Britain, and it is, I think, a proper ambition for us to have the largest town hall in the world. We have been ridiculed, too, as a council for obtaining the largest organ in the world; but here again, I say, with our rapidly-increasing population and revenue, and the knowledge that our city must become the London of the Southern seas, the ambition is a laudable one.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> The organ had 5 manuals and a pedal keyboard with 128 stops (59 speaking stops) which was approximately double the size of the Melbourne Town Hall organ and some 14 stops more than the Royal Albert Hall when built.

<sup>71</sup> Diane Hutchinson and Florian Ploeckl, "Five Ways to Compute the Relative Value of Australian Amounts, 1828 to the Present" *MeasuringWorth*, Accessed 1 May 2017, [www.measuringworth.com/australiacompare](http://www.measuringworth.com/australiacompare). Note that Hutchinson and Ploeckl convincingly argue there are multiple ways to measure what the monetary value in the past is "worth" today. They suggests that a crude CPI measure does not indicate affordability which is best expressed in terms of GDP per capita. Accordingly this is how I have calculated the cost of the Sydney Town Hall organ in this thesis.

<sup>72</sup> Quoted in *SMH*, 28 November 1889, 8.





**Image 2.4: Centennial Hall and organ, circa 1894/5.**

Picture: Charles H. Kerry. Source NLA, Charles Kerry collection of NSW views. Bib ID 6100580.

A world-wide search ensued to find the best organist to give this stupendous instrument an appropriate christening. After exhaustive enquiries, the aptly named W.T. Best from Liverpool was duly engaged and came to Australia to provide an opening series of twelve concerts to celebrate the installation of the organ in 1890. As the concerts approached, anticipation grew. Everyone wanted to hear the new organ, “the people’s organ”<sup>73</sup> as some termed it. Sydneysiders were so excited about hearing their

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<sup>73</sup> Pro Bono Publico, Letter to the Editor, *SMH* 4 August 1890, 6.

new organ that some described the anticipation of the organ's opening concerts as "organ recital fever".<sup>74</sup>

Attempts to make these concerts an exclusive event by setting high entry fees were met with outrage. The Sydney City Council backed down and allowed "popular prices". Attendance grew with each concert. It was estimated that approximately 7 000 people managed to cram into the Town Hall for the eleventh concert. According to the *Sydney Morning Herald*:

even the corridors and the vestibule were accepted as part of the auditorium, while the number of those who went away disappointed of gaining admittance of any kind was beyond computation – though estimated by one of the officials as "a couple of thousand or so".<sup>75</sup>

The average attendance was calculated at 3 300 people per recital and the Council was able to accrue a profit of £845 after payment of expenses.<sup>76</sup>

Following this success the Council committed themselves to further music subsidies by appointing a City organist. Best had been the Council's first choice, but he had declined. After a world-wide search, the eminent Belgian organist Auguste Wiegand was appointed in 1891 from a field of 105 applicants.<sup>77</sup> For the *Evening News*, his appointment marked "the natural culmination of a probationary period through which we have passed" and "the day upon which we attained our majority". Henceforth, "we may

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<sup>74</sup> Ampt, *Organ*, 29.

<sup>75</sup> *SMH*, Monday 1 September 1890, 7.

<sup>76</sup> *SMH*, 31 December 1890, 11.

<sup>77</sup> Ampt, *Organ*, 37.

account ourselves a musical people duly clothed in the outward garb of artistic manhood".<sup>78</sup> Such an investment in classical musical culture was clearly a coming of age event.

One of Wiegand's first acts was to inaugurate regular bi-weekly organ recitals. According to the *Herald* these recitals represented:

the mind of the city in joy and sorrow, in gravity and lightness; and while the new Post Office bells speak tunefully out overhead, from their windy turrets, the great organ will respond under the deft fingers of the city musician to the popular sentiment in all its varying moods. With these things about us, and our new Town Hall, we begin to feel that the corporate sense of the city is being adequately bodied forth at last.<sup>79</sup>

Typically such concerts included a range of virtuosic organ works including the great classical works by J.S. Bach, Josef Haydn, Ludwig van Beethoven<sup>80</sup> and Felix Mendelssohn, as well as more contemporary works by his French and Belgian contemporaries including Auguste Dupont, Édouard Batiste, Charles Gounod, Alexandre Guilmant and Jules Grison. In addition Wiegand often performed his own compositions, improvisations and transcriptions, particularly of operatic works or excerpts. Sydney now aspired to be a leading musical centre where concerts should be open and affordable to all, ensuring that the whole population might share the benefits. As an article in the *Sydney Mail* expressed it, orchestral music

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<sup>78</sup> *EN*, 20 July 1891, 5.

<sup>79</sup> *SMH*, 25 July 1891, 5.

<sup>80</sup> The works performed by Haydn and Beethoven were usually transcriptions of their symphonies or chamber music as neither composer wrote extensively for the organ.

promised to exert a “powerful influence” on the “family, social and national life of a civilised community” by stimulating “heroism, loyalty and devotion”.<sup>81</sup> It was therefore worthy of government support.

Although the Council was now prepared to provide funds for an organist and regular concerts it was clearly not its intention that music should be elitist or exclusively classical. The Councillors continued to understand music as a means of bringing the community together and of promoting a shared sense of community purpose and civic pride. With the opening of the Centennial Hall and its organ Sydney residents found what William Weber has described as:

a lust for identification with the mass of the population, a desire to celebrate the emerging urban-industrial civilization with a grand thronging together in public places.<sup>82</sup>

DiMaggio and Mullen have described such musical events as “civic rituals” by which collectivities consciously or unconsciously created emotional commitment which constituted a component structure of collective life.<sup>83</sup>

Such an interpretation might be aptly applied to Town Hall concerts in Sydney which could likewise affirm social hierarchies, define community boundaries, and incorporate problematic groups into a larger polity.<sup>84</sup>

Classical music was a necessary inclusion in such concerts, but not at the

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<sup>81</sup> *M & A*, 18 January 1890, 125.

<sup>82</sup> William Weber, “Mass Culture and the Reshaping of European Musical Taste, 1770–1870,” *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music* 8, no. 1 (1977): 15.

<sup>83</sup> Paul DiMaggio and Ann L Mullen, “Enacting Community in Progressive America: Civic Rituals in National Music Week, 1924,” *Poetics* 27, no. 2–3 (2000): 136.

<sup>84</sup> DiMaggio, “Enacting Community”, 151.

exclusion of other forms of music. Such concerts provided a means of promoting collective civic bonds that might transcend familial bonds and unite a growing city.

### **The rise of the entertainment industry**

The impromptu and informal arrangements that brought Cowen and his orchestra to Sydney were one of the last vestiges of community

entrepreneurship, gradually replaced through the 1880s by increasingly

“centralised, standardised, rationalised and bureaucratised”<sup>85</sup> theatre

management firms, represented most famously in Australia by J.C.

Williamson and his various rivals (and sometimes collaborators) including

Arthur Garner, George Musgrove, Harry Rickards, Garnett Carroll,

Benjamin Fuller and various members of the Tait family.<sup>86</sup> These firms were

situated within a transnational network where, like the touring actors

discussed by Veronica Kelly, singers and virtuoso musicians were

“conspicuous international figures”<sup>87</sup> whose performances attracted

widespread newspaper attention, even in the most far-flung provinces of

European colonisation. Underpinned by a complex web of international

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<sup>85</sup> Veronica Kelly, *Empire Actors : Stars of Australasian Costume Drama 1890s–1920s* (Strawberry Hills, N.S.W.: Currency House, 2010), 6.

<sup>86</sup> For more information on the Australian theatrical firms see Veronica Kelly, "A Complementary Economy? National Markets and International Product in Early Australian Theatre Managements " *New Theatre Quarterly* 21 (2005): 77; Eric Irvin, *Dictionary of the Australian Theatre, 1788–1914* (Sydney: Hale & Iremonger, 1985); Claude Kingston, *It Don't Seem a Day Too Much* (Adelaide: Rigby, 1971); Philip Parsons with Victoria Chance, ed., *Concise Companion to Theatre in Australia* (Sydney: Currency Press, 1997); Viola Tait, *A Family of Brothers: The Tait's and J. C. Williamson: A Theatre History* (Melbourne: Heinemann, 1971); Richard Waterhouse, *From Minstrel Show to Vaudeville: The Australian Popular Stage 1788–1914* (Kensington, N.S.W.: NSW University Press, 1990); and John West, *Theatre in Australia* (Stanmore, N.S.W.: Cassell Australia, 1978).

<sup>87</sup> Kelly, *Empire Actors*, 5.

finance, entrepreneurship and capital, celebrity artists travelled the world via the “steam, rail and telegraphic networks of Empire”.<sup>88</sup> David-Guillou has claimed that during this period “transnational musical relations” were particularly intense, playing a critical role in the growing success of popular music worldwide.<sup>89</sup> Such intense transnational musical relations also promoted classical music as a high status cultural endeavour able to foster patronage and garner respectability for their entrepreneurial endeavours among the middle class.

There were many reasons entertainment entrepreneurs became involved in promoting tours by singers and virtuosi musicians. First, as P.T. Barnum had already shown in the United States, such tours could be exceedingly profitable. Between 1850 and 1851, the first American tour by the Swedish soprano Jenny Lind attracted unprecedented attention<sup>90</sup> with gross receipts in excess of US \$500 000<sup>91</sup> (which would be equal to approximately US \$225 million in today’s currency<sup>92</sup>). Secondly, such tours enhanced the respectability of the theatre. As Rickard has pointed out, in the nineteenth century, in Australia as elsewhere, theatres were still considered

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<sup>88</sup> Kelly, "A Complementary Economy?", 77–95.

<sup>89</sup> Angèle David-Guillou, "Early Musicians' Unions in Britain, France, and the United States: On the Possibilities and Impossibilities of Transnational Militant Transfers in an International Industry," *Labour History Review* 74, no. 3 (2009): 290.

<sup>90</sup> Daniel Cavicchi, *Listening and Longing: Music Lovers in the Age of Barnum* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 2011), 101.

<sup>91</sup> W. Porter Ware and Thaddeus Constantine Lockard, *P.T. Barnum Presents Jenny Lind: The American Tour of the Swedish Nightingale* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1980), 98.

<sup>92</sup> Purchasing power calculated on the basis on GDP per capita as indicated at:

<https://www.measuringworth.com/uscompare/relativevalue.php>, accessed 27 April, 2016.

“raffish places” associated with alcohol and prostitution.<sup>93</sup> Many religious members of the community held conscientious objections even to entering a theatre.<sup>94</sup> For these groups, music with its historical association with religious practice and (in the case of oratorios) religious texts, was a very effective symbol of respectability that appealed particularly to the middle class.<sup>95</sup> Entertainment entrepreneurs could at least partially absolve the “stain” of their involvement in theatrical activities by pursuing higher forms of cultural entertainment, like opera and classical concerts. According to Bourdieu this is how entertainment entrepreneurs acquired “cultural capital” or “symbolic capital”, enabling them to expand their audience over time and ultimately to increase profits.<sup>96</sup>

Like their international counterparts Australian theatrical entrepreneurs organised tours by singers and instrumentalists in addition to their theatrical activities. This included legendary figures such as English baritone Charles Santley in 1890, the famous conductor and pianist Sir Charles Halle and his violinist wife Wilma Neruda in 1890–91, Russian/British pianist Mark Hambourg and French Soprano Antoinette Trebelli in 1895, leading Canadian soprano Madame Emma Albani in 1898,

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<sup>93</sup> Rickard, *Australia*, 98.

<sup>94</sup> Alison Gyger, *Opera for the Antipodes: Opera in Australia, 1881–1939* (Sydney: Currency Press and Pellinor, 1990), 78.

<sup>95</sup> Simon Gunn, *The Public Culture of the Victorian Middle Class: Ritual and Authority and the English Industrial City, 1840–1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), 134.

<sup>96</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, “The Production of Belief: Contribution to an Economy of Symbolic Goods,” in *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*, ed. Randal Johnson (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1993), 75.

German pianist Albert Friedenthal in 1899, Belgian cellist Jean Gerardy in 1901 and even the world famous Polish pianist Ignacy Jan Paderewski in 1904 (see extended discussion of the Paderewski tour in chapter four) just to mention some early prominent examples.<sup>97</sup> In the process of bringing celebrity artists to Sydney, musical entrepreneurs were able to cultivate a large audience for classical music by capitalising on the discourse that had emerged during the centennial celebrations that linked the cause of classical music with both respectability and national progress.

Commentators proudly welcomed the announcement that the renowned conductor/pianist Sir Charles Hallé and his violinist wife Wilma Neruda — then considered “executive musicians of the very first rank”<sup>98</sup> — were to visit in 1890, as evidence that Australia had finally attracted the attention of the world. The tour coincided quite closely with the visits of W.T. Best and Charles Santley. According to the *Herald's* “Art, Music and the Drama” column:

all the world is agog—our own colonial musical world especially—about the visit to our continent of Sir Charles Hallé and his accomplished wife...Never before in the history of the whole world has a young country, a mere infant of a century of years, attracted to itself such a galaxy of artistic talent.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> Information about visiting artists has been derived from various searches in the NLA’s online newspaper data base, Trove.

<sup>98</sup> *SMH*, 18 December 1889, 8.

<sup>99</sup> *SMH*, 31 May 1890, 6.



That such an eminent couple as the Hallés should agree to travel to Australia was, according to the *Herald*, “something of which Australia can boast”<sup>100</sup> and was cited as evidence of “the growing importance of the colonies in respect of music”.<sup>101</sup> In 1891 the *Herald* published a long article from the *St James Gazette* by an “Australian Correspondent” detailing Australia’s national achievements. Music featured prominently in the author’s account which enthused about the world’s “largest organ” in the Sydney Town Hall and the way Australian audiences appreciated the “works of Rubenstein, Gounod, and Meyerbeer, the symphonies of Beethoven and Wagner, the rhapsodies of Liszt and Raff, and the national dance-music of Brahms and Dvorák” when performed by visiting artists like Cowen, Santley and Halle.<sup>102</sup> The author offered these things as proof that Australia had “ceased to be primitive or aboriginal”.<sup>103</sup> The promotion of a classical music culture facilitated the presentation of a “civilised” façade that denied continuing conflicts with Australia’s indigenous population.

Such events were also an important sign of Australia’s growing connection with the rest of the world; for instance, newspapers reported Madame Albani’s 1898 tour as notable for keeping Australia “in even distant touch with what is going on elsewhere”.<sup>104</sup> Her visit was considered such a

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<sup>100</sup> *SMH*, 21 December 1889, 7.

<sup>101</sup> *SMH*, 8 March 1890, 7.

<sup>102</sup> *SMH*, 1 July 1891, 3.

<sup>103</sup> *SMH*, 1 July 1891, 3.

<sup>104</sup> *SMH*, 23 April 1898, 8.

pivotal event in the life of the city that the Mayor, Alderman Matthew Harris, held a reception to welcome her “on behalf of the citizens of Sydney”.<sup>105</sup> A range of Sydney luminaries attended the event including the Governor, aldermen and key members of Sydney’s musical community to recognise Australia’s connection to European culture as symbolised by Albani’s visit. By attending these concerts and celebrating the fame and artistry of the visiting virtuoso, audience members could vicariously participate in an imagined and idealised cultural world which operated on a different sphere than the tainted material world of everyday life. In a nation that did not then recognise its extensive Aboriginal history, concerts by important visiting artists established “traditions” and a musical heritage that citizens could subsequently revisit and reflect on.

Theatre managers also emphasised the prestigious and respectable nature of concerts by classical music artists. Advertisements for the Hallé-Neruda concerts noted the patronage of the Governor and Lady Carrington,<sup>106</sup> reinforcing the notion that such forms of entertainment were highly respectable, warranting the attendance of the highest government official of the land. In 1898 Williamson and Musgrove advertised Madame Albani’s tour as “the most important musical event in the history of the Australian colonies” (**Image 2.5**).<sup>107</sup> They emphasised the artist’s association

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<sup>105</sup> *SMH*, 14 February 1898, 4.

<sup>106</sup> *SMH*, 19 July 1890, 2.

<sup>107</sup> *SMH*, 8 February 1898, 2.

with “Her Majesty the Queen”, “Reigning European Monarchs” and the “Great World of Artists and Musical Amateurs in Many Lands”, praising both “the charms of her singing” and her “graces as a woman.”<sup>108</sup> Their advertising also emphasised the expense of the tour, claiming it to be “the most costly ever attempted here” insisting on the need to “crowd the very largest halls to obtain remunerative results”.<sup>109</sup> Williamson and Musgrove aimed at both prestige and profits.

**THE ALBANI CONCERTS.**

Messrs. Williamson and Musgrove have the honour to ANNOUNCE that AFTER YEARS of NEGOTIATING, they have at last SUCCEEDED in EFFECTING an ENGAGEMENT with

**MADAME ALBANI**

for a short tour of the Australian colonies. The name of Albani is a household word throughout Europe and America, the charms of her singing being equalled only by her graces as a woman; and both combined have gained for her the special favour and friendship of  
HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN,  
Also unprecedented honours from the  
REIGNING EUROPEAN MONARCHS,  
and from the Great World of Artists and Musical Amateurs in Many Lands.

Notwithstanding the enormous expense attendant upon this engagement, Messrs. Williamson and Musgrove have determined that nothing shall be wanting to make the Albani tour the  
MOST IMPORTANT MUSICAL EVENT  
in the history of the Australian colonies. To that end they have engaged  
A COMPLETE COMPANY  
of artists of the first rank upon the London Concert Platforms, who will accompany Madame Albani as her support, and whose names will be presently advertised.

MADAME ALBANI WILL ARRIVE BY THE R.M.S.  
ORUBA,  
and will make her  
FIRST AUSTRALIAN APPEARANCE IN SYDNEY.

The NUMBER of CONCERTS in AUSTRALIA is  
LIMITED to SIXTEEN.

The date of the first concert, prices, and other interesting particulars will be duly made public.

Image 2.5: Advertisement for Albani concerts, *SMH*, 8 February 1898, 2.

<sup>108</sup> *SMH*, 8 February 1898, 2

<sup>109</sup> *SMH*, 12 February 1898, 2.

Entrepreneurs generally targeted concerts by celebrity artists at a more affluent audience than “popular” concerts by local artists. The latter were generally much cheaper to attend even though the programs of both types of concerts were, in effect, still quite similar at this stage. Tickets for regular Town Hall concerts, for instance those conducted by the town hall organist, routinely ranged between sixpence and one shilling. Although concerts by visiting artists were sometimes held at the same “popular” price, particularly if not well known, in the 1890s tickets typically ranged in cost from two shillings for seats in the body of the town hall to three shillings or, for the best known artists, five shillings for reserved seats in the balcony. The exception to this was Madame Albani’s concerts which, given her high status as a world renowned soprano, ranged from two shillings and sixpence to seven shillings and sixpence. Despite the high prices for the Albani concerts, these attracted record attendances.<sup>110</sup> The price of the tickets added to the prestige of these events.

Newspaper editorials and music critics strongly supported music entrepreneurs by promoting concert attendance in their columns. At this time, each of the major newspapers and magazines included prominent reports and reviews of musical activities often as part of the theatrical reviews or amusements, suggesting that classical musical activities were not as yet separately identified from the popular culture. The *Herald’s* column,

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<sup>110</sup> *SMH*, 22 March 1898, 4.

“Music and the Drama” (sometimes called “Art Music and the Drama”, “Musical and Dramatic Notes” and later just “Music and Drama”) had begun in 1857. The *Referee* reported on music in the “Footlight Flashes” column. To mark the “new epoch” signified by the appointment of Wiegand as City organist in 1891, *The Evening News* commenced a specific music column entitled “Music in Sydney”, written by the English émigré organist Neville George Barnett.<sup>111</sup> However they also continued to include music reviews in the “Amusements” column. *The Sydney Mail and NSW Advertiser* had a regular “Music and Drama” column until 1898 and then began a column entitled “Music” (later “Musical Notes”) written by “Leipsic”. *The Australian Town and Country Journal* had a column entitled “Musical Notes” and *Illustrated Sydney News* included musical reviews in “Green-Room Gossip”.

In the 1890s reviewers provided detailed reports for concerts by visiting artists which included the size of the audience and their responsiveness to the more “classical” items on the program as a means of assessing Sydney’s cultural progress. The audiences that attended the Hallé and Neruda concerts passed on all criteria. According to the *Australian Star*:

Who shall now say that good music has no home in Sydney?  
The welcome—nay, we might almost say the adulation—that  
was extended to the distinguished musicians who presented  
themselves for the first time to a Sydney house last night will  
go a long way to prove that in this city there is an ample  
appreciation of the very highest class of musical work ... To us

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<sup>111</sup> EN, 20 July 1891, 5.

of Sydney the advent of such performers is an occurrence of the greatest interest, and to us as a community that professes to have an admiration for and an appreciation of the higher forms of art generally the reception accorded last evening must always be a matter for congratulation.<sup>112</sup>

That these artists “found no necessity for lowering the standard of programs” played in Australia was a matter of particular pride.<sup>113</sup> In addition, the *Herald’s* reviewer boasted attendances of up to 3000 persons, claiming such numbers to be more numerous than are “ordinarily, if ever seen even in the European centres, on similar occasions.”<sup>114</sup> He was particularly proud that “our public has proved its capacity to enjoy and appreciate music of the highest class in which there is nothing ‘sensational’ but only artistic beauty of a quiet kind”.<sup>115</sup> In this instance the reviewer was referring to the chamber music of “the great masters” performed by Hallé and Neruda, and he appealed to the egos of those who attended by suggesting that their appreciation of such musical forms demonstrated superior levels of cultural appreciation. Strong financial returns were not perceived as an unhealthy interest in “mammon”. Rather, for contemporaries they furnished further evidence of Sydney’s cultural status. Adelaide for instance was “absolutely non-remunerative” for the Hallé-

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<sup>112</sup> *Australian Star*, 19 June 1890, 7.

<sup>113</sup> *SMH*, 28 July 1890, 6.

<sup>114</sup> *SMH*, 13 July 1891, 5.

<sup>115</sup> *SMH*, 13 July 1891, 5.

Neruda concerts, which for the *Herald* reviewer indicated that it may be losing its reputation for being one of Australia's "most musical cities".<sup>116</sup>

If attendance at concerts was not satisfactory, some reviewers directly appealed to audiences to support the artists. Indeed for the *Herald's* reviewer this was part of their responsibility. Discussing the initial poor attendance at Madame Patey's 1890 concerts, the *Herald's* critic credited the press for promoting increased attendance at the later concerts:

The Patey concerts only required to be known to be appreciated; and the Press in the exercise of one of its many duties as taster to the public palate, was not slow to lead the way in this direction.<sup>117</sup>

Reviewers might also attempt to shame readers to attend and show proper respect for visitors by giving them an appropriate reception; for instance in 1892 the *Evening News* review of visiting Belgian violinist Ovide Musin's first concert was as much a review of the audience's behaviour as of the performer. The reviewer was particularly concerned that "only a very small minority" of the audience had "troubled to don the costume which conventional courtesy has long since decided ought to be worn", which might reflect badly on Sydney.<sup>118</sup> He indicated that this meant "our newest artistic visitors were not favourably impressed by this their first experience of the attitude of our Sydney folk." He nevertheless anticipated a better

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<sup>116</sup> *SMH*, 6 September 1890.

<sup>117</sup> *SMH*, 25 October 1890, 9.

<sup>118</sup> *EN*, 9 September 1892, 2.

reception at subsequent concerts to ensure the visitors left with a more favourable impression. Similarly the *Illustrated Sydney News* insisted, “lovers of music should not fail to attend” Musin’s concert.<sup>119</sup> The *Herald* warned that if visiting artists did not get a good reception in Sydney they might “warn” other artists that Sydney is to be “avoided” which would mean “we shall be written up as Philistine to be left severely alone”.<sup>120</sup> Newspaper critics and concert entrepreneurs worked together to promote visiting artists and higher forms of music as socially desirable and a civic responsibility.<sup>121</sup>

Contemporary commentaries acknowledged the “impetus to musical culture”<sup>122</sup> provided by visiting artists, whom they credited with “the awakening of musical Sydney to its privileges and responsibilities in respect of the divine art”.<sup>123</sup> They asserted that the “art life of this country needs deepening, widening and elevating” and that the nation now needed “high standards which we have not heretofore possessed”.<sup>124</sup> For these reasons the visits by world famous artists were critically important, “elevating our taste by bringing us more closely in touch with the high standards that obtain in the older countries of the world”.<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> *Illustrated Sydney News*, 1 October 1892, 15.

<sup>120</sup> *SMH*, 15 July 1904, 4.

<sup>121</sup> *EN*, 20 July 1891, 5.

<sup>122</sup> *M & A*, 2 August 1890, 271.

<sup>123</sup> *SMH*, 11 February 1889, 5.

<sup>124</sup> *SMH*, 13 July 1889, 10–11.

<sup>125</sup> *EN*, 20 July 1891, 5.



While the symbolic value of these concerts depended on portraying the artists as exponents of high forms of classical musical culture, in reality their programs incorporated a variety of musical forms. According to *The Herald's* critic, for instance, vocal selections had been included in Hallé's and Neruda's concerts as it was felt that a "concert of instrumental music alone would prove somewhat 'heavy'".<sup>126</sup> He claimed "the concerts should be no less attractive to the masses than to the musicians".<sup>127</sup> In 1890 the reviewer praised Madam Patey for including "the old familiar songs that for a century and a half have charmed successive generations of hearers of all classes and all grades of culture".<sup>128</sup> Similarly, the 1892 Farewell concert by Ovide Musin and his associate artists (soprano Annie Louise Tanner and pianist Edouard Scharf) incorporated a mix of "classic" items, "new" items and ballads or folk-tunes (**Image 2.6**). A review expressed high regard for his program which appealed to "the amateur, the artists, [and] the music-loving masses".<sup>129</sup> As DiMaggio has observed, mixed programs were common practice among American musical entrepreneurs since by mixing genres and crossing aesthetic boundaries they were able to "reach out to larger audiences".<sup>130</sup> Programs therefore took account of audience taste and were not imposed on

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<sup>126</sup> *SMH*, 11 June 1890, 6.

<sup>127</sup> *SMH*, 11 June 1890, 6.

<sup>128</sup> *SMH*, 25 October 1890, 9.

<sup>129</sup> *SMH*, 12 September 1892, 6.

<sup>130</sup> Paul DiMaggio, "Cultural Entrepreneurship in Nineteenth-Century Boston: The Creation of an Organizational Base for High Culture in America," in *Rethinking Popular Culture: Contemporary Perspectives in Cultural Studies*, ed. Chandra Mukerji and Michael Schudson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 378.

audiences in any doctrinaire way. Indeed, audiences often participated in choosing programs for farewell concerts with entrepreneurs conducting a “plebiscite” of the audience who could vote for their favourite piece performed during the tour. Mark Hambourg, for instance, performed a “plebiscite program” at his farewell concert on 4 September 1897.<sup>131</sup> Such practices encouraged audience participation and repeat attendance.

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<sup>131</sup> *SMH*, 3 September 1897, 6.

**CENTENNIAL (TOWN) HALL.**  
**FRIDAY, SEPT. 30, and SATURDAY, OCT. 1.**

Previous to the departure by the Mariposa on October 3,  
of the  
**MUSIN CONCERT COMPANY**  
**MUSIN CONCERT COMPANY**  
**MUSIN CONCERT COMPANY,**  
**TWO GRAND COMPLIMENTARY AND FAREWELL**  
**CONCERTS.**  
**THE MUSICAL EVENT OF THE SEASON.**  
**EXTRAORDINARY COMBINATION OF BRILLIANT**  
**AND POPULAR STARS.**  
**OVIDE MUSIN,**  
The Violinist.  
**ANNIE LOUISE TANNER,**  
Prima Donna Soprano.  
**EDUARD SCHARF,**  
Solo Pianist.  
**WITH THE KIND AND COMPLIMENTARY**  
**SUPPORT OF**  
**MDME. CHARBONNET-KELLERMAN,**  
Solo Pianist.  
**MISS BEATRICE GRIFFITHS,**  
Solo Pianist.  
**HENRY KOWALSKI,**  
Solo Pianist.  
**HORACE POUSSARD,**      **AUGUSTE WIEGAND,**  
Solo Violinist.              City Organist.  
**RAIMUND PECHOTSCH,**      **EDGAR STRAUSS,**  
Solo Violinist.              'Cello.  
And **CLAUDIUS DESLOUIS,**  
Baritone.

**POSITIVELY THE LAST TWO CONCERTS**  
**of the MUSIN CONCERT COMPANY.**

**FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 30.**  
**PROGRAMME.**

1. Fantaisie sur Faust ... .. A. Wiegand  
Piano and Great Organ,  
Miss BEATRICE GRIFFITHS and AUGUSTE  
WIEGAND.
2. { a. La Plainte ... .. H. Poussard  
{ b. Intermezzo ... .. H. Poussard  
**OVIDE MUSIN, accompanied by the Author.**
3. Duo de Don Pasquale ... .. Donizetti  
A. L. TANNER and C. DESLOUIS.
4. { a. Un Soir aux Alpes (Idylle) ... Rover  
{ b. Tarantelle op. 17 ... .. Dunkler  
**EDGAR STRAUSS.**
5. Rhapsodie No. 12 ... .. Liszt  
**EDUARD SCHARF.**
6. Berceuse (two violins) ... .. H. Poussard  
**OVIDE MUSIN and HORACE POUSSARD.**
7. Marche Hongroise (two pianos) ... H. Kowalski  
**EDUARD SCHARF and HENRY KOWALSKI.**
8. Barbier de Seville ... .. Rossini  
**ANNIE LOUISE TANNER.**
9. Kreutzer Sonata (for Piano and violin) Beethoven  
a. Andante con Variazioni  
b. Finale (Presto)  
**EDUARD SCHARF and OVIDE MUSIN.**
10. { a. Child Song ... .. Nevins  
{ b. Daisy ... .. Arditti  
**ANNIE LOUISE TANNER.**
11. Caprice de Concert... .. Ovide Musin  
(By special request.)  
**OVIDE MUSIN.**

Box Plan now open at Pasing and Co.'s.  
**POPULAR PRICES** ... .. 3s. 2s. and 1s  
The Celebrated Steinway Pianos used at all the Musin  
Concerts.  
**FABIUS FERAUD, Manager.**

Image 2.6: Advertisement for Musin Farewell Concert, SMH, 28 September 1892, 2.

Not all concerts by visiting artists were organised by the Williamson firm. Other business people also became involved. For instance, concert tours often had significant flow-on effects for music shop proprietors by way of sales of sheet music and musical instruments as well as (later) pianola and phonograph sales. Indeed, as the English concert scholar Simon McVeigh has noted, "concerts were part of a wide business network in which publishers

and piano-makers took a central role".<sup>132</sup> In Sydney the link was very tangible, local music stores selling tickets for both musical and theatrical events, even those organised by management companies such as J.C. Williamson. Lesser-known artists who might arrive in Australia without any pre-arranged management would typically first present themselves at one of Sydney's music stores and conduct impromptu and later more formalised concerts in their "rooms" to attract newspaper attention and stimulate interest in a concert series. Inevitably, music shop proprietors became involved in the management of tours for many of these artists. Nicholson's music shop in Sydney (**Image 2.7**), for instance, directed the tour of German pianist Albert Friedenthal in 1899. Charles Tait, who worked in Allan's music shop in Melbourne, was part of the famous Tait family who were to play a pivotal role in the J.C. Williamson empire.<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> Simon McVeigh, "An Audience for High-Class Music': Concert Promoters and Entrepreneurs in Late-Nineteenth-Century London," in *The Musician as Entrepreneur, 1700–1914: Managers, Charlatans and Idealists*, ed. William Weber (Bloomington In.: Indiana University Press, 2004), 164.

<sup>133</sup> Tait, *Family of Brothers*, 7–8.



**Image 2.7: Two staff members assisting customers at Nicholson and Company music Store, Sydney, ca. 1905.**

Part of the Nicholson and Company music store collection, NLA, Bib ID 477360.

Some local performers also became involved in organising concerts as a means of raising their own profile and promoting opportunities for local musicians. Australian flute player John Lemmone, for instance, was a friend of Dame Nellie Melba and organised her concert tours of Australia although J.C Williamson later organised her Australian opera productions. In the latter part of the nineteenth century, Lemmone organised the tour of Russian pianist Mark Hambourg in 1897, dramatic English soprano Madame Alva in 1898, and returning Australian violinist Maud MacCarthy in 1899. Similarly, W. H. Poole, a bass singer who came to Australia in 1889 as a support act for the English opera star Charles Santley, remained in Australia and took up a

managerial role organising the visit of Sir Charles Hallé and Wilma Neruda in 1890, British contralto Janet Patey in 1890, American soprano Alice Esty and English baritone Alec Marsh in 1895. Many Sydney musicians, as the next section proposes, opportunistically sought associations with visiting artists and/or directly emulated their programs to increase their own profile.

### **The rise of a music profession**

The burgeoning entertainment industry also provided increased opportunities for performers in the latter part of the nineteenth century, leading to a significant expansion of the music profession. In Great Britain, for instance, there was a six-fold increase in the number of musicians and music teachers between 1841 and 1901.<sup>134</sup> Comparable figures are not available for Australia, since although the NSW Census regularly collected data on occupation, those earning a living through music were not separately identified until the censuses of 1891 and 1901 (and subsequent Federal censuses).<sup>135</sup> Presumably no such separate category of “musician” was included in the census since the music profession lacked a strong public profile in Australia until the latter part of the nineteenth century. Musicians and music teachers at that time were probably included within the “other educated professions” which included “literature, fine arts, sciences, &c”.<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> Cyril Ehrlich, *The Music Profession in Britain since the Eighteenth Century: A Social History* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1985), 99–103.

<sup>135</sup> For more information on the historical development of the census see J. C. R. Camm, *Past Populations of Australia: A Review of the Historical Development of Australian Colonial Censuses, 1828–1901* (Newcastle, NSW: University Of Newcastle, 1984).

<sup>136</sup> John Byron, *New South Wales, Census of 1881* (Sydney: Government Printer, 1883–4), xxxvii.

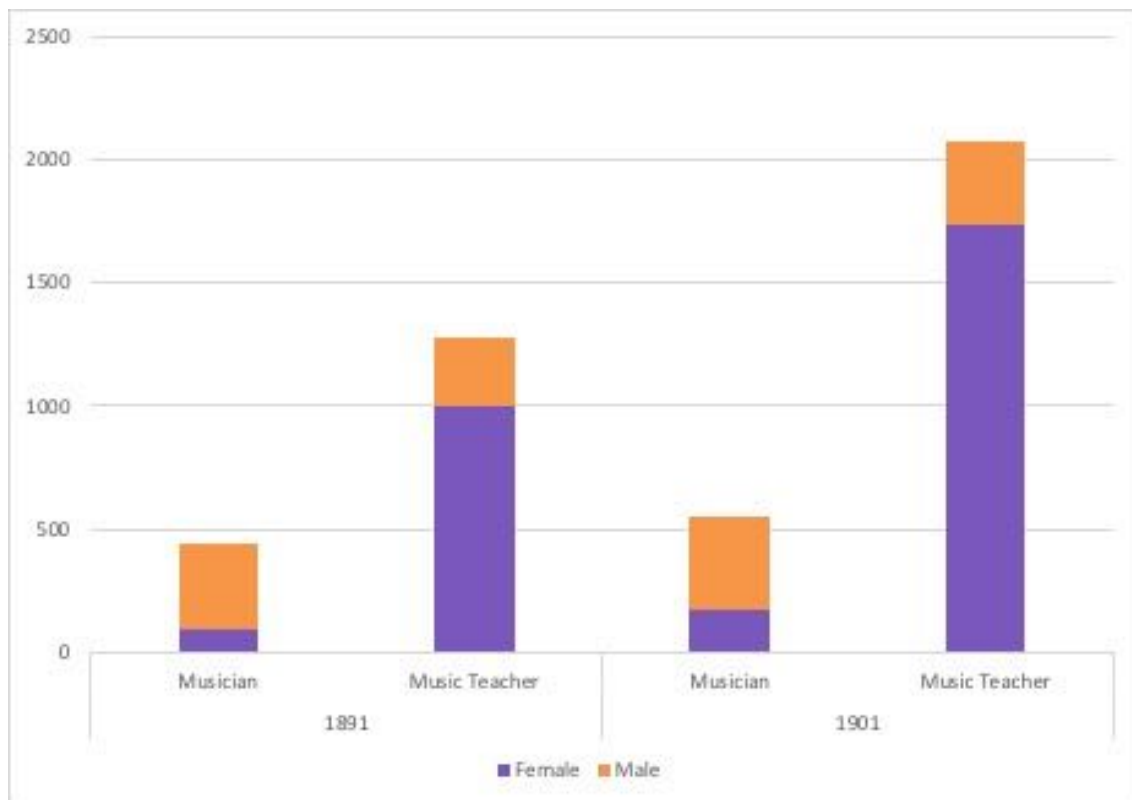
In 1891 and 1901 the NSW census identified and enumerated a “music” occupational category which included both performers and teachers as depicted in **Figure 2.2**.<sup>137</sup> While the general population of NSW increased by 21 per cent between 1891 and 1901, membership of the music profession increased by 53 per cent. Much of this increase was fuelled by a 76 per cent increase in the number of female musicians (mostly teachers<sup>138</sup>) while the number of male musicians increased by only 14 per cent in total.<sup>139</sup> Approximately eighty per cent of teachers were women in 1891, increasing to eighty-five per cent in 1901. Twenty per cent of performers were female in 1891 increasing to thirty-one per cent in 1901. This disparity between the genders will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

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<sup>137</sup> All NSW State Census data for 1901 and previous years is derived from NSW State Records, *Muster and Census Records 1788–1901* (State Records Authority of New South Wales, 2001), Accessed 28 May 2017, <http://hccda.ada.edu.au/regions/NSW>.

<sup>138</sup> Most musicians probably both taught and performed.

<sup>139</sup> The role of women may be even more significant than the census figures show, given that in NSW many households did not state the occupation for female members of the household. See Desley Deacon, "Political Arithmetic: The Nineteenth-Century Australian Census and the Construction of the Dependent Woman," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 11, no. 1 (1985): 33–34.



**Figure 2.2: Increase in music profession 1891 to 1901<sup>140</sup>**

Musicians were typically employed in a variety of environments with no strict demarcation between musical and theatrical events. Theatres routinely engaged small orchestras which performed in support of the theatrical productions (particularly if a musical) and who offered a small program that often included classical music items. For instance, **Image 2.8** shows the orchestral program for the 1909 production of *The Bondman* which included some music written for the play as well as compositions by Sir Arthur Sullivan and other popular composers of the day.

<sup>140</sup> Derived from NSW Census Data.



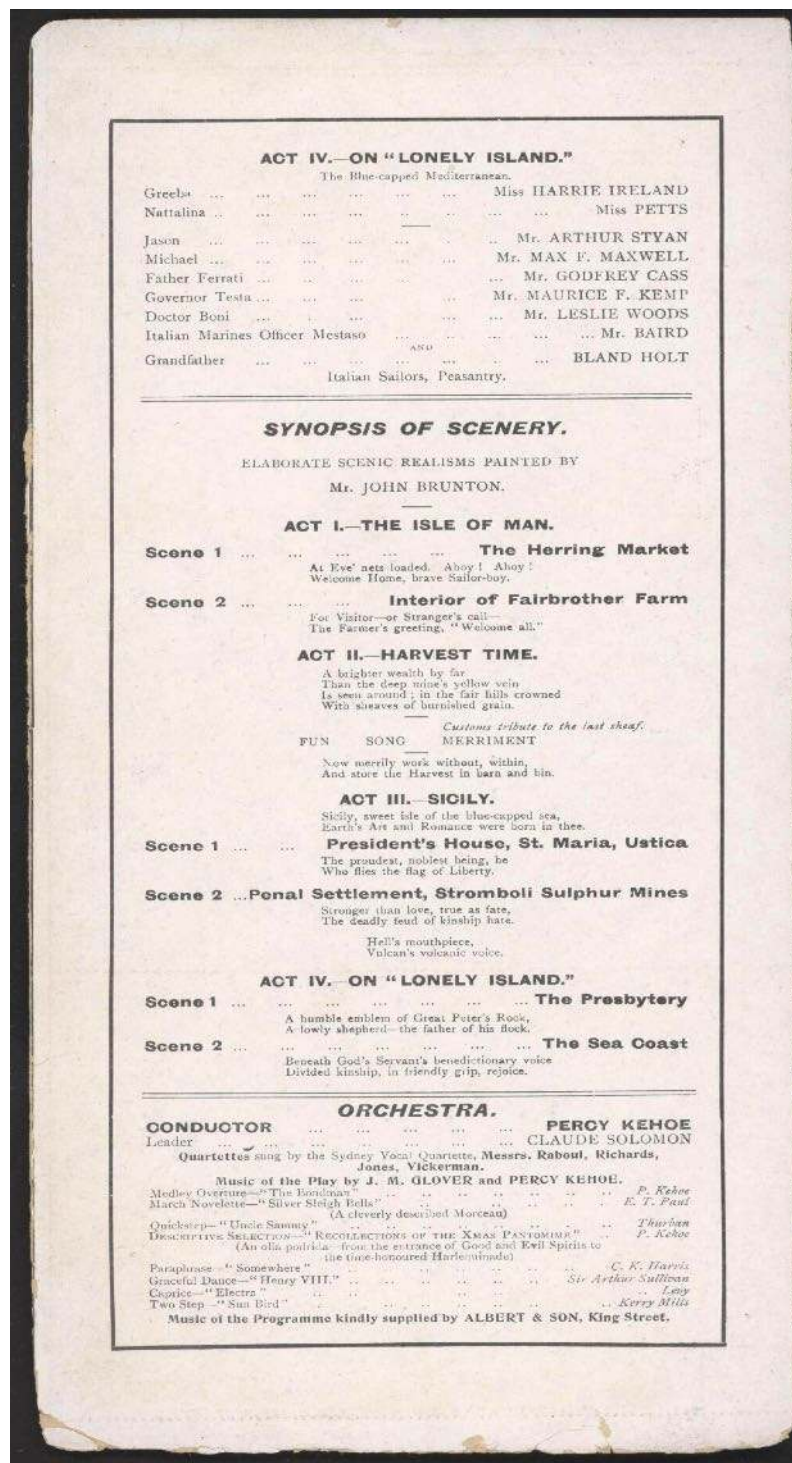


Image 2.8: Program for J.C. Williamson production *The Bondman*, 31 July 1909. J.C. Williamson collection of music and theatre programs, General theatre programs in the Australian performing arts collection [PROMPT], NLA, available online at <http://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-54663852>. Accessed 14 May 2017.

Local musicians obtained regular employment working in theatre orchestras. By the end of the nineteenth century, the two most populous

capitals (Sydney and Melbourne) supported at least five theatres each.<sup>141</sup>

Often conditions in theatres for musicians were less than ideal, lacking job security, working for long hours and meagre wages in crowded orchestra pits.<sup>142</sup> Historically, as David-Guillou has observed, musicians' work was not highly valued and those who performed in the theatre or on the street were considered "vulgar".<sup>143</sup> According to David-Guillou the "industrialization" of music which was a by-product of the increasingly bureaucratized entertainment industry which forced musicians to "not only put a value on their work, but to fight for it".<sup>144</sup> This was facilitated in Sydney through the establishment of a Musicians' Union in 1898 (discussed below). However, even prior to the establishment of the union, musicians engaged in numerous entrepreneurial projects designed to create a career path for themselves and ensure opportunities outside the theatre.

Local artists not only organised visits from international celebrities but performed alongside them.<sup>145</sup> In other instances, local musicians were enlisted to form an orchestra to accompany visiting artists. Examples of this occurred in 1895 when local musicians were engaged in orchestras to

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<sup>141</sup> Richard Waterhouse, *Private Pleasures, Public Leisure* (South Melbourne: Longman, 1995), 68.

<sup>142</sup> Cyril Ehrlich, "The Marketplace," in *The Twentieth Century*, ed. Stephen Banfield (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), 43. See also Margaret R. Butler, "Italian Opera in the Eighteenth Century," in *The Cambridge History of Eighteenth-Century Music*, ed. Simon P. Keefe, (Cambridge University Press, 2009), 222.

<sup>143</sup> David-Guillou, "Musicians' Unions", 290.

<sup>144</sup> David-Guillou.

<sup>145</sup> For instance, the violinist Ovide Musin included several Sydney residents including pianists Alice Charbonnet-Kellerman, Beatrice Griffiths, and Henry Kowalski, violinists Raimund Pechotsch and Horace Poussard, cellist Edward Strauss, baritone Claudius Deslouis and city organist, Auguste Wiegand in his farewell concert on September 30 and October 1, 1892 (see **Image 2.6** above).

accompany the returning Australian violinist Johann Secundus Kruse, in 1899 to accompany visiting pianist Albert Friedenthal, in 1902 to accompany the returning Australian pianist Barron Morley and, as I will discuss in some detail in chapter four, in 1904 to accompany the world-famous Polish pianist Ignacy Jan Paderewski. Some artists toured with “concert parties”, or a group of artists that often included local artists, for the whole duration of their tour. For instance, underlining the transnational nature of such ventures, the 1895 “Esty-Marsh Concert and Opera Recital Company” comprised the American Soprano Alice Esty and her husband British baritone Alec Marsh as the lead artists, appearing with the Australian tenor Robert Cunningham and cellist Gerard Vollmar (born in Holland, but resident in Australia from the 1890s) as co-performers. Similarly, the Star Concert Company which also toured in 1895 consisted of the then youthful prodigy, Russian pianist Mark Hambourg as the star attraction together with American soprano Evangeline Florence and English contralto Lily Moody along with local performers, cellist Gerard Vollmaar and tenor Harry Weir. These moves foreshadowed Musgrove’s efforts in the late 1890s to economise on the costs of importing fully mounted international productions by recruiting a cast which typically included both imported and local performers.<sup>146</sup> Kelly has described this *modus operandi* as a

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<sup>146</sup> Kelly, "A Complementary Economy? National Markets and International Product in Early Australian Theatre Managements " Cited (2005): 90.

“complementary economy.”<sup>147</sup> The more informal mixed concert parties of the 1890s provided a proof of concept that may have influenced Musgrove’s and Williamson’s later endeavours.

Sometimes the distinction between local performers and visiting artists would be blurred since many overseas artists resided for an extended period in Australia, using Australia as a base while undertaking tours in New Zealand and Asia. According to David-Guillou, in response to the expanding entertainment industry in the latter part of the nineteenth century, many musicians took advantage of improved transportation links to travel widely. In the process they often borrowed from other cultures, promoting “transnational artistic exchanges” and intercultural exchanges that had a widespread cultural impact.<sup>148</sup> Many of the visiting artists who stayed for extended periods in Australia had a significant impact on local music-making. Many became highly influential, taking up conducting posts or established teaching studios, contributing significantly to Sydney’s musical life. The 1901 NSW census data indicated that 25 per cent of all those within the music profession were born overseas.<sup>149</sup> French violinist Horace Poussard, for instance, toured extensively in the 1860s and returned to settle in Sydney in the 1880s where he took an active role in chamber music concerts, establishing the Beethoven String Quartet and the Sydney

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<sup>147</sup> Ibid., 83.

<sup>148</sup> David-Guillou, “Musicians’ Unions”, 294.

<sup>149</sup> NSW Census Data.

Quintette.<sup>150</sup> Pianist Henri Kowalski, of Polish although raised in France<sup>151</sup>, came to Australia to give a series of concerts in 1880. After settling for a time in Melbourne, in 1885 he moved to Sydney and was subsequently appointed conductor of the Sydney Philharmonic before returning to Europe in 1896. With conductor Leon Caron, he co-founded the Sydney Orpheus Club in 1887.<sup>152</sup>

As local musicians gained a prominent profile they also began to organise concerts without recourse to international attractions. For instance, in 1892 the *Sydney Mail and NSW Advertiser* reported that the “musical profession generally” had combined to provide a series of “promenade concerts”<sup>153</sup> at the Exhibition Building on Saturday nights. These concerts featured local artists and boasted of “giving people of Sydney a RATIONAL EVENING’S AMUSEMENT at a nominal cost.”<sup>154</sup> “Rational” forms of amusement were designed as an alternative for those who “loiter up and down George-street and stand in knots at the arcade entrances”.<sup>155</sup> The concerts included ballads and instrumental solos, glee and selections by the band of the Second Regiment.<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>150</sup> Peggy Lais, "Horace Poussard and the *Dead Heroes*: A Musical Tribute to Burke and Wills," *Context* 23, Autumn (2002).

<sup>151</sup> Murphy, Kerry. "Henri Kowalski (1841–1916): A French Musician in Colonial Australia," *Australian Historical Studies* 48, no. 3 (2017): 348.

<sup>152</sup> Dennis Davison, "Howard Kowalski: A French Musician in Melbourne," *Explorations* 1 (1985), Accessed 23 August 1912, <http://www.msp.unimelb.edu.au/index.php/explorations/article/view/6>

<sup>153</sup> *M & A*, 18 February 1893, 337.

<sup>154</sup> See advertisement, *SMH*, 15 February 1893, 2.

<sup>155</sup> See for instance *M & A*, 11 March 1893, 491.

<sup>156</sup> *SMH*, 25 February 1893, 10.

The advertising for these concerts was blatantly designed to attract a wide-ranging audience and little emphasis was given to music with higher aesthetic values. While this no doubt maximised returns, the concert was also portrayed as a benefit for the entire community. For instance, one critic described the initiative as “music for the millions”, a reference to the French conductor, Louis Jullien, who pioneered similar promenades and “monster” concerts, sometimes called “Music for the Millions”, in England and the United States.<sup>157</sup> The reviewer enthused about the mass appeal of the concerts where “purse distinctions are ignored and where the ‘first come first served’ theory applies equally to the millionaire and the frugal working man”.<sup>158</sup> Such sentiments appealed in Sydney where working people were increasingly engaged in the public life. Given such a democratic appeal, the reviewer believed that such music might form the basis of a “national art” where “the poorest may familiarise himself with art’s best ... national music arising from the soul of the people and redeeming them from the purely sordid interests which have hitherto millstoned Australians amid the cultured nations.”<sup>159</sup>

As I will discuss further in the next chapter, the emphasis on “rational entertainment” also cleverly targeted concerns about urban decay and

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<sup>157</sup> Katherine K. Preston., "Jullien, Louis," *Grove Music Online*, Oxford Music Online, Oxford University Press, Accessed June 1, 2017, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.virtual.anu.edu.au/subscriber/article/grove/music/A2249950>).

<sup>158</sup> *SMH*, 6 March 1893, 5.

<sup>159</sup> *SMH*, 6 March 1893, 5

disorder. Similar strategies had been proposed in British cities.<sup>160</sup> The numerous concerts that followed attracted large and appreciative audiences.<sup>161</sup> In February 1894 another series of “promenade concerts” was initiated by Sydney violinist Frederick William Kellermann, husband to the Sydney-based French pianist, Alice Charbonnet-Kellermann (and father to Annette Kellermann who later became the internationally acclaimed Australian aquatic performer). These concerts featured ballads, favourite instrumental pieces and selections by a “string band” of 25 performers.<sup>162</sup> As the name “promenade” suggests, the audience attending these concerts was not intended to sit passively and listen. Rather, they were encouraged to “change their seats” and “have a stroll when tired of sitting”.<sup>163</sup> Initiatives such as this demonstrated that for many sections of the population music continued to be a participatory community activity where aesthetic differences between different types of music were not given a high priority. Nevertheless, as I will discuss in some detail in the next chapter, they also perceived such music-making endeavours as a national good.

These concerts, along with those by visiting artists, often competed with and even began to displace the Saturday night Town Hall organ concerts in Centennial Hall. Tensions between the inaugural organist and the

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<sup>160</sup> Peter Bailey, *Leisure and Class in Victorian England: Rational Recreation and the Contest for Control, 1830–1885* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1978), 31.

<sup>161</sup> *EN*, 24 April 1893, 3.

<sup>162</sup> *SMH*, 10 February 1894, 7.

<sup>163</sup> *Truth*, 11 February 1894, 3.

broader community started quite early in his tenure. While most accepted that his role was to improve and guide “the musical taste of the Sydney public”,<sup>164</sup> after the initial enthusiasm to hear the new organ had worn off, newspaper correspondents began to debate the extent to which “classical” music should dominate concert programs. In an early exchange in the editorial pages of the *Herald*, “Vox Humana” implored Wiegand to ignore calls for “more heavy classical music”.<sup>165</sup> However, “M” responded “there is a strong and a growing musical public, whose wishes are deserving of recognition”, suggesting that “it would seem to be a wise as well as a just policy to give more consideration to the higher musical taste than is evident at present”.<sup>166</sup> In a conscious effort to “conciliate both sides”, Wiegand deliberately arranged his program so that a “popular” piece would always be followed by a “classical” work.<sup>167</sup> Despite such efforts to respond to different tastes the newspaper correspondence continued. In January 1893, for instance, in a letter to the *Herald* “Y.E.G.” expressed concern about the focus on organ music and the number of his recitals devoted to the classical repertoire, suggesting that it would be necessary to introduce other forms of music to “draw the people”.<sup>168</sup> Perhaps in response to this pressure, in 1893 the usual Saturday night “organ recital” which took place when no other concerts were being held in the Town Hall was rebranded as a “popular

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<sup>164</sup> *EN*, 20 July 1891, 5.

<sup>165</sup> *SMH*, 27 July 1891, 6

<sup>166</sup> *SMH*, 1 August 1891, 7.

<sup>167</sup> *Review of Reviews*, 30 April 1895, 395.

<sup>168</sup> *SMH*, 23 January 1893, 6.



concert.”<sup>169</sup> It nonetheless continued to consist solely of organ music.

However, there was an attempt to cater to public taste by including more opera transcriptions rather than less popular learned works by composers such as J.S. Bach.<sup>170</sup> His Wednesday mid-week matinee concerts remained focused on “classical” music. The charge for both the promenade concerts and the popular organ concerts and matinees was one shilling.

Wiegand’s concerts were heavily subsidised by the City Council which paid for the upkeep of the hall and organ as well as Wiegand’s salary. To use the Town Hall, private entrepreneurs, performers and amateur groups all paid hire fees including a fee for use of the organ and organist given that Wiegand exerted fierce control of the instrument which he would only rarely allow others to play.<sup>171</sup> There were regular letters and articles in the *Herald* suggesting that the efforts of groups which aimed to improve the musical taste of the general community should also be subsidised. The arguments were summarised in a *Herald* editorial as follows:

We built our Centennial Hall for our use and benefit, for the education and enjoyment of the people, and as a means towards the better cultivation of the arts and graces and refinements of life. Following the admirable example set us by the most advance civilisations of the old world, we established a centre where the best of those influences that help to mould the mind of the race and form its public spirit on the most

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<sup>169</sup> *SMH*, 17 January 1895, 2.

<sup>170</sup> *SMH*, 13 March 1893, 9.

<sup>171</sup> Y.E. G., Letter to the editor, *SMH*, 23 January 1893, 6.

desirable models, should be at home. To make it pay expenses was a secondary, though important, consideration.<sup>172</sup>

The implication was that concerts provided in the town hall should be readily accessible to the entire population, not just a select few.

Amateur groups were among the chief advocates of subsidised fees for the use of the Town Hall in respect of “efforts for the cultivation and enjoyment of superior music”.<sup>173</sup> The enthusiastic response to the centenary celebrations had initially boosted amateur groups, even leading to the establishment of a new group, the Sydney Amateur Orchestra (SAO). First established in 1890 under the leadership of conductor Signore Hazon, this group (which will be further discussed in chapter four) aimed to ensure the performance of orchestral music in Sydney on a regular basis. Like concerts by the Sydney Philharmonic and the Sydney Liedertafel, where an orchestra was usually enlisted to accompany the choir, such concerts demanded significant resources. However, like other groups they were required to pay fees for the use of the hall and organ which necessitated a “high average attendance” to break even.<sup>174</sup> Not all were sympathetic to their plight. One *Herald* correspondent suggested that given such groups might at best appeal to “a small audience of intelligent and cultured lovers of music” they should

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<sup>172</sup> *SMH*, 7 May 1892, 8.

<sup>173</sup> “A Lover of Good Music”, Letter to the editor, *SMH*, 11 May 1892, 4.

<sup>174</sup> *SMH*, 10 December 1892, 5.

perform in smaller and cheaper venues to reduce their expenses.<sup>175</sup> With such strong differences of opinion the matter remained unresolved.

In this increasingly complex field of musical activities, both regimental and amateur bands, mentioned earlier, continued to proliferate. This presented a challenge to the growing group of people who set out to make careers as professional musicians. Many musicians complained that military bands accepted engagements at lower rates than professional bands making it difficult for professional musicians to obtain fair compensation for their efforts.<sup>176</sup> Musicians working in theatres were also vulnerable to being replaced at short notice by amateurs or less qualified people. In response to these concerns, musicians expanded their earlier collective action from organising concerts to forming a union as a means of better defining and controlling the music profession.

### **The establishment of the Musicians' Union**

The Musicians' Union was first established in Sydney as the Professional Orchestral Benefit Association in 1897, reformulating itself as the Professional Musician's Benefit Association (PMBA) of Australia on 10 April 1899.<sup>177</sup> The PMBA was formed only four years after the establishment of the Amalgamated Musicians' Union in Great Britain<sup>178</sup> and a year after

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<sup>175</sup> "Performer", Letter to the editor, *SMH*, 13 May 1892, 6.

<sup>176</sup> *SMH*, 16 March 1897, 4–5.

<sup>177</sup> Information from Noel Butlin archive index.

<sup>178</sup> Ehrlich, *The Music Profession in Britain since the Eighteenth Century: A Social History* (1985): 146–8.

the establishment of the American Federation of Musicians in 1896.<sup>179</sup>

Initially it focused on both the social and professional needs of its members, organising club rooms where members could purchase liquor and participate in billiards games as well as concerts. It also established an employment bureau and provided assistance to members and their families in distress.

As a social group, however, the PMBA found they had little capacity to improve working conditions in the theatres. To achieve this objective they realised they need to formally affiliated with Sydney Trades Hall. This they did in 1901, becoming the Professional Musicians' Association of Australasia, when they became registered under the *Trade Unions Act* (1881) and again changing name in 1902 to the "Amalgamated Musicians' Union of Australasia" when they became registered under the *Industrial Arbitration Act* (1901) in 1902.<sup>180</sup> In her work on transnational ties between early musicians' unions Angèle David-Guillou noted that many musical associations were initially reluctant to adopt the name "union" for fear it would tarnish their reputation.<sup>181</sup> Similarly in Australia, the original PMBA continued to operate as a separate mutual support agency to satisfy those who insisted that as artists, musicians should not be associated with

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<sup>179</sup> David-Guillou, "Musicians' Unions", 296.

<sup>180</sup> *SMH*, 5 March 1902, 9.

<sup>181</sup> David-Guillou, "Musicians' Unions", 296.

“organised labour”.<sup>182</sup> This was an ongoing cause of tension which will be further discussed in the next chapter. In any event, the artificial distinction between the PMBA and the union soon dissolved and both names were often used interchangeably. For simplicity’s sake I will therefore refer to all affiliated groups as the Musicians’ Union.

All professional musicians were eligible to become members of the Musicians’ Union although the union by-laws provided for an “examination” where there was “any doubt with regard to competency”.<sup>183</sup> The Association’s constitution included a by-law prohibiting members from performing with non-members in an effort to reduce competition from amateurs. This was consistent with the early struggles of most professions, which would typically demand monopoly control over “whatever service it was they offered” on the basis of their special skills and knowledge.<sup>184</sup> While in reality such a law was very difficult to police, the objective was to reduce the likelihood of an employer bringing in non-professional labour where a band or orchestra mostly consisted of professionals. The aim was that the association, rather than the employer, should control the entry gateway for

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<sup>182</sup> For a good discussion of these issues see Sandy Raymond Mazzola, "When Music Is Labor: Chicago Bands and Orchestras and the Origins of the Chicago Federation of Musicians, 1880–1902" (Northern Illinois University, 1984), 4; and Steven Meicke, "A History of the Musicians Union Local 6, American Federation of Musicians," *LABR 300 Research Methods for Labor Studies*, San Francisco State University (2003), Accessed 20 February 2012, <http://www.afm6.org/documents/local6-history.pdf>.

<sup>183</sup> Article 5, Rules and Bye-Laws, inserted in Minute Bk 3, Noel Butlin Archive, T7 1/2, 1900–01.

<sup>184</sup> Jürgen Kocka, "The European Pattern and the German Case," in *Bourgeois Society in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, ed. Jürgen Kocka and Allan Mitchell (Berg Publishers, 1993), 30.

professional work and assert some sort of quality control in the absence of any conservatorium or other institutional authority.

The Musicians' Union was not the only group concerned with controlling performance standards. As previously mentioned, the City Organist, Auguste Wiegand had very definite ideas about the music that should be performed at his concerts and he was very reluctant to relinquish control of the Town Hall organ to other organists or allow others to participate in his organ recitals. Despite pressure to open up his organ concerts to other performers he continued to resist until 1898 when, after ongoing requests to reduce the "monotony" of the organ recitals with the inclusion of songs,<sup>185</sup> Wiegand agreed to collaborate with the popular tenor Philip Newbury, another visiting artist who stayed for an extended period in Australia, for a series of Saturday evening concerts at the Sydney Town Hall. Known as the "Town Hall Pops" these concerts were held on a regular basis for over a year. These concerts were highly successful, attracting large audiences<sup>186</sup>. They included "operatic and classic excerpts"<sup>187</sup> as well as novelty items such as a Biographe which projected cricket scenes and "other animated tableaux"<sup>188</sup> and comedy elements<sup>189</sup> designed "to suit all tastes".<sup>190</sup> While Wiegand may not have approved of all these initiatives there is no

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<sup>185</sup> See letter to the editor from "citizen", *SMH*, 23 February 1898, 4.

<sup>186</sup> *SMH*, 8 May 1899, 4.

<sup>187</sup> *SMH*, 17 October 1898, 3.

<sup>188</sup> *SMH*, 26 October 1898, 6.

<sup>189</sup> *EN*, 24 October 1898, 3.

<sup>190</sup> *SMH*, 16 January 1899, 9.

suggestion that there was any conflict with Newbury, who obviously did not challenge his authority.

However, in 1900, the Council itself initiated a similar series of Saturday night concerts in 1900 called “civic concerts” where Wiegand’s authority was challenged. The concerts were managed on behalf of the Council by the organist and singing teacher, Nicholas Gehde, but clearly Gehde and Wiegand had significant disagreements about the type of music, the quality of some of the musicians engaged by Gehde and the fees paid to them.<sup>191</sup> Wiegand was clearly displeased that his authority was ignored and that artists had been engaged without his consent or sanction.<sup>192</sup> In February 1900 he published a circular letter to the Mayor and aldermen arguing that while he had been keen to introduce some vocal numbers to relieve the program of the organ concerts, extensive liberties had been taken. In essence, he claimed that the recitals had become “miscellaneous concerts” and that the costs of engaging additional artists had made the concerts unviable.<sup>193</sup> Unsurprisingly, the Council was not pleased that Mr Wiegand should raise his concerns publicly. On 19 February 1900, the General Purposes Committee met to consider action against Mr Wiegand. The Town Clerk argued that while the civic concerts had run at a loss, they lost less money than the organ recitals had and there was a greater long term prospect of making them

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<sup>191</sup> *SMH*, 20 February 1900, 3. See also *Evening News*, 14 February 1900, 4, *SMH*, 15 February 1900, 7.

<sup>192</sup> *Evening News*, 20 February 1900, 3.

<sup>193</sup> *SMH*, 15 February 1900, 7.

financially viable. He claimed that there had been a long history of disputation between the Council and the organist and that the organist's "insubordination" should be referred to the Mayor for disciplinary action while the financial viability of the concerts should be referred to the Finance Committee.<sup>194</sup> Wiegand was subsequently suspended for three weeks.

Given his difficulties with the Council, it was not surprising that when Wiegand received an invitation to play at the Paris Great Exhibition he decided to leave Australia for good.<sup>195</sup> After extended farewells, he eventually did so in July 1900. While the newspapers included letters regretting the treatment of Wiegand,<sup>196</sup> not all were sorry to see him go, claiming his music had been "abstruse, wild, weird, and fantastic" and not well understood by many members of the audience.<sup>197</sup>

In contrast, the Musicians' Union marked Wiegand's departure with a concert held in his honour. The President, Rivers Allpress, paid a "flattering" tribute to Wiegand describing him as "the chief of his profession in Australia".<sup>198</sup> They shared with him a concern to restrict competition from amateurs and felt they, too, should be able to exert more control regarding which musicians should be able to perform at public concerts. Not everyone agreed that the Musicians' Union should perform this role. As I will discuss

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<sup>194</sup> *SMH*, 20 February 1900, 3.

<sup>195</sup> *M & A*, 19 May 1900, 1156.

<sup>196</sup> See for instance a letter from "Victimised", *EN*, 21 May 1900, 2 & letters from "Ratepayer" & C. Dudley-Cooper, *EN*, 25 May 1900, 5

<sup>197</sup> *EN*, 1 June 1900, 8.

<sup>198</sup> *EN*, 11 June 1900, 2.



in more detail in chapter five, following the lead from both Melbourne and Adelaide, the idea of establishing a conservatorium had already been mooted in Sydney. It was envisaged that such a body should be able to regulate the standard of musical playing. Indeed, in 1899 William Laver, from the Melbourne Conservatorium, had already visited Sydney to discuss the possibility of establishing a Chair of Music at the University with the then Minister of Education, James Hogue. The Musicians' Union, which was not invited to the meeting, was furious to have its members' expertise in this area ignored.<sup>199</sup> And so began a battle that was to dominate the history of Australian music for the next forty years— who has the authority to decide on programs and performers at classical music events?

## **Conclusion**

William Weber has stated that the nineteenth century "rise of the musical masters" was as much a "commercial" as an "artistic phenomenon" which grew directly from "the burgeoning industries of music publishing, instrument manufacture, and concert management".<sup>200</sup> My research confirms that commercial interests significantly boosted interest in classical music in Sydney. It also demonstrates that the commercialisation of classical music

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<sup>199</sup> *M & A*, 5 August 1899, 317. There may well have been some self interest involved in this visit as Laver had missed out on appointment to the Ormond Chair of Music in Melbourne in favour of Marshall-Hall on account of his young age. See Thérèse Radic, "Laver, William Adolphus (1866–1940)" *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University (1986), <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/laver-william-adolphus-7109/text12261> accessed online 2 July 2017. See also Doreen M. Bridges, "The Role of Universities in the Development of Music Education in Australia 1885–1970" (PhD diss., University of Sydney, 1970), 34. Laver eventually became the Ormond Chair of Music at Melbourne University in 1915.

<sup>200</sup> Weber, "Mass Culture", 6.

was successful because music entrepreneurs were able to link the cause of high class music with the national cause. The grand orchestral music of the centennial celebrations had captured the public imagination and created a vision of a peaceful harmonious nation which, inspired by great music, might contribute to the progress of humankind in the wider world. Such a vision provided a pathway forward for a city struggling with the consequences of rapid growth and over-crowding.

Ironically, Australia's unique identity as a nation was dependent on becoming part of a transnational network where it could measure its performance against a set of common standards. Music provided an important means of demonstrating the nation's worth. By linking commercial objectives to emerging national objectives entertainment entrepreneurs were able to accumulate cultural capital, expanding the audience for classical music and creating opportunities which those in the music profession were able to capitalise on. As interest in classical music grew, a discourse began about music's role in the nation's future, an issue which at times prompted considerable community conflict and disputation.

Competition within the field increased as local professional musicians and amateur groups struggled to compete for a share of the audience and cover rising costs for venue hire and payment of professional instrumentalists. Each group strove for a competitive edge by seeking to define the music that they provided as contributing to the national common

weal. By 1901, music-making had become an increasingly complex and competitive sphere conducted by a range of private, government and amateur concerns.

On 1 January 1901, as Australians celebrated their new status as Federated nation, the *Sydney Morning Herald* detailed the key achievements since European settlement. Music featured prominently with a 3000-word article featured on page eleven along with articles on education, drama and philanthropic endeavour, and followed on page twelve by articles detailing military as well as sporting achievements. The article detailed early musical endeavours in the colony, visiting artists and the establishment of orchestral and choral societies. However, the most extensive coverage was given to the opening of Centennial Hall as a venue which could accommodate international artists and the “largest organ extant”. The article concluded that the efforts of entertainment entrepreneurs had stimulated an increased interest in music which had encouraged many people to pursue musical studies and undertake musical examinations. As a consequence, the author contended “the musical outlook under the Commonwealth is brighter than it has appeared since Australia was discovered”.<sup>201</sup> In the next chapter I will be looking at how this new interest in music came to advance national objectives in the early years of the new Federation.

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<sup>201</sup> *SMH*, 1 January 1901, 11.



### 3.

## The Education of the “Music Lover”

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At the dawn of Federation, town hall concerts had become popular events that excited idealistic visions of a cultured and ordered urbane community evoking images of an “Athens” of the south in an article in the highly sectarian publication *Watchman*.<sup>1</sup> This article provides an insight into the vibrant nature of Saturday night town hall concerts as a means of bringing together a cross-section of the community to partake of ‘rational’ forms of entertainment, even while pointing to the emergence of new ideas about the role of music in the newly federated nation.<sup>2</sup>

From the article’s program description, the concert was in all likelihood held on the evening of 15 February 1902 (**Image 3.1**). The article described an inclusive audience comprising equal numbers of “ladies” and “gentlemen.” The writer was particularly pleased at the presence of “young men” who, rather than “playing billiards” or “patronising an hotel” were attending in pairs, or accompanying sisters or sweethearts to the concert. This expressed a hope that music might discourage larrikinism, an idea that was gaining currency at that time. With a minimum of ritual, a single ticket-

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<sup>1</sup> *Watchman* was published by the Australian Protestant Defence Association.

<sup>2</sup> Our Special, “Musical Sydney: Impressions of a Saturday night organ recital”, *Watchman*, 1 March 1902, 2.

seller sold tickets for the gallery (for one shilling) or the lower portion of the hall (for sixpence) and programs were left on a chair in the vestibule for audience members to help themselves.

**O**RGAN RECITAL AND CONCERT.  
TOWN HALL.  
TO-NIGHT AT 8 TO-NIGHT.

PROGRAMME.

The CITY ORGANIST (Mr. Arthur Mason) will play :—  
“Sonata in F Minor” (Mendelssohn); Intermezzo,  
“Forget Me Not” (Macbeth); STORM FANTASIA  
(Lemmens); Fantasia on Hymn tune, “Sicilian Mari-  
ners” (Lux); “Spring Song” (Mendelssohn); Ga-  
votte from “Mignon” (Thomas); “War March of the  
Priests,” Athalie (Mendelssohn).

Miss CRYSTAL RIENETS will sing :—“The Promise of  
Life” (Cowen); “Two’s Company” (Roeckel).

Mr. PERCY HERFORD :—“The Mighty Deep” (Jude).

Mr. HARRY FREEMAN will play :—Cornet Solo, “Sere-  
nade” (Schubert).

Admission—6d and 1s.

Image 3.1: Advertisement, *SMH*, 15 February 1902, 2.

The highlight of the evening’s entertainment was the “Storm Fantasia” by Jacques Nicolas Lemmens, one of the most popular organ-recital pieces of the late nineteenth century. On this occasion, the organist enhanced the atmospheric character of the performance by having the lights dimmed in the hall. According to the article, “the lights are turned low, and the rolling of the thunder through the darkened auditorium frightens a few of the ladies”.<sup>3</sup> While the author clearly enjoyed being swept up in the audience’s emotional response and was excited that music had attracted

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<sup>3</sup> Musical Sydney, 1902, 2.

such a wide-ranging audience, the article ends with the suggestion that mere entertainment was not the sole aim of the concert. Rather, according to the author, while popular items may be mixed in with classical music items, the aim was “to educate the public taste in first-class music”.<sup>4</sup>

This article reveals that understandings about the role and function of music were starting to shift. For the author, miscellaneous concerts of this kind might be a means of engaging young people in forms of entertainment that would keep them away from what he perceived as more morally dubious activities. Yet he hoped that in time, people would become more discerning and increasingly focus on higher forms of music. At the beginning of the 1900s, music was enlisted as a powerful tool in the armoury of the moral defenders who wished to promote more community engagement with music. However, like this author, many saw this as a stepping stone to promoting a more spiritual and individual experience for those who could learn to appreciate what they considered by be aesthetically higher forms of music. Rather than focusing on community engagement, such music lovers wanted to focus on promoting a more individual subjective appreciation of music that would facilitate an inner transformation. These enlightened individuals would eventually render the need for social reform measures redundant.

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<sup>4</sup> *Musical Sydney*, 1902, 2.

This chapter discusses how new ideas that focused on music's transcendent, spiritual qualities became widely disseminated in a variety of ways and adopted as a badge of identity by "music lovers". Entertainment entrepreneurs wanting to promote the higher aesthetic claims of their artists emphasised the intense spiritual experience of attending a classical music concert. Similarly they promoted new technical innovations such as pianolas and phonographs as a means of encouraging a better appreciation of classical music. While they did not neglect popular music, they clearly differentiated it as a lower status form of entertainment compared to classical music. As these ideas became more widespread, the classical music audience who came to identify themselves as music lovers embarked on a campaign to educate the community about the higher aesthetic claims of classical music.

### **Music and Social Reform**

The potential democratic benefits of a musical education had long been recognised in Sydney. As early as 1841, an article in the *Temperance Advocate and Australasian Commercial and Agricultural Intelligencer* condemned shrouding the "science of music" in "aristocratic exclusiveness" and confining it to "the concert-room, the theatre, or to the singing-club." Instead, the article's author insisted that "the moral and national happiness of the people would be improved by the general cultivation of music".<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> *Temperance Advocate and Australasian Commercial and Agricultural Intelligencer*, 11 August 1841, 6.



While there was a strong element of the moral improver implicit in the article, there was also an overt hope that music might open up new social networks and genuinely improve opportunities for disadvantaged members of society. They believed that in Australia great music should be shared and enjoyed as a means of promoting participation in cultural life for people from all walks of life. An initiative to introduce a “workmen’s singing class”<sup>6</sup> ignited hopes that “the education of the masses” might promote a “higher degree of refinement” among the “whole framework of society...than has yet characterised the civilization of modern Europe.”<sup>7</sup> What is noticeable here is that early music reform initiatives focused on empowering disadvantaged groups by teaching them a musical skill and providing them with an opportunity to participate in music-making endeavours.

In the latter part of the nineteenth century music again became a subject for discussion as Sydney faced the growing population pressure discussed in the previous chapter. At that time, Australia was one of the most urbanised nations in the world<sup>8</sup> and, as Matthews has observed, was beginning to grapple with modern discourses about municipal reform and town planning, seeking ways to change the city’s story from one of “chaotic growth” to one of “order and modern rationality”.<sup>9</sup> According to Lash and

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<sup>6</sup> *SMH*, 27 April 1843, 2.

<sup>7</sup> *The Colonial Observer*, 29 April 1843, 991.

<sup>8</sup> Peter Fitzpatrick, “Australian Drama 1850–1950,” in *The Cambridge History of Australian Literature*, ed. Peter Pierce (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 199.

<sup>9</sup> Jill Julius Matthews, *Dance Hall & Picture Palace: Sydney’s Romance with Modernity* (Sydney: Currency Press, 2005), 44.

Urry, the accelerated mobility and chaos of the modern age irretrievably altered social relationships and created a sense of meaninglessness that fostered a desire to establish rule-based abstract systems that created a sense of order and control.<sup>10</sup> As discussed in chapter two, the development of a classical musical culture was primarily an urban phenomenon, and I will argue that in Australia it was at least in part stimulated by the discourse promoting an ordered and civilised urban milieu. At that time, reformers and elected officials often promoted cultural institutions alongside parks and other civic reforms as a means of improving the urban environment.<sup>11</sup> While civic reformers did not promote classical music exclusively, they were sympathetic to those who aspired to ensure classical music was performed on a more regular basis in Sydney. There was often a significant overlap between the ideals of civic reformers and classical music enthusiasts, although, as I will discuss at various points, there were often tensions between the two groups as well. Nevertheless, civic reformer support for classical music initiatives significantly assisted the efforts of classical music enthusiasts.

In the latter part of the nineteenth and early part of the twentieth centuries, reform groups urged the City of Sydney Council to improve the facilities available for open air band concerts, not just as a source of

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<sup>10</sup> Scott Lash and John Urry, *Economies of Signs and Space, Theory, Culture & Society*. (London; Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage, 1994), 40–1.

<sup>11</sup> Helen Meller, "Imagining Culture and the City in Planning History: Some Reflections on the Public and Private," *Planning Perspectives* 24, no. 1 (2008): 110.

entertainment and enjoyment but to promote civic order and to educate the polity about the beneficial effects of good music. A *Herald* editorial outlined the proposed benefits of such a scheme at length:

It is worthwhile considering the civilising and humanising effect of good music freely and openly available. Those elements in the population which might under other circumstances find occupation in disorder are not only interested but elevated by these musical performances, and it might be worth while trying the experiment in all our Australian cities, if only for the purpose of testing its effect on the unattached youthful element in their population from which larrikinism recruits its forces.<sup>12</sup>

Similarly, a regular columnist for several Sydney newspapers with the pen name “Boondi” argued that music in the parks rather than the “art of painting” might be a better recipient of government funding as a strategy for checking “larrikinism, drunkenness, and many other vices.”<sup>13</sup> According to Boondi, while only about ten per cent of the population might be able to understand a “good painting”, “music is a universal language”. “The man who is not influenced in a desirable way by good music is either morally or physically deformed.”<sup>14</sup> Such sentiments are consistent with Bailey’s findings that in England music was generally thought to be the “least corruptible of the arts” because of its non-representational character.<sup>15</sup> Similarly, according to Vaillant, civic reformers in Chicago during the Progressive Era dreamt

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<sup>12</sup> *SMH*, 1 August 1896, 4.

<sup>13</sup> *Sunday Times*, 15 November 1903, 3.

<sup>14</sup> “Boondi” on “Music for the Masses”, *Sunday Times*, 15 May 1904, 2.

<sup>15</sup> Peter Bailey, *Leisure and Class in Victorian England: Rational Recreation and the Contest for Control, 1830–1885* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1978), 72.

that music might “bind the diverse urban population together in hopes of creating a city in which each citizen could ‘live life worthily’”.<sup>16</sup> Boondi, like his international counterparts, insisted that music had the potential to reduce the necessity of gaol, may have an “improving effect” on some forms of disease and might even relieve “fits of frenzy”.<sup>17</sup>

While promoting access to “improving music” in parks would provide some benefits, Boondi felt that ideally “good” music should be “taught properly” in schools to maximise its impact.<sup>18</sup> Encouraged by such exhortations, many reformers embarked on a campaign to promote musical education. For such reformers, it was not sufficient for the listener to trust their own senses or to experience mere “pleasure”. According to a *Herald* editorial entitled “How to Listen to Music”, to really appreciate the “sublime ecstasy” of great music people needed to undertake a program of “self-education”.<sup>19</sup> Advertisements for “music appreciation” guides began to appear in the newspapers to meet this demand. Available options included Annie W. Patterson’s *Chats with Music Lovers*<sup>20</sup> and *The Appreciation of Music* by American authors T.W. Burette and D.G. Mason (“intended for the music

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<sup>16</sup> Derek Vaillant, *Sounds of Reform: Progressivism and Music in Chicago, 1873–1935* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 2.

<sup>17</sup> “Boondi” on “Music for the Masses”, *Sunday Times*, 15 May 1904, 2.

<sup>18</sup> Bailey, 72.

<sup>19</sup> *SMH*, 28 May 1913, 7.

<sup>20</sup> *SMH*, 15 June 1907, classified advertisements. See also *The Newsletter*, 8 September 1906, 3. An article on the Lemare organ concerts states: “Mr H.N. Southwell is in control of the arrangements, and he rigorously closes the doors against ingress and egress during the rendition of a number. For this lesson in manner he has the thanks of all true music lovers.”

lover rather than the student").<sup>21</sup> An historical study by Joseph Goddard entitled *The Rise of Music* based on evolutionary theory was also reviewed in the *Herald*.<sup>22</sup> These were the fore-runners of numerous music appreciation guides to be published over the next few decades.

Reformers also initiated music appreciation classes at Mechanics' Institutes, Schools of Art and public schools. Such classes were intended to "supplement" ordinary instrumental training to teach students "to appreciate what is best, and to understand the value and power of music".<sup>23</sup> Inevitably, however, music appreciation became an end in itself, gradually replacing the need for singing lessons or practical instruction. This marked a significant change in approach from the efforts to teach musical skills that would encourage musical participation among working people typical of reform movements in the earlier part of the nineteenth century. In the beginning of the twentieth century there was a new focus on encouraging an appreciation of music's beneficial effects on the human psyche and minimising what reformers perceived to be the negative impact of popular music. This implied that a clear differentiation between different types of music was now emerging. The underlying assumption was that it was only when people were "educated to know what music really is" that they could "feel the effects ... upon their own souls, and ... realise ... that music is a gift

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<sup>21</sup> SMH, 29 August 1908, 4.

<sup>22</sup> SMH, 5 September 1908, 4.

<sup>23</sup> SMH, 6 March 1912, 5.

of God sent to comfort our sorrows, purify our pleasures, and make the world and its people better in every possible way.”<sup>24</sup> Such attitudes were no doubt influenced by new beliefs about the role and function of music that had emerged in Europe along with the rise of classical music in the latter part of the nineteenth century.

### **Changed understandings about the role and function of music**

In chapter one I discussed the evolution of new aesthetic concerns about music in Europe and the United States in the nineteenth century, which focused on the aesthetic and spiritual qualities of music rather than its functional utility as an accompaniment to other activities.<sup>25</sup> Musical groups such as the Sydney Philharmonic Society and the Orpheus Society actively promoted these ideas in the 1880s. The 1889 centenary celebration and the move towards Federation focused attention on the debate within a nationalistic context. Demonstrating an awareness of both sides of the debate, in 1890, a *Herald* columnist succinctly described competing schools of thought: those who emphasised the “useful” and those who prioritised the “beautiful” in music.<sup>26</sup> The author argued for something of a compromise between the two sides, suggesting the continuation of the utilitarian spirit

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<sup>24</sup> “Boondi” on “Music for the Masses”, *Sunday Times*, 15 May 1904, 2.

<sup>25</sup> For a good discussion of these issues see: Lydia Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works: An Essay in the Philosophy of Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, Revised edition, 2007, first published 1992); Mark Evan Bonds, *Music as Thought: Listening to the Symphony in the Age of Beethoven* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2006).

<sup>26</sup> *SMH*, 4 October 1890, 8–9.

but acknowledging a need to look towards more artistic discernment as

Australia marched towards nationhood:

The *utile* has never been neglected in Australia; of that our material progress is always in evidence. The danger is rather that we may leave the light and shade and colour out of the national picture.<sup>27</sup>

The proposed compromise was not long-lived and debates about the role and function of music continued until well into the next century.

Those who promoted classical music's higher aesthetic qualities were significantly buoyed by the Australian lecture-tour of the English clergyman and music moralist, the Reverend H. R. Haweis (1838-1901) in 1895 (**Image 3.2**). Haweis was the author of a very influential text, *Music and Morals*, and other books including *Memories of a Musical Life* (1909) and an analysis of Wagner's opera *Parsifal* (1905) as well as assorted sermons and travelogues. *Music and Morals*, initially published in 1871, went through seventy-nine editions and was distributed widely throughout England, the United States and other English speaking countries. Haweis's ideas about music were very much in the tradition of literary critics—Matthew Arnold, John Ruskin and Walter Pater—who had argued for the “civilising” potential of high culture.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> *SMH*, 4 October 1890, 8–9.

<sup>28</sup> Meirion Hughes and Robert Stradling, *The English Musical Renaissance, 1840–1940: Constructing a National Music* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), 277; Alan Trachtenberg and Eric Foner, *The Incorporation of America: Culture and Society in the Gilded Age*, American Century Series (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982), 155.



**Image 3.2: Image taken from H. R. Haweis, *Travel and Talk*.**

*My Hundred Thousand Miles of Travel through America, Australia, Tasmania, Canada, New Zealand, Ceylon and the Paradises of the Pacific*, vol. 1 (1896) London, front piece.

The influence of these ideas in Australia has not been examined in any detail. Waterhouse claimed that Matthew Arnold had few adherents in Australia.<sup>29</sup> However, with the search facility of Australian newspapers now available through the Australian National Library's Trove service it is evident that both Arnold and Haweis's ideas were well known and widely discussed in the Australian press.<sup>30</sup> Such a concern would be consistent with recent Australian historical research which suggests an increasing interest in

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<sup>29</sup> Andreas Huyssen, *After the Great Divide* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 140.

<sup>30</sup> This confirms an assertion in Peter Goodall, "High Culture, Popular Culture: The Long Debate," (St. Leonards, N.S.W.: Allen & Unwin, 1995), 19 that Arnoldian views were very deeply held within Australian culture.



defining ethical behaviour from a secular perspective. This was not intended to replace church teachings although there is evidence to suggest the influence of traditional religion in Australia was waning at that time.<sup>31</sup> There was no actual exodus from the traditional church. Indeed, during the Federation era, churches were at the “peak of their influence”<sup>32</sup> with forty-five per cent of adults attending church on a regular basis in New South Wales.<sup>33</sup> However, there was a marked interest in new ideas about spirituality and a “startling variety” of religious practices being explored in addition to traditional church practices.<sup>34</sup> Haweis’s 1895 Australian tour no doubt fed this interest in exploring spiritual ideas even while his presentation as a clergyman offered the assurance that there was some compatibility with traditional Christian beliefs. Press reports about his visit would have enhanced the dissemination of his books which were in all likelihood readily available, both for purchase and for borrowing, through various libraries such as the Mechanics’ Institute libraries.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Martin Crotty, *Making the Australian Male: Middle-Class Masculinity 1870–1920* (Carlton South, Vic.: Melbourne University Press, 2001), 17; Gregory Melleuish, “Liberal Intellectuals in Early Twentieth Century Australia: Restoring the Religious Dimension,” *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 35, no. 1 (1989): 1–12.

<sup>32</sup> J. B. Hirst, *The Sentimental Nation: The Making of the Australian Commonwealth* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2000), 44.

<sup>33</sup> Roger C. Thompson, *Religion in Australia: A History*, Australian Retrospectives (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1994).

<sup>34</sup> Hilary M. Carey, *Believing in Australia: A Cultural History of Religions* (St Leonards, N.S.W.: Allen & Unwin, 1996), 99.

<sup>35</sup> For instance, the Launceston Mechanics’ Institute current website details the Rev. Haweis’s visit in September 1895, acknowledging that at that time the Institute’s library included at least fifteen of his books. The Mechanics’ Institute in Sydney undoubtedly also held several copies of his books. See: website accessed 4 August 2017, <http://launcestonmechanicsinstitute.blogspot.com.au/2014/09/rev-h-r-haweis-ma.html>.

Although Haweis's Sydney lectures covered a range of religious and moral issues his particular interest in the relationship between music, emotions and morals received attention in two of his lectures. The summaries of his lectures published in local newspapers suggest that Haweis enunciated the arguments set out more fully in his treatise *Music and Morals*. Haweis clearly differentiated between music that expressed what he saw as false, abused, frivolous or sentimental emotions and that which exhibited true, disciplined or sublime feeling.

It is quite impossible for any one, who has thoughtfully and sympathetically studied the different schools of music, not to feel that one style and conception of the art is nobler than another. That certain methods of using musical sound are affected, or extravagant, or fatiguing, or incoherent, while others are dignified, natural, or really pathetic, arranging and expressing the emotions in a true order, representing no vamped-up passion, but passion as it is, with its elations, depressions, intensities, velocities, varieties, and infinitely fine inflexions of form. Between the spirit of the musical Sentimentalist and the musical Realist there is eternal war.<sup>36</sup>

According to Haweis, music which inflamed the emotions should be discouraged in favour of higher forms of music that engaged both emotions and the rational mind. Haweis was concerned with the health of society as a whole and his ideas had implications that fed the discourse on national character. He argued that "what is really morally healthful for the individual will be found, as a general rule, healthful to society at large".<sup>37</sup> That is, Haweis promoted ideas later adopted by reformers to reform society

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<sup>36</sup> H. R. Haweis, *Music and Morals*, vol. 1 (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1877), 57.

<sup>37</sup> Haweis, vol. 1: 47.

through individual transformation. In Haweis's view, it was therefore a matter of some urgency "to awaken in her [England], or force upon her, the appreciation of music as an art" for the sake of the nation as a whole.<sup>38</sup>

Haweis was very specific that German music was the highest form of musical art known to humankind. While Haweis argued that Italian music of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries had had a sacred character, he claimed that there had been a "degradation of Italian music" in the nineteenth century "when sound came to be understood as a most subtle and ravishing minister to pleasure" and became seen simply as "the slave of the senses."<sup>39</sup> Likewise, French music was denigrated as being too "frivolous and sentimental".<sup>40</sup> He placed German music in the first rank because it had "probed the humanities and sounded the depths of our nature—taught us how to bring the emotional region not only into the highest activity, but also under the highest control".<sup>41</sup> Because of this, according to Haweis, the mantle of higher forms of musical expression passed from Italy to Germany, reaching a pinnacle in the music of Beethoven. He argued that in Beethoven's music the expression of emotion was associated with the "analytical faculty".<sup>42</sup> This ensured that emotions were not "enervated" but the listener might be "conducted through a cycle of naturally progressive

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<sup>38</sup> Haweis, 4: 411.

<sup>39</sup> Haweis, 1: 58.

<sup>40</sup> Haweis, 61.

<sup>41</sup> Haweis

<sup>42</sup> Haweis, 59.

feeling, which always ends by leaving the mind recreated, balanced and ennobled by the exercise."<sup>43</sup>

Such a description suggested that for Haweis music had a deep spiritual role, facilitating a cathartic experience that could enable a person to transcend negative emotions and realise a higher self. In one of his Sydney lectures a newspaper article quotes him as saying that music was designed

to teach man, even in that materialistic age, the essential spirituality of his nature, and to enable him to hear the footfalls beyond the threshold of the world around him.<sup>44</sup>

Such notions were a secularised version of a redemptive theology whereby music facilitated a process of spiritual atonement.<sup>45</sup> They were consistent with new definitions of music emphasising its cathartic, transcendent spiritual properties, which had permeated Europe<sup>46</sup> and the United States<sup>47</sup> during the course of the nineteenth century. Such ideas were also consistent with the emerging practice of psychoanalysis<sup>48</sup> and the "self-help" ethos of

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<sup>43</sup> Haweis.

<sup>44</sup> *SMH*, 12 April 1895, 6.

<sup>45</sup> See M. H. Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), 334–5 who claims that Arnold and his followers overtly conceptualised literature as a means of ensuring the survival of religious ideas within an increasingly secularised society. Haweis essentially secularises music within the same tradition.

<sup>46</sup> Nicholas Cook and Nicola Dibben, "Emotion in Culture and History," in *Handbook of Music and Emotion: Theory, Research, Applications*, ed. Patrik N Juslin and John A Sloboda (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 47–8.

<sup>47</sup> Daniel Cavicchi, "Fandom before 'Fan'": Shaping the History of Enthusiastic Audiences," *Reception: Texts, Readers, Audiences, History* 6, no. 1 (2014): 58.

<sup>48</sup> For a good discussion of the uptake of Freudian ideas in Australia see Joy Damousi, *Freud in the Antipodes: A Cultural History of Psychoanalysis in Australia* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2005), 3.

the twentieth century which encouraged a focus on the inner psychological life of the individual.

The American musicologist Michael Broyles has suggested that in the United States, it was but “a small step” to convert aesthetic values to social values.<sup>49</sup> Perhaps, however, the reverse is true and middle class social values became converted to aesthetic values. Certainly, the values ascribed to classical music by Haweis were in harmony with values which scholars have typically associated with the middle class. These included moral fortitude, an ability to keep emotions in check and an orderly conduct of business within a rationalised bureaucratic world unsullied by undue noise or emotional outbursts.<sup>50</sup> Such views were also aligned closely with middle class conceptions of citizenship which focused on creating a harmonious society by promoting inner moral virtues of each citizen.<sup>51</sup> Many of these ideas became widespread in secular spheres. In particular, entertainment entrepreneurs often highlighted the higher aesthetic claims of classical music when promoting tours by celebrity artists.

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<sup>49</sup> Michael Broyles, "Bourgeois Appropriation of Music: Challenging Ethnicity, Class, and Gender," in *The American Bourgeoisie: Distinction and Identity in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Sven Beckert and Julia B. Rosenbaum (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 236.

<sup>50</sup> For a more detailed discussion of middle class values see Linda Young, *Middle Class Culture in the Nineteenth Century: America, Australia, and Britain* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 80–1 and Jürgen Kocka, "The European Pattern and the German Case," in *Bourgeois Society in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, ed. Jürgen Kocka and Allan Mitchell (Berg Publishers, 1993), 15.

<sup>51</sup> Judith Brett, *The Australian Liberals and the Moral Middle Class: From Alfred Deakin to John Howard* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 10.

## **Paderewski's 1904 Australian Tour**

The influential American historian Warren Susman has claimed that the “creation of the star” or the cult of celebrity that emerged at the beginning of the twentieth century encouraged a focus on the “isolated individual apart from the mass” or a “culture of personality” as a means of externalising “the self”.<sup>52</sup> Susman’s focus was film, but as Cavicchi has shown, the culture of celebrity which was to reach its apex in film culture was already an intrinsic part of classical music culture in the latter part of the nineteenth century. This culture encouraged a focus on the emotional journey of the self as symbolised in the life of the celebrity, who was typically represented in the media as someone who had overcome great hardships to achieve fame and fortune. As Cavicchi explains this phenomenon, virtuoso music celebrities were some of the prototype “stars” of the modern era, suggesting the “power of self making for the middle-class admirers; they were each a testament to an increasingly influential bourgeois culture of possibility in which everybody could be somebody”.<sup>53</sup>

It is my contention that in Australia at the beginning of the twentieth century visits by celebrity artists not only promoted classical music as a national project but facilitated the dissemination of new ideas about classical music that encouraged a focus on interior experience and self-realisation. In

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<sup>52</sup> Warren I. Susman, “‘Personality’ and the Making of Twentieth-Century Culture,” in *New Directions in American Intellectual History*, ed. John Higham and Paul Keith Conkin (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979), 223.

<sup>53</sup> Cavicchi, *Fandom*, 59.

the early years of the twentieth century, newspaper reports and concert critiques increasingly focused on the spiritual aura and distinctive personality of the artist and the music they performed. Few artists attracted as much attention as the internationally renowned pianist and composer Ignacy Jan Paderewski when he visited Australia in 1904. According to contemporaries, Paderewski's visit marked a significant shift in musical culture when "many old ideas were slain, and many new prejudices vanquished, never to rise again."<sup>54</sup> Marking a break with the "miscellaneous" programs of the past, Paderewski focused on the performance of the "classic" repertoire. Unusually for the time, the program for his first concert (**Image 3.3**), as advertised in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, did not include any novelty acts or even a singer. Rather he focused on the music of Bach, Beethoven and Schubert alongside Chopin, Paderewski himself and Franz Liszt.

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<sup>54</sup> *SMH*, 1 August 1904, 6.

# T O W N H A L L

Under the Direction of JOHN LEMMONE.  
(By arrangement with W. Adlington, London.)

## PADEREWSKI,

### THE ILLUSTRIOUS

PIANIST,

Has enchanted thousands upon thousands of Music Lovers in all Cultured Parts of the Universe.

### THE SYDNEY SEASON

opens at the TOWN HALL, Sydney, TO-MORROW (SATURDAY) NIGHT, 30th July, when our undoubted Music-loving Community will have their Highest Ideals Realised.

### THE FIRST PROGRAMME.

#### TO-MORROW NIGHT.

Prelude and Fugue, A Minor .....	Bach-Liszt
Sonata, Op. 53 (Waldstein) .....	Beethoven
Impromptu, B flat, Op. 42 .....	Schubert
Serenade—"Hark, Hark, the Lark" .....	Schubert-Liszt
Erl King .....	
Nocturne, G Minor .....	Chopin
Etude, No. 9, Op. 25 .....	
Prelude, No. 17 .....	
Mazurka, B flat Minor .....	
Valse .....	
Polonaise, Op. 53 .....	
Minuet .....	Paderewski
Caprice .....	
Rhapsodie, No. 2 .....	Liszt

### FOLLOWING RECITALS.

SECOND—TUESDAY, 2nd Aug.  
THIRD—THURSDAY, 4th Aug.  
FOURTH—SATURDAY, 6th Aug.

### BOX PLANS.

The Plans for ONE GUINEA and HALF-GUINEA SEATS now OPEN for the Four Recitals.

### FIVE SHILLING SEATS.

A LIMITED NUMBER of FIVE SHILLING TICKETS (Unreserved) for the FIRST RECITAL are now being Sold at PALING'S.

Erard Grand Pianos supplied by S. and P. Erard, London and Paris. (Nicholson and Co., Sole Agents).

H. N. SOUTHWELL,  
Business Manager,  
Address, PALING'S.

Image 3.3: Advertisement for first Paderewski concert in Sydney, *SMH*, 29 July 1904, 2.



Paderewski reviewers insisted on the transformative power of Paderewski's playing and his control of emotions in terms that were strongly reminiscent of Haweis's writings. The *Herald* review of 1 August 1904 stated "the passionate and persistent striving towards the ideal which lifts the man of rich mental endowment above his fellows is embodied in such art as Paderewski exhibits".<sup>55</sup> Similarly, a review on 8 August 1904 described him as a "gallant Sir Galahad" who, in the course of "three hours of enchantment", passed through "flowered roadways of radiant romance fringed with blowing foliage and branches full of birds: past tender images and symbols sweet and saint-like."<sup>56</sup> While reviewers typically described a range of emotions expressed in Paderewski's playing, they emphasised that Paderewski did not lose self-control: "at moments which most tax the resources of the player he is always master of himself and of his subject and the discipline of definite purpose entirely eliminates exuberance of method".<sup>57</sup> The focus of such reviews was the emotional journey that Paderewski embarked on with his audience toward a higher plane of being.

Equally in terms reminiscent of Haweis, Beethoven "who leads the mind through realms of stateliness and splendid proportion into a paradise of beauty and serenity" was singled out for particular attention.<sup>58</sup> The *Australian Star* reviewer described Paderewski as "sedate and self-controlled

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<sup>55</sup> *SMH*, 1 August 1904, 6.

<sup>56</sup> *Star*, 8 August 1904, 4.

<sup>57</sup> *SMH*, 29 October 1904, 11.

<sup>58</sup> *Star*, 3 August 1904, 4.

as a young monk ‘in choir’” and the “personification of reverence” when performing Beethoven’s Emperor Concerto. According to the reviewer “he interpreted and expounded the musical text as if it were chapter and verse of the Scriptures”.<sup>59</sup> Significantly, the reviewer claimed that Paderewski’s playing of Beethoven made the “introspective significance” of the works evident.<sup>60</sup>

Haweis was directly referenced in the *Evening News*’ review of Paderewski’s fourth concert. Attempting to explain the way in which Paderewski’s playing influenced the minds of the listeners, the reviewer credited Haweis as describing it as “a physic emanation, passing out through the finger tips...”.<sup>61</sup> Such reviews mark a significant shift in focus from the typical review of the 1890s which tended to concern itself with the audience’s musical enjoyment and the educative interests of the performances. They marked an inward turn focusing on the audience’s subjective experience, even while telling them what they should be experiencing.

Two other aspects of Paderewski’s concerts were notable. For one thing, according to the *Herald*, he insisted on “playing in the half-light”.<sup>62</sup> The fact that such a comment was made suggests that this was an unusual

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<sup>59</sup> *Star*, 22 August 1904, 4.

<sup>60</sup> *EN*, 8 August 1904, 8.

<sup>61</sup> *EN*, 8 August 1904, 8.

<sup>62</sup> *SMH*, 1 August 1904, 6.

practice in Australia at that time (although it had been introduced in Europe in the 1850s<sup>63</sup>). In addition, music lovers called on other patrons to “have mercy upon their more delicately constituted brethren, and refrain from chattering whilst the maestro is playing”.<sup>64</sup> Following such injunctions ensured the listener could absorb the music in darkness and in silence, limiting awareness of everyone else in the audience and other stimuli apart from the performer. In this way the introspective, subjective nature of the experience was maximised and distractions minimised. This was a significant shift away from the participative community-building civic concerts that were still very popular at that time.

The necessity of improving audience behaviour was increasingly the subject of newspaper articles and letters to the editor in the early 1900s. While in the 1890s the “enthusiasm” of audiences had been reported as a positive,<sup>65</sup> in the 1900s complaints about talking, inappropriate applause and other extraneous noises during concerts began to be a subject of complaint.<sup>66</sup> According to a *Herald* critic, for instance:

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<sup>63</sup> Richard Leppert, "Aural Cultures," in *Aural Cultures*, ed. Jim Drobnick (YYZ Books, 2004), 32.

<sup>64</sup> *SMH*, 28 July 1904, 8.

<sup>65</sup> See for example a review of an Ovide Musin concert which remarked positively on the audience's marked enthusiasm for “new favourites and old” (*SMH* 3 October 1892, 5); and a review of Antoinette Trebelli's concert which positively alluded to the way the artists has stirred the enthusiasm of the crowd (*SMH*, 9 December 1895, 3)

<sup>66</sup> See for example a review of a concert by a Miss Alice Hollander which complained of audience members who “talked incessantly” (*Evening News*, 28 April 1900, 3); a review of Madame Albani's concerts which complained of “idle applause” commencing even before an item had finished (*Truth*, 27 February 1898, 2); and a *Herald* editorial which complained that many a concert is “spoilt” for music lovers by the jarring applause which might occur even into the middle of a song or sonata (*SMH*, 18 March 1910, 5).

As a rule, a Sydney audience is too prone to hand-clapping, and many a concert is spoilt for music-lovers by the jarring applause which comes even into the middle of a song or sonata.<sup>67</sup>

Scenes of “turbulence” caused by the press of crowds at concerts by popular artists such as Melba also elicited calls for a more orderly and effective control of concert crowds.<sup>68</sup> Repeated calls for encores of a particular artist or song within a concert had long been an issue of contention as they extended the length of concerts significantly, making it difficult to complete the scheduled program.<sup>69</sup> However Mr V. Day’s concerns were not quite so pragmatic. He wrote to the *Sunday Times* complaining of “the greedy concert-goer” who applauded loudly to elicit encores “to obtain thrice as much for their money as they are promised in any program”. He claimed such behaviour drove away the “sensitive music-lover whose nerves are delicately responsive to every sound, and whose soul is attuned to the inner message of the higher melody”.<sup>70</sup>

Catering to the needs of such music lovers, in the early 1900s concert and theatrical managers began to discourage late arrivals by establishing strict rules prohibiting entry once the program had started. For instance,

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<sup>67</sup> *SMH*, 18 May 1910, 5.

<sup>68</sup> *SMH*, 28 October 1902, 4.

<sup>69</sup> See for instance, A review of the Halle–Neruda concerts, *SMH*, 7 July 1890, 6 which describes “a noisy minority” pertinaciously insisting on encores against the expressed desire of the rest of the audience; a review of an Ovide Musin concert, *SMH*, 12 September 1892, 6 which complains that the “encore system was well nigh done to death”; and a review of a “People’s promenade concert”, *Evening News*, 13 March 1893, 3 which complains of the “increasing tendency to encore every member” and proposes the “discountenancing (of) encores altogether”.

<sup>70</sup> *Sunday Times*, 19 October 1902, 9.

advertisements for the Royal Grand Opera performances of Wagner's opera *Tannhauser* in 1907 stated:

In the interest of all Music Lovers, the DOORS WILL BE KEPT CLOSED, and on no account WILL ANY BODY BE ADMITTED DURING THE PERFORMANCE OF EACH ACT.<sup>71</sup>

The audience were also instructed to refrain from interruptions that broke the concentration of 'music lovers' and made it hard to "lose oneself" in the music.<sup>72</sup> Such depictions of the sensitive nature of music lovers who were spiritually affected by music suggested that the music denoted a new form of self-identification. One could now express one's individuality and personality on the basis of musical and aesthetic preferences. The group that identified themselves as "music lovers" now requires further analysis.

### **Music lovers**

Much can be learned about the development of Australian culture by considering interactions between different social classes as some groups came to assume a more prominent position, enabling them to define cultural values and distinctions. Scholars generally agree that the "middle class" was a highly disparate, ill-defined group which might include people with widely varying levels of economic wealth, education and occupation ranging from wealthy merchants, manufacturers, bankers and professionals to poorly paid white collar workers. Despite these significant differences and

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<sup>71</sup> *SMH*, 8 June 1907, 2.

<sup>72</sup> *SMH*, 1910.

sometimes competing interests, scholars generally agree that the middle class united around shared values, behaviours and cultural practices.<sup>73</sup> Many scholars also identify the cause of classical music as a central identification point for the middle class.<sup>74</sup> In Australia, too, during the early decades of the twentieth century many members of the middle class came to distinguish themselves from other groups by a demonstrating a preference for classical music.

Music and identity are so closely intertwined in the twenty-first century<sup>75</sup> that it is easy to assume that this was always the case. Yet to define oneself by one's musical tastes would have been quite alien within the "shared" culture outlined in chapter one. It would have made little sense for people to promote the musical preferences of one group over another or exclude one type of music on the basis of aesthetic judgements. Hymns, parlour songs, dance music, folk music, band music, opera and classical music were part of a common musical lexicon which might be drawn on for public concerts and even for many private music-making events. As

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<sup>73</sup> See for instance Sven Beckert, "Bourgeois Institution Builders: New York in the Nineteenth Century," in *The American Bourgeoisie: Distinction and Identity in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Sven Beckert and Julia B. Rosenbaum (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 2–3; Simon Gunn, *The Public Culture of the Victorian Middle Class: Ritual and Authority and the English Industrial City, 1840-1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), 23–4; Young, 14–15; Colin Campbell, *The Romantic Ethic and the Spirit of Modern Consumerism* (Oxford: B. Blackwell, 1987), 33; Wolfgang Kaschuba, "German *Bürgerlichkeit* after 1800: Culture as Symbolic Practice," in *Bourgeois Society in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, ed. Jürgen Kocka and Allan Mitchell (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 1993), 400.

<sup>74</sup> William Weber, *Music and the Middle Class: The Social Structure of Concert Life in London, Paris and Vienna* (London: Croom Helm, 1975); and Gunn, *Public Culture*.

<sup>75</sup> See for instance Simon Frith, "What Is Bad Music?," in *Bad Music: The Music We Love to Hate*, ed. Christopher Washburne and Maiken Derno (New York, NY: Routledge, 2004), 33; Andy Bennett, "Identity: Music, Community, and Self," in *The Routledge Reader on the Sociology of Music*, ed. John Shepherd and Kyle Devine (Oxon: Routledge, 2015), 143–51; Tia DeNora, "Music as a Technology of the Self," *Poetics* 27, no. 1 (1999): 31–56.

discussed in the previous chapter, prior to the opening of the Town Hall, there was little to distinguish between the type of music performed in different social contexts apart from the status of the musicians engaged for the performance and the resources employed for the event. It was not until new definitions of music based on aesthetic distinctions became common that it was possible for people to define themselves in relation to their musical preferences.

In Sydney during the 1880s and 1890s those who took the cause of classical music particularly seriously began to self-identify as “music lovers”. This group was often separately identified in newspapers, with the most passionate writing letters to the editor signing themselves “music lover”. In his study of concert diaries in the United States, cultural historian, David Cavicchi documented a similar group of self-identifying music lovers. He defined this group as young, middle-class, white men and women, often newly arrived in the cities, who were, for the first time in history, focused more on hearing music in public concerts than on making music themselves at home.<sup>76</sup> They may have had a musical education and played a musical instrument or sung, but their defining feature was as listeners rather than as players. Cavicchi’s music lovers did not necessarily give preference to classical music but were often particular “fans” of visiting virtuoso artists. For them, the act of listening was “excitingly dangerous and quite cathartic

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<sup>76</sup> Cavicchi, *Fandom*, 56.

within the behavioural strictures of middle-class Victorian culture."<sup>77</sup>

Cavicchi suggested that such listeners placed a new emphasis on "celebrity and selfhood" as they projected their own identity onto that of the self-made stars of the music world.<sup>78</sup> According to Cavicchi, the intense emotional experience that they described in their diaries provided an opportunity for self-reflection and internalised ideation.<sup>79</sup> I will argue that while Sydney's music lovers shared many similarities with those identified by Cavicchi, they expressed a clear preference for classical music.<sup>80</sup>

In Sydney, the term music lover was initially employed to describe someone who appreciated a broad range of music. However, in the latter part of the century, with the formation of groups such as the Sydney Philharmonic and the Orpheus Society, the usage of the term became more exclusive. For instance, members of the Orpheus Society asserted a difference between "a real lover of music and a lover of real music". "Real music" as defined by the Orpheus Club was represented in the music of the master composers including Beethoven, Handel, Wagner, Mendelssohn,

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<sup>77</sup> Cavicchi, 58.

<sup>78</sup> Cavicchi, 59.

<sup>79</sup> Cavicchi.

<sup>80</sup> See also Ralph P. Locke and Cyrilla Barr, "Patronage—and Women—in America's Musical Life: An Overview of a Changing Scene," in *Cultivating Music in America: Women Patrons and Activists since 1860*, ed. Ralph P. Locke and Cyrilla Barr (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 12. Notably Locke also describes "music lovers" as those who devoted their energies to the dissemination of the canonical works of European musical culture.



Gounod, and Meyerbeer.<sup>81</sup> From this time, the term “music lover” gradually became most commonly associated with those who enjoyed classical music.

Sydney’s music lovers, like their American namesakes, were not necessarily participants or musical performers of any kind. The Orpheus Society differed from choral groups and bands which typically formed with a view to performing music together. Rather, Orpheus Society members were enlisted as listeners rather than performers, engaging professional musicians to perform for them—albeit with the inevitable distractions of food and drink that were typically served at their “smoke” concerts. However, this was a distinctive shift away from music as a participative experience. Rather, the listener demonstrated their good taste by the discernment of “good music” and taking “pleasure in high-class works performed by local artists”.<sup>82</sup> In the 1890s “classical music lovers” were as yet a small group and struggled to support their activities financially.<sup>83</sup> The Orpheus Society soon became unviable but there was no shortage of similar endeavours, all of which struggled to obtain sufficient membership to sustain a regular concert series. These groups included the Chamber Matinee Concert series in 1891, the Sydney Quintet Society in 1893, the Aeolian Club in 1896 and the Chamber Music Society in 1903. At the same time there were

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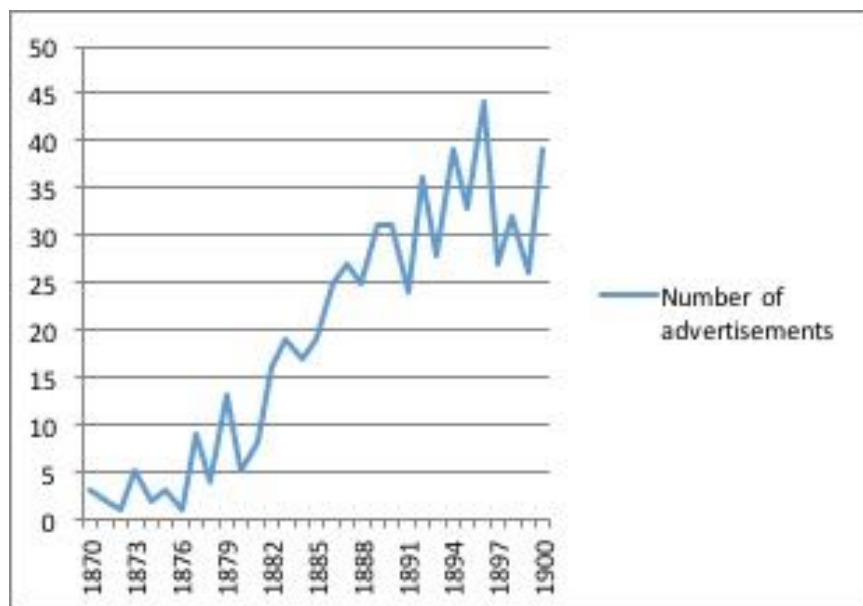
<sup>81</sup> *SMH*, 14 December 1887, 4.

<sup>82</sup> *SMH*, 10 August 1889, 8.

<sup>83</sup> *SMH*, 1 March 1890, 7.

efforts to establish an orchestra (to be discussed in the next chapter)—an endeavour that was even more financially risky.

While these groups focused on “listeners” it was not uncommon for music lovers to have formally learnt to play a musical instrument or to sing. During the 1890s and the early 1900s two sources of evidence indicate a dramatic increase in the number of music students who significantly swelled the ranks of those identifying as music lovers. First, as **Figure 3.1** demonstrates, the number of music teachers advertising in the *Herald* classifieds increased significantly in the 1890s, which would suggest a commensurate increase in students.



**Figure 3.1: Number of music teachers advertising in the *Sydney Morning Herald* on the first Saturday of February from 1870 to 1900.<sup>84</sup>**

<sup>84</sup> The reason for the sudden drop-off in advertisements in 1897 is unclear. At that time Sydney would have been beginning to recover from the effects of the early 1890s depression. Perhaps a higher demand for music teachers meant there was less need to advertise.

Second, during the 1890s there was an extraordinary increase in the numbers of students sitting for practical music examinations. There was a variety of music examination options available. The most prestigious were the examinations by visiting examiners from Trinity College in London, which commenced in Sydney in 1879 with examination results published annually in the local paper and a public presentation of examination awards. In 1879 a total of nine candidates sat for their elementary annual musical knowledge examination.<sup>85</sup> In 1889, 85 candidates sat the exam with 51 passes.<sup>86</sup> This grew to 637 passes in 1901. In 1894 a local system of examinations was introduced under the auspices of the Australian Musical Association.<sup>87</sup> In addition, from 1897, external examiners from the Associated Board of the Royal Academy of Music and the Royal College of Music began visiting Australia to conduct music examinations. Music was also introduced into the school curriculum at that time.<sup>88</sup> In 1897 the *Australian Musical Times* estimated that over 3000 students submitted to music examinations annually in Sydney, marking an enthusiastic uptake of the examination system in less than twenty years.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> *SMH*, 18 June 1879, 7.

<sup>86</sup> *SMH*, 24 June 1889 6 & 1 November 1889, 6.

<sup>87</sup> *SMH*, 20 October, 1894, 7.

<sup>88</sup> *Australian Musical Times and Magazine of Art*, 2 Jun 1898, 3.

<sup>89</sup> *AMTMA*, 10 December 1897, 9. The article details the examining institutions which included Trinity College (London), the Associated Board of the Royal Academy of Music and the Royal College of Music, the International College of Music, Melbourne University, Adelaide University, the Sydney College of Music, the Australian Musical Association, and the Guild of Church Musicians.

Music students were an increasing and observable part of the concert audience, partly because they might take their music with them when attending a performance.<sup>90</sup> The presence of this group suggests that for some people classical music was not just an occasional interest, but a lived out role enacted in day to day life by going to music lessons, practising and attending concerts. Learning music provided an easy form of access into the middle class. These social benefits were capitalised on by music teachers. In 1907, for instance, an advertisement for one of Sydney's leading teaching establishments, the Austral orchestral college, stated:

URGENT IMPORT attaches to a high-class Musical Education; it undoubtedly enhances the possessor's chances in life in both the Social and Commercial World.<sup>91</sup>

Such promises clearly fed the influx of students, particularly women, who, according to Collins, often took on the role of accumulating cultural capital on behalf of their family.<sup>92</sup> Becoming a music lover then was also a means of social advancement.

Music shop proprietors also promoted their products to those wishing to educate themselves about music. Pianolas had been introduced into Australia in 1900. The following advertisement (**Image 3.4**) advances the case

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<sup>90</sup> There are several allusions to students and "serious music lovers" following scores during performances. See for instance *Referee*, 16 January 1889, 5. See also *SMH*, 24 April 1897, 864. This also occurred in the United States. For more information, see Adrienne Fried Block, "Matinee Mania, or the Regendering of Nineteenth-Century Audiences in New York City," *19th-century Music* 31, no. 3 (2008): 202.

<sup>91</sup> *SMH*, 8 June 1907, 2.

<sup>92</sup> Randall Collins, "Women and the Production of Status Cultures," in *Cultivating Differences: Symbolic Boundaries and the Making of Inequality*, ed. Michèle Lamont and Marcel Fournier (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 227.

that they place the “best music” in the hands of every “music lover” and that the “famous composers no longer reside with the favoured few”.<sup>93</sup> A decade later, phonograph purveyors also promoted the potential of the technology for “music-lovers” who wished to “cultivate a higher musical taste” even while continuing to target a broad-based audience by promoting pianolas as a means of providing “accompaniments for dancing or singing” or the performance of “popular airs”.<sup>94</sup> Increasingly they appealed to women in their advertisements and promoted classical music as a means of facilitating social mobility. It provided a means of identifying as middle class and an opportunity for those wishing to improve their station in life. For this reason, those with dreams that the next generation might live a better life encouraged their children to learn music if at all possible.

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<sup>93</sup> *ATCJ*, 3 May 1902, 42.

<sup>94</sup> *Sunday Times*, 30 July 1911, 20.


**THE APPRECIATION** of the **ÆOLIAN** by those who have had an intimate association with it in the home, *centres attention on that which constitutes the chief value of the ÆOLIAN—the inexhaustible source of pleasure it provides in the household.*

It is a solo orchestra, always ready for any occasion, and the playing of it requires no musical skill. Overtures, symphonies, and entire operas can be played by the brain-tired business man, his wife or his daughter. The Æolianist experiences all the pleasure of hand playing, because he controls the expression, which is the soul of music. If you wish accompaniments for dancing or singing, or if you wish to hear the latest popular air you need only turn to your Æolian.

The majority of those who hear the Æolian for the first time express surprise, saying they have been unable to comprehend until then what it was like. Many of our patrons, after using the Æolian, for six months, go out of their way to tell us of the pleasure they have derived from their purchases, evincing a degree of enthusiasm which leaves no room for doubt as to their complete conversion.

This enthusiasm is the rule, not the exception. Why is it?

Unquestionably it suggests that the Æolian is worthy of your attention, and that every day you delay your investigation of the instrument you are cutting yourself off from a source of pleasure about which you might become equally enthusiastic.



**The unqualified endorsement of the ÆOLIAN** by practically every **MUSICIAN OF PROMINENCE IN EUROPE AND AMERICA** assures its artistic status.

*We reproduce extracts from a few letters from our patrons.*

These letters bear the signatures of some of the most prominent people in this country.

... "It is simply impossible for me to tell you all the pleasure and satisfaction I experience in the interpretation of the sublime and melodious thoughts of some of the greatest musical composers of the past and present."

... "Having had the Æolian over ten years, changing it occasionally as improvements have been made. I feel under no consideration could I be induced to part with it. It is a soul harmonizer, eliminating the fret and care which business brings, and for this reason alone worth its weight in gold."

... "The Æolian is in my estimation the greatest musical instrument that has ever been invented—greatest because it has brought all the best music practically within the reach of every music lover. The famous composers reside no longer with the favoured few. They are now at home wherever the Æolian is. My Grand stands in my working den, not far from my desk, ever ready to soothe, to inspire, and to divert."

The smallest instrument embodies the same principles, is just as perfect in construction, and plays as many selections as the most expensive styles. Æolians may be purchased on the hire system if desired. You are invited to visit at our warehouses, if for no other reason than to learn more about this remarkable instrument—what it is and what it will do. If you are unable to call, and the subject interests you, we shall be pleased to send you a descriptive catalogue.

**THE ÆOLIAN CO. OF NEW YORK.**  
**HENRY M. BIRGE & CO.** (SYDNEY: 222 George St. MELBOURNE: 125 & 127 Collins St.)  
 SOLE AGENTS FOR AUSTRALASIA.

Image 3.4: *Australian Town and Country Journal*, 3 May 1902, 42.

## Women's entry into the public sphere via music

Women made up the vast majority of music students and teachers. *The Herald*, for instance, noted that the Melbourne Conservatorium of music contained scarcely any male students.<sup>95</sup> This followed international trends. A newspaper article in *Australian Star* claimed that women were threatening to

<sup>95</sup> *SMH*, 10 April 1907, 5.

monopolise classes at the Paris Conservatoire. The headline of the article asked “Women Musicians: Are they ousting the Men?”<sup>96</sup> When the NSW State Conservatorium did open in 1915 (as discussed in chapter five), the absence of many young men at war meant that female students dominated (Image 3.5).

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<sup>96</sup> Australian Star, 7 May 1904, 3.



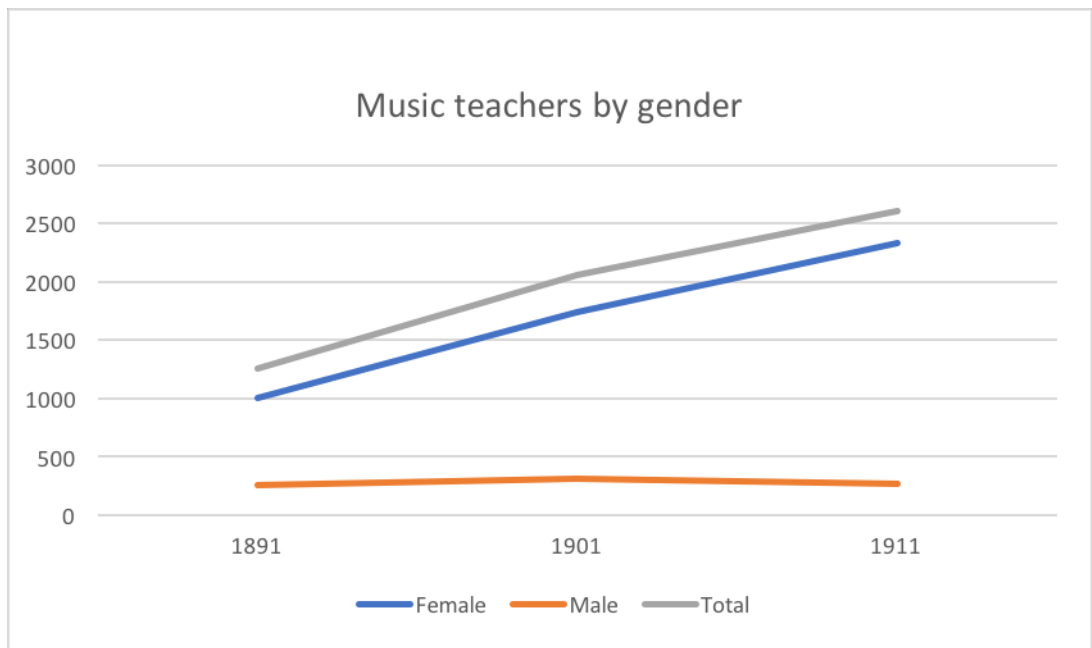
**Image 3.5: Staff and students of the NSW State Conservatorium of Music August, 1916.**

NSW Govt Printer series, Department of Education, SLNSW, FL1950353.

There was a 64% increase in the number of music teachers in New South Wales between 1891 and 1911 driven almost entirely by an increase in the number of female teachers (**Figure 3.2**). This is consistent with a similar trend in the United States where between 1870 and 1910 the number of women holding jobs (including part-time work) in some aspect of music increased eightfold with the proportion of women rising from 26 per cent to



60 per cent.<sup>97</sup>



**Figure 3.2: Music teachers by gender, 1891 to 1911 as registered in NSW Census data<sup>98</sup>**

As early as 1887, a Sydney pianist and conductor observed that given growing unemployment for male workers, women must increasingly preoccupy themselves with “material existence” and that a musical education might enable a woman to mix with those from different positions and earn a living without necessarily “abandoning her home.”<sup>99</sup> It also ensured that women did not compete with men for employment in the public economy.

<sup>97</sup> Locke and Barr, “Patronage”, 36.

<sup>98</sup> All NSW State Census data for 1901 and previous years is derived from NSW State Records, *Muster and Census Records 1788–1901* (State Records Authority of New South Wales, 2001), accessed 28 May 2017, <http://hccda.ada.edu.au/regions/NSW>. Federal census data from 1911 is taken from the ABS website accessed 9 August 2017, <http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/DetailsPage/2112.01911?OpenDocument>.

<sup>99</sup> *SMH*, 4 June 1887, 6.

While women were encouraged to become teachers they were initially not so welcome within the Musician's Union. Although membership of the Union was not overtly restrictive, when a Miss Reave had the temerity to write to the Union in 1901 seeking to become a member, the Committee informed her that joining the Association "would be no advantage to any lady at present."<sup>100</sup> Bronwen Arthur demonstrates that despite early efforts to exclude women from the music profession and concerns about "ladies'" orchestras, from the very first award there were no differential pay rates for women. This was unlike "virtually every other industry".<sup>101</sup> Some women were also included in the various orchestras that were formed in this period, even the flagship Sydney Symphony Orchestra, to be discussed in the next chapter. By 1914 the membership of the NSW Musicians' Union was 5 to 10 per cent female,<sup>102</sup> increasing to at least 13 per cent in the 1920s and 1930s.<sup>103</sup>

In the United States, Campbell has argued that women were particularly attracted to new ideas emphasising music's spiritual qualities. He claims that by fusing music and religion, women justified their growing social, cultural and economic power by declaring that their work merely

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<sup>100</sup> "Minutes of Committee Meeting", June 13, 1901, *Minute Bk 3*, Noel Butlin Archive, T7 1/2.

<sup>101</sup> Bronwen Arthur, "Industrial Relations," in *Currency Companion to Music & Dance in Australia*, ed. John Whiteoak and Aline Scott-Maxwell (Sydney: Currency House, Inc., 2003), p. 348.

<sup>102</sup> Arthur.

<sup>103</sup> Data taken from Membership books found in the Noel Butlin Archive, E156/7/1 & 2(i). No dates are given, but annotations on each book suggest that the lists pertain to membership in the early 1920s and 1930s. It is an estimate of female membership derived by counting those with a title of Miss or Mrs. It may be that some members with no title given in the membership book are also female.

extended their traditional moral, domestic interest into a larger area.<sup>104</sup> It is therefore not surprising that women were often at the forefront of classical music initiatives. I will argue that that similarly in Australia, women were able to gain access to the public sphere through music. This opportunity would have been less available to them if music were considered to be mere entertainment. Many women therefore came to be heavily invested in promoting classical music as a spiritual endeavour. While women might struggle to gain equal representation in orchestras they soon became the dominant attendees at classical music concerts.

In the early 1900s the increasing number of women who attended concerts in Sydney was becoming quite noticeable. As discussed earlier, nineteenth century theatrical entrepreneurs worked to improve the reputation of the theatre to attract a middle class audience. One of the strategies they used was to target a female audience explicitly to emphasize the respectable nature of their entertainment. To this end, they often provided matinee performances that were largely attended by women.<sup>105</sup> Whereas in the 1890s groups such as the Orpheus Society had been established primarily to cater to men, within ten years critics often noted that women outnumbered men at public concerts. This was notable at the

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<sup>104</sup> Gavin James Campbell, "Classical Music and the Politics of Gender in America, 1900–1925," *American Music* 21, no. 4 (2003): 465.

<sup>105</sup> Richard Butsch, *The Making of American Audiences: From Stage to Television, 1750–1990*, Cambridge Studies in the History of Mass Communication (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 66, 74; Block, "Matinee Mania", 193–216.

Paderewski concerts<sup>106</sup> as well as those of renowned contralto Clara Butt, where it was estimated that the proportion of women in the audience outnumbered men by six to one.<sup>107</sup> An *Evening News* article claimed that “two-thirds of the ‘concert-lovers’ are women and young girls”.<sup>108</sup>

The nationalistic musical press asserted that Australian women were particularly musical. In his report on Australian progress in music and drama, presented at the Great Exhibition at Chicago in 1893, F. C. Brewer asserted that the Australian climate “particularly suited the vocal organ, particularly in females”<sup>109</sup> being similar to the dry climates of Italy and Sweden.<sup>110</sup> An article on women of the British Empire claimed that the success of Australian women such Nellie Melba and Ada Crossley in the field of music demonstrated that the “typical Australian woman has a soul for music”.<sup>111</sup> By following these highly renowned stars Australian women could symbolically participate in the glamorous, even fairy-tale, world of the international stage:

it is like a story of Alice in Wonderland, or some phantasy of the "Arabian Nights", to read of this Australian child passing as an honoured guest through the palaces of royalty and the mansions of millionaires, her fairy gift of genius acting as the magic talisman of the genii, which unlocked the mysteries of king's houses to its owner...It is a pretty story, too, this tale of a little Australian girl who saw the Queen and had been a

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<sup>106</sup> *Star*, 5 August 1904, 4.

<sup>107</sup> *SMH*, 18 September 1907, 5.

<sup>108</sup> *Evening News* 1 September 1913, 6.

<sup>109</sup> F.C. Brewer, *The Drama and Music of New South Wales* (Sydney: Charles Potter, Government Printer, 1892), 54.

<sup>110</sup> *Australian Star*, 27 May 1899, 2.

<sup>111</sup> *World's News*, 30 January 1904, 10.

favoured guest of the Princess of Wales and Mr. Gladstone. It is the kind of story that kindles emulation and becomes an encouragement and an incentive to all young Australians who may aspire in this or similar directions and to the fame and reward which diligent effort and success command.<sup>112</sup>

This fed hopes and dreams that even those from humble origins could rise to great heights through music.

While the achievements of great Australian singers like Nellie Melba, Ada Crossley, Amy Sherwin and Amy Castles, were prominently paraded in newspapers, young women were nonetheless encouraged to temper their ambitions.<sup>113</sup> Melba herself cautioned against the “chimera” of a singing career, advising young women “the substance of life is home”. She counselled young women to “sing if you must, but sing for your husbands, and croon love-songs for your babies”.<sup>114</sup> The *Catholic Press* also warned against too much musical education for a woman, claiming it would not prepare her for marriage as would “a regular course of domestic economy and culinary knowledge”, but would rather encourage her to set her sights on a husband somewhat “higher in the social scale” meaning she would more likely remain single.<sup>115</sup>

Such admonishments did little to dissuade women from entering the public sphere through their involvement in musical activities. Indeed music

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<sup>112</sup> *SMH*, 14 October 1899, 8–9.

<sup>113</sup> See for example, *SMH*, 23 November 1901, 10;

<sup>114</sup> *The Globe*, 27 December 1911, 2.

<sup>115</sup> *Catholic Press*, 26 July 1902, 18.

provided a central focal point around which women formed themselves into communities. Many women continued to harbour ambitions for a musical career and there are frequent reports of “farewell concerts” to raise funds for young people who were leaving Sydney to study abroad.<sup>116</sup> At such events speakers expounded on the patriotic dream that Australia would make its reputation in the world on the back of such talented young people.<sup>117</sup>

By following these young artists, Australians felt they were taking their place as modern world citizens in the noble court of the concert platform—a court equally open to Australians, or so they believed, as to those who traditionally took up prominent positions in world affairs. It was therefore particularly important to Australians for whom traditional hierarchal positions of social privilege were not generally accessible. It marked a modern way of thinking whereby celebrity artists rather than the traditional nobility or high society became objects of envy and idolisation.

For those women who pursued their musical dreams domestically rather than on the international stage, music still provided important social outlets, acting as a means of participating in a respectable cultural activity within the public sphere. Women were prominent members of many musical

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<sup>116</sup> Angela Woollacott, *To Try Her Fortune in London: Australian Women, Colonialism, and Modernity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001): 4.

<sup>117</sup> See for example the *Telegraph*, 15 March 1894, 6 report of the Sydney farewell concert for Melbourne contralto, Ada Crossley. The Mayor’s speech is recorded as follows; “Australia was now over a hundred years old, and he thought it was time they gave proof to the older counties that in the development of their material resources and physical powers they had not forgotten the artistic graces”.

groups and music was a prominent feature of most women's groups. For instance, the Sydney Ladies' Musical Club was established in 1895 with a choir and orchestra.<sup>118</sup> There is a record of only one public performance by this group; however, it attracted considerable attention because, unusually for the time, all the performers except Signor Podenzana, the conductor, were female.<sup>119</sup>

Other groups quickly succeeded it. In the 1890s and early 1900s, following the example of women's clubs in England<sup>120</sup> and the United States, women's clubs began appearing firstly in Melbourne with the Austral Salon established in 1890. The Victoria Salon soon followed in Sydney in 1896 as a means of bringing the "artistic, journalistic, and generally intellectual circles into closer unison than hitherto".<sup>121</sup> This group was short-lived but a succession of women's clubs soon followed. In the early 1900s these included the Women's Patriotic Club, the Women's Club, the Alexandra Club, and the Women's Liberal Club. The membership of these clubs generally comprised women of means who engaged in various moral improvement projects and political initiatives including women's suffrage, sanitation improvement and temperance. Musical gatherings including "at homes", "conversaciones" and "salons" were common features at most club meetings and social events. For

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<sup>118</sup> *SMH*, 3 August 1895, 5.

<sup>119</sup> *EN*, 16 August 1895, 3. See also, *SMH*, 16 August 1895, 6 & *ATCJ*, 24 August 1895, 37.

<sup>120</sup> *M & A*, 17 February 1904, 421 provides background information about women's clubs in England to explain the establishment of the Women's Club in Sydney suggesting a direct desire to emulate such clubs.

<sup>121</sup> *M & A*, 7 November 1896, 977.

instance, at a “preliminary gathering” of the Victoria Club and Salon on 13 November 1896, French-Australian pianist Madame Charbonnet Kellermann provided “a program of music” which also included “recitations” by a Mrs Martel.<sup>122</sup> Vocal and instrumental solos with piano accompaniment also featured at the formal opening of the club on 19 November 1896.<sup>123</sup> As Woollacott has suggested, such events “blurred the boundary between private and public” and were a means by which women were able to establish a space for themselves within city life.<sup>124</sup> Such events were described in detail in women’s columns and social pages which were proliferating rapidly in nearly every newspaper and journal.<sup>125</sup> Melbourne’s Austral Salon, now known as the “Austral Salon of Music”, continues to operate to this day. It remains a socially prestigious organisation with ongoing patronage by Governors’ wives for “music lovers committed to encouraging young musicians by providing an interested and supportive audience”.<sup>126</sup>

### **‘Smokos’ and manly music**

While women were increasingly participating in classical music activities a range of male music-making activities continued in parallel. For instance,

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<sup>122</sup> *ATCJ*, 21 November 1896, 34.

<sup>123</sup> *M & A*, 28 November 1896, 1133.

<sup>124</sup> Woollacott, *Fortune*, 70.

<sup>125</sup> For instance between 1906 and 1908 the *SMH* had a regular weekly columns entitled “Women in the Arts” and “Of Interest to Women”. Other women’s columns included The *Sunday Times*, column “Women’s World”, *ATCJ*, “Women’s Ways”; and “A Word to Women” which appeared in several newspapers.

<sup>126</sup> See Austral Salon website accessed 17 September 2017, <https://www.australsalon.org/>.



brass bands, which in Australia had deeply entrenched military associations, were comprised almost exclusively of men and were extremely popular in the latter part of the nineteenth and early part of the twentieth centuries. According to Whiteoak, the “thrusting, penetrating, aggressive power” of brass instruments essentially reinforced a masculine identity that underpinned its popularity among men.<sup>127</sup> They were, according to Bythell, a “ubiquitous feature of Australia’s musical and cultural life in the late nineteenth and early part of the twentieth century”,<sup>128</sup> only declining in popularity in the late 1920s and 1930s in the face of competition from other forms of entertainment.<sup>129</sup> Many such bands were “workplace-based” and provided members with “conviviality and camaraderie” as well as a means of making money in lean times.<sup>130</sup> Brass band concert programs and advertisements show that brass bands typically performed a wide-ranging repertoire which included arrangements of classical works, popular songs, opera excerpts, hymns and religious music and, as I will discuss in the next chapter, often claimed to play an important role in educating the public about classical music.

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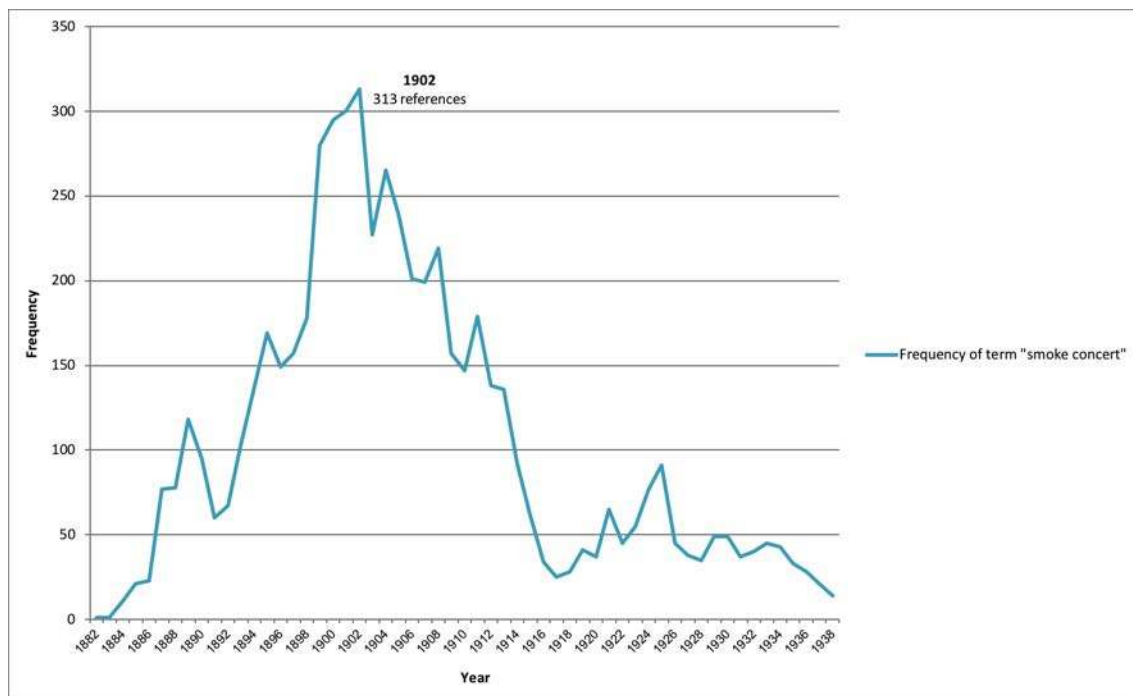
<sup>127</sup> John Whiteoak, "Popular Music, Militarism, Women, and the Early "Brass Band" in Australia," *Australasian Music Research* 6 (2001): 45–6.

<sup>128</sup> Duncan Bythell, "The Brass Band in Australia: The Transplantation of British Popular Culture, 1850–1950," in *Bands: The brass band movement in the 19th and 20th centuries* ed. Trevor Herbert (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1991), 145.

<sup>129</sup> Bythell, 146.

<sup>130</sup> Bythell, 152.

Men, or as they were described in one newspaper article, the “smoking sex”,<sup>131</sup> also enjoyed an almost exclusively male form of entertainment called “smoke concerts.” Smoke concerts were popular in Sydney during the latter part of the nineteenth and early part of the twentieth century. **Figure 3.3** presents data derived from the National Library of Australia’s newspaper database Trove for the occurrence of the term “smoke concert” or “smoko concert” in the *Herald*. These terms first appeared in 1882 and the frequency of their use reached a peak in 1902.



**Figure 3.3: Frequency of the term “smoke concert” in *The Sydney Morning Herald* between 1882 and 1938.**<sup>132</sup>

Smoke concerts in Australia presumably derived from similar events in England dating from the 1860s, which uniquely combined existing

<sup>131</sup> *SMH*, 24 October 1891, 5.

<sup>132</sup> For a discussion of the methodology used see Fn 87 on p. 25.

practices of the public concert, the catch or glee club and the music hall.<sup>133</sup>

They were originally offered by aristocratic amateur music societies but were quickly copied, becoming popular among all classes. Similarly in Australia, smoke concerts were originally offered by male-only music clubs like the Liedertafel and the Orpheus Society. However the practice was soon adopted by male sporting clubs, political groups and union bodies to mark social occasions.

While many smoke concerts were very informal gatherings more akin to music hall events, some smoke concerts were quite formal affairs that included a large proportion of classical music. For instance the Professional Musicians' Association's smoke concert on 25 September 1900, held in honour of the Governor, included works by Bach, Beethoven and Mendelssohn as well as songs and "humorous recitations".<sup>134</sup> In contrast, the People's Reform League held their annual smoke concert on 2 April 1904. The *Herald's* report of this event makes it evident that political speeches were the main event of the evening. No classical music was mentioned although the event closed with songs, recitations, exhibitions of physical exercises, of legerdemain (sleight of hand – probably card tricks), and other items.<sup>135</sup> According to Eva Mantzourani such events were primarily socially oriented

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<sup>133</sup> Eva Mantzourani, "'The Aroma of the Music and the Fragrance of the Weed': Music and Smoking in Victorian England," *Musicology of Lithuania/Lietuvos muzikologija*, no. 13 (2012): 121–2.

<sup>134</sup> *EN*, 27 September 1900, 8.

<sup>135</sup> *SMH*, 4 April 1904, 3

events designed to bring men together to enjoy social intercourse with their peers:

These male-dominated institutions, denoting an inner circle of persons with common interests were related through their music-making and merry entertainment. Dinner, drinking, smoking and music-making were means by which friends and equals came together to express their shared relationships within a particular social group.<sup>136</sup>

Mantzourani has argued that smoke concerts may have indirectly contributed to the popularisation and commercialisation of classical music.<sup>137</sup> This may have been true of early smoke concerts in Sydney but by the early part of the twentieth century as classical music performances became more exclusively the preserve of entrepreneurs and musical institutions, smoke concert programs tended to exclude classical music and increasingly focused on popular music.

Like other types of concerts, smoke concerts were interrupted by the war. They never regained their former popularity although they did continue until well into the 1950s, particularly within a military context, for instance as part of Anzac Day celebrations.<sup>138</sup> However, as **Figure 3.3** illustrates, interest in smoke concerts was declining even before the war. There is evidence to suggest that, at least in part, this may have been linked

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<sup>136</sup> Mantzourani, "Aroma", 133.

<sup>137</sup> Mantzourani

<sup>138</sup> A search using the term "smoke concert" on the ANL's newspaper database Trove shows that "smoke concerts" were regularly advertised as part of Anzac Day celebrations until as late as 1947.

to efforts by women to promote more wholesome forms of entertainment without alcoholic beverages.

Women were able to attend many smoke concerts but in the Town Hall at least, were usually required to be seated separately from men, in the gallery.<sup>139</sup> Attendance by women at Sydney Liedertafel smoke concerts became so popular that by 1905 the attendance in the galleries exceeded the “roll-up of gentlemen” ensuring that men “who sit around the little tables in the body of the hall are careful to be on their best behaviour”. According to the reviewer the programs were not “watered down” at all for the women. Rather, “there was more ‘manly’ music ... than we get at the average Liedertafel concert.” To prove the point, the reviewer listed the typical repertoire of songs extolling the heroic deeds of men on the sea, at war and in the hunt, going on to say

“Of effeminacy there wasn’t a trace in the work of the singing society. In the opposite direction the performing members of the Liedertafel displayed an almost sensational amount of strength and spirit.”<sup>140</sup>

Despite such boasts of masculinity, the presence of women may have impacted on the characteristic nature of smoke concerts. In a bid to promote their respectability, by 1916 the Liedertafel had separated social activities from music-making activities, firstly abolishing the canteen at smoke

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<sup>139</sup> See *SMH*, 18 October 1902, 7, advertisement for Sydney Liedertafel Smoke Concert to be held in the Sydney Town Hall on 29 October 1902. The announcement states “the galleries will be reserved for ladies and non-smokers”.

<sup>140</sup> *Star* 29 June 1905, 2.

concerts and then replacing smoke concerts with “bread and cheese nights” for the purpose of “convivial intercourse among the performing members”.<sup>141</sup> This suggests that music was part of the ongoing gender debates that were a feature of the period.

### **Music and gender roles**

Women’s increasingly public role in cultural activities in this period has been cited as evidence of a “feminisation of culture”.<sup>142</sup> Such concerns were particularly pronounced in the United States where, according to Campbell, America’s future president Theodore Roosevelt and other men expressed concerns about the growing “feminization” of American culture, particularly the “dominance” women exercised over classical music culture in America.<sup>143</sup> Similarly, Locke and Barr claimed that in the early twentieth century male musicians would “moan in embarrassment” that women were increasingly involved in the organisation of musical activities with 85% of music students being female while 75% (at least) of the audience were also female.<sup>144</sup> Australians were aware of concerns in the United States about “the American nation” being “too much under the domination of the American woman”. In June 1908 a *Herald* article entitled “feminisation” asserted that Australia would not follow America’s lead since it did not have such a high percentage of female teacher as in the American school system and more

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<sup>141</sup> *Sun*, 16 May 1915, 11.

<sup>142</sup> Ann Douglas, *The Feminization of American Culture* (New York: Knopf, 1977).

<sup>143</sup> Campbell, “Politics of Gender”, 448, 57.

<sup>144</sup> Locke and Barr, “Patronage”, 2.

single sex education (as opposed to co-education of girls and boys).<sup>145</sup> While such assertions may now seem outdated, the extent to which Australian culture was impacted by feminine or masculine values in the Federation era continues to be a subject of considerable debate within Australian history.

The historiographical debate focusing on what Lake has described as “the contest between men and women at the end of the nineteenth century for the control of the national culture”<sup>146</sup> has focused on literary culture, with little consideration of musical culture.<sup>147</sup> Beginning the debate in 1958, Australian historian Russell Ward argued that the glorification of bush men by turn of the century writers such as Henry Lawson, A.B. (‘Banjo’) Paterson and Joseph Furphy promoted a national myth of egalitarianism and mateship.<sup>148</sup> Later historians including Davison and Waterhouse argued that these city-based writers were largely projecting their own urban-based fantasies to create a pastoral idyll that did not necessarily reflect the values of all workers.<sup>149</sup> Lake argued that the *Bulletin* writers glorified men’s freedom from the responsibilities of family life and that the corresponding neglect of women prompted resistance from women, who in response

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<sup>145</sup> *SMH*, 13 June 1908, 12.

<sup>146</sup> Marilyn Lake, “The Politics of Respectability: Identifying the Masculinist Context”, in *Debutante Nation: Feminism Contests the 1890s*, ed. Susan Magarey, Sue Rowley and Susan Sheridan (St Leonards, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 1993), 116.

<sup>147</sup> See for example Graeme Davison, “Sydney and the Bush: An Urban Context for the Australian Legend”, *Australian Historical Studies* 18, no. 71 (1978): 429–51; Jane Clark and Bridget Whitelaw, eds., *Golden Summers: Heidelberg and Beyond* (Sydney: The Corp., 1986); and John Docker, *Australian Cultural Elites* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1974).

<sup>148</sup> Russel Braddock Ward, *The Australian Legend* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1978).

<sup>149</sup> Davison, “Sydney and the Bush”, 191–209; Richard Waterhouse, “The Vision Splendid: Conceptualizing the Bush, 1813–1913,” *The Journal of Popular Culture* 33, no. 1 (1999): 27.

became politically engaged in reform initiatives and obtaining suffrage as a means of social empowerment.<sup>150</sup> Docker has noted that city-based writers of the 1890s did not focus exclusively on rural subject matter but covered a diverse range of topics,<sup>151</sup> claiming that the focus on the pastoral myth has meant that other visions of masculinity have been overlooked. He has suggested that from a post-modern perspective a broader range of responses from both genders needs to be considered that takes into account “the presence of heterogeneity as well as unifying force, the centrifugal as well as the centripetal, discontinuity as well as continuity, disorder as well as order”.<sup>152</sup>

The musical world at that time paints just such a complex picture of competing notions of masculinity and of femininity. Both men and women claimed a superior understanding and sensitivity as music lovers. With the example of Melba, Crossley and Sherwin, women claimed “musical talent” as a distinguishing feature of the “typical Australian woman” who has a “soul for music”.<sup>153</sup> Conversely, some men claimed that while women may superficially enjoy music only men could fully appreciate music’s spiritual

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<sup>150</sup> Lake, “Politics of Respectability”, 122–26.

<sup>151</sup> John Docker, “The Feminist Legend: A New Historicism?”, in *Debutante Nation: Feminism Contests the 1890s*, ed. Susan Magarey, Sue Rowley, and Susan Sheridan (St Leonards, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 1993), 23.

<sup>152</sup> Docker, 19.

<sup>153</sup> *World’s News*, 30 January 1904, 1. See also Brewer, 54–5, who claimed that Australian women were often the best singers and pianists.



dimensions. For instance, a male character in a short story published in 1907 in the *Sunday Times* made the following observation:

Men are, almost without exception, fond of music; but women often pretend they are. I have noticed at band concerts in the Brisbane Botanical Gardens, men standing here and there, listening intently to every rise and fall of the music, and women seated on the grass or walking up and down absorbed in details of dress and babies, or the actions of their neighbours—chatter, chatter all the time!<sup>154</sup>

The presence of women at concerts was even considered a distraction by some and was one of the reasons given for darkening the hall during concerts.<sup>155</sup> According to Campbell, gender relations in the vibrant musical worlds of various American cities were similarly confused, leading him to comment that the “muddled state of gender roles in the new century” also played out within the musical arena.<sup>156</sup>

While women increasingly participated in the musical arena, they often (although not always) did so in the shadow of men who, as I will discuss in the coming chapters, came to assume powerful positions in the musical bureaucracies that women worked so hard to build. As McCarthy observed in her study of women’s culture in the United States, contrary to popular perceptions that the arts were becoming “feminized, cultural institutions typically emerged as “important building blocks in the

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<sup>154</sup> *Sunday Times*, 6 January 1907, 4.

<sup>155</sup> *ATCJ*, 6 September 1902, 31.

<sup>156</sup> Campbell, “Politics of Gender”, 465.

emergence of a national male policy-making elite".<sup>157</sup> Despite this, music presented new opportunities for women, providing both a means of earning a living as music teachers and a pathway for participation in the public sphere. While, as the smoke concerts suggest, many men preferred music as a form of socialisation rather than as a form of spiritual enlightenment, as I will discuss in the next chapter, there was a significant group of men, particularly professional men and merchants, who were at the forefront of iconic classical music initiatives, particularly the establishment of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra. For such men, music was a means of asserting cultural leadership at a time when the middle class were becoming anxious about an increasingly politically engaged workforce. In the next chapter I will discuss the way in which class anxieties were acted out in the musical world. However, before proceeding in that direction I will briefly discuss the way in which religious rivalries of the Federation era were also played out in the musical sphere. The groups promoting classical music, while nominally non-denominational, were mostly Protestant and were at the forefront of the Protestant moral improvement agenda of the period.<sup>158</sup> Many of the endemic religious battles of the period also played out in the concert hall.

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<sup>157</sup> Kathleen D. McCarthy, *Women's Culture* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1991), xiv.

<sup>158</sup> Matthews, *Dance Hall*, 206.

## Music and religion

According to Judith Brett's analysis of liberalism in the early twentieth century, the moral virtues promoted by the middle class were strongly associated with Protestantism.<sup>159</sup> Haweis's dual persona as a protestant clergyman and an emissary for the classical music cause certainly hints at such an association. Music-making was an integral part of Protestant religious and social gatherings. Some bands and choirs such as the United Protestant Choral Union and the Glebe Protestant Musical Society also promoted themselves as exclusively Protestant organisations. Meetings of the anti-Catholic, morally conservative political group, the Australian Protestant Defence Association, were usually combined with musical entertainments. In addition they organised "grand concerts" and "entertainments" which focused around a miscellaneous program of songs, band music and recitations.<sup>160</sup> Such community building events were designed to promote a Protestant identity rather than an identity based on musical choice. Yet the two were closely linked.

A heightened Protestant militancy was a feature of the latter part of the nineteenth and early part of the twentieth century. Scholars generally interpret it as a response to anxieties about social unrest and fear of "creeping socialism" among the working class which threatened to end "individual enterprise" from a largely middle class Protestant

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<sup>159</sup> Brett, *Australian Liberals*, 11.

<sup>160</sup> See for instance reviews of concerts at *SMH*, 7 April 1904, 8 and the *Telegraph*, 16 October 1912, 18.

establishment.<sup>161</sup> They dreamt of a Christian Commonwealth where social harmony might be achieved by individual self-restraint and submission to the rule of Christ.<sup>162</sup> The solution for most Protestants to the problems of urbanisation was not social reform but “individual regeneration”.<sup>163</sup> That is, their focus was saving souls—any soul—although the focus of their attention was often those they perceived to have moral flaws, particularly those engaged in consuming alcohol. This motivated their engagement with temperance movements, which were primarily organised by Protestants. As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, engagement with music was offered as a morally uplifting alternative to alcohol consumption and a means of imposing middle class values and reducing the perceived antagonism of the working classes.

Notions that classical music provided a means of inner transformation of the individual were a natural fit for Protestants. While the church itself (at least at this stage) was not directly involved in the classical music cause, the missionary efforts of both music lovers and the church significantly overlapped. Both were focused on addressing social ills by reforming the individual.

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<sup>161</sup> Richard Broome, *Treasure in Earthen Vessels: Protestant Christianity in New South Wales Society 1900–1914* (St. Lucia, Q.: University of Queensland Press, 1980), 11. See also John David Bollen, *Protestantism and Social Reform in New South Wales 1890–1910* (Clayton, Vic.: Melbourne University Press, 1972), 124.

<sup>162</sup> Broome, *Treasure*, 9; Bollen, *Protestantism*, 25–6; and Michael Hogan, *The Sectarian Strand: Religion in Australian History* (Ringwood, Vic.: Penguin Books, 1987), 154.

<sup>163</sup> Broome, 9.

In the early 1900s, *The Catholic Press* had a somewhat ambivalent attitude towards music. While many articles celebrated traditional Irish music<sup>164</sup> and church music,<sup>165</sup> as well as the generally positive moral role that the “highest forms” of music might exert<sup>166</sup> some articles expressed concerns that “here in Australia the cult of music is carried too far”.<sup>167</sup> According to one writer:

the higher school of music ... has become a mania ... a mania to have to feign understanding, and comprehension in matters of music, to discuss the composer, either German or French ... It is surely an exaggeration, and one may be fond of music for its own sake, yet not do, as so many are striving to do just now — dissect and explain every score, every bar, without really being a virtuosos or a musician.<sup>168</sup>

Despite such ambivalence Catholic schools invested heavily in musical education and every year, *The Catholic Press* recorded long lists of music examination results along with other school prizes and results.<sup>169</sup> The dominance of Catholic schools in this arena seemed to attract some Protestant students, prompting warnings that Protestants who allowed their daughters to attend the Convent for a musical education also risked religious indoctrination.<sup>170</sup>

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<sup>164</sup> See for example *The Catholic Press*, 4 February 1899, 3; *The Catholic Press*, 17 February 1900, 20; and *The Catholic Press*, 19 January 1901, 9.

<sup>165</sup> See for example, *The Catholic Press*, 6 October 1900, 3; and *The Catholic Press*, 18 February 1904, 7; and 30 April 1908, 12.

<sup>166</sup> *The Catholic Press*, 28 September 1901, 26.

<sup>167</sup> *The Catholic Press*, 9 January 1908, 21.

<sup>168</sup> *The Catholic Press*, 4 August 1910, 21.

<sup>169</sup> See for example *The Catholic Press*, 29 December 1900, 3–13.

<sup>170</sup> See for example *Watchman*, 4 March 1905, 2 and 9 February 1911, 8.

Many of Sydney's leading musicians, including composers and organists John Delany and Ernest Truman, were Catholics and, notably, the first director of the NSW State Conservatorium, Henri Verbrugghen, was also Catholic, although according to Collins, most staff and leading benefactors had Protestant connections.<sup>171</sup> She claimed that music functioned to reinforce rather than challenge Protestant dominance. However, it is also true that periodically the classical music cause united Protestants and Catholics in a way that made religion irrelevant. For instance, as I will suggest in chapter five, Verbrugghen attracted broad and passionate support across the community despite his Catholic background.

### **Conclusion:**

In the first decade of the twentieth century, most concerts continued in the tradition of the miscellaneous concert. However, the higher aesthetic values of "classical music" were gradually percolating through the population. This was aided by newspaper discussions, concert reviews, claims by and about visiting celebrity artists, changed practices within the concert hall, and the introduction of new technology such as the pianola. Music lovers also worked with social reformers who promoted classical music as a useful tool in their quest for civic reform and social harmony. New understandings of music emphasised the internal, subjective musical experience, promoting musical preference as a form of self-expression that gave a sense of identity

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<sup>171</sup> Diane Collins, *Sounds from the Stables: The Story of Sydney's Conservatorium* (Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2001), 95.

and purpose to those who pursued their enthusiasm for classical music.

Although this group often had diverse, competing agendas, they self-identified as music lovers, united by their concern that music should offer more than superficial sensory appeal. Rather, they believed it should facilitate emotional control, inner harmony and spiritual renewal.

Women featured prominently among music lovers, particularly as music teachers and students. Men were also actively engaged in promoting classical music; however the brass bands and smoke concerts that acted as homosocial gatherings conformed to older more participative models of music-making. Gender, class and religious conflicts of the period were played out in the musical world, with women often promoting newer ideas about music as a form of spiritual uplift that gave them a means of participating in the public sphere. They were an integral part of Protestant moral reform efforts which supported musical activities as an alternative to what they perceived as more morally questionable activities. For them, such reform efforts were an intermediary step as they moved to a greater focus on the transformation of the individual as a means of achieving their vision of a harmonious society comprising enlightened and engaged individuals.

Being a music lover was a performative act for the middle class and those aspiring to identify with middle class values. By attending concerts they became a part of a group of like-minded people who came to hear the music as an expression of their ideals and beliefs. They gave expression to a

modern “self” who, in Rose’s terms, “interrogate[s] and narrate[s] themselves in terms of a psychological ‘inner life’ that holds the secrets of their identity, which they are to discover and fulfil, which is the standard against which the living of an ‘authentic’ life is to be judged”.<sup>172</sup> Although members of the middle class were beginning to appropriate and appreciate classical music as a symbol of their social position this did not mean that working people could not also continue to appreciate classical music. In the next two chapters I will discuss ways in which classical music became a vehicle for expressing class conflicts and suggest ways in which working people resisted middle class efforts to separate classical music from other types of music.

The most heartfelt ambition of classical music lovers was the creation of an orchestra. The establishment the first Sydney Symphony Orchestra in 1908 was a landmark event that demands a chapter of its own.

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<sup>172</sup> Nikolas S. Rose, *Inventing Our Selves: Psychology, Power, and Personhood*, Cambridge Studies in the History of Psychology (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 22.



## 4.

# Orchestrating the Metropolis:

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According to Weber, the modern orchestral concert came to be one of “the most central civic and national rituals in the industrial age, grandiosely celebrating high art and the new social order.”<sup>1</sup> The establishment of an orchestra was a critical step towards the creation of a classical music culture in Sydney and was a key focus for many of the music lovers discussed in the previous chapter. On 24 June 1908, a headline in the *Sydney Morning Herald* proudly announced the formation of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra as a “permanent professional orchestra”.<sup>2</sup> This orchestra operated a regular series of concerts from 1908 until 1917 and gave first Sydney performances of many of the great orchestral works of the classical repertoire. The official history of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, *Play On*, published by the ABC in 1992, passes over the original Sydney Symphony Orchestra in a short paragraph, claiming (incorrectly) that it existed from 1908 to 1914. It included a passing comment about rehearsals being held “above a fish shop”,<sup>3</sup> thereby implying that the orchestra was of little account. This ignores the enormous

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<sup>1</sup> William Weber, “The Rise of the Classical Repertoire in Nineteenth-Century Orchestral Concerts,” in *The Orchestra: Origins and Transformations*, ed. Joan Peyser (New York: Scribner, 1986), 8.

<sup>2</sup> *SMH*, 24 June 1908, 8.

<sup>3</sup> *SMH*, 7.

community energy that was channelled into the establishment of this orchestra documented in this chapter.

Almost all agents had a vested interest in creating an orchestra. These included musicians seeking to increase the status of their profession and expand job opportunities for themselves, civic-minded members of the middle class with ambitions to establish Sydney's reputation as a cultured and harmonious city, music lovers who wished to hear more orchestral music, and theatrical entrepreneurs who wished to attract larger audiences for their concert artists with the added attraction of an orchestra. Their early endeavours to create an orchestra therefore provide an opportunity to gain insights about the ways the agents interacted.

This chapter will focus on the kaleidoscope of shifting relationships that brought all stakeholders together to create an orchestra, despite differing motivations. These alliances, with all their dramas, tensions, successes and failures, demonstrate the negotiated, almost haphazard way that cultural change occurred as well as many of the financial challenges involved in establishing an orchestra and a classical music culture.

### **Bands *versus* orchestras**

In the nineteenth century, the terms "orchestra" and "band" were loosely applied to an ill-defined body of instrumentalists regardless of size<sup>4</sup> and

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<sup>4</sup> Michael Broyles, *Music of the Highest Class: elitism and populism in antebellum Boston* (New Haven Yale University Press, 1992), 319.

there was often not a clear distinction between the two.<sup>5</sup> Musicians routinely belonged to both bands and orchestras, each with a similar repertoire which included overtures, operatic arias, waltzes, polkas, fantasies and marches.<sup>6</sup> Spitzer has claimed that orchestras were a ubiquitous part of American urban life with literally hundreds of orchestras performing on a daily basis in theatres, restaurants, beer gardens, concert halls, circuses and amusement parks.<sup>7</sup> Similarly, in Australia a band might consist of wind instruments for outdoor entertainment or strings for inside entertainment, but almost any grouping of instruments might be called an orchestra.<sup>8</sup> For instance, in chapter two, I discussed an 1850 concert by an orchestra that was comprised mostly of woodwind and brass instruments and so would most likely be considered a band in today's usage of the word.

During the course of the nineteenth century the term "orchestra" came to be used more exclusively to refer to a strictly defined group of instrumentalists which included players of strings, paired wind and brass instruments and percussion<sup>9</sup> coming together to perform the symphonic repertoire of the classical music canon.<sup>10</sup> In Europe, the Leipzig Gewandhaus

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<sup>5</sup> Lawrence W. Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), Kindle, Loc. 1175.

<sup>6</sup> Levine, Loc 1188.

<sup>7</sup> John Spitzer, "The Ubiquity and Diversity of Nineteenth-Century American Orchestras," in *American Orchestras in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. John Spitzer (London: The University of Chicago Press, 2012), 19.

<sup>8</sup> John Whiteoak, "Popular Music, Militarism, Women, and the Early 'Brass Band' in Australia," *Australasian Music Research* 6 (2001): 30–31.

<sup>9</sup> George B. Stauffer, "The Twentieth Century and the Orchestra as Museum," in *The Modern Orchestra: A Creation of the Late Eighteenth Century*, ed. Joan Peyser (New York: Scribner, 1986), 41.

<sup>10</sup> Weber, "Rise of the Classical Repertoire", 361–86.

Orchestra was established as early as 1781 and London's Philharmonic Society was established in 1813, along with the *Orchestre de la Société des Concerts du Conservatoire* in Paris in 1828 and the Vienna Philharmonic in 1842. The establishment of orchestras accelerated in the latter part of the century when many of Europe's major orchestras, Berlin Philharmonic (1882), the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam (1888) and the Munich Philharmonic (1893) were established.<sup>11</sup> The first permanent professional orchestra in the United States was the Boston Symphony Orchestra, established in 1881, followed by the Chicago Symphony in 1891. While the New York Philharmonic had been in continuous operation since 1842 it did not become a permanent professional orchestra until the first decade of the twentieth century.<sup>12</sup> London did not have a full-time professional orchestra until 1927<sup>13</sup> although including the Hallé Orchestra in Manchester was established in 1857. This slow development reflected the struggle most orchestras faced in obtaining ongoing funding that would enable them to engage full-time professional musicians for regular orchestral performances

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<sup>11</sup> Spitzer, "Orchestras: American and European," in *American Orchestras in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. John Spitzer (London: The University of Chicago Press, 2012), 316; John Spitzer and Neal Zaslaw. 2001 "Orchestra." *Grove Music Online*. Accessed 27 Jan. 2019.

<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.virtual.anu.edu.au/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000020402>; and Peter Anthony Bloom, "The Public for Orchestral Music in the Nineteenth Century", in *The Orchestra: Origins and Transformations*, edited by Joan Peyser, (New York: Scribner, 1986.), 251-81.

<sup>12</sup> Karen Ahlquist, "Performance to 'Permanence': Orchestra Building in Late Nineteenth-Century Cincinnati," in *American Orchestras in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. John Spitzer (London: The University of Chicago Press, 2012), 156.

<sup>13</sup> Nicholas Kenyon, *The BBC Symphony Orchestra: The First Fifty Years, 1930–1980* (London: British Broadcasting Corporation, 1981), 11.

and rehearsals in the absence of court patronage.<sup>14</sup> Sydney's ambition to establish symphony orchestras in its major cities was part of this world-wide trend.

The great musical centres of the world were part of a musical "mind map". This is a term used by historian Desley Deacon to describe the way Australians located themselves in the world through various international connections.<sup>15</sup> For most major cities in the Western world a professional full-time orchestra was a potent symbol of a city's cultural progress. Sydney's musical community was keen to make its mark on the international map not just as the recipient of overseas talent but as a worthy actor. However, like other cities, Sydney struggled to find funding to make such an orchestra viable in the long run.

While many entrepreneurs became involved in organising orchestral concerts in both Europe and the United States, this was a financially risky venture and most failed to be sustainable over the long term, even when they included more popular music in an effort to attract a larger audience.<sup>16</sup> A unique solution was found in Boston when a single, exceptionally wealthy individual, Henry Lee Higginson, a partner in a brokerage firm and music

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<sup>14</sup> Peter Gay, *The Bourgeois Experience: Pleasure Wars*, vol. 5 (New York; London: WW Norton & Company, 1998), 178.

<sup>15</sup> Desley Deacon, "Location! Location! Location! Mind maps and theatrical circuits in Australian transnational history", *History Australia* 5 (3), 2008, 81.1–81.16.

<sup>16</sup> Paul DiMaggio, "Cultural Entrepreneurship in Nineteenth-Century Boston: The Creation of an Organizational Base for High Culture in America," in *Rethinking Popular Culture: Contemporary Perspectives in Cultural Studies*, ed. Chandra Mukerji and Michael Schudson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 376–8.

enthusiast, established an orchestra governed by a not-for-profit body established on a corporate model, dependent on private philanthropy.<sup>17</sup> Higginson was a member of a urban elite known as the “Boston Brahmins” who, according to DiMaggio, “were able to build organisational forms that first, isolated high culture and second, differentiated it from popular culture.”<sup>18</sup> Because this orchestra had independent financing, it was not dependent on commercial success and could police a strict demarcation between entertainment and art music.

In Sydney, although there was certainly an emerging cultural and social elite,<sup>19</sup> there was no equivalent to the “Boston Brahmins”. Other strategies, of necessity, had to be found to address ongoing concerns that Sydney was lagging behind other cities because it did not have an orchestra. After initial individual efforts by entrepreneurs and then musicians to establish an orchestra, Sydney’s most successful strategy before the establishment of the Conservatorium was for all stakeholders to work together to establish an orchestra.

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<sup>17</sup> DiMaggio, 393.

<sup>18</sup> DiMaggio, 374–5.

<sup>19</sup> See for example Jill Julius Matthews, *Dance Hall & Picture Palace: Sydney's Romance with Modernity* (Sydney: Currency Press, 2005). Matthews found that by 1931 the upper echelons of Sydney Society (households earning more than £500 per annum) constituted about 10% or some 3 000 households.

## **Initial attempts to establish an orchestra in the 1890s**

Momentum grew for the establishment of a permanent orchestra in the aftermath of the Cowen orchestra concerts in 1889.<sup>20</sup> According to the *Herald's* Art, Music and Drama Columnist:

Prior to the visit of Mr Frederic Cowen with the Melbourne Exhibition Orchestra, there was general apathy about this class of music ... a taste was created for orchestral compositions, and with it came also the desire to make a new departure in that direction.<sup>21</sup>

After hearing the orchestra some now became dissatisfied with the organ, claiming "not even the biggest organ in the world, manipulated by the ablest organist procurable, can be even a faint representative of a genuine orchestra such as we have been privileged to hear at this time".<sup>22</sup> While acknowledging funding for such an enterprise would be something of a stretch for government coffers, the correspondent argued that "if applied to the sustentation of an orchestra which would be elevating and instructive to the community at large" it might be justifiable.<sup>23</sup>

Since government funding was not immediately forthcoming, entertainment entrepreneurs were among the first to respond to the clamour for an orchestra. George Rignold, who (as discussed in chapter two) had been one of the Cowen concert sponsors, attempted to establish a series of

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<sup>20</sup> See for instance, *SMH*, 7 February 1889, 4 & *SMH*, 11 February 1889, 5.

<sup>21</sup> *SMH*, 4 January 1890, 6.

<sup>22</sup> *SMH*, 9 February 1889, 9.

<sup>23</sup> *SMH*.

Sunday evening orchestral concerts conducted by the Italian conductor  
Signor Hazon, at Her Majesty's theatre commencing in May 1889.



**H**ER MAJESTY'S THEATRE.

Mr. GEORGE RIGNOLD,  
being encouraged by the success of the late  
COWEN CONCERTS,  
and feeling that the musical taste of Sydney warrants the  
enterprise, has made arrangements with the eminent  
Conductor  
SIGNOR HAZON,

to give a series of those sound pictures from the great  
masters, in the rendition of which he has become so truly  
celebrated.

These special high-class Orchestral Concerts will be given  
every SUNDAY EVENING. A few Afternoon Concerts will  
also be given, to suit the convenience of those residing at a  
distance and those unable to be present on Sunday evenings.

FIRST  
GRAND ORCHESTRAL AND VOCAL CONCERT  
GRAND ORCHESTRAL AND VOCAL CONCERT.  
TO-MORROW (Sunday) EVENING,  
TO-MORROW (Sunday) EVENING,  
TO-MORROW (Sunday) EVENING,

May 5th,  
under the direction of  
THE EMINENT CONDUCTOR  
(specially engaged)  
SIGNOR HAZON  
SIGNOR HAZON  
SIGNOR HAZON,

with  
AN ORCHESTRA OF 36 PERFORMERS  
AN ORCHESTRA OF 36 PERFORMERS.

(Leaders—Mr. Walter Rice and Mr. F. Engarde),  
together with the following artists :—  
SIGNORINA REBOTTARO. SIGNORINA REBOTTARO.  
SIGNORINA REBOTTARO. SIGNORINA REBOTTARO.  
(her farewell appearance).  
SIGNORINA AJMO. SIGNORINA AJMO.  
SIGNORINA AJMO. SIGNORINA AJMO.  
Miss FLORA GRAUPNER. Miss FLORA GRAUPNER.  
Miss FLORA GRAUPNER. Miss FLORA GRAUPNER.  
SIGNOR VENTURE.  
SIGNOR MANCINI  
Mr. GEO. SINCLAIR.

- PROGRAMME.
1. March—"Tannhauser" ... .. Wagner  
ORCHESTRA.
  2. "Il Monaco" (The Monk) Aria ... Meyerbeer  
Signor MANCINI.
  3. Celebrated Largo in G ... .. Handel  
ORCHESTRA.
  4. "Carnevale di Venezia" (Variations) ... Benedict  
Signorina REBOTTARO.
  5. "Bid me Good-bye"—Romance ... Tosti  
Mr. SINCLAIR.
  6. "Souvenir Gavotte" ... .. Zelman  
ORCHESTRA.
  7. "The Power of Love" ... .. Balfe  
Miss GRAUPNER.
  8. "Salve Regina"—Quartette ... Hazon  
Signorina AJMO, Miss GRAUPNER, Signor VENTURI,  
Signor MANCINI.

- Part II.
9. Funeral March, from opera "Hamlet" ... Faccio  
ORCHESTRA.
  10. Cielo e Mar, Romanza in opera "Gioconda" Ponchielli  
Signor VENTURI.
  11. "Lo, Hear the Gentle Lark" ... Bishop  
Signorina REBOTTARO (with orchestra).
  12. "Ave Maria," from "Othello," last opera by Verdi
  13. Pizzicati, from Ballet "Silvia" ... Delibes
  14. "Juanita," Spanish song ... Yrapies  
Signorina REBOTTARO.
  15. Vespress—"Siciliennes" (overture) ... Verdi  
ORCHESTRA.

Conductor, Signor HAZON.  
Doors open 7. Commence 8.  
PRICES as USUAL. Box Plan at Theatre.  
J. P. MACDONALD, Acting Manager.

Image 4.1: Advertisement, SMH, 4 May 1889, 2.

Noticeably, the advertised program for this concert (**Image 4.1**) described “a series of sound pictures from the grand masters”, focused on opera excerpts and vocal works rather than the symphonic repertoire presented by Cowen. Rignold’s initiative did not attract much support and was soon abandoned.<sup>24</sup> A second orchestra, calling itself the *National Orchestra*, held a series of orchestra concerts with sponsorship from the proprietor of the Darlinghurst Skating Rink.<sup>25</sup> These concerts were also poorly attended and soon discontinued.<sup>26</sup> After this, Hazon took the initiative himself. Capitalising on the nationalistic feeling now associated with music, he created an orchestra which he also called the “national orchestra”. However, he too struggled to make ends meet in the initial series of concerts held at the beginning of 1890, despite attracting audiences of between 1200 and 3000. To try to find a way to continue the concerts, a meeting of sixty prominent gentlemen which included the Governor, Lord Carrington, Mr S. Burdekin, (the Mayor and also chair of the meeting) and Justice Stephen, was held in May 1890 in the City Council Chamber.<sup>27</sup> The meeting resolved to attract subscribers of a guarantee fund to underwrite the costs of the orchestra.<sup>28</sup> Although the possibility of seeking government funding was discussed they decided not to pursue this option, optimistically claiming there were “quite a sufficient number of people perfectly able and willing to do all that was necessary to

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<sup>24</sup> *SMH*, 8 June 1889, 7.

<sup>25</sup> *SMH*, 21 September 1889, 12.

<sup>26</sup> *SMH*, 4 November 1889, 4.

<sup>27</sup> *SMH*, 20 May 1890, 7.

<sup>28</sup> *SMH*, 20 May 1890, 7.

ensure a continuance of the concerts”.<sup>29</sup> Despite this enthusiasm the required funds did not eventuate. The financial position of the orchestra did not improve in the latter part of the year and the management committee was left having to raise funds to cover their liabilities.<sup>30</sup> This initiative also was subsequently abandoned.

One of Hazon’s main difficulties in establishing an orchestra was that professional musicians were mostly engaged playing in theatre orchestras in the evenings. His orchestra was therefore confined to giving matinee performances on Saturday afternoons, which limited the audience who could attend.<sup>31</sup> In 1891, Hazon abandoned the idea of a professional full-time orchestra and settled for establishing the Sydney Amateur Orchestra.<sup>32</sup> This initiative was much more sustainable and the orchestra held regular concerts until 1915. However, an “amateur” orchestra fell far short of the ambition for a permanent professional orchestra—a subject, which, as we will see throughout this thesis, was to be a focus of music lovers for the next forty years.

### **Musicians’ Union Attempts to Establish Bands and Orchestras**

While Signor Hazon continued his work with the Sydney Amateur Orchestra, the Musicians’ Union pursued its own agenda to expand

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<sup>29</sup> *SMH*, 20 May 1890, 7.

<sup>30</sup> *SMH*, 31 December 1890, 11.

<sup>31</sup> *SMH*, 21 July 1891, 4–5.

<sup>32</sup> *SMH*, 28 April 1892, 2.

opportunities for professional musicians. To achieve this, the Union had first to establish a clear distinction between professional and amateur musicians. Bourdieu has argued that the symbolic struggle between various cultural agents is most often carried out through the mediation of professionals who act as spokespersons for the groups that call on their particular type of competence or skill.<sup>33</sup> A particular social entity such as the professional musician can only exist if there are one or several agents who can assert “with a reasonable chance of being taken seriously” that such a group exists.<sup>34</sup> Professional musicians faced considerable competition from regimental bands and amateur bands<sup>35</sup> who often undercut professional bands.<sup>36</sup> One of the precipitating reasons for establishing a union was to differentiate professional players from amateur and military groups and to ensure appropriate remuneration for professional players.

One means of addressing the problem of competition from other bands was for the union to form their own, high status, band or orchestra. An examination of the first available membership list dating from 1908 shows a large number of brass players, particularly cornet players with no orchestral trumpet listed (cornet players possibly doubling as trumpeters when required). The cornet was actually the second most common

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<sup>33</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, "What Makes a Social Class? On the Theoretical and Practical Existence of Groups," *Berkeley Journal of Sociology* 32 (1987): 14.

<sup>34</sup> Bourdieu, 15.

<sup>35</sup> There was an abundance of amateur bands operating in workplaces, unions, religious groups and a range of voluntary organisations in this period.

<sup>36</sup> See *SMH*, 9 March 1895, 5; 12 March 1897, 3; & 15 March 1897, 3.

instrument after violin and before piano (see **Figure 4.1**). Altogether the 132 Union members played 162 instruments (many doubling or even tripling instruments). The available instrumentation indicates that in its early days the Union was in a good position to create bands but would be stretched to provide an orchestra that could perform the works of the canonic classical repertoire. Because of this, the establishment of a professional “military” band, higher in status than an informal or amateur band, initially presented a possible alternative for the Union as a means of securing the professional recognition they desired. In any event, the Union’s interests were best served by not focusing on the orchestral music of the great masters in an environment where a variety of tastes continued to prevail.

<b>Instrument</b>	<b>No. of players</b>
Flute	6
Oboe	4
Clarinet	6
Bassoon	3
Cornet	23
Horn	7
Trombone	11
Bombardon/Tuba	6
Timpani/percussion	7
Piano	22
Violin	39
Viola	11
Cello	3
Double Bass	13
Music Director	2
Total No. Instruments played	163

**Figure 4.1: Instruments played by 1908 Musicians' Union members<sup>37</sup>**

In 1900 the Union decided to establish a military band with one George Bentley, who claimed to be an Associate of the Royal College of Music and to have belonged to the Coldstream Band, as bandmaster.<sup>38</sup> Despite their best efforts, Unionists found it difficult to establish the superior claims of this band and differentiate it from other military or amateur bands. In 1903 the Union decided to try to obtain special recognition from the

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<sup>37</sup> Compiled from "List of Names and Addresses of the Members of "The Musicians' Union of Australasia" New South Wales Local No. 1, NBA, T7 1/3.

<sup>38</sup> MBA Meeting, February 19, 1901, Minute Bk 3, NBA, T7 1/2.

Council by sending a deputation from the Musicians' Union to the Sydney City Council proposing that the Council engage "either the formation of a line military organisation for outdoor purposes, or a good orchestra for indoor playing".<sup>39</sup> To this end, they suggested the formation of a band of twenty performers to give six or seven performances per week with an estimated annual expenditure of £3 438. The Lord Mayor was reported as expressing sympathy with the "modern view" that councils did not exist solely for the "cleansing of streets, &c., but had charge of the health and also to some extent of the amusements of the city".<sup>40</sup> However, he regretted he was unable to spend £3 500 per annum on a band.

Despite this setback, the Musicians' Union again returned to Council to suggest the establishment of a City Band of sixty players, requesting a lesser sum of £250, which the Union claimed would be supplemented by £500 from the NSW Government.<sup>41</sup> The Council unfortunately could not see its way clear to reverse its former decision. However in 1905 the Council did offer an amateur group, the Band Association, £300 in prize money for a band competition to be held in Hyde Park as free public entertainment.<sup>42</sup> The Musicians' Union was outraged, claiming this would "pauperise" its members, but it was unable to move the Council to change its mind.<sup>43</sup> No

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<sup>39</sup> *SMH*, 16 January 1903, 3.

<sup>40</sup> *SMH*.

<sup>41</sup> *SMH*, 16 September 1904, 6.

<sup>42</sup> *SMH*, 6 September 1904, 9.

<sup>43</sup> *SMH*, 16 October 1905, 5.

doubt, the Council saw the prospect of 60 free concerts promised by the Band Association as better value for money than the 30 concerts the Union had promised<sup>44</sup>.

Ehrlich has detailed similar efforts by the English Musicians' Union to obtain council funding at the beginning of the twentieth century. He suggested such negotiations were partly motivated by the Union's desire to improve wages and conditions in the theatre. According to this logic unionists saw local government contracts as possible bargaining counters for fair wages.<sup>45</sup> The parallels with the Sydney situation are quite close and it is likely that local Union members knew about the Union's initiatives in England. However, in the Sydney context jobs in the theatres were precarious at best. Sydney unionists were more worried about competition from amateur bands and overseas bands, a theme that crops up repeatedly in Union papers and in newspapers. In Sydney, therefore, the attempts to attract government funding can be seen as part of a Union strategy to establish a unique position for themselves within the musical sphere that would enable them to minimise competition.

Many work groups had their own amateur bands which were often closely linked with their own union. For instance, the Victorian Boot Trade Band was formed "to drum up support when the union was at a low ebb in

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<sup>44</sup> *SMH*, 15 September 1905, 5.

<sup>45</sup> Cyril Ehrlich, *The Music Profession in Britain since the Eighteenth Century: A Social History* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1985), 165.



the depression of 1896".<sup>46</sup> Such bands were often actually more popular with other unions than the Musicians' Union band and, as Bythell observed, the Musicians' Union band struggled to compete with them for engagements even at trade union events such as the annual union picnic and the iconic Eight Hour Day processions.<sup>47</sup> In 1905 the Brickmakers' Union justified employing a non Musicians' Union band as all the members of the band they employed were trade unionists who had previously provided services free of charge to play for benefits that assisted injured members.<sup>48</sup> The Musicians' Union was particularly resentful of the Railway Band which had often played a leading role in union events. With their striking appearance in "black uniforms laced with silver" they had led the Trades Section during the Federation Celebrations procession through Sydney.<sup>49</sup> The Union claimed the Railway Band openly competed against those who "depended on their engagements in that direction for their livelihood".<sup>50</sup>

The Union lodged official protests with the Trades and Labor Council on several occasions about being undercut by amateurs. The matter was discussed at some length at a meeting of the Sydney Labour Council in 1905. According to the *Herald's* report of the discussion, the Council eventually agreed "that the principle of trades unionism is outraged if a union member

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<sup>46</sup> Duncan Bythell, "The Brass Band in Australia: The Transplantation of British Popular Culture, 1850–1950," in *Band: The Brass Band Movement in the 19th and 20th Centuries*, ed. Trevor Herbert (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1991), 158.

<sup>47</sup> Bythell, 159.

<sup>48</sup> *SMH*, 7 April 1905, 6.

<sup>49</sup> *SMH*, 2 January 1901, 9.

<sup>50</sup> *SMH*, 22 April 1904, 3.

accepts employment at any other trade unless he becomes a member of the union of that trade.”<sup>51</sup> In regard to Eight Hour Day Processions, it was agreed to give priority to the Musicians Union, even though in reality, the Musicians’ Union had difficulty in finding wind players not otherwise engaged to provide the required band.<sup>52</sup> This resolution did not satisfy anyone. Union bands and the Musicians’ Union continued to debate their rival claims with the Musicians’ Union periodically considering relinquishing their connection with Trades Hall.

The Musicians’ Union also faced competition from foreign bands. They held a particularly long standing grievance about two German bands (which probably included temporary and permanent German residents) which undercut professional musicians, securing engagements at garden parties, sports meetings and even from the government at a much lower cost than local bands.<sup>53</sup> Foreign musicians also came to Australia under contract for engagements in the theatre and with visiting bands. In 1902, for instance, J.C. Williamson refused to meet a deputation from the Labor Council and threatened instead to obtain musicians from Italy who would work for a lower rate.<sup>54</sup> The Musicians’ Union was not the only Union to be concerned about competition from foreign workers at that time.<sup>55</sup> They often lobbied

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<sup>51</sup> *SMH*, 7 April 1905, 6.

<sup>52</sup> Secretary’s Report, Quarterly General Meeting, November 6, 1906, Minute Bk 5, *NBA*, T7 1/4.

<sup>53</sup> See *Telegraph*, 31 May 1904, 9, *SMH*, 1 June 1904, 6 & *EN*, 8 September 1909, 10.

<sup>54</sup> *Star*, 25 April 1902, 3.

<sup>55</sup> *Telegraph*, 5 August 1904, 3.

with other members of the union movement against the importation of foreign workers from the earliest days of the twentieth century.<sup>56</sup> Their ongoing opposition to foreign musicians in the 1930s (discussed in chapter seven) needs to be seen within this historical context.

A more novel form of competition came from a Miss Ruby H. Guest, music teacher, singer and multi-instrumentalist, who established the Austral Mandolin and Banjo Orchestral Society (later renamed the Premier Orchestral Society) in 1904. The orchestra's configuration included mandolins, banjos, guitars, three cellos, one viola, two double basses, two flutes, one cornet, one trombone and one harp.<sup>57</sup> The novelty of a woman "conductress" drew considerable attention and the orchestra included a large component of female players performing alongside men.<sup>58</sup> At its peak, in 1906, the orchestra included about 100 players.<sup>59</sup> The orchestra often performed at charitable and fundraising events. The Musicians' Union found it particularly humiliating in 1905 when those in charge of fundraising efforts for the Bush Fire Relief Fund accepted an offer from Miss Guest's orchestra to give a concert in the Town Hall in aid of the fund, in preference

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<sup>56</sup> Ian Alexander Hamilton Turner and LJ Hume collection., *Industrial Labour and Politics: The Dynamics of the Labour Movement in Eastern Australia 1900–1921* (Canberra: Australian National University, 1965), 24.

<sup>57</sup> *Star*, 3 October 1905, 7.

<sup>58</sup> *Star*, 6 March 1905, 2. This article reports that the orchestra included "33 lady mandolinists and three lady banjo players".

<sup>59</sup> *SMH*, 15 September 1906, 17.

to accepting the Union's offer to give a grand concert with 200 professional musicians.<sup>60</sup>

With such competition in the band market, the Musicians' Union began to look at developing new avenues for the engagement of professional musicians. Increasingly the Union began to take up the rhetoric that music had curative characteristics that could address various social ills. In a very innovative move, in 1904 the Musicians' Union approached the Premier suggesting a yearly subsidy of £750 to provide regular performances to those who might benefit from both the "curative" and "elevating" aspects of music, specifically, those undergoing treatment for "mental afflictions" as well as those living in the "city slums".<sup>61</sup> In 1906, the Union made an application to the town clerk to rent the Town Hall for a series of "intellectual and instructive entertainments" on Sunday evenings as a means of promoting social harmony.<sup>62</sup>

Despite the lack of government support, or perhaps because of it, the Union also undertook a range of quite ambitious cooperative projects on their own initiative. For instance, the Union established a series of regular monthly Sunday evening smoke concerts with an "orchestra" organised on a cooperative basis. While these concerts included the usual array of miscellany typical of smoke concerts described in chapter three, there was

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<sup>60</sup> Professional Musicians Association, *SMH*, 8 February 1905, 8.

<sup>61</sup> *SMH*, 3 October 1905, 4.

<sup>62</sup> *SMH*, 22 June 1906, 6.

clearly more focus on the inclusion of works by canonic composers than was usually the case. For example, in January 1900, the Union's performance of the Beethoven Septet prompted the congratulations of *The Australian Star's* reviewer who insisted the Union deserved "some recognition from the music-loving portion of the community for their efforts in affording them the opportunity of hearing music which but for the existence of this society could not be attempted in this city".<sup>63</sup> The union also promoted compositions by their own members, with the performance of a *Symphonic Poem for Orchestra* by Archie Fraser, a member and sometime Secretary of the Association in January 1902 with an orchestra of thirty-five members.<sup>64</sup>

In addition to raising the status of their profession, the move to establish "orchestra" concerts may have reflected a genuine desire of some members of the Union to pursue their interest in classical music. Rivers Allpress, for instance, was a prominent violinist and leading member of the Union, taking the role of president during many of its early years. He was considered to be one of the leading "musical artists" of Sydney at the time. He was one of only twelve "artists" included in a bi-lingual (English-French) pamphlet about the Sydney Town Hall organ by the first City Organist, the Belgian organist, August Wiegand, to celebrate his achievements and the high calibre of the people he played with.<sup>65</sup> Allpress was also one of the

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<sup>63</sup> *Star*, 23 January 1900, 3.

<sup>64</sup> Advertisement, *SMH*, 11 January, 1902, 2

<sup>65</sup> August Wiegand, *The largest organ in the world and the musical artists of Sydney*, (Sydney : William Maddock, 1892), x.

founders of the Sydney Orpheus Society, which pioneered the performance of chamber music in Sydney. He was at one time a Musical Director of the Sydney Liedertafel choir<sup>66</sup> and regularly acted as leader when orchestras were formed. Although Allpress barely rates a mention in any previous histories of Australian music, in his lifetime he was honoured with an admiring portrait by leading artist, Tom Roberts (**Image 4.2**).

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<sup>66</sup> Wiegand.



**Image 4.2: Tom Roberts, *G. Rivers Allpress* (c. 1895).**

Oil on wood panel, 61.0 x 33.3 cm, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne Purchased, 1979 (A15-1979).

In 1900 Allpress was a key instigator of the Union's Sunday night orchestra concerts. At least initially, these concerts were well attended with

audiences ranging in size from 168 to 263 people.<sup>67</sup> However, the Union had difficulty finding members available and willing to play for the concerts. As a consequence, the orchestra usually consisted of a disparate group of instrumentalists who turned up on the night. In 1903, because of the difficulties in recruiting participants for smoke concert orchestras, the Union's Committee charged the Secretary to write to every member "to notify him that he is expected to take his turn with the orchestra."<sup>68</sup>

Although this aroused some interest temporarily it was not maintained and in his Quarterly Secretary's Report in May 1903, the Secretary opined:

So great has the difficulty of forming orchestras become that unless some reliable scheme is adopted or the duty taken entirely out of my hands, I must respectfully decline to arrange for an orchestra at any future concert.<sup>69</sup>

In the same report, he similarly despaired regarding their efforts to form a military band which he described as "a lasting disgrace" and upbraided members for being "blind to their own interests".<sup>70</sup>

In 1904 the Union reluctantly decided to relinquish its concert room because of financial difficulties it had encountered at that time. However it continued to organise sporadic events at other venues, some of which were quite ambitious, but usually with the same lack-lustre results. Significantly, in 1904 the Union formed an orchestra to accompany Paderewski during

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<sup>67</sup> Minutes Annual General Meeting, August 20, 1900, Minute Bk 2, NBA, T7 1/1

<sup>68</sup> *Committee Meeting, 22 May 1903*, Minute Bk 3, NBA, T7 1/4

<sup>69</sup> *Secretary's Report, 23rd Quarterly Meeting, 18 May, 1903*, Minute Bk 3, NBA, T7 1/4

<sup>70</sup> NBA.



some of his Sydney concerts.<sup>71</sup> Following this, in 1905, the Musicians' Union decided to use this orchestra as the basis for a new group with the ambitious title of Sydney Symphony Orchestra.<sup>72</sup> This group held its first and only concert on 30 September 1905. Again the Union failed to impress. According to the *Herald's* reviewer:

The high-sounding title ... failed to draw. As a matter of fact, whatever may be the future intention, the first concert did not justify that title. The program was well selected to hit the popular taste, but it did not breathe of the atmosphere of which the name Symphony Orchestra is redolent.<sup>73</sup>

On their own, the Musicians' Union, like other groups, struggled to find the resources for the creation of an orchestra or band. Nevertheless, their initiatives encouraged an ongoing discourse about the role of music and the role of professional musicians. They fed the growing sense that something was lacking musically within the community and that this could only be filled by establishing a higher value form of musical culture.

### **The establishment of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra**

Melbourne's announcement in May 1908 that it had created a permanent professional orchestra caused much dismay among Sydney's civic fathers, leading them to marshal their forces and join together with the Musicians' Union to form their own orchestra. Campbell has argued that at this time in the United States music had become a tangible symbol of "wide-awake

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<sup>71</sup> *SMH*, 22 August 1904, 3.

<sup>72</sup> *EN*, 14 August 1905, 8.

<sup>73</sup> *SMH*, 2 October 1905, 5.

masculinity"<sup>74</sup> and a useful weapon in the struggle between civic leaders of rival cities for metropolitan supremacy.<sup>75</sup> Sydney's civic fathers, a group who will take a more prominent role in the following discussion, were similarly motivated. In announcing the creation of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra just weeks after the Melbourne announcement, inter-city rivalry was a clear motivation:

Melbourne has long been ahead of us...in the possession of the Marshall-Hall orchestra. But Sydney has at last come into line with all the other leading cities of the world and is now able to boast of its own permanent professional organisation, in the recently-formed Sydney Symphony Orchestra.<sup>76</sup>

A *Herald* editorial in July 1908 was similarly frank, claiming the need to establish an orchestra for the purpose of "removing the stigma that has long rested on Sydney, that it has no professional orchestra", and "to put us on a level with Melbourne".<sup>77</sup>

The orchestra's committee included some of Sydney's leading musicians and civic leaders keen to promote Sydney's cultural standing. These included Arundel Orchard who was elected as the initial conductor, violinist Henri Staell, leader of the orchestra, and leading legal figure and sometime opera librettist W. J. Curtis as honorary secretary. Amateur singer and Liedertafel Society life member H.B. Brewer became Treasurer with R.

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<sup>74</sup> Gavin James Campbell, "Classical Music and the Politics of Gender in America, 1900–1925," *American Music* 21, no. 4 (2003): 463.

<sup>75</sup> Campbell, "Politics of Gender", 464.

<sup>76</sup> *SMH*, 24 June 1908, 8.

<sup>77</sup> *SMH*, 4 July 1908, 13.

Clive, E.J. Daly, L. Henderson and E.H. Martin from the Musicians' Union on the Committee.<sup>78</sup> George Plummer (**Image 4.3**), a violinist and teacher "long identified with the symphonic professional orchestra movement"<sup>79</sup> was initially the assistant secretary and librarian, but became secretary in 1910.<sup>80</sup>



**Image 4.3: George Plummer, *AMN*, 1 November 1911, 109.**

The Musicians' Union was intimately involved with the orchestra's establishment and organisation. Meetings of the orchestra's governing committee were held at the Musicians' Union club rooms in Rowe Street in Sydney.<sup>81</sup> The creation of a symphonic orchestra, less likely to face competition from amateurs, must have been an attractive proposition given the ongoing competition from bands.

Until recently, the work of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra between 1908 and 1917 has been virtually ignored.<sup>82</sup> As previously mentioned, the

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<sup>78</sup> *SMH*, 3 July 1908, 8.

<sup>79</sup> "Prominent Australian Musicians", *AMN*, 1 November 1911, 109.

<sup>80</sup> *SMH*, 3 July 1908, 8.

<sup>81</sup> The orchestra's minute book can be found among the Musicians' Union papers in the NBA *Symphony Orchestra Minute Book*, NBA, T7-7.

<sup>82</sup> See Fiona Fraser, "Orchestrating the Metropolis the Creation of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra as a Modern Cultural Institution," *History Australia* 11, no. 2 (2014): 196–221 where I published some of the material used in developing this chapter and chapter seven.

official history of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra by Phillip Sametz pays scant attention to the first Sydney Symphony Orchestra.<sup>83</sup> Melbourne musicologist, Thérèse Radic, dismissed the original Sydney Symphony Orchestra as “a fitful endeavour” that operated from 1908 “until it was snuffed out by the effects of the First World War”.<sup>84</sup> The Sydney Symphony Orchestra’s current website includes a short “historical snapshot” which briefly acknowledges the original SSO “that rehearsed over a fish shop” but claims to be celebrating the history of the “real” orchestra which began in 1932 when the ABC committed itself to providing Sydney with a permanent orchestra of a size adequate for the symphonic repertoire.<sup>85</sup> The only exception to this negativity is a small article published in *Australasian Sound Archive* in response to Sametz’s book expressing concern at the neglect of the early SSO which “was honoured with the right to display the royal arms on the front page of its programs”.<sup>86</sup>

The original Sydney Symphony Orchestra held a small but regular winter subscription series of between three and seven concerts per year from 1908 until 1917.<sup>87</sup> It did not cease operations in 1914 as asserted by Sametz

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<sup>83</sup> Phillip Sametz, *Play On! 60 years of music-making with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra* (Sydney: ABC Enterprises, 1992), 5.

<sup>84</sup> Thérèse Radic, “Orchestras”, in *Currency Companion to Music & Dance in Australia*, eds. John Whiteoak and Aline Scott-Maxwell (Sydney: Currency House 2003), 484

<sup>85</sup> David Garrett, *Accident or Inevitability?* SSO Website accessed 5 September 2017, <https://www.sydnaysymphony.com/about-us/history/historical-snapshots/accident-or-inevitability>

<sup>86</sup> Ron Wills, “The First Sydney Symphony Orchestra,” *The Australasian Sound Archive* 16,1994, 14.

<sup>87</sup> This contradicts Garrett’s claim that “only in Melbourne—nowhere else in Australia were subscription orchestral concerts established before the coming of the ABC”. See David Garrett, “The Accidental Entrepreneur—How ABC Music Became More Than Broadcasting,” (PhD diss., University of Wollongong, 2012), 91.

and others. Altogether, there are accounts of some 47 concerts by the original Sydney Symphony Orchestra, commencing with the first concert on 2 July 1908 at the Sydney Town Hall. This was the venue for all its concerts until the NSW State Conservatorium was established in 1915. The rehearsal venue, at least in 1912, was the Conference Hall in Castlereagh Street,<sup>88</sup> which was part of the Methodist Central Mission complex. Its proximity to a “fish shop” was not referred to in any contemporary source.

An undated picture of the orchestra (**Image 4.4**) shows a sizeable group which during the orchestra’s life ranged from around 70 to 90, depending on the program and the availability of players. It was almost exclusively male; the lone female in the photograph was possibly one of the harpists, W. Carter, or the violinist Miss N. Holt.

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<sup>88</sup> *SMH*, 3 October 1902, 9. This is the only mention that I can find of the rehearsal venue, although there are mentions of general meetings of the orchestra committee in the same venue in 1910 so it is likely that this was their rehearsal space for that period at least.



**Image 4.4: Sydney Symphony Orchestra. ND.**

Wentzel family photographs, Mitchell Library, State Library of NSW – MLMSS 6606/21/2.

Because of the evening theatre engagements of many of the orchestra's players, the early SSO restricted itself to matinee performances. This no doubt reduced attendance, particularly from the working people. However, the orchestra did generate a significant following and a sense of civic pride is evident in all appraisals of the orchestra. Music lovers were urged to attend concerts to support "unselfish Musicians" who at "considerable self-sacrifice" sought to "elevate the taste of the public and to satisfy the ever-increasing desire to hear the best compositions of the grand masters."<sup>89</sup> The orchestra's supporters generally waxed lyrical about the

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<sup>89</sup> *EN*, 7 May 1910, 4.

“humanising art”<sup>90</sup> of the orchestra, emphasising its value as “an educational art institution”<sup>91</sup> and its contribution to the “intellectual pleasure of the citizens.”<sup>92</sup> Underlining the educational emphasis, programs provided detailed descriptions of the form and structure of the music being performed including musical quotations as well as biographical information about composers.

Newspaper reviews also appealed to nationalistic sentiment imagining a future where Australia would make its mark in the world through music.<sup>93</sup> The role of the orchestra, according to a *Herald* correspondent in 1912, was not only musical, but should “promote civic pride and patriotic co-operation on the part of all our citizens”.<sup>94</sup> Reviews proudly acclaimed the orchestra’s achievements and the standard of its performances. For instance, in 1909 the *Telegraph* reviewer claimed:

It is not too much to say that in orchestral playing nothing so fine has been achieved in Sydney as the program performed by the Sydney Symphony Orchestra at the Town-hall yesterday afternoon...Those present, familiar with the best orchestras in the Old-world, must have been pleasingly surprised with the standard of the performance...The great hall was well filled in every part by a highly attentive and appreciative gathering.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> *SMH*, 16 February 1910, 8.

<sup>91</sup> *SMH*, 29 April 1910, 10.

<sup>92</sup> *EN*, 9 January 1912, 4.

<sup>93</sup> *EN*, 7 May 1910, 4.

<sup>94</sup> *SMH*, 17 February 1912, 17.

<sup>95</sup> *Telegraph*, 24 September 1909, 9.

The *Evening News* reviewer was even more effusive, claiming on several occasions that the SSO was “equal to the best that Europe and America can produce”.<sup>96</sup>

While it is difficult to judge the validity of these claims, they may not have been greatly exaggerated. Orchestras in London<sup>97</sup> and New York,<sup>98</sup> which were similarly dependent on musicians from the theatre who could not always attend rehearsals, struggled to achieve high performance standards. Although in 1912 the accomplished and well rehearsed orchestra of the touring Quinlan Opera Company gave rise to unfavourable comparisons,<sup>99</sup> at least in the early days of the orchestra positive reviews provided reassurance that Sydney was now a worthy participant in the international world of music.

Emphasising its cosmopolitan outlook, the orchestra focused on familiarising audiences with the work of the European masters<sup>100</sup> as well as introducing “novelty items” with a focus on “fine music previously unheard here”.<sup>101</sup> To that end, it introduced an impressive array of “classics” including in its performances: 1908, Schumann’s *Symphony No. 1* in B flat (1841), Brahms’s *Symphony No. 1* in C minor (1862–1876); in 1910, Berlioz’s

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<sup>96</sup> *EN*, 14 October 1911, 9. See also 5 October 1910, 31 March 1911, 5.

<sup>97</sup> Kenyon, *The BBC Symphony Orchestra*, 12.

<sup>98</sup> John Henry Mueller, *The American Symphony Orchestra: a social history of musical taste*, Westport: Greenwood Press 1976, 46.

<sup>99</sup> *SMH*, 3 August 1912, 7.

<sup>100</sup> *SMH*, 3 July 1908, 8.

<sup>101</sup> *SMH*, 25 July 1908, 8.



*Symphonie Fantastique* (1830); and in 1912, Berlioz's *Harold in Italy* (1834). As well, they played a number of quite recent works including, in 1910, Tchaikovsky's *Symphony No. 4* (1877–1878) and Richard Strauss's tone-poem *Don Juan* (1888–1889);<sup>102</sup> in 1911, Debussy's *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune* (1891–1894), Saint-Saëns' *Symphony No. 3 in C minor*, the *Organ Symphony* (1886) and Sibelius's *Valse Triste* (1904); in 1912, Dvořák's *Symphony in G Major* (1889) and Elgar's *Enigma Variations* (1898–1899); in 1913, Rimsky-Korsakov's *Scheherazade* (1888) and Saint-Saëns' *Concerto for Pianoforte and Orchestra in F Major* (1896); in 1914, Borodin's *In the Steppes of Central Asia* (1880); and in 1917, Borodin's *Symphony in B minor* (1869–1876) and Glazunov's *Symphony in C Minor* (1896). The interest in modern music, particularly music by modern Russian composers, demonstrated a surprisingly rapid transmission of and interest in musical trends in Europe, a finding also noted by Bowan in her investigation of the musical influences on Sydney composer Roy Agnew.<sup>103</sup> However, the orchestra did not ignore Australian composers, performing works by Howard Carr, Alfred Hill, Percy Grainger, Ernest Truman, John Delany, Christian Hellemann and Joseph Bradley. Most concerts also included a soloist with vocal items, operatic excerpts being the most popular. The orchestra also accompanied visiting celebrities including the baritone Andrew Black and the pianist

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<sup>102</sup> Sametz incorrectly claims that the Conservatorium Orchestra under Dr Orchard premiered *Don Juan* in 1929. See *Play On*, 7.

<sup>103</sup> Kate Bowan, "Wild Men and Mystics: Rethinking Roy Agnew's Early Sydney Works", *Musicology Australia* 30, 2008, 21.

Madame Carreno in 1910, the pianist Madame d'Aleria in 1912, pianist Barron Morley and American baritone, David Bispham in 1913, pianist Lawrence Godfrey Smith, and French Canadian singer Eva Gauthier, also in 1913, and pianist Leonard Borwick in 1915.

The orchestra's crowning achievement was the widely acclaimed Sydney premier of Beethoven's ninth symphony, the famous *Choral Symphony*, which was performed as part of a "Grand Beethoven Concert" with the visiting Sheffield Choir on 17 June 1911 (**Image 4.5**). After the event, the *Telegraph* reviewer proudly boasted the abilities of an orchestra that could match the "well-trained body of singers" of the Sheffield Choir to achieve "the pinnacle of the ambition of every orchestra" in a "distinctly creditable performance" of Beethoven's ninth symphony.<sup>104</sup> The re-creation of the European musical world in Sydney through the performance of a common repertoire of works symbolically enabled Sydney audiences to transcend the tyranny of distance between Australia and Europe, assuage anxieties about Sydney's worth in an international context and to see themselves as a participants in world culture. These achievements were significant given the ongoing difficulties the orchestra experienced in remaining financially viable.

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<sup>104</sup> *Telegraph*, 19 June 1911, 8.



**Image 4.5: Advertisement taken from SSO Concert Program, 27 May 1911.**  
 Mitchell Library Performance Program Collection.

The orchestra was initially established on a cooperative basis with positions in the orchestra being “varied in rotation” for each concert.<sup>105</sup> The proceeds of the concerts were divided among players in accordance with their attendance at rehearsals and concerts.<sup>106</sup> It proceeded on a cooperative basis for two years with the Musicians’ Union waiving requirements for award rates. Unfortunately the returns were disappointing and musicians received very little return for their efforts. Given the “great sacrifice” made by orchestra members to establish the orchestra, at the 1910 Annual General

<sup>105</sup> Minutes of meeting of 8 May 1908, *Symphony Orchestra Minute Book*, NBA, T7-7.

<sup>106</sup> Minutes of meeting of 3 August 1908, NBA, T7-7.

Meeting the Union indicated it was not prepared to continue supporting the Orchestra unless members were paid award rates.<sup>107</sup> This principle was readily agreed by the Committee, prompting a reorganisation of the orchestra to meet the additional cost of paying the award.

In 1910, music lovers were invited to contribute sums of £5 or more<sup>108</sup> to a citizen's guarantee fund to provide a buffer against loss. Donations were primarily from three main groups, reflecting the alliance of groups that had initially come together to form the orchestra: businessmen and merchants including the Wunderlich brothers (manufacturers), James Fairfax (newspaper proprietor), James Chalmers (Managing Director of Farmers Department Store), and Q.L Deloitte (Merchants and Traders Association); leading legal figures including J. T. Lingen, Justice Gordon, Robert Henry Todd, F. Leverrier and T.E. Rofe; and Sydney's musical community including teachers, music shop proprietors and the Musicians' Union.<sup>109</sup> The musicians, according to the then Secretary, George Plummer, collectively provided the majority of all funds.<sup>110</sup> However, the involvement of many legal figures is noteworthy and supports Melleuish's assertion of the

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<sup>107</sup> Plummer to Moses, 16 July 1937, SP724 Box 8, NAA.

<sup>108</sup> *SMH*, 14 May 1910, 16.

<sup>109</sup> Guarantors were listed on orchestra programs which I have collected from ephemera collections in Mitchell Library and the NLA.

<sup>110</sup> *Sun*, 15 October 1912, 1.

prominent role that lawyers played in Australian intellectual life at that time.<sup>111</sup>

In addition to establishing the guarantee fund, the Annual General Meeting of 3 February 1910 also agreed to send a deputation to the Liberal Premier, Charles Wade, to request a subsidy of £1000 per annum.<sup>112</sup>

Although initially unsuccessful they continued their campaign for funding and in 1913 the by then Labor Government agreed to provide a one off subsidy of £150.<sup>113</sup> They agreed to continue the subsidy in 1914 increasing it to £500 per annum.<sup>114</sup> Robert Birrell has suggested that Labor Governments at this time embraced “a citizenship-oriented program framed in a nationalist context”<sup>115</sup> which garnered support from the working class as well as middle class intellectuals. In this context, the Sydney Symphony Orchestra’s agenda, supported as it was by an alliance between unionists, professionals and merchants, must have presented itself as a worthy nation-building endeavour that justified government support. However, the alliance between the unionists and middle class patrons was not without its problems.

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<sup>111</sup> Gregory Melleuish, "Liberal Intellectuals in Early Twentieth Century Australia: Restoring the Religious Dimension," *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 35, no. 1 (1989): 1.

<sup>112</sup> 10 February 1910, 11.

<sup>113</sup> *SMH*, 14 October 1913, 7.

<sup>114</sup> *SMH*, 2 February 1921, 14.

<sup>115</sup> Robert Birrell, *A Nation of Our Own: citizenship and nation-building in Federation Australia*, (Melbourne: Longman 1995), 255.

## **Musical discord arises from union dispute**

On 3 October 1912 headlines in the *Sydney Morning Herald* announced “musical revolt”, “union crisis”, “symphony orchestra’s trouble”, “80 professionals idle”.<sup>116</sup> The trouble began on 17 July 1912 with the establishment of the Musical Association of NSW. This was a group of senior members of Sydney’s musical community including prominent Sydney composer and music critic for the *Telegraph*, George de Cairos-Rego<sup>117</sup>, Joseph Bradley, then conductor of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, Arundel Orchard, who also conducted the Orchestra for some concerts, and Henri Staell, its leader. However, the new association did not include most rank and file members of the orchestra. It was primarily concerned with promoting the “art of music”,<sup>118</sup> bringing a focus on aesthetic issues that had not, as suggested earlier, previously been an issue of significant contestation. This difference was not initially clear. The stated objective of the Musical Association, to advance the “interests of music in NSW” and support and represent “the views and interests of the musical profession,”<sup>119</sup> had a significant overlap with the role of the Union, which similarly claimed to support and protect “the character, status, and interests of professional musicians, and their profession”.<sup>120</sup> Not surprisingly, the Union, which tried

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<sup>116</sup> *SMH* 3 October 1912, 9.

<sup>117</sup> Graeme Skinner, “De Cairos-Rego, George,” *The Dictionary of Sydney*, accessed 5 September 2017 (2011).

<sup>118</sup> *SMH*, 26 August 1912, 5.

<sup>119</sup> *SMH*, 27 July 1912, 20.

<sup>120</sup> Rules and Bye-Laws, Professional Musicians’ Benefit Association, 1902, Article 2, NBA, T7 1/2.

to maintain its bargaining position by creating a monopoly over the supply of labour, perceived the new organisation as a threat and its members immediately moved a motion that, consistent with its rule that unionists should not play with non-members, members of the union should also not play with members of the “opposition organisation.”<sup>121</sup> Resenting any implied criticism about the quality of Union members, the motion also claimed “the union exercises considerable rigour in the selection of its members”.

The Secretary of the Musical Association, George de Cairos-Rego, responded on 26 August 1912. He claimed that the Musical Association was not an industrial union and it was not formed “out of the remotest feeling of antagonism to such”.<sup>122</sup> Rather, its aim was to provide a common meeting ground for all bona-fide members of the musical profession and for “all those members of the public who have the advancement of music at heart”.<sup>123</sup> He indicated that it was possible for members of the music profession to belong to both organisations, and expressed concern that some might be forced into “compulsory severance” from his organisation. He indicated that he considered such actions an abuse of the privileges that accrued to the union under law.

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<sup>121</sup> *SMH*, 20 August 1912, 9.

<sup>122</sup> *SMH*, 26 August 1912, 7.

<sup>123</sup> *SMH*, 26 August 1912, 7.

Alfred O'Brien, a cornet/trumpet player and Secretary of the Musicians' Union, was a member of the orchestra and took a leading role in the dispute. He responded to the Musical Association within the day. He argued that he thought it a "strange matter" that only five of the 800 members of the union were invited to join the new association. He argued that there was simply no need for a new organisation since the Union had already made good progress toward improving the position of professional musicians.<sup>124</sup>

The polarisation of the two groups, both claiming an idealistic position, could only have one result and it happened very quickly. On 3 October 1912 the aforementioned "revolt" finally occurred.<sup>125</sup> Joseph Bradley, who was to conduct a forthcoming concert of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, and three of the players, including Henri Staell, the leader of the orchestra, were members of the new association, but were not members of the Union. While previously this had been tacitly ignored, the establishment of what it perceived as a rival group prompted the Union to enforce its rule that Unionists should not play with non Union members. At the orchestra rehearsal on 1 October 1912, the Musicians' Union decided to enforce their rule about not playing with non-unionists. Bradley indicated

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<sup>124</sup> Letter to the editor, *SMH*, 27 August 1912, 9.

<sup>125</sup> *SMH*, 3 October 1912, 9.



that he would not “submit to tyranny of this kind” and so abandoned the rehearsal.

With terms such as “revolt” and “tyranny” used to describe the situation in the media the dispute was now clearly entering the political realm. A long article in the *Herald* revealed the deep-seated anxieties aroused by the debate. The article began by asserting a distinction between the idealist world of the arts and the “prosaic world of matter-of-fact” that is the province of the unions. It described the Sydney theatre world as being “hopeless on its purely artistic side” and that while the work of the Musicians’ Union in improving the working conditions of theatre musicians was “entirely legitimate” it was reasonable that musicians “whose connection with the art is not wholly a matter of wages, and whose interest in hours of labour is only an indirect interest” might wish to remain outside the Union.<sup>126</sup> The current orchestra crisis, the writer indicated, was a “tragedy” for the “divine art”. He claimed that the Union was an industrial affair and that its contributions to art were “infinitesimal”. Revealing more general fears about union domination, the author argued that the public should be interested, not only in this “smashing of an important influence for artistic good” but “in the possibilities of union domination of music generally”. The writer claimed that if the union took power they would even challenge the established position of the canonic composers:

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<sup>126</sup> *SMH*, 3 October 1912, 8.

Concede this precious principle of unionism, and you will have the disciples of the art of Beethoven and Wagner and Mozart ... assisting at discussions on the ethics of State brickyards and the laws of political gravitation and walking in labour processions, and proudly proclaiming that they, too, are manual workers ... Supposing a composer should rise in the Trades Hall, and be vouched for there as the long awaited successor to Brahms. What is to prevent a unionist orchestra from boycotting forthwith the effete productions of Beethoven, and insisting on the performance only of a new unionist genius? What is to prevent their establishment of a new order of music altogether – a sort of diviner than the divine art we know, enwrapped in the ritual of the Labour Council, and girt about by the mysterious rites of the minimum wage? Nothing at all. The portent of unionism in music, in point of fact, heralds a new era of art, at thought of which the imagination faints and fails ... But the public is not so easily gulled. It will expect them, and all the other musicians who from the first have refused to drag a great art which lives only by ideals, in the mire of political manoeuvring – as if there could be any remotest connection between them – to take a definite stand. Music is an infinitely greater thing than the minimum wage of theatre orchestras. That is what the union stands for. The musicians outside the union stand for music. There is no doubt as to which will have the support of the art public.<sup>127</sup>

Clearly, for the author, the growing power of the Musicians' Union threatened to upset the existing social order and the established hierarchy not only in regard to music, but for society at large. For Sydneysiders, concerns about the political mobilisation of the working class and the development of unions had now come to the fore.

The next day members of the Orchestra met and a long and heated discussion ensued. According to the *Herald's* report of the meeting, union members made it clear that they were going to adhere to their rule about not

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<sup>127</sup> *SMH*, 3 October 1912, 8.

playing with non-unionists, although they did agree that as conductor, Joseph Bradley, was exempt from the rule. However, they indicated that they wished to proceed with the concert and were happy to do so with players who were members of the union, suggesting another violinist could act as leader instead of Henri Staell.<sup>128</sup>

The orchestra's guarantors would not accept the union position, claiming that a union giving a concert simply cannot be called a "symphony orchestra" as, for them, the term obviously denoted something with more spiritual connotations. They cancelled the forthcoming concert and made no definite announcement about future concerts although they considered that one might be considered when the spring racing carnival was over.<sup>129</sup> The guarantors seem not to have been aware that the union rule about not playing with non-members had been inserted at the time the union was formally registered with Trades Hall—although there is little evidence that they often enforced this rule.

At this point, prominent Sydney businessman and amateur musician, Ernest Wunderlich, then President of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra Committee, entered into the fray. He argued that "no self-respecting artist will agree to belong to an orchestra which is controlled from the Trades Hall, and where his individuality would become merged in a dead level of

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<sup>128</sup> *SMH*, 4 October 1912, 9.

<sup>129</sup> *SMH*, 4 October 1912, 21.

average” claiming that the great orchestras of the world are comprised of “artists”. He drew an explicit political comparison, arguing that one of the results of “compulsory equality in wages prevents the worker of special merit from obtaining his full reward”. This he claimed cannot apply to art. He claimed the actions of the Musicians’ Union had “lowered the status of their profession to that of the paid labourer.” Wage equality in Wunderlich’s eyes discredited the orchestra which he suggested should be disbanded and reformed “on an entirely new basis.” He proposed that Joseph Bradley should form an orchestra with those “who refused allegiance to the union” and who would give the new orchestra their first call on services rather than theatres or picture shows. He claimed that there were sufficient music lovers in Sydney who would cheerfully foot the bill for the desired goal—“music of the highest class, rendered by an efficient orchestra.”<sup>130</sup> By implication, the Unionists were not music lovers in Wunderlich’s view.

Wunderlich’s proposal was a fantasy and it was not difficult for the Secretary of the Musicians’ Union to point out the many difficulties with trying to establish Wunderlich’s ideal orchestra. In his rebuttal, O’Brien reminded Wunderlich of the material needs of the “old masters”, many of whom “lived and died in poverty” and indeed may have benefited from union membership. He drew comparisons with orchestras internationally which Wunderlich had held up as models, pointing out they also were

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<sup>130</sup> Letter to the editor, *SMH*, 11 October 1912, 3.

comprised of union members. He also pointed out that the Musicians' Union provided £100 to the guarantee fund of the orchestra in contrast to the £10 provided by Wunderlich. He agreed however, that Sydney's wealthy citizens might do more for the "art of music" as "very little has been done except what has been done by the musicians themselves."<sup>131</sup>

In the meantime, fifty people attended a meeting of orchestra subscribers and endorsed the argument that "the tyrannical principles of militant trades-unionism" should not have been introduced into an "art society".<sup>132</sup> Mr O'Brien reminded the meeting that the Union was actually the largest guarantor for the orchestra and that members of the Union had assisted the movement by giving their services for free during the first two years. He insisted that the union was keen for the concerts to proceed but that talk about the "dignity of art" would not buy food and clothing for musicians. He even offered to supply the whole orchestra without fees, but would not change his position regarding the rule about not playing with non-unionists.<sup>133</sup> Despite these efforts, with the range of opinion against the unionists, it was ultimately decided to abandon the orchestra concerts for the rest of the year and look at trying to make some arrangements to carry out concerts in the following year.

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<sup>131</sup> Letter to the editor, *SMH*, 17 October 1912, 5.

<sup>132</sup> *SMH*, 15 October 1912, 10.

<sup>133</sup> *SMH*.

At this stage no one group was in a financial position to take over control of the orchestra, so concerts resumed in 1913 under the same arrangements as they had in 1912. Guarantors, unionists and the Musical Association members were mutually dependent on each other for the continuation of the orchestra. The fragile alliance was resumed for a four-concert season which was “the most distinguished of any” with “greatly increased audiences”, “esteemed” soloists, and donations of about £300.<sup>134</sup> In any event, by 1913 many music lovers had now become preoccupied with a new urgent task. In May 1912, the Minister for Education, Campbell Carmichael, had established an advisory committee to consider a proposal to establish a Conservatorium.<sup>135</sup> Significantly, the Musicians’ Union was not included on this Committee. The Orchestra continued in operation until 1917 but decided not to perform in 1918 as the Conservatorium Orchestra (which became known as the State Orchestra) had taken most of its players. The SSO was then suspended, lending its music and all other property to the State Orchestra.<sup>136</sup>

## **Conclusion**

The role of the Musicians’ Union in establishing early musical institutions has hitherto been ignored. While it had difficulty establishing a viable orchestra on its own, by joining together with music lovers and prominent

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<sup>134</sup> *SMH*, 14 October 1913, 7.

<sup>135</sup> *SMH*, 27 May 1912, 10.

<sup>136</sup> *SMH*, 2 February 1921, 14.

civic-minded professionals and merchants they were able to establish an orchestra that gave many notable Australian and Sydney premier performances and provided a sense of pride and civic achievement.

However, being restricted to matinee concerts, the orchestra fell far short of the desired permanent professional orchestra.

Nevertheless, the orchestra played a key role in promoting the music profession and establishing the players' credentials as professionals. While they clearly wanted to promote a classical music culture this was not as high a priority for them as for music lovers and the civic establishment.

Inevitably, their interests clashed. The vision of civic harmony and moral virtue symbolised by the orchestra became sullied in the eyes of the middle class who feared that music had now become tainted by its association with unionism. According to Peter Gay, as the working class in Europe emerged as a "rival for power" in the latter part of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the middle class adopted a "widespread defensive identity across national frontiers".<sup>137</sup> In Australia too the middle class rallied to promote the further development of a high class musical culture. The focus of their energies however now shifted from the orchestra to the establishment of a Conservatorium which will be the main subject matter of the next chapter.

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<sup>137</sup> Gay, 5, 241.





## 5.

# Making Sydney a Musical Mecca

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In August 1915 the euphoria surrounding the arrival of charismatic Belgian violinist and conductor Henri Verbrugghen as the inaugural Director of the NSW State Conservatorium brought together a deeply divided musical community. Sydney's music lovers were flattered that a man with impeccable credentials and experience working within leading European musical institutions would come to Australia. His arrival excited new ambitions among musicians and music lovers that their hopes for a musical "mecca"<sup>1</sup> in Australia might at last be realised. The exotic persona of the "little man with a dark face" ... his "luminous eyes ... sparkling expression ... natural vivacity" and "intense earnestness" both fascinated and entranced the music public.<sup>2</sup> Such was his authority that his tenure at the Conservatorium would dominate Sydney's musical life for the next six years. Yet the unity of purpose that welcomed his arrival only barely disguised the ripples of discontent that simmered underneath. Although Verbrugghen temporarily united Sydney's musical community, by the time he departed in 1921 amidst controversy about the funding of his orchestra,

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<sup>1</sup> *Telegraph*, 1 May 1915, 6.

<sup>2</sup> *SMH*, 21 August 1915, 14.

this unity had been torn asunder. Deep rifts within the musical and broader communities during his tenure would have a lasting impact.

The establishment of the NSW State Conservatorium established clear lines of aesthetic authority that largely disenfranchised those with alternative views about music, particularly amateurs. As well as establishing an orchestra and creating a strong personal following, Verbrugghen embarked on a campaign to educate and silence his audience. His views about music were widely disseminated by the general press and by several musical magazines that emerged in this period, giving him an unrivalled authority on aesthetic judgments about music and performers. As Verbrugghen's plans for the Conservatorium, particularly his orchestra, grew more grandiose, the question of financial viability became an increasingly dominant issue. Ultimately Verbrugghen's focus on aesthetic standards failed to convince many who still advanced older notions of music as a participative community building activity. Given this, the Government decided it could not support elite forms of classical music-making at the expense of more general forms of musical education, particularly in country areas. Efforts to find the required funds privately were not successful. This led to Verbrugghen's resignation and departure, leaving a deeply divided community.

## Sydney debates the establishment of a Conservatorium?

The establishment of conservatoria and music academies is a relatively modern phenomenon strongly associated with the evolution of classical music during the course of the nineteenth century. Prior to this, music was primarily taught on an apprenticeship basis.<sup>3</sup> Many of the musical training establishments that did exist were essentially charitable institutions that trained orphans or other socially disadvantaged groups in a skill that would enable them to support themselves. For example, the Neapolitan “conservatorio” (meaning preservation) was first established in the sixteenth century as an institution “for the shelter and instruction of orphans and abandoned children”.<sup>4</sup> These institutions existed alongside various church-based music schools which trained choirs and church musicians.<sup>5</sup> This began to change during the early part of the nineteenth century when musical academies began to appear in a small number of European cities. Such institutions were a by-product of urban growth and the decline of the power of the church and aristocracy which had previously controlled music schools.<sup>6</sup> With the rise of a classical music culture in the latter part of the

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<sup>3</sup> William Weber et al., “Conservatories,” *Grove Music Online*, Oxford University Press, accessed 24 February 2017, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.virtual.anu.edu.au/subscriber/article/grove/music/41225>.

<sup>4</sup> Bernarr Rainbow, “Music in Education,” in *The Romantic Age 1800–1914*, ed. Nicholas Temperley (London: Athlone, 1981), 34.

<sup>5</sup> Weber et al., “Conservatories,”

<sup>6</sup> Notable musical institutions established in the early nineteenth century included the *Paris Conservatoire de Musique*, established in 1795; *Ordentliche Singschule of the Akademie der Künste*, established in Berlin in 1804, the *Royal Academy of Music*, established in London in 1822; *Accademia di S Cecilia*, established in Rome in 1839; and the *Royal Irish Academy of Music*, established in Dublin in 1848.

nineteenth century the establishment of musical academies gained momentum throughout Europe and the United States.<sup>7</sup>

As musical life expanded in the more populous Australian cities, they sought to join with other great cities of the world in establishing musical training institutions. The first university Conservatorium in the southern hemisphere was the Elder Conservatorium established at the University of Adelaide in 1885 funded by a bequest of £20 000 by businessman and pastoralist Sir Thomas Elder. A chair of music was established at the University of Melbourne in 1891 with a gift of £20,000 by Scottish-born Australian pastoralist, Francis Ormond.<sup>8</sup> The University Conservatorium in Melbourne opened in 1895 with 51 students and by 1899 was self-supporting with 84 full-course students enrolled.<sup>9</sup>

While the Adelaide and Melbourne initiatives prompted considerable debate about the need to establish a similar establishment in Sydney, no benefactor came forward despite constant urging in the press that “our own wealthy folk” should “loosen their purse-strings” to support those “striving to give us the best of the works of the great masters”.<sup>10</sup> In the absence of a

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<sup>7</sup> Notable musical institutions established in the latter part of the nineteenth century included many of the world’s most famous musical schools such as the *Philadelphia Musical Academy*, (now the *University of the Arts*) founded in Philadelphia in 1870; the *Royal College of Music* in London founded in 1882; the *Athenaeum School of Music* (now *Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama*) founded in Glasgow in 1890; the *Akademie der Tonkunst*, founded in Munich in 1874; the *Julliard School* founded in New York in 1905; and the *Akademie für Musik und Darstellende Kunst*, in Vienna so named in 1909.

<sup>8</sup> Maureen Thérèse Radic, “Marshall-Hall, George William Louis (1862–1915) *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University (1979), accessed 16 April, 2010, <http://adbonline.anu.edu.au/biogs/A100412b.htm?hilite=marshall;hall>.

<sup>9</sup> Radic, 4.

<sup>10</sup> “Our Sydney Letter”, *Hobart Mercury*, 8 November 1910, 2.

wealthy benefactor Sydney's musical community had little choice but to work together to raise funds for any musical initiative. This proved difficult because of rivalries and competing agendas within and between the various stakeholders, significantly hampering efforts to establish a Conservatorium in Sydney. As a consequence little of substance occurred until the NSW State Government stepped finally stepped in to establish the NSW State Conservatorium in 1915 some 25 years after the University of Melbourne had established its Conservatorium. In the interim music lovers, musicians and civic reformers debated the need to establish some sort of musical academy. During this debate several very different visions for a Conservatorium emerged that revealed conflicting beliefs about what the role and function of music should be.

The discourse on the establishment of a musical academy had strong nationalistic overtones. Since the late nineteenth century, patriotic rhetoric insisted on musical aptitude as a defining feature of the "Australian race of the future".<sup>11</sup> Proponents of the musical academy argued that for the nation to achieve its full potential musically it would need guidance and training.<sup>12</sup>

Australians are naturally a musical race, plentifully fitted with talent that only requires the guiding hand of cultivation to develop it into artistic perfection.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> *SMH*, 14 October 1899, 9.

<sup>12</sup> *SMH*, 8 May 1907, 5. (See also quotation used on p. 53.)

<sup>13</sup> *Sydney Mail*, 4 September 1912, 21.

Discernment of good from bad music was considered important to Australia's national development. The belief was that good music might act as a "stimulant of mentality" while "distorted music of a sensual nature does great harm to musical progress".<sup>14</sup>

Given the "astonishingly large percentage of fine voices in comparison with population",<sup>15</sup> training for singers was a priority for many of those concerned with the establishment of a conservatorium. Commentators suggested that the high degree of talented vocalists and other musicians was "out of all proportion to our population" and that "the talent of young Australians is so pronounced as to warrant our taking some trouble in properly training and developing it".<sup>16</sup> As discussed in chapter three, the achievements of Australian singers abroad were a particular source of national pride. However, it was obviously expensive and in some cases impractical to be sending young people abroad for their training. There were particular concerns for young women alone and unchaperoned in a foreign country.<sup>17</sup> Advocates of a local musical academy claimed it was therefore a priority to ensure adequate training facilities were available in Sydney.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> *The Catholic Press*, 26 August 1915, 27.

<sup>15</sup> *Sunday Times*, 1 December 1901, 7.

<sup>16</sup> *SMH*, 23 November 1901, 10. See also *SMH* 16 November 1907, 12.

<sup>17</sup> Nancy B. Reich, "Women and the Music Conservatory," in *Aflame with Music : 100 Years of Music at the University of Melbourne*, ed. Naomi Cumming, Brenton Broadstock, Denise Erdonmez Grocke, Catherine Falk et al. (Parkville, Vic.: Centre for Studies in Australian Music, University of Melbourne, 1996), 431.

<sup>18</sup> *SMH*, 23 November 1901, 10.

Another strong theme among music lovers and some musicians was the key role a musical training facility might play in making music accessible to a broader range of people. In 1886, in the tradition of the Neapolitan conservatorio mentioned earlier, a feature article in the *Herald* expounded at length on the potential benefits a conservatorium might bring in providing employment opportunities for “the poorest classes” and for “the spread of musical tastes and the consequent facilities for harmless recreation.”<sup>19</sup> The writer was particularly concerned that such an initiative should enable all classes to benefit rather than just “people who can afford to pay high prices for admission”.<sup>20</sup> To this end, the article proposed that “a band of some thirty or forty skilled performers” should be formed to provide “popular musical entertainments”, either “at a nominal charge or without any charge at all for admission” at the Exhibition Building or the Botanical Gardens.<sup>21</sup> The author noted that some may feel there was “far too much Socialism in the legislation which aims at the gratification of refined tastes among the working classes” but countered by arguing:

As an agency for the moral elevation of the masses, there is nothing of the kind that can be compared with music. The art itself is free from all the corrupting taints which are too often associated with dramatic performances, and under proper regulations, musical entertainments might be made the most healthful as well as the most popular of all social agencies.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> *SMH*, 6 March 1886, 13.

<sup>20</sup> *SMH*, 6 March 1886, 13.

<sup>21</sup> *SMH*.

<sup>22</sup> *SMH*, 6 March 1886, 13

The establishment of a musical institution, for this writer was a key step towards realising a dream for an egalitarian and harmonious society. It marked a development of the ideas promulgated in the 1840s in regard to the democratic potential of promoting musical activities for disadvantaged groups discussed in chapter 3.<sup>23</sup>

In contrast to the stance of the author of the 1886 article, leading Sydney musician George de Cairos Rego had more elitist tastes. A church organist from a well-known family of musicians and music critic for the *Telegraph*,<sup>24</sup> De Rego wished to foster “music in its most advanced forms” in the tradition of the great European centres as a means of raising musical standards.<sup>25</sup> In various articles and editorials in his short-lived journal *The Australasian Art Review*<sup>26</sup>, he clearly yearned for a more educated audience such as those in Europe who were “the product of many generations of art-culture” and could discriminate between “the artistically good and bad”.<sup>27</sup> He considered it might take “many years” to achieve such a “highly developed musical environment” in Sydney, since “many babble of the masters, but few understand them”.<sup>28</sup> He argued the general public did not have the “capacity for the enjoyment of high art” and was pessimistic about its ability ever to learn to appreciate good music. He therefore argued that

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<sup>23</sup> See pp 104-5.

<sup>24</sup> Music Australia, “G. (George) De Cairos-Rego (Ca. 1858-1946),” website accessed 1 June 2011, (2005), <http://nla.gov.au/nla.cs-ma-ANL%3AMA-457273>.

<sup>25</sup> Anon, An Academy for Sydney, *The Australasian Art Review*, 1 No. 2, 1899, 9–10.

<sup>26</sup> Twelve editions of this journal were published between 1899 and 1900.

<sup>27</sup> George de Cairos Rego, “Untitled Editorial”, *The Australasian Art Review* 1, no. 12 (1900) 5.

<sup>28</sup> *The Australasian Art Review*, 1, No. 7 1899, 23.



professional musicians must lead the way in establishing musical standards.<sup>29</sup> For him, a conservatorium should promote classical music above other forms of music rather than a more democratic approach to music-making.

As a composer and a well-regarded Sydney musician, de Rego may have been hoping that a music academy might provide him with additional career opportunities. However, many of Sydney's music teachers were more fearful of the potential competition that would ensue with the establishment of a conservatorium, arguing it would be "a blow at hundreds of people who now earn a living by teaching music."<sup>30</sup> Observing this one of Sydney's leading musicians, C. Reginald Toms, lamented that a school of music would not be established in Sydney given the "jealousy among musicians".<sup>31</sup> In his memoirs, Arundel Orchard, who was to become the second director of the Conservatorium, later censured "leading teachers of music" who "hotly opposed" the proposal to establish a musical institution:

Such narrow-mindedness was not very creditable to the intelligence of that particular clique who controlled all the important musical events of that period and who evidently considered that their supremacy might be challenged and the centre of music would move to the University.<sup>32</sup>

Some private music schools took the innovative approach of claiming they already provided the services of a conservatorium. In 1899, the Sydney

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<sup>29</sup> George de Cairos Rego, Editorial, *The Australasian Art Review* 1, no. 12 (1900) 5

<sup>30</sup> Cairos Rego.

<sup>31</sup> D.J. Quinn, "Music & Musicians in Australia," *Sydney Mail* 30 September 1908, 874.

<sup>32</sup> W. Arundel Orchard, *The Distant View* (Sydney: Currawong Pub. Co., 1943), 50.

College of Music lobbied the government for funding, claiming that their private teaching establishment might form the nucleus of a conservatorium of music.<sup>33</sup> Similarly, in 1901 a group of private music teachers strategically named themselves the “Sydney Conservatorium of Music” and claimed there was no need to establish a state-run conservatorium as they already fulfilled the conservatorium function.<sup>34</sup> Not surprisingly, other music teachers opposed such proposals from their competitors, arguing there was already insufficient demand “for the services of a very large number of professional musicians.”<sup>35</sup> Given the rival claims, in response to the 1899 deputation, the then Minister for Education James Hogue indicated that although he had some sympathy with the “very wholesome, healthy, elevating and refining influence on the masses” that music might have, he could not offer support for the establishment of any musical academy given the rival claims from various musical establishments.<sup>36</sup>

Sydney’s musical community also hotly debated whether any musical academy should be located within the university. As discussed in chapter 2, William Laver, actively lobbied the NSW Government to establish a Chair of Music at The University of Sydney.<sup>37</sup> Several other leading members of Sydney’s musical community vehemently argued against locating a musical

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<sup>33</sup> *SMH*, 12 August 1899, 6.

<sup>34</sup> *SMH*, 15 May 1907, 5.

<sup>35</sup> *SMH*, 7 August 1899, 3.

<sup>36</sup> *SMH*, 12 August 1899, 4.

<sup>37</sup> See p. 97.

academy within a university claiming it would foster an overly intellectual or scientific approach, making music inaccessible for the general population. Signor Hazon, for instance, the popular conductor of the Sydney Philharmonic Society, was concerned that “while a chair might be an advantage in the teaching of medicine and mathematics”, musicians should be trained through “practical experience, such as that which comes from orchestral performances.” In the same article, this view was endorsed by prominent organist and teacher J.E. Sykes, who stated “a Chair of Music is calculated to render the art of music a pedantic science, which it is not.”<sup>38</sup>

Despite the variety of views about the establishment of the Conservatorium, the cause gained momentum in the early 1900s when reformers and music lovers advocated the need to improve access to a musical education as a democratic ideal. For them improved musical education programs would raise musical standards and so enhance and enrich the lives of Australians. A 1907 article supporting the proposal to establish a Chair of Music at the University of Sydney simultaneously represented music as a scientific and spiritual experience:

... music is more than an art, it is a science. Let the newly elected scientific University Senator consider this—music is a force that lifts a mind out of itself, and creates a new spirit for those who know how to enjoy it.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> *SMH*, 24 July 1907, 6.

<sup>39</sup> *SMH*, 8 May 1907, 5.

In 1912, an article in *Australian Musical News* claimed that all “civilised countries” recognised that in developing systems of education “designed to improve the religious, moral, and social conditions of a people”, that “well-known and intelligent views of music as a science, and as an art should be properly cultivated.”<sup>40</sup> Such sentiments are very similar to those discussed in chapter three as advocated by Haweis and disseminated by concert promoters. It is significant that such sentiments began to appear to justify more formalised arrangements for teaching music and promoting music as an object of “progressive zeal”.<sup>41</sup> While the writer clearly shared many of the same democratic ideals as expressed in the 1886 article discussed above, this vision was now clearly linked to creating a privileged role for classical music rather than promoting musical education more generally. Yet despite this ongoing debate regarding various proposals to establish a music academy in Sydney, little headway was made in the first decade of the new century.

Finally, in 1912, in the absence of a private benefactor, the then Minister for Education and Treasurer, Campbell Carmichael, and the Premier, W.A. Holman, made a decisive move to establish the long-debated Conservatorium. The context was the expansion of the general education system to ensure “the greatest possible mental and physical development of the people of a country” – something that Carmichael believed to be an

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<sup>40</sup> *AMN*, 1 February 1912, 214.

<sup>41</sup> *SMH*, 8 May 1907, 5.

expression of the “highest form of patriotism”<sup>42</sup> This framing was consistent with the Labor Government’s reform agenda, mentioned in the previous chapter. Significantly, in outlining his reform objectives, Carmichael, who was at one point an accountant for the piano manufacturer O.C. Beale, singled out music for special attention, insisting there was a need to “provide wider channels for the musical education of the people”.<sup>43</sup> Holman, who became premier in 1913, was a music lover who strongly supported Carmichael’s initiative.<sup>44</sup> Subsequent to this announcement Carmichael undertook a visit to Adelaide and Melbourne to study both the Conservatorium and University approach and in April 1912 announced his decision that Sydney should establish a “Conservatorium” to encourage the “practical side of music” rather than provide for musical study within the University.<sup>45</sup>

Carmichael’s proposed Conservatorium was initially part of a broader fine arts complex although, ultimately, he only proceeded with the Conservatorium. In 1912 he established an advisory committee to provide advice on how a conservatorium should be established. The committee consisted of representatives of leading musical societies, the teaching community, the newly formed Musical Association, businessmen, government and the University, although significantly, the Musicians’ Union

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<sup>42</sup> *SMH*, 21 March 1912, 6.

<sup>43</sup> *SMH*, 21 March 1912, 6.

<sup>44</sup> Orchard, *The Distant View* (1943): 52–3.

<sup>45</sup> *SMH*, 19 April 1912, 9.

was not initially invited to send a representative.<sup>46</sup> However, the committee did include prominent musicians such as de Rego, who had strongly advocated that any musical academy should take a firm stand on musical standards, as well as Joseph Bradley and Henri Staell who, as representatives of the NSW Musical Association, might be expected to take a similar view.

Even while Carmichael's Labor convictions might suggest his support of a conservatorium was linked to a vision of expanding opportunities and enriching the lives of all New South Wales residents, the committee he established clearly wished to encourage more elite forms of music-making. The committee's report justified the need for a conservatorium on account of "the confusion of defective standards and the bewilderment of an Art community striving ... to discern what is best." The committee's report asserted the need for an institution with "the force of authority" to "demonstrate the truth of things" and to "dissipate the wrong ideas of musical art which fill this country."<sup>47</sup> In other words, the Conservatorium was to be an agent of what DiMaggio has termed "classification." The committee's report differentiated between classical music and what it considered to be less valuable forms of music which the report described as "commercialism" and DiMaggio described as "entertainment".<sup>48</sup> The report

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<sup>46</sup> *SMH*, 9 May 1912, 8.

<sup>47</sup> Reports of the Academy of Fine Arts Proposed Academy of Fine Arts: Report of the Music Subcommittee of the Advisory Board, Conservatorium of Music Archives, Box 12/1479.3, NSW SAR.

<sup>48</sup> Paul DiMaggio, "Cultural Entrepreneurship in Nineteenth-Century Boston: The Creation of an Organizational Base for High Culture in America," in *Rethinking Popular Culture: Contemporary Perspectives in Cultural Studies*, ed. Chandra Mukerji and Michael Schudson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 377.

indicated that the Conservatorium would need to “convince the public that it really was what it claims to be.”<sup>49</sup> That is, the committee believed that the community should endorse the Conservatorium as the authority on musical matters or a musical arbiter of standards. It was this vision of the Conservatorium’s function that eventually came to fruition.

The advisory committee’s report also focused on the need for the Conservatorium to promote a uniquely Australian expression of European cultural values. From the very first page of the report the committee outlined the way it perceived musical culture developing in Australia compared with classical music cultures in Berlin, London and Paris. It noted that in Europe, the “standards of art” had been honed by “centuries of musical culture”.<sup>50</sup> Although the committee considered a NSW State Conservatorium must adapt to “the special needs of the community it is designed to serve”,<sup>51</sup> the report made it clear that Australian musical culture must be able to demonstrate the outward signs of European culture. In particular, the report indicated that the establishment of an orchestra was “an essential need of any community hoping for musical progress” and that it might be possible for the Conservatorium to be “the foundation impulse of a national Australian Opera House.”<sup>52</sup> Indeed, given the beliefs about Australian singers discussed above, and the evidence already provided by singers such

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<sup>49</sup> Report of the Music Sub-Committee, SAR.

<sup>50</sup> Report of the Music Sub-Committee.

<sup>51</sup> Report of the Music Sub-Committee.

<sup>52</sup> Report of the Music Sub-Committee.

as Dame Nellie Melba, the committee believed that opera was an area where “Australia is likely to have its best chance of distinction in musical art”.<sup>53</sup>

Not surprisingly, given the ongoing controversy regarding the establishment of a Conservatorium, the initial response from the community was equivocal. Indeed, according to Collins, the hall was less than half full at the official Conservatorium opening concert on 6 May, 1915 organised by the NSW Government. Those who did attend were “not entirely representative of the Sydney musical scene”.<sup>54</sup> The response to the opening no doubt reflected tensions within the musical profession discussed above. According to Collins, the lack of choral music at the concert raised the ire of the various choral societies, including the Philharmonic Society, the Liedertafel and the Madrigal Society, who were not invited to participate.<sup>55</sup> Others claimed that the proposed solo singer, Melbourne-born soprano Amy Castles, was not a NSW singer.<sup>56</sup> She was belatedly replaced by a NSW-born contralto, Ella Caspers, but this did not resolve the tensions.<sup>57</sup> There were also ongoing accusations of disrespect in repurposing the stables which had been part of the Governor-General’s residence, to house the Conservatorium.<sup>58</sup> Others

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<sup>53</sup> Report of the Music Sub-Committee.

<sup>54</sup> Diane Collins, *Sounds from the Stables: The Story of Sydney’s Conservatorium* (Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2001), 19–20.

<sup>55</sup> Diane Collins, *Sounds from the Stables*, 20.

<sup>56</sup> *EN*, 4 May 1915, 2.

<sup>57</sup> Peter McCallum and Julie Simonds, *The Centenary of the Con: A History of the Sydney Conservatorium of Music 1915–2015* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2015), 18.

<sup>58</sup> See McCallum and Simonds, 11–18, who note the use of the stables was a compromise. The Conservatorium was originally intended to be located within the actual residence of the Governor-General which, since Federation, was under-utilised.



questioned the expense, particularly during a time of war.<sup>59</sup> This response to the opening of the Conservatorium sits in sharp contrast to the enthusiastic audience who attended the opening concerts for the Town Hall organ in 1890, discussed in chapter two. During the intervening twenty-five year period, music had become a source of division, rather than a means of bringing the community together.

### **Verbrugghen and the peanut wars**

Despite the tensions aroused by the debate about the establishment of the Conservatorium, the appointment of the Belgian conductor Henri Verbrugghen, and his arrival later in 1915, brought renewed enthusiasm for the endeavour. On his arrival in Sydney every musical group in Sydney vied for his attention in a full day of receptions “fit for a prince”<sup>60</sup> which brought together prominent members of the Government, including the Premier and key Government ministers as well as members of the legal community, the Musicians’ Union, the Sydney Symphony Orchestra and the NSW Musical Association,<sup>61</sup> all keen to acknowledge a “new epoch for musical culture not only in New South Wales, but in Australia”.<sup>62</sup> The aura of Verbrugghen’s international reputation clearly enchanted Sydney music lovers and he soon amassed a “crowd of thurifers” who, according to one observer, treated him

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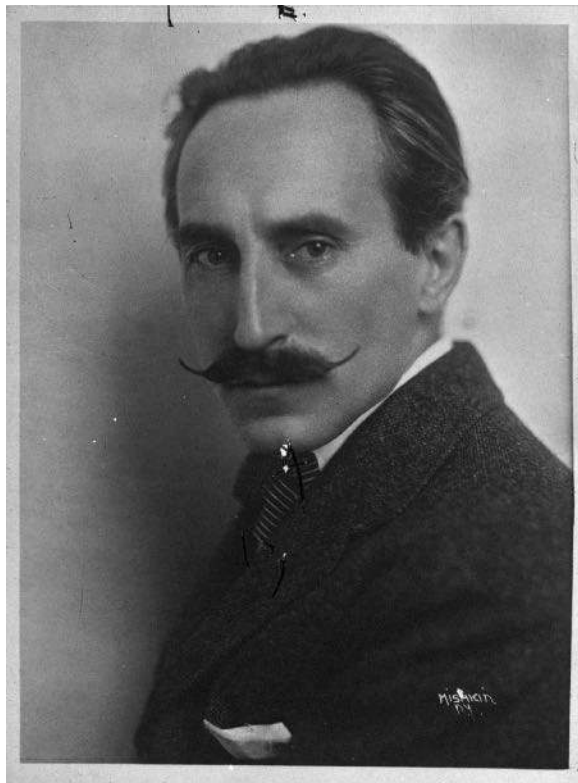
<sup>59</sup> Collins, *Sounds from the Stables*, 19. Collins reports that Mr T. Henley, MLA, scathingly declined his invitation to the opening of a facility which he believed represented a “wilful, wicked waste of public funds, at a time when drought and war is impoverishing so many”. See also *Catholic Press*, 29 April 1915, 27.

<sup>60</sup> *Sun*, 22 August 1915, 3.

<sup>61</sup> *Sun*, 8 August 1915, 14.

<sup>62</sup> *SMH*, 21 August 1915, 14.

“like a little god, on a high pedestal ... offering incense to him”.<sup>63</sup> In the weeks following his arrival, almost on a daily basis the press reported his opinions about “men, manners and music in the city”<sup>64</sup> including the great composers,<sup>65</sup> opera,<sup>66</sup> choral singing,<sup>67</sup> Australian musicians,<sup>68</sup> music in Australian schools,<sup>69</sup> military and brass bands,<sup>70</sup> Australian painters<sup>71</sup> and church music.<sup>72</sup>



**Image 5.1: Henri Verbrugghen (1873–1934)**  
Unknown photographer, 1920. SLNSW, FL1794132.

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<sup>63</sup> *The Catholic Press*, 18 November 1915, 9.

<sup>64</sup> *SMH*, 19 September 1915, 22.

<sup>65</sup> *Sun*, 22 August 1915, 16.

<sup>66</sup> *Telegraph*, 11 September 1915, 10.

<sup>67</sup> *Sun*, 3 October 1915, 11.

<sup>68</sup> *Telegraph*, 28 August 1915, 8.

<sup>69</sup> *Sun*, 19 September 1915, 22; *Telegraph*, 18 September 1915, 10.

<sup>70</sup> *Sun*, 17 October 1915, 22.

<sup>71</sup> *Sun*, 5 September 1915, 8.

<sup>72</sup> *Sun*, 3 October 1915, 11.

While some continued to express concern at the cost of the Conservatorium<sup>73</sup> and Verbrugghen's focus on German music,<sup>74</sup> after the initial concerts with Verbrugghen conducting the Conservatorium orchestra, expectations of the great things that might be achieved with Verbrugghen's leadership excited idealistic visions of Australia's future. The Honourable John Daniel Fitzgerald, prominent reformist Labor parliamentarian, also Minister for Public Health and Local Government, was particularly effusive, claiming that under Verbrugghen:

The velocity and momentum of our musical development will be increased fifty-fold by the force and finesse, by the combination of temperament and skill, of passion and knowledge, of fiery ardour and balanced restraint, which is comprehended in the talismanic name—Henri Verbrugghen.<sup>75</sup>

Fitzgerald's dream was far from an elitist one. He hoped that Verbrugghen might awaken a renewed sense of democracy and liberty inspired by the "communistic"<sup>76</sup> vision of all members of the orchestra working together to bring about a unified expression of Beethoven's revolutionary spirit. The fact that it was a government enterprise raised hopes that since it owed nothing to "patronage or to the strained enthusiasm of any little coterie of posturing aesthetes", it might relate to "the people as a whole".<sup>77</sup> However, as I will

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<sup>73</sup> *Newsletter* 23 October 1915, 4; *Newsletter*, 30 October 1915, 4; *Telegraph*, 3 November 1915, 11; *Sun*, 3 November 1911, 4.

<sup>74</sup> *Sunday Times*, 7 November 1915, 10; *SMH*, 3 November 1915, 8.

<sup>75</sup> *Sunday Times*, 14 November 1915, 10.

<sup>76</sup> *Sunday Times*, 14 November 1915, 10.

<sup>77</sup> *Sunday Times*, 18 May 1919, 3.

discuss, it soon became apparent that such democratic ideals were not entirely consistent with the quest to raise musical standards.

Prior to his appointment as Director of the NSW State Conservatorium of Music, Verbrugghen had been professor of violin, chamber music, orchestra and opera at the Athenaeum in Glasgow. He was also beginning to establish himself as a conductor appearing with a range of European orchestras prior to his arrival in Australia.<sup>78</sup> He made his priorities clear at his initial reception where he is quoted as saying “please note this, as my prime article of faith – that all musical progress must be based upon the classic masters of the art”.<sup>79</sup> While allowing that Australian students should “retain the colouring and the character of their race”, his aim was to provide “a musical education from A to Z in standards of the best schools in Europe”.<sup>80</sup> Commentators noted that his demeanour left little room for compromise:

He is a musician and a classicist first of all, and if he can't have his way and work fully towards the realisation of his ideals he gives the impression that he would not be long in cutting the painter.<sup>81</sup>

The cornerstone of classical music for Verbrugghen was the “great German masters”.<sup>82</sup> Like Haweis, Verbrugghen considered that instrumental

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<sup>78</sup> Diane Collins, "Henri Verbrugghen's Auditory Utopianism," *History Australia* 6, no. 36.1–36.18 (2009): 36.2.

<sup>79</sup> *SMH*, 21 August 1915, 14.

<sup>80</sup> *SMH*, 21 August 1915, 14.

<sup>81</sup> *AMN*, 1 September 1915, 82.

<sup>82</sup> *Telegraph*, 21 August 1915, 13.

German music, as epitomised in the work of Beethoven, was the highest form of musical expression known to humankind. He did not believe that the war should impact on the performance of the German masters (as distinct from contemporary German composers).<sup>83</sup> Indeed, one of the reasons he claimed to have come to Australia was because of the opposition that the war had generated to the performance of German music in England. Although, as a Belgian, he was not unsympathetic to the suffering experienced in many European countries, he claimed he still knelt “at the altar of my musical gods”.<sup>84</sup> He argued that the great composers did not represent Germany *per se*, but were “a blessing to all humanity” or the “Shakespeares of the musical world”.<sup>85</sup>

Nevertheless, despite his definite elitist preferences he also had genuine democratic sympathies. He believed passionately that music could enhance human existence.<sup>86</sup> Verbrugghen based his beliefs on theosophical convictions “that human life was evolving to a higher stage”.<sup>87</sup> Theosophy was extremely popular at that time, particularly among artists, and had greatly influenced the European composers Arnold Scriabin<sup>88</sup> and Arnold

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<sup>83</sup> *Telegraph*, 21 August 1915, 13. It should be noted that despite a promise not to perform music by living German composers, the Conservatorium did perform Max Bruch's (1838-1920) violin concerto in 1918. See *Sun*, 23 June 1918, 8.

<sup>84</sup> *SMH*, 21 August 1915, 14

<sup>85</sup> *SMH*, 21 August 1915, 14

<sup>86</sup> Collins, "Henri Verbrugghen's Auditory Utopianism," (2009): 36.4.

<sup>87</sup> Collins.

<sup>88</sup> See Susanna Garcia, "Scriabin's Symbolist Plot Archetype in the Late Piano Sonatas," *19th-Century Music* 23, no. 3 (2000): 273-300. for a good discussion of the influence of theosophy in Scriabin's music.

Schoenberg.<sup>89</sup> As I will explain in the next chapter, it was also growing in popularity in Australia.<sup>90</sup> According to Collins, Verbrugghen believed that individual thought and action could bring forward an ideal spiritual state and that the quest for perfection depended on men and women developing a “keener auditive sense”.<sup>91</sup> To do this, he set out to educate and expand audiences so that they could be empowered to understand and appreciate the same music that inspired him.<sup>92</sup> He described his role as “bringing to rich fruition ... those creative musical forces that must be innate in the virile character of this young nation”.<sup>93</sup>

Verbrugghen clearly saw himself as an authority and believed that to develop musically Australia needed to accept his musical judgments, including his strong preference for instrumental music over opera. This was at odds with the advisory committee’s express wish (discussed earlier) that opera also be prioritised. He wrote an article for a Conservatorium publication which acknowledged that Australians, particularly those in NSW, were “keenly susceptible to the delights of opera ...” but questioned whether or not this would be a “beneficial consummation, from a musical point of view”. Verbrugghen’s ambivalence reflected his concern about

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<sup>89</sup> See Jelena Hahl-Koch, ed. *Arnold Schoenberg Wassily Kandinsky: Letters, Pictures and Documents* (London: Faber and Faber, 1984), which details Schoenberg’s correspondence with Kandinsky where they discuss many ideas about colour, art and music.

<sup>90</sup> See Jill Roe, *Beyond Belief: Theosophy in Australia 1979–1939*. (Kensington: NSWU Press, 1986). Roe claims that between 1914 and 1921 membership of the Theosophical Society in Australia almost doubled.

<sup>91</sup> Quoted in Collins, “Henri Verbrugghen’s Auditory Utopianism,” (2009): 36.4.

<sup>92</sup> Collins, 36.6.

<sup>93</sup> *Telegraph*, 4 September 1915, 6.

whether opera truly elevated and embellished “the minds of the people” or, given the context of performance in a theatrical environment, whether it rather warped and stultified, gradually lowering rather than elevating the taste of the masses. He, like Haweis, believed that opera had developed in Italy during a period of “decadence”. He insisted that it was almost impossible to hear opera “under suitable conditions” except in special theatres built for the performance of Wagnerian opera.<sup>94</sup> Verbrugghen claimed that unless the Government were to provide funds for such a facility in Sydney, where opera could be produced “according to certain rules and conditions set down” as an “undoubted moral and educational factor”,<sup>95</sup> it would be the “greatest folly” to attempt to establish opera in Australia”.<sup>96</sup> During his tenure, apart from training singers, he did very little to promote opera.

Verbrugghen also had little tolerance for those who he felt did not demonstrate an appropriate degree of reverence for the musical masters. He berated audiences about his behaviour expectations at his regular lecture concerts where he condemned chattering, enthusiastic recalls for encores and even the knitting<sup>97</sup> that was for the most part intended as part of a patriotic effort to provide socks for the armed forces.<sup>98</sup> According to Orchard,

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<sup>94</sup> Henri Verbrugghen, Opera in Australia, *The Conservatorium Magazine*, October, 1916, 6–7.

<sup>95</sup> Verbrugghen.

<sup>96</sup> Henri Verbrugghen, “Music in America”, *AMN*, 1 June 1918, 324.

<sup>97</sup> *Sun*, 2 April 1916, 10.

<sup>98</sup> *Sun*, 6 April 1916, 3.

Verbruggen's constant chastisements caused many subscribers to take umbrage and some would time their arrival for the end of the lecture just before the first musical item, in order to avoid them.<sup>99</sup>

Verbruggen's expectations of audience behaviour caused little concern for the middle class who generally accepted similar behavioural norms. The clear class divide was apparent in what became known as the "peanut wars".<sup>100</sup> At one of his lecture recitals late in 2016, Verbruggen complained that he always knew what sort of concert had been held the night before by "the state of the hall" the next morning.<sup>101</sup> After chamber music concerts, he claimed the hall was always clean but after other concerts "I find all kinds of rubbish strewn about—chocolates and even remnants of peanuts".<sup>102</sup> The difficulty, as Cairos-Rego explained, was that "in accordance with our long-established custom", the peanut had been reserved for more broadly based forms of entertainment like the "pictures". It was therefore of concern that "peanuts" were now "jostling the aristocratic chocolate at concerts ... and there is even a threatened outbreak of oranges at organ recitals".<sup>103</sup> Cairos-Rego, who was a strong supporter of classical music, thought that Verbruggen's "reformatory crusade" had now gone "a step too far".<sup>104</sup> The debate was widely discussed in the media and

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<sup>99</sup> Orchard, *The Distant View* (1943): 62.

<sup>100</sup> *Sun*, 3 November 1917, 4.

<sup>101</sup> *Sun*, 1 November 1917, 5.

<sup>102</sup> *Sun*, 1 November 1917, 5.

<sup>103</sup> *Telegraph*, 1 November 1917, 8.

<sup>104</sup> *Telegraph*, 1 November 1917, 8.



Verbrugghen even made it into the *Sunday Times* list of “personalities of the week” for his comments (Image 5.2)



**Image 5.2:** *Sunday Times*, 4 November 1917, 9.

The implied insult to those not included among Verbrugghen’s “elect ... music lovers” was widely denounced with a “butcher-boy” quoted as saying “I ain’t goin’ to no more leckcher concerts at the Consy”<sup>105</sup> and the *Australian Worker* suggested that it was actually Verbrugghen who was “rude” for holding a concert “while people are eating peanuts”.<sup>106</sup> While these remarks were clearly facetious they demonstrate that Verbrugghen’s attempts to democratise classical music concerts were clearly understood to be conditional on audience members adopting conforming to the behaviour

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<sup>105</sup> *Sun*, 1 November 1917, 4.

<sup>106</sup> *The Australian Worker*, 8 November 1917, 10.

expectations of the middle classes. This suggested a clear ongoing tension with the desire to raise musical standards while simultaneously promoting music as a means of enhancing democratic values.

The ongoing press coverage of Verbrugghen's views reinforced his authority, making him the clear arbiter of musical standards for Sydney. Verbrugghen's views were not only discussed in general media but were widely disseminated in the various musical journals being established at that time. The national journal, *Australian Musical News*, had already been launched in Melbourne in 1912. In contrast to George de Cairos Rego's short lived *Australasian Art Journal*, such a journal was evidently now sustainable and continued up to 1940. The Conservatorium established its own magazine *Conservatorium Magazine* in October 1916. Praised widely for its quality both in Australia and overseas, according to Collins it communicated an "exuberant sense of mission" that presented the Conservatorium as a "runaway success"<sup>107</sup>. However it did not have the same longevity as *Australian Musical News* and was eventually subsumed within other publications.<sup>108</sup> Both of these magazines provided uncritical support of Verbrugghen's musical agenda. The *Australian Musical News*, for instance,

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<sup>107</sup> Collins, *Sounds from the Stables*, 29–30.

<sup>108</sup> Although the *Conservatorium Magazine* continued through most of the 1920s it had several name changes and was eventually incorporated within the *Australasian Phonograph Monthly and Music Trade Review* (also known as *Music in Australia*). See Letter to N.L. Salmon from Commonwealth Publications Ltd., 14 July 1928, Box 12/1475, SRO, Kingsford.

expressed glee that Sydney now had a “musical high priest” who “without hesitation dubs himself a classicist”.<sup>109</sup>

Yet Verbrugghen’s focus on raising musical standards effectively disenfranchised, even derided, “half-baked amateurs”,<sup>110</sup> effectively preferencing attentive listeners (many of whom might be amateur musicians), aspiring students and performers who obtained the imprimatur of the Conservatorium above amateurs and less committed music enthusiasts. He maintained that the Conservatorium should not only focus on producing musicians of the highest standard but that “people should be taught how to discriminate in the quality of the music they hear”.<sup>111</sup> Those who received a musical education but didn’t make a career in music would henceforth become listeners. Lesser quality musicians had little place in Verbrugghen’s scheme. Although Verbrugghen recognised the important work of brass bands in “reaching all conditions of people” he insisted that to be of “real benefit to the public ... it was of the highest importance that the technique of the players should be cultivated on the best lines ... and ... that style and good taste should be inculcated”.<sup>112</sup> Amateur choral and orchestra groups rightly worried that regular concerts by professional musicians placed the “old metropolitan musical societies” at a “disadvantage.”<sup>113</sup> They

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<sup>109</sup> *AMN*, 1 September 1915, 66.

<sup>110</sup> *Sun*, 22 August 1914, 16.

<sup>111</sup> *Sun*, 3 October 1915, 11.

<sup>112</sup> *Sun*, 17 October 1915, 22.

<sup>113</sup> *Telegraph*, 12 March 1919, 10.

expressed concern that it would not represent a “satisfactory way of progression in music” if amateur efforts were killed off as part of the process of establishing professional groups.<sup>114</sup>

As Verbrugghen’s missionary efforts to raise musical standards ramped up it soon became apparent that in some ways his ideals were incompatible with the democratic hopes that many had pinned on developing a classical music culture. In particular, there was considerable debate about whether it was better to educate a small group to elite levels or to promote community participation in musical activities in accord with traditional understandings about the role and function of music. This divide was succinctly summarised by a *Telegraph* correspondent who insisted more good would be accomplished by sending out teachers to establish an orchestra in country towns than by establishing a single professional orchestra.<sup>115</sup> Typically such concerns were dismissed by those who suggested a better appreciation of music would, of itself, raise more demand for singers and instrumentalists,<sup>116</sup> an assertion which, as I will demonstrate, failed to come to fruition. As Verbrugghen’s vision for his orchestra became increasingly grandiose and expensive, many, like the *Telegraph*’s

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<sup>114</sup> *Telegraph*, 12 March 1919, 10.

<sup>115</sup> *Telegraph*, 14 March 1919, 6.

<sup>116</sup> *Telegraph*, 14 March 1919, 4.

correspondent, began to ask whether it was better for a community to be educated as to how to listen or how to play music.<sup>117</sup>

### **The NSW State Orchestra**

Verbrugghen's most daring enterprise, and the one that eventually caused him to part ways with Sydney, was the creation of an orchestra. Such an initiative had been a strong expectation of the Conservatorium's music sub-committee, along with the establishment of an opera school. While the Sydney Symphony Orchestra had been strongly supported by the musical community, it was little more than a part-time venture and had fallen far short of the full-time professional orchestra that music lovers believed a necessary part of a classical music culture. As an editorial in the *Herald* put it:

For if there is one thing that Sydney must have if it is to develop musically, that one thing is an orchestra—the unrivalled instrument, which more than any other medium enshrines the music of two centuries past, and in which every great composer has found the most adequate expression of his genius.<sup>118</sup>

Within his very first weeks of taking up the Director's position, Verbrugghen established both a Student Orchestra and a Conservatorium Orchestra. The latter consisted principally of teaching staff, advanced students and outside professionals who were engaged for the season (from March to December) and paid a fixed sum for a weekly orchestral rehearsal and for concerts.<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> *Telegraph*, 14 March 1919, 6.

<sup>118</sup> *SMH*, 3 August 1912, 7.

<sup>119</sup> Collins, *Sounds from the Stables*, 30.

The use of outside performers meant he was still, at least in part, reliant on theatre instrumentalists and was forced to continue with matinee performances which typically did not attract the same audience as evening performances. During the war period, there were also difficulties recruiting appropriately qualified musicians.

The part time engagement of musicians at this time was an issue that also plagued orchestras in the United States and Europe. Clearly, if concerts could only be held in the afternoons so as not to conflict with theatrical engagements in the evening, this was a serious impediment to attracting an audience, impacting on the orchestra's viability. Given that players prioritised better paid theatrical work it was also not uncommon for orchestral players to allow a substitute to deputise if a last-minute paid performance came up.<sup>120</sup> This also impacted on the quality of performances since a conductor could not ensure that those who rehearsed for a concert would actually be the people who performed at a concert.

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<sup>120</sup> This was also a problem in London in the 1920's. For a good discussion on the issue see Nicholas Kenyon, *The BBC Symphony Orchestra: The First Fifty Years, 1930–1980* (London: British Broadcasting Corporation, 1981), 8.



**Image 5.3: State Orchestra in Conservatorium of Music, Henri Verbrugghen conductor, November 1920, State Library of NSW.**

From the outset Verbrugghen wanted a large permanent orchestra “guaranteed by the generosity of private patrons” or “by some kind of Government subsidy<sup>121</sup> which would provide sufficient work to enable players to “derive an income large enough to prevent them being under the necessity of employing the major portion of their time in playing for outside engagements”.<sup>122</sup> This was a big ambition, since despite constant suggestions that such orchestras were common in other countries,<sup>123</sup> as discussed earlier, this was not the case.<sup>124</sup> Yet Verbrugghen claimed that the orchestra was an

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<sup>121</sup> *SMH*, 4 August 1915, 8.

<sup>122</sup> *Sun*, 3 September 1915, 5.

<sup>123</sup> See for example, *SMH*, 4 March 1916, 8.

<sup>124</sup> Paddy Scannell, “Music for the Multitude? The Dilemmas of the BBC’s Music Policy 1923–1946,” *Media, Culture and Society* iii (1981): 248.

essential component of a Conservatorium as “its strongest means of appeal and advertising medium.”<sup>125</sup> He saw it both as a means of providing training for instrumental students and as a link between the Conservatorium and the larger community.<sup>126</sup> Conducting an orchestra clearly also fitted with Verbrugghen’s own career aspirations. Indeed for Verbrugghen the orchestra was so critical to his enterprise, he later claimed “without orchestral activities my own usefulness here ceases”.<sup>127</sup>

Within weeks of his arrival, even before opening the doors to students, Verbrugghen organised the first Conservatorium orchestra concert. This was, in the tradition of previous orchestra concerts, a day or matinee performance held on 6 November 1915 at the Sydney Town Hall, but with an unusually large orchestra of 120 players. Demonstrating the way that Verbrugghen had now united the musical community, and in contrast to the poor audience at the Conservatorium’s opening concert, around 2000 attended Verbrugghen’s first orchestra concert. “Enthusiasm has never run higher” gushed the *Herald’s* critic. So much so, that a thousand people could not gain entry so a repeat performance was promised for the following Saturday.<sup>128</sup> The program reflected Verbrugghen’s focus on German high culture, with the first half devoted to the music of Beethoven. In the second

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<sup>125</sup> Verbrugghen to the Minister for Public Instruction, February 1919. Quoted in John Mansfield Thomson, *A Distant Music The Life and Times of Alfred Hill, 1870–1960* (Auckland, New Zealand: Oxford University Press, 1980), 147–8.

<sup>126</sup> Collins, *Sounds from the Stables: The Story of Sydney’s Conservatorium* (2001): 37–8.

<sup>127</sup> Thomson, *A Distant Music : The Life and Times of Alfred Hill, 1870–1960* (1980): 146–7.

<sup>128</sup> *SMH*, 8 November 1915, 4.



half he bowed somewhat to popular taste by including some Wagner (the first act from *Lohengrin*), some Bizet, the prelude to *The Dream of Gerontius* by Elgar and the *1812 Overture* by Tchaikovsky.<sup>129</sup> Unusually for Sydney, no vocal works were included, marking a move towards the elimination of vocal items in orchestral concerts.

**TOWN HALL, SYDNEY.**

—

THIS AFTERNOON, AT 3 O'CLOCK.

IN THE PRESENCE OF

HIS EXCELLENCY THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL AND LADY HELEN MUNRO FERGUSON,  
AND  
HIS EXCELLENCY THE STATE GOVERNOR, SIR GERALD STRICKLAND.

**HENRI VERBRUGGHEN**  
**HENRI VERBRUGGHEN**

WILL CONDUCT

AN ORCHESTRA OF OVER 120 PERFORMERS,

AT THE

**GRAND ORCHESTRAL CONCERT.**  
**GRAND ORCHESTRAL CONCERT.**

—

BOX PLAN OPEN TILL 12 O'CLOCK AT PALING'S.  
SUBSTANTIAL CONCESSIONS TO STUDENTS.  
RESERVED SEATS, 10/6, 5/-.  
UNRESERVED, 2/6, 1/-.  
N.B.—ALL DOORS CLOSED DURING PERFORMANCE.

A. STANLEY WARWICK,  
Registrar.

—

**PROGRAMME.**

Overture—Egmont .....	Beethoven
Adagio, from Ballet Music to Prometheus...	Beethoven
Symphony No. 5, in C Minor .....	Beethoven
Prelude—Lohengrin .....	Wagner
Prelude—Act. III, Lohengrin .....	Wagner
Prelude—The Dream of Gerontius .....	Elgar
Adagio—L'Arlésienne .....	Bizet
Overture Bolesnelli, 1812 .....	Tchaikowsky

Image 5.4: Advertisement, *Telegraph*, 6 November 1915, 2.

In 1916 Verbrugghen began a small series of subscription concerts with a more modestly sized orchestra of 35 players. The season of concerts

<sup>129</sup> *SMH*, 8 November 1915, 4.

opened with a matinee concert on Saturday 8 April 1916 with a program of the “standard classical works” by the German quadrumvirate of composers, Beethoven, Haydn, Mozart and Schubert.<sup>130</sup> Haydn and even, to some extent, Mozart were not established composers within Sydney’s orchestral repertoire at that time. Between 1908 and 1917, the Sydney Symphony Orchestra only performed three works by Mozart and none by Haydn, compared to 35 works by Wagner, 25 by Tchaikovsky and 21 by Beethoven. Mendelssohn was the eighth most commonly performed composer with eight works. Verbrugghen was clearly aiming to steer Sydney towards the older foundational works of the European canon. There was a total of four orchestral concerts in 1916, eight in 1917 (with each program repeated at least once) and eleven in 1918 including a concert with Melba to raise funds for Soldiers’ Dependents and an end of year plebiscite concert. The programs focused heavily on the German masters, and included the complete symphonic works of Beethoven as well as his *Missa Solemnis* and three of his piano concerti. With each concert, reviewers noted a steady improvement in the quality of the performances, which they credited to Verbrugghen’s skills as conductor, and by the end of the 1918 season the orchestra was able to break even financially.<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> Thomson, *A Distant Music*, 143.

<sup>131</sup> Thompson, 146.

At the final orchestral concert for 1918, Verbrugghen announced that with the war now over, more opportunities were opening up for some of the orchestra players, who had been offered other jobs. He insisted that the orchestra would not be able to continue if the Government did not establish a guarantee fund which would enable him to recompense instrumentalists so that they did not need to seek employment elsewhere.<sup>132</sup> Verbrugghen wrote to the Minister for Public Instruction claiming that further progress was not possible “unless the orchestra be placed upon a permanent basis.”<sup>133</sup> Although he had originally assumed the job of unpaid orchestra director,<sup>134</sup> with the additional workload he also requested an additional fee for himself as conductor. There were some misgivings about such “extravagant expenditure”<sup>135</sup> for the “intellectual amusement of the city.”<sup>136</sup> However, given the euphoria surrounding the success of the orchestra and its profitability to date, it was not a difficult decision for the Government to provide a guarantee for £11 000.<sup>137</sup> The guarantee fund was established to protect against any loss, and would not be payable unless the income generated by the orchestra failed to match up with receipts.<sup>138</sup> At this time the orchestra was renamed the State Conservatorium Orchestra, or just the State Orchestra.

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<sup>132</sup> *Telegraph*, 9 December 1918, 6.

<sup>133</sup> Quoted in Thomson, *A Distant Music*, 146.

<sup>134</sup> Collins, *Sounds from the Stables*, 38.

<sup>135</sup> Letter to the editor, *SMH*, 21 January 1919, 6.

<sup>136</sup> Letter to the editor, *SMH*, 22 January 1919, 10.

<sup>137</sup> *SMH*, 23 January 1919, 6.

<sup>138</sup> *SMH*, 10 March 1919, 6.

The Government did not agree to provide a separate fee for the conductor. Verbrugghen's salary of £1250 per annum as Conservatorium Director was already a matter of some controversy since a mid-ranking teacher might only be paid £336 per annum (plus overtime)<sup>139</sup> and there was little public sympathy for increasing a salary, which, or so it was claimed, was higher than that of the Chief Justice.<sup>140</sup> By comparison, at that time, a house could be purchased in the well-to-do suburb of Woollahra for £12000 or £640 in the less prestigious suburb of Willoughby.<sup>141</sup> Nevertheless, during negotiations around the renewal of Verbrugghen's contract in 1920, the government did increase Verbrugghen's salary to £1500 per annum with up to £2000 to be paid in addition from any profit accumulated by the orchestra which would have more than doubled Verbrugghen's salary.<sup>142</sup> Verbrugghen showed little gratitude for this gesture, further unsettling matters by claiming he had received an offer of £5000 per annum to conduct an American orchestra.<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>139</sup> McCallum and Simonds, *The Centenary of the Con*, 30–1. See also <https://www.fwc.gov.au/waltzing-matilda-and-the-sunshine-harvester-factory/historical-material/methods-wage-adjustment-1>. In 1921 the Commonwealth Court of Conciliation and Arbitration affirmed the Harvester rate of 7 shillings a day, adjusted for inflation, as the appropriate award minimum rate. This represented a weekly wage of 85 shillings or £221 per annum. Verbrugghen's salary was approximately six times the minimum wage. At this time, the Australian and English pound were officially at parity. In American dollars this represented \$5770.00 (See Lawrence H. Officer and Samuel H. Williamson, "Computing 'Real Value' Over Time With a Conversion Between U.K. Pounds and U.S. Dollars, 1791 to Present". *MeasuringWorth*, Accessed 3 January 2019, [https://www.measuringworth.com/calculators/exchange/result\\_exchange.php](https://www.measuringworth.com/calculators/exchange/result_exchange.php)).

<sup>140</sup> *Sydney Mail*, 10 March 1920, 7.

<sup>141</sup> Peter Spearritt, *Sydney Since the Twenties* (Sydney: Hale and Iremonger, 1978), p. 31.

<sup>142</sup> *SMH*, 10 June 1920, 6.

<sup>143</sup> *Sunday Times*, 25 April 1920, 4.

In 1919 the orchestra, with the security of the guarantee fund, was at last able to conduct regular evening concerts alternating between “popular” concerts on Saturday nights and the works of the great masters during subscription concerts on Thursday nights. In addition, there was a short series of “popular” concerts at the King’s Cross Theatre and in 1920 at the Arcadia Theatre in Chatswood and the Hippodrome (now Capitol) Theatre as part of Verbrugghen’s missionary efforts to gain converts to the cause of classical music. The repertoire performed in the “popular” concerts included some of the more popular of the canonical symphonies and concertos, but was mostly comprised of music which might be more immediately familiar and engaging to listeners including music by Wagner, ballet music and popular opera excerpts or songs. The recourse to “popular” concerts was not intended as a concession to popular taste. Rather it was a practical step to ensure the profitability of the orchestra.<sup>144</sup> For Verbrugghen his compromises in programming for the “popular” orchestral concerts were only ever considered a temporary measure to “convert the innocent concert-goer into a high-brow” so that he might become “one of the devoted flock who crowd the Conservatorium when the same orchestra perform a classical program”.<sup>145</sup> Prices ranged from three shillings for reserved seats to one shilling for unreserved. Tickets for the subscription concerts held at the

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<sup>144</sup> *SMH*, 15 March 1919, 8.

<sup>145</sup> *Telegraph*, 8 March 1919, 11.

Conservatorium ranged from 3/6d for reserved seats to two shillings for unreserved, reflecting the more exclusive target audience.

The orchestra gave a total of ninety-three concerts in 1919 and undertook tours in Victoria and South Australia. It was received enthusiastically wherever it went.<sup>146</sup> The 1919 season was far and away its most successful with frequent press references to large crowds and enthusiastic audiences. The popular concerts were particularly well received with many disappointed people unable to get tickets. This was despite the influenza epidemic that year which negatively affected other forms of entertainment. Effusive reviews appeared in a wide variety of publications describing orchestral concerts as a “sensational event,”<sup>147</sup> “a rare feast of melody and harmony,”<sup>148</sup> a “brilliant affair”<sup>149</sup> with the orchestra itself described as a “glorious asset”<sup>150</sup> for the state. In particular, Sydney residents relished having an orchestra that was recognised as superior to any Melbourne orchestra, with *The Catholic Press* proudly proclaiming:

The Mother State will now lead in the world of music, as in so many matters, and the Conservatorium orchestra is being duly recognised throughout the Commonwealth.<sup>151</sup>

Not all listeners focused on the transcendental nature of the music. A review in *Australian Worker*, for instance, emphasised the revolutionary,

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<sup>146</sup> Collins, *Sounds from the Stables*, 38.

<sup>147</sup> *SMH*, 20 June 1919, 11.

<sup>148</sup> *Sunday Times*, 22 June 1919, 2.

<sup>149</sup> *The Mirror*, 17 August 1919, 3.

<sup>150</sup> *Sun*, 14 August 1919, 2.

<sup>151</sup> *The Catholic Press*, 7 August 1919, 16.

“inflammatory” experience of listening to Tchaikovsky’s fifth symphony at the Orchestra’s first subscription concert for the year:

In the blare of the trumpets and trombones the doom of Privilege was sounded. In the muttering resonance of the drums the anger of the oppressed multitude was proclaimed. The shrill incitation of the violins made the blood leap in the veins, and the drone of the oboes and bassoons was charged with a tremendous significance.<sup>152</sup>

The reviewer ended the article somewhat bemused by the fact that it seemed at the end of the performance as the conductor turned to acknowledge the plaudits of the audience, not all had shared his experience of hearing the “tramp of the Soviet Army”.<sup>153</sup> While clearly the reviewer looked to music to promote the workers’ cause, the context in which this music was performed amidst the social elite within the strictly controlled ritualised framework of the concert platform hall caused something of a disjunction for him. A similar sense of dissonance was apparent in another article in *Australian Worker* which described a concert from the perspective of a group of “working men” who felt “this congregation of posturing intellects and pretentious emotions” lacked the sincerity of the honest worker. According to the author of the article, the violinist with his privileged background had failed to adequately capture the struggles of life which they believed to be the essence of Beethoven’s music:

If that chap with the fiddle had stoked a ship’s furnace for four quid a month, or earnt his bob an hour in a railway cuttin’, or

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<sup>152</sup> *Australian Worker*, 27 March 1919, 13.

<sup>153</sup> *Australian Worker*, 27 March 1919, 13.

rouseabouted in a shearin' shed; if he had blewed his cheque in a bush shanty, an' tramped the country lookin' for someone to rob him of the fruits of his labour, all the time longin' for a quiet life an' the love of a clean woman ... well, I reckon he'd have played that bit o' tune in a way that would have shocked all the silly affectation out o' this mob of low-necks an' high-brows.<sup>154</sup>

Despite the dissatisfaction of these audience members music lovers could hardly get enough of the orchestra. In the short term the orchestra's popularity provided a profit of £2500, ensuring it did not need to draw on the Government's guarantee fund during 1919.<sup>155</sup> However, as feared, interest in amateur groups declined commensurately. By June 1919, both the Sydney Symphony Orchestra and the Amateur Orchestral Society had gone into recess while the Philharmonic was languishing and in urgent need of funds without an orchestra to accompany its concerts.<sup>156</sup> The Philharmonic had lost about half of its regular subscribers during the war and had only survived 1918 by providing Saturday night popular concerts. But by 1919, this was "a field now occupied by the State Conservatorium orchestra".<sup>157</sup> In the end, the Philharmonic managed to survive the year by obtaining the services of the State Orchestra to accompany its performances. The all male Liedertafel Choir had the added disadvantage of having to disentangle itself from its Germanic origins during wartime. By renaming itself the Apollo Club and by joining forces with the State Conservatorium Orchestra it was

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<sup>154</sup> *Australian Worker*, 15 November 1917, 17.

<sup>155</sup> Collins, *Sounds from the Stables*, 38.

<sup>156</sup> *Sunday Times*, 20 July 1919, 10.

<sup>157</sup> *SMH*, 28 May 1919, 11.



also able to revive its fortunes after hitting a low spot immediately after the war. The original Sydney Symphony Orchestra and the Sydney Amateur orchestras, however, never revived as, according to a *Herald* correspondent, with the advent of the State Orchestra, “the day of the amateur had passed”.<sup>158</sup>

The State Conservatorium Orchestra meanwhile extended itself still further in 1920 with the size of the orchestra increasing first to 60, then 80, players.<sup>159</sup> In that year the orchestra also undertook a six week tour of New Zealand with nearly 100 players.<sup>160</sup> This was in addition to the 120 concerts scheduled domestically for the year which included tours of Brisbane, the north coast of New South Wales,<sup>161</sup> Melbourne and Adelaide. While it has been claimed that the heavy concert schedule was necessary to make the orchestra viable,<sup>162</sup> the increased size of the orchestra and the actual costs of touring added to expenses.<sup>163</sup> In addition to the heavy concert schedule, to celebrate the sesquicentennial of Beethoven’s birth, the orchestra performed all of the Beethoven symphonies, the Beethoven Mass in D and other Beethoven works in Melbourne during the course of a week.<sup>164</sup> As if this

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<sup>158</sup> Letter to the editor, *SMH*, 4 May 1925, 5.

<sup>159</sup> Thomson, *A Distant Music*, 154.

<sup>160</sup> Thomson.

<sup>161</sup> Collins, *Sounds from the Stables*, 39.

<sup>162</sup> Kenneth Morgan, "Music, Finance, and Politics: Henry Verbrugghen and the New South Wales State Orchestra, 1919–1923," *Musicology Australia* 36, no. 1 (2014): 21.

<sup>163</sup> Morgan.

<sup>164</sup> New South Wales State Conservatorium of Music Orchestra, *Souvenir Program : Beethoven Festival 1920* (Sydney, Government Printer, 1920), 9.

wasn't enough, Verbrugghen also proposed that the orchestra become an Australasian orchestra and undertake an American, or even a world tour.<sup>165</sup>

The frequent touring took its toll on players and at least ten of them resigned.<sup>166</sup> After the initial novelty and enthusiasm had worn off, audience attendance also began to fall.<sup>167</sup> Audiences now had many other options to choose from with the growing popularity of movies and the resumption of tours by international artists after the disruption caused by the war.<sup>168</sup> The orchestra performed over 100 concerts during 1920. According to a sympathetic *Herald* article, this created a situation where the "tax upon the purse and the assimilative musical powers of the citizens had been too heavy."<sup>169</sup> There were also claims that costs had risen since there were more paid professionals than students in the orchestra. In addition, venue hire and printing costs had increased.<sup>170</sup> This did not deter Verbrugghen, who planned a second tour of New Zealand at the end of 1920. However, this tour had to be postponed because of a ship stewards' strike which significantly added to expenses,<sup>171</sup> which meant that at the end of 1920 the

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<sup>165</sup> *Sun*, 11 May 1920, 3; See also Collins, *Sounds from the Stables*, 41. She claims that Verbrugghen was contemplating taking the orchestra on a global tour, with performances in London to coincide with the 1924 British Empire Exhibition.

<sup>166</sup> Collins, 40.

<sup>167</sup> *SMH*, 4 September 1920, 8.

<sup>168</sup> See *Sydney Mail*, 16 March 1921, 9 which discusses the "diversity of entertainments" which impacted on attendance at classical music concerts.

<sup>169</sup> *SMH*, 26 May 1921, 8. See also *SMH*, 19 February 1921, 8 where comparisons were made with the numbers of concerts held in European cities and it is concluded "Our own 96 concerts are far more than are wanted."

<sup>170</sup> *SMH*, 16 April 1921, 13.

<sup>171</sup> *SMH*, 6 January 1921, 8.

orchestra was now faced with a deficit.<sup>172</sup> By the end of 1921, amid increasing uncertainty about the orchestra's future, a loss of over £9000 had been incurred.<sup>173</sup> Verbrugghen supporters blamed delays in government decision making which had affected long term planning<sup>174</sup> while others asserted the orchestra had simply been mismanaged.<sup>175</sup> Faced with such a loss and no doubt aware of the grandiose plans of the Director which were discussed widely in the media, the new Labor premier, John Storey and Minister for Public Instruction, Thomas Davies Mutch, balked at providing further guarantees.

Most studies have blamed the new Labor government elected in 1920, claiming it was actively hostile towards the arts.<sup>176</sup> However, it should be remembered that the new Premier John Storey and his education minister Thomas Mutch were part of the same Labor government which had originally supported the Conservatorium. Far from being hostile to the arts, Mutch had travelled with Henry Lawson and had organized the Australian

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<sup>172</sup> Thomson, *A Distant Music: The Life and Times of Alfred Hill, 1870–1960* (1980): 160.

<sup>173</sup> *SMH*, 27 July 1922, 6.

<sup>174</sup> Morgan, "Music, Finance, and Politics", 32.

<sup>175</sup> See for example a letter to the editor of *SMH*, 19 February 1921, 9. The writer claims that Hansard records indicated £89 723 had been provided to the Conservatorium during the last 6 years which should have been enough to support the orchestra. Also see *EN*, 18 February 1921, 4; *Sunday Times*, 20 February 1921, 3 and a letter from a Randal Woodhouse *EN*, 15 March 1921, 4 who claims to have been a Professor at the Royal Irish Academy of Music. His view was "Conservatorium extravagance has killed the orchestra".

<sup>176</sup> The source for this assertion is Thomson, *A Distant Music*, 160 but Thomson's source is unclear. Nevertheless, the claim has been repeated by Morgan, "Music, Finance, and Politics" 23. McCallum and Simonds, *The Centenary of the Con* quote Wunderlich's view that the new government was not interested in supporting a "Labor Party 'folly'", which does not make sense since the Storey and Mutch were part of a Labor government, and as McCallum admits, Mutch signed off on the orchestra's contract which had been negotiated by the previous National government.

Writers' and Artists' Union in 1909.<sup>177</sup> Mutch also mounted a strong defence of the Conservatorium in response to questioning by his Ministerial colleague Charles William Oakes, who was critical both of the amount paid to Verbrugghen and the orchestra's monopoly of the Town Hall on Saturday nights.<sup>178</sup> Even the *Sun's* highly regarded music critic, well known singing teacher Griffen Foley, asserted that it was not fair to claim the Minister for Education and his colleagues were "unsympathetic" to the orchestra and that the Government would not reject any "practical scheme for keeping the orchestra in being".<sup>179</sup> Earlier concerns about the extravagance of the orchestra and its elitist vision, however, did grow more prominent with each additional request for funding. According to Collins, those with parochial interests, particularly country interests, "saw the institution as emblematic of the growing political power of urban Australia."<sup>180</sup> It was clear that different attitudes to the role and function of music were also at issue.

In the midst of the orchestra crisis, *The Sydney Mail* published a feature article entitled "Are Australians Musical?" questioning what it meant to be musical. Was it "an appreciation and understanding of music, or the ability to make it?" The writer of the article felt that Verbrugghen's answer

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<sup>177</sup> Martha Rutledge, "Mutch, Thomas Davies (1885–1958)", *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University (1986), accessed 10 September 2018, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/mutch-thomas-davies-7720>.

<sup>178</sup> NSW, Parliamentary Debates, Legislative Assembly, 23 November 1920. Vol 25, accessed 2 December 2017, <https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/hansard/Pages/Comprehensive-index-to-all-parliamentary-document.aspx>.

<sup>179</sup> *Sun*, 6 March 1921, 21.

<sup>180</sup> Collins, *Sounds from the Stables*, 40–1.

to such a question would focus on listening to music and thought such an answer showed a deep disparity with “the man in hardware” who would be more concerned with the ability to make music. The writer mocked those who focused on music’s transcendent qualities by suggesting the “ultra-musical temperament” is marked by “deep sighing breaths and mournful, emotional appreciation”.<sup>181</sup>

Yet despite such views, the importance of learning to “listen” and “appreciate” good music was clearly making the practice of music an optional activity. The *Musical News* argued that first and foremost the object of music training in schools should be “to appreciate and to like good music”:

Elementary notions about crotchets and quavers will not cultivate or refine. Neither will the most assiduous vocal energy devoted to the misuse of the voice and the English language. The only way to salvation lies in somehow developing a taste for good music, and in feeding that taste”.<sup>182</sup>

This clearly differed from the viewpoint of those who continued to favour forming bands and choirs among working people. It marked a move from empowering people to make their own music to promoting an audience of listeners. Such changes had a significant impact on amateur music-making.

The writer of the 1921 article in the *Sydney Mail* had noted the decline in amateur music-making noted above. He particularly lamented the

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<sup>181</sup> *Sydney Mail*, 16 March 1921, 8.

<sup>182</sup> *AMN*, 1 December 1920, 204.

extinction of the Sydney Amateur Orchestra claiming that it was a “tremendous stimulant” to young instrumentalists. The author acknowledged that playing music was becoming increasingly superfluous given the invention of the player piano and the gramophone. Despite this, the article’s author hoped that Australia might still be “a land of song and gladness” and argued that music was a means by which Australians could express “the sheer joy of living in a place remote from snows and bitterness of other countries”. Music, for this author, should be an inherent part of life and not locked within a concert hall.<sup>183</sup>

Even while Verbrugghen and his followers were exhilarated by the success of his orchestra, there was a growing number of people expressing disappointment at the direction that the Conservatorium had taken. The *Sunday Times*, while acknowledging the “excellent work” undertaken at the Conservatorium, felt that it had not gone “out of its way to seek musical talent in .... the gifted impecunious” who had previously not had the opportunity to access a musical education.<sup>184</sup> The *Construction and Local Government Journal* argued that it was questionable whether workers had benefitted materially at all from the Conservatorium, claiming that people from all ranks of society had always accessed musical activities even before the Conservatorium was established.<sup>185</sup> For many, the real concern was that

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<sup>183</sup> *Sydney Mail*, 16 March 1921, 8–10.

<sup>184</sup> *Sunday Times*, 25 April 1920, 4. See also *Sunday Times*, 9 January 1921, 3. “it is up to the State to make it possible for the poorest child with talent for music to take up music as a career.”

<sup>185</sup> *Construction and Local Government Journal*, 17 January 1921, 5.

Verbrugghen's focus on the orchestra had disappointed aspirations to enhance musical life more generally, particularly in regard to the training of voice students.

During the first few years the Conservatorium was the centre of great interest and great discussions. Since the formation of the State Orchestra, the centre of interest has entirely shifted, and we very rarely hear of the Conservatorium as an educational institution, but rather as a supplementary and tributary organisation dependent upon the orchestra. It has really come to this, that although the Government of N.S.W. has founded a Conservatorium for the purpose of educating the people and centralising the best musical tuition in the State under the personal supervision of a capable artistic head, it is conducted at present as a sub-institution of secondary importance to the State Orchestra.<sup>186</sup>

Despite the increased questioning about the role of the orchestra, the NSW Government eventually agreed that the orchestra could continue if a private guarantee fund of £10 000 per year for three years could be found. At this point, several prominent Sydney businessmen stepped in and formed a "Citizens' Committee" to raise money for the proposed guarantee fund.<sup>187</sup> The group was a small one of merchants including real estate developer (and foundation president of the Millions Club) Arthur Rickard; manufacturer and businessman William Vicars; Charles Lloyd Jones, Chairman of the David Jones company; the piano manufacturer Octavius Beale; Hugh Denison, tobacco manufacturer and newspaper proprietor; and ceiling

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<sup>186</sup> *Sydney Mail*, 18 May 1921, 7.

<sup>187</sup> *SMH*, 26 May 1921, 8.

manufacturer, Ernest Wunderlich.<sup>188</sup> The lawyers who had been active in the earlier Sydney Symphony Orchestra's fund-raising efforts were not as actively involved here. Wunderlich was the clear leader of the group. He was himself an amateur composer and had been very active in efforts to establish an orchestra since the beginning of the century. He was also a strong supporter and friend of Henri Verbrugghen. According to Arundel Orchard, every Monday morning Wunderlich even sent fresh fish for Verbrugghen's lunch from his country home in Port Hacking.<sup>189</sup>

Despite a growing ambivalence in the general community about Verbrugghen's priorities, the financial threat to the orchestra's existence brought Sydney's musical community together to rally for the cause. A public meeting at the Town Hall on 27 May 1921, attended by all the key musical organisations and clubs including the Musicians' Union, strongly endorsed the committee's fundraising efforts. The committee, which was to be registered under the Companies Act, aimed to raise £10 000 a year over three years divided as follows: 7 000 shares of £3 each offered for public subscription to be paid in three annual instalments of £1 per year per share; and 3 000 £3 shares from a Victorian fund.<sup>190</sup> Shares would also be offered in New Zealand and interstate.

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<sup>188</sup> Biographical information taken from the Australian Dictionary of Biography where entries are available.

<sup>189</sup> Orchard, *The Distant View*, 74.

<sup>190</sup> *SMH*, 28 May 1921, 12.



Although music lovers were initially optimistic, the fund-raising did not go smoothly. A number of people pledged their support on the day of the meeting but by 2 June 1921 there were only 273 subscribers prepared to purchase 1989 £1 shares, well short of the 7 000 on offer.<sup>191</sup> The situation was summarised as follows:

When the scheme was launched at a well attended public meeting, great enthusiasm was displayed, but the number of contributors who came forward at the end of the meeting was disappointing, and the various appeals of the Committee have not yet met with a satisfactory response from the general public.<sup>192</sup>

The members of the committee renewed their efforts to raise the required funds. They wrote to numerous councils and to musical organisations in Australia and New Zealand. They placed fliers in music shops and distributed them at concerts. They also placed advertisements in the newspapers, established a Ladies' Committee and organised fund-raising concerts. Numerous speeches and editorials forecast the triumph of "materialism",<sup>193</sup> even a "national disaster"<sup>194</sup> if the orchestra was forced to disband. In total they delivered 10 000 prospectuses. They even enlisted support from celebrities such as Dame Nellie Melba which facilitated some favourable press coverage for the cause.<sup>195</sup> This led to a significant increase in subscriptions but by 30 August 1921 they had a total of 1 273 subscribers

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<sup>191</sup> NSW State Orchestra Guarantee Fund 3 June 1921, SAR, 12/1474.

<sup>192</sup> State Orchestra, SAR, 12/1474.

<sup>193</sup> *Conservatorium Magazine*, June 1921, 6.

<sup>194</sup> *Telegraph*, 28 May 1921, 11.

<sup>195</sup> *SMH*, 11 August 1921, 6.

committing to purchasing 5 088 subscriptions, which was still well short of the 7 000 shares set aside for NSW.<sup>196</sup>

Despite significant efforts, Sydney failed to attract the generous patronage of wealthy members of the community as orchestras in other cities had done. The records for the guarantee fund show that the committee looked enviously to America where the “business man” supported guarantee funds of \$1 million or more in numerous cities.<sup>197</sup> Interestingly, comparatively few of the Australian subscribers made large donations, demonstrating an absence of people with sufficient means or inclination to support an orchestra. As Richard Waterhouse has noted, in Australia there was no entrenched aristocracy and insufficient wealthy families who wanted to shore up their position by providing cultural patronage on the scale it was provided in the United States.<sup>198</sup> According to the August list of subscribers, there was only one subscriber who committed to buying 150 shares and fifteen who committed to buying 100 shares. The majority of subscribers, 808 of the 1 223 shareholders, bought only a single £1 share, suggesting that the majority of shareholders were people of limited means.<sup>199</sup> This meant that the orchestra had a much stronger and more democratic community base

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<sup>196</sup> NSW State Orchestra Guarantee Fund. Statement as of 30 August 1921, SAR, 12/1474

<sup>197</sup> State Orchestra, SAR, 12/1474.

<sup>198</sup> Richard Waterhouse, *From Minstrel Show to Vaudeville: The Australian Popular Stage 1788–1914* (Kensington, N.S.W: NSW University Press, 1990), 143.

<sup>199</sup> State Orchestra, SAR, 12/1474.

than in other countries but it also made the orchestra more vulnerable financially.

It took until November 1921 before the Citizens' Committee had managed to scrape together a fund consisting of £6 000 from NSW, £3 000 from Melbourne and £1 000 from New Zealand.<sup>200</sup> While the Government hesitated and fundraising efforts stalled, Verbrugghen keenly felt that he had not been appropriately recognised as the Government still refused to pay him a fee for conducting the orchestra. No doubt Verbrugghen's state of mind had also been affected by the heavy workload that he had carried.<sup>201</sup> He became increasingly disaffected and, according to Collins, there were constant rumours of his imminent departure for the United States.<sup>202</sup>

It was thus not entirely unexpected when, in December 1921, Verbrugghen requested a six-month leave of absence on medical grounds<sup>203</sup> and embarked on a trip to Europe to recuperate.<sup>204</sup> This necessitated a reconsideration of the terms of the understanding between all parties.<sup>205</sup> Despite emphatic denials that this was a resignation, and a continued pretence that he would return, Verbrugghen eventually accepted a position as conductor of the Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra from 1923 to 1931 (beginning on a trial basis in the latter half of 1922) and never returned to

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<sup>200</sup> Collins, *Sounds from the Stables* 162.

<sup>201</sup> Collins., 40.

<sup>202</sup> Collins

<sup>203</sup> *Telegraph*, 30 December 1921

<sup>204</sup> *Sun*, 30 December 1921, 7.

<sup>205</sup> *SMH*, 31 December 1921, 9.

Australia.<sup>206</sup> While awaiting confirmation of Verbrugghen's resignation, the orchestra struggled on with temporary conductors. The lack of certainty added to the orchestra's viability problems. By this stage, sympathy for Verbrugghen's cause had begun to wane when it was found that before taking his leave, Verbrugghen's orchestra had amassed considerable debts in its last tours of Victoria and New Zealand. It was also found that the annual running expenses were £20 000, which was far in excess of the £11 000 per annum raised by the guarantee fund. As a result the guarantee fund was liquidated and it was decided that the orchestra should be disbanded at the end of the current season.<sup>207</sup> In 1922 the incoming National Liberal Government saw little point in giving priority to an orchestra in such a state of disarray, given other financial priorities.<sup>208</sup> The Minister for Education, Albert Bruntnell, indicated that although he recognised the value of cultural development "in view of the present serious financial condition of the State, the Government was not prepared to incur further losses in that direction."<sup>209</sup> *Catholic Press*, which had supported Verbrugghen throughout his tenure, perhaps best summed up the majority opinion:

Mr Verbrugghen has decided to leave us. We are sorry for it ...  
The whole community benefited by the Conservatorium. But  
the concerts were different ... There is no justice in asking the  
man in Woop Woop to pay for tickling the ears of the Potts

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<sup>206</sup> D.C. Parker, "Henri Verbrugghen," *Oxford Music Online* Oxford University Press, accessed 23 November 2017, [http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.virtual.anu.edu.au/subscriber/article\\_citations/grove/music/29183?q=verbrugghen&search=quick&pos=1&\\_start=1](http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.virtual.anu.edu.au/subscriber/article_citations/grove/music/29183?q=verbrugghen&search=quick&pos=1&_start=1).

<sup>207</sup> *SMH*, 2 June 1922, 8.

<sup>208</sup> Morgan, "Music, Finance, and Politics", 28.

<sup>209</sup> *SMH*, 6 May 1922, 13.

Pointer. If our musical quidnunes [sic] really loved music ... they would pay for it ... So that while we are sorry for losing Mr. Verbrugghen, we put the blame for it on the shoulders of high-brow posers of culture, which they really do not possess.<sup>210</sup>

## **Conclusion**

To define and control a discrete cultural field, DiMaggio argued cultural elites needed to accomplish three concurrent projects—the creation of an organisational form that members of the elite could control: the erection of strong and clearly defined boundaries between art and entertainment, and the social acceptance of their organisation’s right to define such boundaries.<sup>211</sup> Verbrugghen was a strong leader and used his role to assert his right to differentiate clearly between the music of the great masters as accepted within the European musical canon and other forms of music which he considered to be of a lower standard. His uncompromising and charismatic leadership enhanced his authority, making him the unrivalled arbiter of standards. Verbrugghen had a strong support base among middle class professionals and merchants and his orchestral concerts attracted a wide-ranging audience. However, he was dependent on government funding to realise his visions.

The Government did not entirely support Verbrugghen’s quest for high standards at the expense of more democratic goals such as expanding

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<sup>210</sup> *The Catholic Press*, 21 December 1922, 7.

<sup>211</sup> DiMaggio, "Cultural Entrepreneurship", 377.

access to musical education. While many blamed the Government for its short-sightedness, it is difficult to see what it could have done differently in the face of Verbrugghen's ever increasing demands for funds for an orchestra which clearly absorbed all his attention. They were mindful of pressure from rural constituents and others who held more traditional views about music as a participative community activity. It is indeed remarkable that the Government was initially so generous in its funding, even during wartime and the period of economic recovery that followed. This demonstrates the importance attached to promoting cultural achievements like the establishment of a Conservatorium and orchestra. However, their funds were not unlimited and while a solution might have been found if Verbrugghen had stayed, once he left it was difficult to inspire ongoing support for his elitist vision.

When his orchestra was founded in 1915, his many supporters rallied to support him, but Verbrugghen was left in charge of the day to day running of the orchestra, which meant they were unable to control the finances. With responsibility spread between Verbrugghen, the Government and the supporters of the guarantee fund (all of whom had conflicting motivations) no feasible solution could be found to the orchestra's financial difficulties. In essence Verbrugghen did not have a viable organisational structure that would have enabled him to take control of the classical music field. The reliance on guarantee funds differentiates Sydney from cities

where benefactors stepped in to fund orchestras. The continuation of Verbrugghen's orchestra became a matter for community debate and interaction. This generated considerable community involvement in and community ownership of the project but it did make the ongoing financial viability of the orchestra tenuous.

Professional musicians rallied around Verbrugghen who offered opportunities for employment within the constrained economic circumstances of the war. Notably, however, they did not play as big a role in establishing the guarantee fund as they had in relation to the Sydney Symphony Orchestra. In the 1920s many opportunities were also opening up for musicians in the theatre, particularly in relation to the growing popularity of silent movies where musicians were routinely engaged to provide a live soundtrack. While Verbrugghen's orchestra provided welcome employment opportunities they could often seek higher remuneration elsewhere, a difficulty which Verbrugghen sought to eliminate by establishing a permanent orchestra.

While Verbrugghen was very damning of "visiting stars" who were content "to sing and play a good deal of rubbish in Australia"<sup>212</sup> when the artist was sufficiently prestigious, he did not hesitate to work cooperatively with musical entrepreneurs like the Taites who organised venues and

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<sup>212</sup> *AMN*, 1 November 1915, 130.

advertising for many orchestra concerts and tours.<sup>213</sup> He provided orchestral concerts for celebrity artists such as Dame Nellie Melba in 1918 and 1921 as well as internationally renowned violinist Jascha Heifetz and pianist Mischa Levitzki in 1921. However, with several new opportunities opening up, entrepreneurs did not play a significant role in supporting the orchestra's guarantee fund.

When Verbrugghen left Sydney, the Conservatorium failed to hold its level of authority and within an increasingly diverse and growing entertainment industry, classical music struggled to retain the same level of prestige that it had achieved with Verbrugghen. In the next chapter I will discuss how Australian composers came to reinvigorate classical music by giving it an Australian focus that re-established classical music as a national cause.

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<sup>213</sup> Morgan, "Music, Finance, and Politics" 20.



## 6.

# Making Australian Music Classical

In this chapter I will argue that the classical music cause in Sydney suffered serious setbacks with the departure of Verbrugghen in the face of increased competition from a rapidly expanding entertainment industry. The new Conservatorium Director, Arundel Orchard, often worked with entertainment providers to ensure Conservatorium initiatives were financially viable. However, he also obtained support from music lovers and patrons who were increasingly organising themselves into musical organisations that insisted on higher musical standards. Many of these groups also aligned themselves with Australian composers who were beginning to look at ways to promote themselves as composers within a classical music framework. This became increasingly urgent in the 1920s since the market for sheet music and songs which had previously sustained some composers was fast disappearing. By linking the destiny of classical music and Australian music, it was possible to minimise the historical links with German culture and address the anti-German sentiment that followed the war. Instead music could be reframed within a broader context of promoting Australian forms of artistic expression in parallel with similar developments in the visual arts and literature.

In previous chapters I have argued that classical music was harnessed as an integral part of the nation-building process.<sup>1</sup> In this chapter I contend that the converse is also true. The search for national forms of cultural expression promoted classical music culture in Australia. Australian composers often had difficulty obtaining recognition from musical institutions preoccupied with the music of the European canon. Composers began promoting their music in literary and musical circles by seeking to represent Australian aspirations and the experience of the Australian environment through their music, that like classical music aimed at spiritual uplift and transcendence. This ensured continued support for the classical music project even from people committed to Australian nationalism even if not classical music supporters.

In the vibrant cultural environment of the 1920s, several Australian composers began a lively period of experimentation and collaboration with other artists that marked the emergence of a more modernist outlook that mirrored developments in the other arts. Unfortunately, in the more straitened environment of the 1930s many of these initiatives could not be sustained and a more conservative outlook emerged as composers coalesced around the ABC.

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<sup>1</sup> This notion is also supported by Philip V. Bohlman, "Music before the Nation, Music after Nationalism," *Musicology Australia* 31 (2009): 83.

## The Conservatorium after Verbrugghen

Following Verbrugghen's departure, various schemes were proposed to continue an orchestra. Further requests for funds and subscriptions, including a bid to re-establish the former Sydney Symphony Orchestra,<sup>2</sup> failed to garner much support from a general public no doubt tired of such appeals. By this stage, it was widely accepted that the Conservatorium was the chief agent for organising an orchestra<sup>3</sup> since, as indicated in chapter five, amateur groups had lost status. Many had ceased to exist while others were now struggling to survive.

Arundel Orchard was appointed as the new Director of the Conservatorium in August 1923.<sup>4</sup> The existing histories of Australian orchestras view Orchard's orchestra dimly, describing it as "just managing to keep the torch of music faintly glowing—until broadcasting came along."<sup>5</sup> However, while the orchestra may not have reached the heights it had under Verbrugghen, the reformulated Conservatorium Orchestra held regular concerts and subsequently became the mainstay of orchestral life in Sydney during the 1920s. Orchard's Conservatorium Orchestra notched up some

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<sup>2</sup> George Plummer, To the Editor of the Herald, *SMH*, 5 May 1925, 7.

<sup>3</sup> *Truth*, 12 October 1924, 6.

<sup>4</sup> Diane Collins, *Sounds from the Stables: The Story of Sydney's Conservatorium* (Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2001), 48.

<sup>5</sup> Charles Buttrose, *Playing for Australia: A story about ABC orchestras and music in Australia* (Sydney: Macmillan, 1982), 24 quoting an unnamed ABC source; See also Phillip Sametz *Play On! 60 years of music-making with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra*, Sydney: ABC Enterprises 1992, 7 who uses the same unnamed source.

significant Australian premiers including Holst's *Planets Suite* in 1925<sup>6</sup> (which Orchard claimed was only the third occasion on which the work had been performed anywhere in the world<sup>7</sup>), Bach's *Mass in B minor*, Brahms' first and second *Piano Concerto* and *Double Concerto*, Rachmaninoff's *Piano Concerto in D minor*, Glazounow's *Symphony No. 8*, Mussorgsky's *Night on the Bare Mountain*, the Saint-Saëns *Piano Concerto in C minor, No. 4*, and Mozart's *Violin Concerto in A, No. 5*.<sup>8</sup>

Orchard was described as someone who "enjoyed the company of the wealthy and powerful".<sup>9</sup> His connections in "high places"<sup>10</sup> no doubt helped him to obtain additional funding to continue orchestra concerts. He began with a student orchestra but was able to persuade the government to permanently retain teachers who could be used for orchestral work and provide scholarships to ensure good coverage of wind instruments, percussion and harp,<sup>11</sup> creating, in effect, a semi-professional orchestra comprised of students and staff.

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<sup>6</sup> This performance was undertaken with support from Melbourne musical patron, Louise Dyer who liaised personally with Holst to organise the performance. See Jim Davidson, *Lyrebird Rising: Louise Hanson-Dyer of Oiseau-Lyre 1884–1962*, Amadeus Press (Portland, Oregon 1994), 109.

<sup>7</sup> W. Arundel Orchard, *The Distant View* (Sydney: Currawong Pub. Co., 1943), 97.

<sup>8</sup> Orchard provides a full list of Australian first performances by the Conservatorium Orchestra in *Distant View*, 251–3.

<sup>9</sup> John Carmody, "Orchard, William Arundel (1867–1961)", *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University (1988), accessed 4 April 2016, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/orchard-william-arundel-7913>.

<sup>10</sup> Diane Collins, *Sounds from the Stables*, 49.

<sup>11</sup> Orchard, *Distant View*, 78.



**Image 6.1: Sydney Conservatorium Orchestra on stage, conducted by Arundel Orchard, (1920s?).**

Picture: Sam Hood, SLNSW, FL1319143.

However, Orchard had problems building on this base. The silent movie boom of the 1920s quickly absorbed most professional musicians.<sup>12</sup> Sydney's Union Theatres, for example, engaged some 300 musicians as early as 1920.<sup>13</sup> This hampered Orchard's ability to recruit "competent players in certain sections of the orchestra".<sup>14</sup> Orchard also failed to assert the same level of authority as the charismatic Verbrugghen and attendance at Conservatorium concerts declined significantly. According to Collins, those who did attend often reverted to "older patterns" of behaviour with

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<sup>12</sup> Bronwen Arthur, 'Ban the Talkies! Sound Film and the Musicians' Union of Australia 1927-32,' *Context* 13 (Winter), 1997, 48.

<sup>13</sup> Matthews, *Dance Hall*, 161.

<sup>14</sup> *SMH*, 28 April 25, 8.

unpunctuality, chattering, rustling of programs and general unrest and reports of women returning to the practice of stitching embroidery.<sup>15</sup>

By his own admission, Orchard's most successful ventures with the orchestra were his many collaborations with visiting celebrity artists.<sup>16</sup> Such visits reached new heights in the 1920s. For instance, in 1924 visiting celebrity artists included Polish pianist Mieczylaw Muenz; the Russian brothers who made up the acclaimed Cherniavsky Trio; Italian tenor Lenghi Cellini; Russian violinist Michael Zacharewitsch; American tenor Charles Hackett; Serbian violinist Yovanovitch Bratza; Scottish bass William Heughan; and Hungarian violinist Lassie Schwartz as well as the Melba-Williamson opera season. In 1925, the world famous violin virtuoso Fritz Kreisler visited Australia.<sup>17</sup> After the war, opera companies also recommenced touring Australia.

In a sign that Verbrugghen's efforts to persuade Sydney of the primacy of orchestral playing had not been entirely successful, Melba's 1924 tour saw a renewed enthusiasm for opera, leading to assertions that at heart Australia was an "operatic nation".<sup>18</sup> Throughout the 1920s audiences thronged to opera tours organised by both the Williamson and Tait

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<sup>15</sup> Collins, *Sounds from the Stables*, 51.

<sup>16</sup> Orchard, *Distant View*, 86–100. Orchard details the artists he worked with in his capacity as conductor of the Conservatorium Orchestra in some detail as a means of justifying his contribution to Sydney's musical life.

<sup>17</sup> Anne-Marie Forbes, "The Local Impact of an International Celebrity: Fitz Kreisler in Australasia", *Musicology Australia* 31 (2009): 1–16.

<sup>18</sup> *AMN*, 1 May 1924, 5.

companies in 1924 as well as by Fuller and Gonzalez in 1928. Such was the enthusiasm to hear these opera performances that crowds would queue for hours to obtain tickets (See **Image 6.2**).



**Image 6.2: SMH, 5 April 1928, 18.**

Such an influx of talent unleashed unprecedented appreciation for the services of music entrepreneurs. Although not all of these artists were managed by the Tait brothers, a large number of them were. The Tait brothers had by this stage amalgamated with J.C. Williamson and were the chief organisers and promoters of the Melba tours in 1924 and 1928. In May 1924 the *Australian Musical News* presented an interview with Nevin Tait describing him not only as an “impresario” but as a “great lover of music”.

Looking back on his family's achievements, Tait claimed his family had taken the initiative to arrange visits for concert tours as they "saw that Australia was not organised musically." He claimed:

The influence of the firm has been all to the good for musical culture in Australia, and undoubtedly the public owes to its enterprise the greatest musical treats that we have experienced in this country.<sup>19</sup>

As I will demonstrate in chapter eight, the role of the Tait brothers would later be denigrated by the ABC and subsequent histories celebrating ABC concert-making. Despite later assertions that entrepreneurs arranged too few tours by classical artists<sup>20</sup> Sydney was actually well catered for in the 1920s attracting considerable kudos for their efforts. In 1924, for instance, the NSW Musical Association presented Nevin Tait with an award to "express the warmest appreciation" for his "services to the Art of Music in organising and directing the present remarkably artistic season of the Williamson-Melba Grand Opera enterprise".<sup>21</sup>

The stellar cast of celebrities continued in 1926, with visits by luminaries such as Madame Pavlova, Dame Clara Butt, Signorina Toti dal Monte, Feodor Chaliapin, William Backhaus and Percy Grainger. An article in the *Herald* observed:

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<sup>19</sup> *AMN*, 1 May 1924, 5.

<sup>20</sup> Martin Buzacott, *The Rite of Spring: 75 Years of ABC Music-Making* (Sydney: ABC Books for the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, 2007), 104.

<sup>21</sup> Rita Crews and Julie Spithill, *One Hundred Years: Music Teachers' Association of NSW 1912–2012* (Wollongong: Wirripang, 2012), vii–ix.



Not so long ago the coming of a great artist to Australia was an interest discussed and looked forward to many months ahead ... Nowadays we have them coming close upon one another's heels.<sup>22</sup>

In 1927, another stream of eminent names headlined by the return visit of Jan Paderewski plus Madame Frances Alda, Ignaz Friedman, Efren Zimbalist, Joseph Hislop and Melba, prompted the observation that visits came so regularly that it was becoming a strain on the "purses of the public", impacting on house sizes.<sup>23</sup>

In his memoirs, Orchard the artists he accompanied with the Conservatorium orchestra. This included the violinists Fitz Kreisler, Erica Morini and Jascha Heifetz as well as pianists such as Paul Vinogradoff from Russia and Australian ex-patriate Arthur Benjamin. Pre-eminent among the singers he worked with was Dame Nellie Melba as well as the English contralto Dame Clara Butt; as baritone Harold Williams; soprano Florence Austral and returning Australian mezzo soprano Dorothy Helmrich.<sup>24</sup>

Another component of the burgeoning entertainment industry was radio broadcasting which was officially introduced in 1923. Although uptake was initially slow, by July 1926 118 000 radio licenses had been issued.<sup>25</sup>

Many of the early stations were set up as an adjunct to established

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<sup>22</sup> *SMH* 10 July 1926, 11.

<sup>23</sup> *SMH*, 30 December 1927, 10.

<sup>24</sup> See Orchard, *Distant View* pp 86–100. Orchard details the artists the orchestra collaborated with in considerable detail.

<sup>25</sup> Lesley Johnson, *A Cultural Study of Early Australian Radio* (London: Routledge, 1988), 12–14.

businesses. Farmer's department store, in partnership with J.C. Williamson, obtained one of the privileged A-class radio licences for 2FC which entitled them to a subsidy from radio licence fees.<sup>26</sup> A-class radio stations could also advertise while B-class stations were totally reliant on advertising for their revenue.<sup>27</sup> Most radio stations engaged their own small orchestras or used theatre or cinema orchestras which were broadcast from the studio.<sup>28</sup> In 1928, the Postmaster-General took over the A-class licenses as they expired and in 1929 awarded a three year contract to the Australian Broadcasting Company (a consortium formed by Fuller's Theatres, Greater Union Theatres and the music publisher J. Albert & Sons) which was to broadcast without advertising and provide programs for the whole of Australia.<sup>29</sup> By the latter part of the 1920s technology had advanced sufficiently that it was possible to broadcast Conservatorium Orchestra concerts. Both MacCallum<sup>30</sup> and Collins<sup>31</sup> assert that because of his conservative musical tastes Orchard did not sufficiently capitalise on the opportunities that radio provided for promoting classical music. Yet newspaper reports suggest that there was greater involvement than either of these authors acknowledge well before the ABC was established.

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<sup>26</sup> Johnson, 16.

<sup>27</sup> John Whiteoak, "ABC," in *Currency Companion to Music & Dance in Australia*, ed. Aline Scott-Maxwell and John Whiteoak (Sydney: Currency House in association with Currency Press, 2003), 16.

<sup>28</sup> K.S. Inglis, *This Is the ABC* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1983), 13.

<sup>29</sup> Whiteoak, "ABC", 16. Note that this organisation should not be confused with the Australian Broadcasting Commission that came into existence in 1932 which replaced this Company.

<sup>30</sup> Peter McCallum and Julie Simonds, *The Centenary of the Con: A History of the Sydney Conservatorium of Music 1915–2015* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2015), 72.

<sup>31</sup> Collins, *Sounds from the Stables*, 61.

Initially there was some resistance to broadcasting live concerts as concert promoters were concerned it would detract from the audience. To assess the impact on audience numbers, radio station 2FC engaged the Conservatorium Orchestra to broadcast a concert from the Town Hall on 24 September 1927.<sup>32</sup> The correspondence files in the Conservatorium Archive show some to-ing and fro-ing over the program, with the Conservatorium eager to find items that would appeal to a broad, “popular” audience,<sup>33</sup> and the broadcaster keen to focus on items that would transmit well. One of the items the Conservatorium suggested for the concert was Boccherini’s *Minuet* for strings but Farmer’s Broadcasting Manager, Oswald Anderson, asked that this be altered to an excerpt from Humperdink’s *Hansel and Gretel*, because “the muted strings” of the Boccherini would not be “ideal” for broadcasting.<sup>34</sup> As the attendance was not greatly affected by broadcasting (possibly because it was well promoted) subsequent broadcasts by 2FC followed, usually of “popular” classical music concerts.<sup>35</sup> However on 9 June 1928 a more serious “full Wagnerian program” was broadcast.<sup>36</sup> Collins claimed that the radio broadcasters promoted such concerts as they hoped an association with a cultural institution like the Conservatorium would legitimate radio as a morally acceptable medium. However, as she

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<sup>32</sup> *SMH*, 30 September 1927, 7.

<sup>33</sup> Registrar to Oswald Anderson, 9 August 1927, SAR, Box 12/1475.

<sup>34</sup> Oswald Anderson to N.L. Salmon, 30/8/1927, SAR, Box 12/1475.

<sup>35</sup> See for instance reports of orchestra broadcasts on 25 November 1927, 12 April 1928 and 10 August 1929 recorded in *Northern Star*, 12 April 1928, 6, *The Dubbo Liberal and Macquarie Advocate*, 25 November 1927, 11; and *SMH*, 2 August 1929.

<sup>36</sup> *The Grenfell Record and Lachlan District Advertiser*, 28 May 1928, 1.

pointed out, building such an association also was a strategic move for the Conservatorium that recognised the potential benefits that radio patronage might provide in a fast evolving entertainment industry.<sup>37</sup> Such an association was not without problems however from the Conservatorium's perspective. By being engaged in such partnership arrangements, the Conservatorium was never able to assert total control over programming which impacted on its ability to set clear boundaries between "art" and "entertainment" as defined by DiMaggio.<sup>38</sup> However, in line with DiMaggio's theories, without a rigid institutional monopoly, there was a wide degree of musical eclecticism.<sup>39</sup> This was also observable in the work of many musical groups, clubs and other cultural groups. Although such groups often worked co-operatively with the Conservatorium, they were not controlled by them and exercised considerable independence in many of their initiatives.

## **The evolution of music clubs**

From its initial establishment in 1912, membership of the NSW Musical Association (discussed in chapter four) grew modestly with 84 members in 1916, doubling to 169 in 1921.<sup>40</sup> Membership almost quadrupled during the

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<sup>37</sup> Collins, *Sounds from the Stables*, 76.

<sup>38</sup> Paul DiMaggio, "Cultural Entrepreneurship in Nineteenth-Century Boston: The Creation of an Organizational Base for High Culture in America," in *Rethinking Popular Culture: Contemporary Perspectives in Cultural Studies*, ed. Chandra Mukerji and Michael Schudson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 377.

<sup>39</sup> William Weber, "Art Music and Social Class," in *The Routledge Reader on the Sociology of Music*, ed. John Shepherd and Kyle Devine (New York, NY; Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2015), 223.

<sup>40</sup> Crews and Spithill, *One Hundred Years*, 106.

1920s and by 1930 the NSW Musical Association had a membership of 634 members (including associate members) which comprised 74% female members.<sup>41</sup> Despite the majority female membership, women were not eligible for election to the Association council until a change to the constitution of the organisation in 1934.<sup>42</sup>

A growing elitism accompanied the growth in membership as the Musical Association fostered social associations between like-minded people organising “at homes” and “conversazioni” for the exclusive attendance of Association members and invited guests (usually prominent musicians or visitors). Such “at homes” were a recognised gathering for the “elite of the musical world of Sydney”<sup>43</sup> and were designed to appeal to those with more genteel middle class aspirations. At one of their gatherings in 1929, then president Faunce Allman railed against city development and “this craze for the destruction of beauty”, urging members of the Musical Association to “devote more time to the aesthetic side of life,” making themselves persons of “all-round culture”. To ensure members had the required social qualifications for the society, he proposed a motion requiring that in the future those who applied for membership should “furnish proof of a good general education.”<sup>44</sup> It is not clear whether this motion was ever passed. If it

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<sup>41</sup> Derived from “At Home” program for William Backhouse conducted the *Musical Association of NSW*, 24 April 1930, PROMPT Collection, NLA.

<sup>42</sup> Crews and Spithill, *One Hundred Years*, 25.

<sup>43</sup> See **Image 6.3**: The caption of the photo describes the gathering as “the elite of the musical world.”

<sup>44</sup> *SMH*, 28 June 1929, 18.

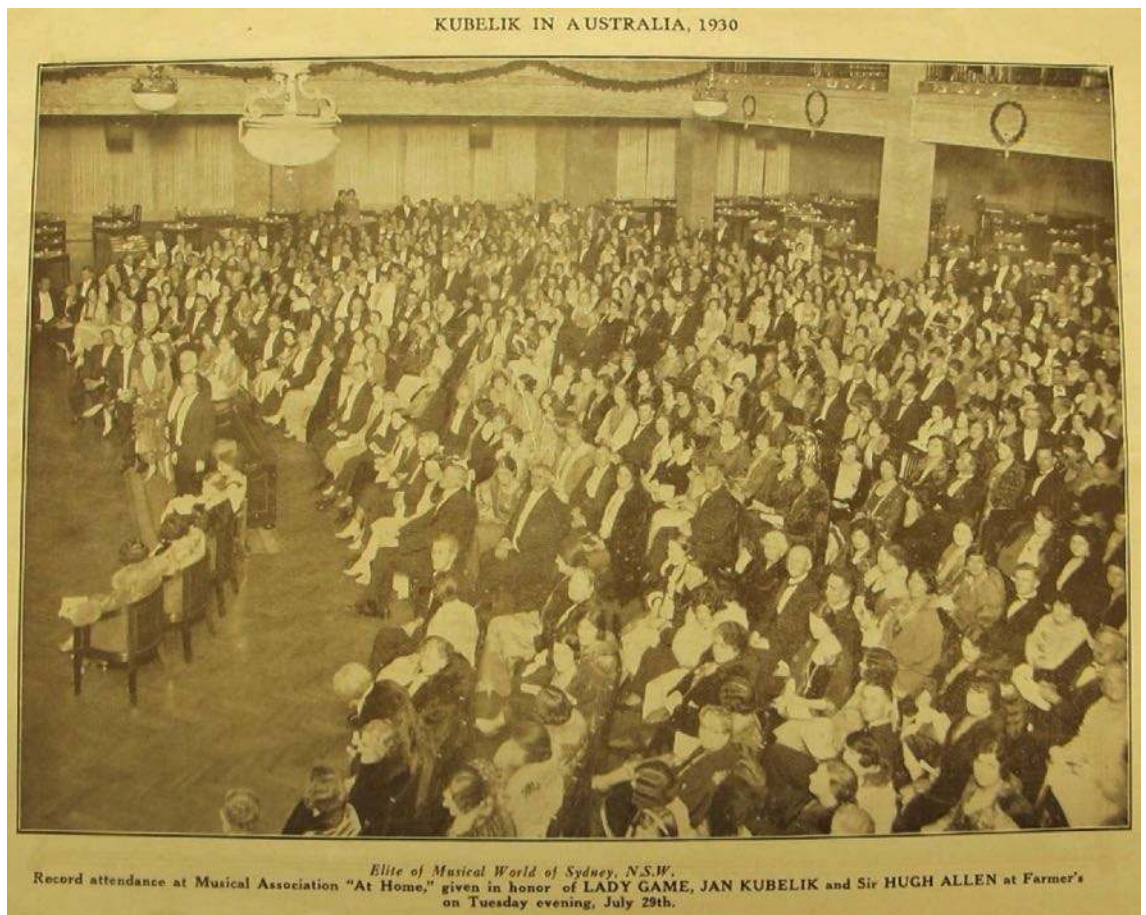
did, it would have effectively disenfranchised many of those from the lower classes. The fact that it was mooted publicly does suggest the society had a strong sense of class membership even if not formally constituted that way. Their functions were often held at Farmer's Department store. Such a commercially oriented venue was somewhat ironic given that the Music Association was committed to promoting classical music as an art form, which ideally should be above everyday commercial priorities. In reality, however, the classical music taste that they fostered was never far away from such commercialism.

Many of the "at homes" were designed as events to welcome visiting artists. Such occasions were indicative of the special relationship they felt with some of the more elite celebrities and marked a contrast with the broad ranging civic receptions held for visiting artists earlier in the century, mentioned in chapter two. In the early 1900s, various musical societies, including the Philharmonic Society, had welcomed visiting celebrities but they remained civic rather than elite events. For instance, on 28 September 1908 the Sydney Philharmonic Society hosted a reception and welcome for Percy Grainger and Ada Crossley attended by nearly five thousand people.<sup>45</sup> However, once the NSW Musical Association was formed in 1913, they largely took over this role and became the gatekeepers to visiting artists while in Sydney. Such events were usually quite select, with only a few

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<sup>45</sup> *SMH*, 29 September 1908, 6.

hundred guests at most, although as **Image 6.3** demonstrates, a record attendance marked the reception for world famous violinist Jan Kubelik in 1930. The attendance still fell well short of the 5 000 who attended Grainger's reception.



**Image 6.3: Kubelik Souvenir Program, 1930, Prompt Collection, ANL.**

Closely associated with the Musical Association (and comprising many of the same people), the NSW Branch of the British Music Society (BMS) was established in September 1920. The aim of the society was to “assert at home and abroad the importance of British music of all periods and to secure more favourable conditions for the continued production and

development of British music of the highest class".<sup>46</sup> Prominent among the membership were composers and performers including Henri Verbrugghen (who was made Australia's representative to the society in Britain), Wilfred Arlom (secretary),<sup>47</sup> Cyril Monk, Arthur Benjamin, Frank Hutchens, Arundel Orchard, Roland Foster, Esther Kahn and Mirrie Solomon,<sup>48</sup> most of whom were employed by the Conservatorium. Located firmly in the "haute bourgeoisie"<sup>49</sup> as Jim Davidson has noted, the BMS jointly organised concerts and had joint meetings with the Musical Association.<sup>50</sup> They also organised concerts of Australian music. However, as I will discuss in the next section, they were not the first group to organise such concerts.

As the 1920s progressed a range of other music clubs sprang up throughout Sydney. In 1928 Oliver King, a singer who had recently made a visit to the United States, proposed the formation of a "National Music Movement of Australia"<sup>51</sup> with a Federation of music clubs along the same lines as the National Federation of Music Clubs which had been formed in the United States.<sup>52</sup> Subsequently, the "Associated Music Clubs of Australia" was established with Vice-Regal patronage "for the purpose of encouraging

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<sup>46</sup> *SMH*, 9 August 1919, 6.

<sup>47</sup> *SMH*, 2 October 1920, 8.

<sup>48</sup> *SMH*, 11 November 1920, 9.

<sup>49</sup> Jim Davidson, "Louise Hanson-Dyer: The Emergence of a Patron," in *Australian Cultural History*, ed. S. L. Goldberg and F. B. Smith (Cambridge: Published in association with the Australian Academy of the Humanities [by] Cambridge University Press, 1988), 247.

<sup>50</sup> See for instance *SMH*, 19 December 1923, 17 which describes a lecture on British music given at a combined meeting of the MA and BMS. Also see *SMH*, 12 December 1924, 5.

<sup>51</sup> *A Brief History of the Federation*, The Federated Music Clubs of Australia website accessed 7 December 2017, <http://www.fmca.org.au/>.

<sup>52</sup> *SMH*, 28 July 1928, 10.



the appreciation and culture of music".<sup>53</sup> The organisation's history quotes

the founder as follows:

The Movement has set out with the aim of developing in the nation, an intellectual appreciation of music ... and since it is neither possible ... nor necessary that every person should become an actual performer, and since musical culture cannot be obtained by reading about it in books, nor hearing about it, the Music Club Movement functioned by organising Music Clubs in suburban and country centres ... where good music is performed by the best artists available.<sup>54</sup>

Within a year, the membership had grown to 2500 split between twelve clubs in NSW. The movement became national after a meeting in Victoria in 1932.<sup>55</sup> The group typically organised chamber music concerts by professional instrumentalists and/or singers who were paid a fee for providing their services, with supper following. Programs had to meet guidelines provided by the State Council.<sup>56</sup>

Closely affiliated with this group (and involving many of the same people) was the Music Advancement Guild which became publicly active in 1929. This group held regular luncheons where they considered ways to "spread propaganda on behalf of music" by distributing literature, booklets

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<sup>53</sup> *Brief History of the Federation.*

<sup>54</sup> *A Brief History of the Federated Music Club*, NLA, Records of the Federated Music Clubs of Australia, 1928–2011, MS9804/3/2.

<sup>55</sup> *SMH*, 3 May 1932, 4,

<sup>56</sup> *NLA*, Records of the Federated Music Clubs of Australia, 1928–2011, MS9804 box 1/1 minute book August 7, 1928 to 8 September 1933, see minutes of 19 November 1928.

and “other matter” and supplying newspapers with “interesting articles concerning the value of music in the home and in the school.”<sup>57</sup>

Spearheaded by the NSW Musical Association, the various musical groups came together in 1929<sup>58</sup> to organise Sydney’s first “music week” which occurred between 31 August and 6 September 1930. Music Week, described as the principal means of “spreading the gospel of good music”<sup>59</sup> was an overt attempt to seek converts to the higher aesthetic and spiritual values of classical music. As the *Herald’s* writer suggested at the inaugural Music Week celebration in 1930:

public attention will be focussed, at all events for a period of seven days, upon that art which Weber has described as “the true universal speech of mankind”. None will dispute the right of music to this title, in all ages and in all climes, since under its refining and elevating sway arbitrary boundaries of race and territory have been swept away. There is no man ... who ... is not moved with concord of sweet sounds. This being so, why is a Music Week necessary? It is necessary not to assure men of the majesty, beauty, charm, and spiritual influences of music—all this they know full well—but to press upon their attention its claims for a fuller and wider share of recognition in the daily activities of the community.<sup>60</sup>

Emphasising the spiritual objectives of the week, the organising committee encouraged churches to participate by preaching sermons on “the spiritual and moral value of good music” and providing special music during

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<sup>57</sup> *Sun*, 29 September 1929, 35.

<sup>58</sup> *SMH*, 20 November 1929, 14.

<sup>59</sup> Robert McCall, “Music of the Week”, *Australian Women’s Weekly*, 7 July 1934, 14.

<sup>60</sup> *SMH*, 30 August 1930, 14.

services on “Music Sunday”.<sup>61</sup> Both Catholic<sup>62</sup> and Protestant<sup>63</sup> churches strongly supported “Music Sunday” and in 1936 some 800 churches participated.<sup>64</sup>

Music Week became an increasingly grandiose affair during the course of the 1930s when it was celebrated with a smorgasbord of events typically including grand orchestral concerts, concerts of Australian music and special events for school students and young people. Concerts were also held at department stores including Farmer’s<sup>65</sup> and Anthony Horden’s, demonstrating the ongoing link between classical music and middle class consumers.<sup>66</sup> In 1932, following Music Week, some of the female members of the Music Week committee formed their own club, the “Music Lovers’ Club” which almost immediately attracted 100 members, growing to 259 members in 1933<sup>67</sup> and 300 members in 1934<sup>68</sup>. With Australian soprano and music teacher Emily Marks<sup>69</sup> as president of this group, it became a “rallying point for music-lovers”<sup>70</sup> during the depression years, holding concerts and lectures on a weekly basis in its club rooms.<sup>71</sup> Although the group fell into

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<sup>61</sup> *The Methodist*, 5 July 1930, 18.

<sup>62</sup> Annual music week concerts were typically held at St Mary’s Cathedral—see for example *The Catholic Press*, 11 August 1932, 22 & *Catholic Freeman’s Journal*, 1 October 1936, 31.

<sup>63</sup> For instance, the President of the Methodist Conference provided a formal endorsement of Music Week in 1932 and strongly encouraged all churches to “arrange special music on that day”. *The Methodist*, 13 August 1932, 9.

<sup>64</sup> *SMH*, 28 September 1936, 8.

<sup>65</sup> *Sydney Mail*, 19 July 1933, 18.

<sup>66</sup> *SMH*, 31 August 1934, 15.

<sup>67</sup> *SMH*, 13 November 1933, 6.

<sup>68</sup> *SMH*, 27 October 1934, 19.

<sup>69</sup> For more information about Marks see Jane Hunt, “Cultivating the Arts” (PhD diss., Australian National University, 2010), 283–4.

<sup>70</sup> *SMH*, 26 October 1935, 21.

<sup>71</sup> *SMH*, 23 August 1934, 8.

decline in the latter part of the 1930s it demonstrated the increasing organisational ability of musical groups as both rallying points for music lovers and lobbyists for the classical music cause, an issue which will be pursued further in chapter eight.

The music clubs of the 1920s had some similarities with the musical societies linked with civic reform initiatives established earlier in the century. However, although choirs and bands continued to exist (with varying degrees of success) in the 1920s and 1930s most musical groups were exclusively “listening” groups rather than groups aiming to make their own music. Whereas traditionally women could demonstrate their refinement by being able to play the piano, women could now follow a simpler route to cultural privilege by becoming a “listener” and associating with other classical music enthusiasts. As members of listening groups, they were typically concerned with teaching people how and what to listen to. They took pains to differentiate between classical music and other forms of music, particularly jazz, arguing that while “jazz had its place” an appreciation of the “works of the great masters” was much more ennobling. In the tradition of civic reform movements they claimed an appreciation of classical music would enable boys to curb violent impulses and cultivate a “gentler side”.<sup>72</sup> Some music lovers were less tolerant of jazz, arguing that music teachers must resist radio propaganda that promoted the “false impression” that jazz

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<sup>72</sup> *Sun*, 8 October 1929, 18.

music had “anything in common with real music”, by which was meant “classical music” either in the “lighter” or “heavier” vein.<sup>73</sup> Music Week, in particular, was framed as an opportunity to take a stand against “the craze of jazz and ragtime, which swept the world like a plague during the war and after” and which, according to Music Week organisers, was “responsible for nothing good and much evil”.<sup>74</sup>

The term “classical music” also needed a more precise definition, a matter which caused some debate within the group. One correspondent to the *Evening News* “took exception to those who defined “classical music” as anything that was not “jazz”. According to the correspondent, Edwin Phillips, who led his own orchestra, songs of the “Mother Macrew” type were merely “ditties” and not even opera was “classical music”. Rather:

The only true classical works are sonatas, concerti, symphonies, chamber ensembles etc. Even the great Chopin never wrote a classic work. He excelled in mastery of the ‘dance forms’ of his day.<sup>75</sup>

Subsequent correspondence in response to this letter focused on whether or not Chopin as a “first rate”<sup>76</sup> composer should be considered classical or not, but did not fundamentally dispute Phillip’s definition.

Music Week and the various music clubs also provided venues for the performance of contemporary Australian music and other forms of modern

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<sup>73</sup> *SMH*, 28 March 1929, 12.

<sup>74</sup> *The Methodist*, 5 July 1930, 18. See also *The Catholic Press*, 4 September 1930, 24 which warns against the “cacophonous and generally unbeautiful aggregation of sounds called jazz”.

<sup>75</sup> *EN*, 8 September 1927, 12.

<sup>76</sup> *EN*, 20 September 1927, 8.

art music. This no doubt stemmed from a genuine desire to further their musical education but was also a vehicle for promoting their exclusivity. Their interest in modern music reflected a desire to redirect the focus of classical music away from German music towards British music, which for them also included Australian music. This naturally appealed to Australian composers, who had hitherto been largely ignored in the quest to develop a classical music culture.

### **Song, opera or instrumental music?**

In his extensive study of Australian composers between 1788 and 1860, Graeme Skinner claimed that from as early as 1820, early settlers harboured national aspirations which they expressed in their music,<sup>77</sup> a trend that accelerated after 1850 when a “genuine public interest in the production of patriotic songs” became apparent, driven at least in part by the highly vocal and nationalistic anti-transportation leagues.<sup>78</sup> One by-product of this trend was the current national anthem, *Advance Australia Fair*, first performed in 1878, which was one of many such anthems composed in this period. This music fed a growing sheet music publishing industry since local composers were more likely to get their music published if “connected to people, events and topics that reflected life in Australia”.<sup>79</sup> This led to a healthy output of

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<sup>77</sup> Graeme Skinner, "Towards a General History of Australian Musical Composition" (Ph. D. diss, University of Sydney, 2011), 375.

<sup>78</sup> Skinner, 380.

<sup>79</sup> Prue Neidorf, "A guide to dating music published in Sydney and Melbourne 1800–1899" (MA diss., University of Wollongong, 1999), 32.

ballads, parlour songs or dances which were essentially similar in musical style to those produced in England, but incorporated local themes, references or even bush terminology in the lyrics or titles.

The first sheet music publications in Australia occurred in the 1830s,<sup>80</sup> growing significantly during the 1850s and 1860s into what Prue Neidorf has described as “an outpouring of music publishing that was astonishing in its musical diversity and technical expertise.”<sup>81</sup> Most music stores also published music. Palings was particularly dominant in the 1890s, publishing 100 items—about one quarter of all the music published in Australia.<sup>82</sup> Although the focus was popular songs and dances imported from England, they often featured local arrangers and local or visiting musicians as well as music composed by the colonies’ best professional musicians. This was usually the infamous “drawing room ballad” that Covell was so contemptuous of in his account of early Australian compositional output.<sup>83</sup> There is little evidence of any expectation that such works could or should contribute to a canonic repertoire that, in any event, was only beginning to emerge in Europe at that time, and there were few expectations about what Australian music should be or do.

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<sup>80</sup> Neidorf, 24.

<sup>81</sup> Neidorf, 31.

<sup>82</sup> Neidorf, 37–8.

<sup>83</sup> Roger Covell, *Australia’s Music Themes of a New Society* (Melbourne: Sun Books, 1967), 23.

Despite Skinner's assertion that Australian music "came of age" in the 1850s and 1860s<sup>84</sup>, it is, in my view, difficult to discern whether nineteenth century composers were inspired by a sense of nationalism, a desire to celebrate local circumstances and the environment in the way that provincial composers elsewhere might have done, or were motivated by sheer opportunism in terms of what would sell. According to popular music specialist Derek Scott, the term "national song", when applied to English songs, signified songs expressing a patriotic sentiment rather than songs sharing some ethnic quality. He claimed that the notion of there being an Englishness in the musical character of a song which could be labelled "national" did not gain wide currency until the 1890s.<sup>85</sup> I would argue that around the same time Australians began their first considerations of what "Australian music" might be like, although it was not until the 1920s that there was any expectation that there would be anything distinctively "Australian" in the music itself. Nevertheless, the Australiana themed songs that Skinner described had a strong and ready local market and there was no shortage of composers. In my study I have identified approximately 182 composers resident in Sydney who had works performed at public concerts between 1889 and 1939.

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<sup>84</sup> Graeme Skinner, "The Invention of Australian Music," *Musicology Australia* 37, no. 2 (2015): 290.

<sup>85</sup> Derek B. Scott, *The Singing Bourgeois: Songs of the Victorian Drawing Room and Parlour* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), 169.



In the 1890s performances of works by Australian composers, particularly songs and instrumental works by composers such as Esther Kahn, Maude Fitz-Stubbs and Augustus Juncker were a commonplace occurrence during miscellaneous concerts. Such works were performed without discussion of their "Australianness". For instance, in the following advertisement for an 1893 concert, the composer Maud Fitz-Stubbs featured prominently, although more as a performer than a composer. Similarly, the premiere of a "Quartette" by her brother, Percy Fitz-Stubbs, was advertised with little fanfare. There was no mention of the fact that both were Australian composers. In any event, the name of the composer is printed in lower case and in a smaller font than that of the performer which is in upper case, indicating their relative status at the time. Fitz-Stubbs, Juncker and Kahn also reaped some financial benefits by having many of their works published.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Jennifer Hill, "Crossing a Divide? Maud Fitz-Stubbs as Amateur Then Professional Musician in Late Nineteenth-Century Sydney," *Context*, no. 19 (Spring) (2000): 35-42; Jennifer Hill, "From Drawing Room to Diva: The Australian Popular Song 'I Was Dreaming'," *Australasian Music Research* 4 (1999): 59-76.

**MISS MAUD FITZ-STUBBS**  
(Mrs. HARRY WOODS)  
COMPLIMENTARY CONCERT,  
CENTENARY HALL, YORK-STREET.  
TO-NIGHT, TO-NIGHT, at 8 o'clock.

Honoured by the Patronage and Presence of HIS EXCELLENCY THE EARL OF JERSEY and COUNTESS OF JERSEY, his Honor Sir F. Darley (Chief Justice), and Lady Darley, The Premier (Sir George Dibbs), the Ministry, his Worship the Mayor (W. P. Manning, Esq.), and the Lady Mayoress, &c., &c., &c.

PROGRAMME.

PART I.

1. Double Quartette—"On the Sea" Dudley Buck  
GENTLEMAN AMATEURS.
2. Song—"Star of My Heart"<sup>87</sup> ... Denza  
Mr. WM. WALSH.
3. Piano Solo—Sonata (Opus 140) ... Golinelli  
Andante, Presto.  
Miss MAUD FITZ-STUBBS.
4. Ballad—"Looking Forward" ... Sullivan  
Mrs. F. J. RILEY.
5. Duo (Violin and Piano)—Sonata  
(Opus 21) ... N. W. Gade  
Allegro, Larghetto, Allegro Vivace.  
Herr PECHOTSCH and Miss MAUD FITZ-STUBBS.
6. Vocal Solo—"The Angel Came" ... Cowen  
Miss COLBOURNE BABER.
7. Quartette—"Psalm of Life" (Long-fellow) ... Percy Fitz-Stubbs  
(First time)  
Voice, Violin, Organ, and Piano.  
Mr. HARRY WOODS, Herr PECHOTSCH,  
Mr. HARRISON WHITE, and Miss MAUD  
FITZ-STUBBS.

PART II.

1. Duo—(Two Pianos) "Les Preludes"  
(Symphonic Poem) ... Liszt  
Miss MAUD FITZ-STUBBS and Mr. F. M'QUADE.
2. Vocal Solo—"Dear Bird of  
Winter" ... Ganz  
(By special request)  
Miss MARION LLEWELYN.
3. Piano Solo—"Rondino" (Pré aux  
Cleres) ... Dehler  
Miss MAUD FITZ-STUBBS.
4. Song—"Ave Maria" ... Gounod  
Miss COLBOURNE BABER.  
(By special request)  
With Violin and Organ Obligato.
5. Double Quartette—"Evening" ... Abt  
GENTLEMAN AMATEURS.
6. Vocal Duo—"Il Trovatore" ... Verdi  
Mrs. F. J. RILEY and Mr. HARRY WOODS.
7. Piano Solo—March ... Golinelli  
Miss MAUD FITZ-STUBBS.

The Pianos kindly lent by Messrs. Paling and Co.,  
George-street.  
500 SEATS, 1s. DOORS OPEN 7.15.  
PLAN AT PALINGS.

Image 6.4: Advertisement for complimentary concert, *SMH*, 25 February 1893, 2.

One of the reasons Australian composers focused on parlour songs was that there was little market for the publication of classical music at this time.<sup>87</sup> As in Europe,<sup>88</sup> specialist composers were exceedingly rare. Rather, musicians might provide a new composition as part of their duties, for example as a conductor of a local choral society or a church musician, or to

<sup>87</sup> Prue Neidorf, "A Guide to Dating Music", 37.

<sup>88</sup> William Weber, "Canonicity and Collegiality: "Other" Composers, 1790–1850," *Common Knowledge* 14, no. 1 (2008): 106.

provide music to accompany a local celebration or festive occasions. Such pieces were usually only performed once.<sup>89</sup> In 1895 Sydney journalist D.J. Quinn<sup>90</sup> wrote an extended article for the *Review of Reviews*, featuring the life and work of those he considered to be Sydney's most important musicians—Auguste Weigand, the town hall organist; Henri Kowalski, a noted pianist and conductor; John Delany, organist at St Mary's pro-Cathedral; Guglielmo Lardelli, organist for St Mary's Waverly and the respected accompanist for the Liedertafel choir; Augustus W. Juncker, an opera conductor;<sup>91</sup> and Madame Kellermann, a distinguished pianist and teacher. Quinn referred to his select group as musicians who "have also won distinction as composers". In essence, composing was considered an adjunct to their role as professional musicians. The lack of compositions in the classical tradition was lamented by some local musicians including the first Sydney Town Hall organist, the Belgian organist and composer Auguste Wiegand who decried the "epidemic of the waltz". Nevertheless, Wiegand was philosophical about this, claiming "Australia was not singular in this respect."<sup>92</sup>

The new discussion about the need to develop a "moral" national character through the development of an Australian musical culture fuelled

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<sup>89</sup> Jennifer Royle, "Musical (Ad)Venturers: Colonial Composers and Composition in Melbourne, 1870–1901," *Nineteenth-Century Music Review* 2, no. 2 (2005): 135.

<sup>90</sup> In 1908, Quinn was appointed as Secretary of the Sydney Improvement Commission chaired by the Lord Mayor of Sydney.

<sup>91</sup> See Obituary, *SMH*, 2 March 1942, 7. Juncker came to Australia as conductor of the Dunning London Comic Opera Company and held similar positions with other companies touring Australia and New Zealand, including J.C. Williamson and Klaw and Brianger in the US.

<sup>92</sup> D. J. Quinn, "Musicians and Musical Taste in Australasia", *Review of Reviews*, 20 April 1895, 395.

by Haweis' visit (see chapter three) slowly influenced ideas about "Australian music" as Australia headed towards Federation. In 1893, a *Herald* article discussing the artistic development of the nation argued that a "national music" must arise "from the souls of the people", "redeeming them from the purely sordid interests which have hitherto millstoned Australians amid the cultured nations".<sup>93</sup> In 1899, Mr Hogue, then Minister for Education, indicated that the proposed conservatorium could "foster a type of Australian music, analogous to Australian literature or art" that would be "distinctive of Australia" in addition to general musical education.<sup>94</sup> Similarly, in a lecture on national music in 1907, Rabbi Cohen (father of composer Dulcie Cohen), claimed that a truly national music should be "holy" since "envy, dishonesty, and uncleanness could not be expressed in music. Rather real music portrayed patriotism, love, and friendship".<sup>95</sup>

The new emphasis on Australian music as an expression of the higher moral aspirations of the nation suggested that the parlour song might no longer be an adequate vehicle for doing so. The problem was that Australian works in the classical music tradition often didn't sound very Australian. Rather, they were often "a series of echoes" from Germany and France that did not reflect any uniquely Australian attribute.<sup>96</sup> As late as 1927, Thorold

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<sup>93</sup> *SMH*, 6 March 1893, 5.

<sup>94</sup> *SMH*, 7 July 1899, 4.

<sup>95</sup> *SMH*, 31 October 1907, 6.

<sup>96</sup> *Argus*, 12 August 1912, 14.

Waters claimed that nearly all Australian composers were “watered Wagnerians, colourless Debussyians, devitalised Mascagnians, and so forth” with only a few “groping towards a sturdy expression for Australia”.<sup>97</sup> Nationalist movements in many European countries<sup>98</sup> and in America<sup>99</sup> were prompting composers to consider a similar dilemma—how should their music reflect local national traits when being compared against an imported standard based on a canon of predominantly German music.

Initially little progress was made in developing an Australian national school of composition. With little other alternative available, Australian themed drawing room ballads remained very popular and were commonly featured at patriotic gatherings including meetings and concerts organised by The Australian Natives’ Association.. **Image 6.5** is an advertisement for an Anniversary Day concert in 1892 which featured Australian songs and Australian artists.

The Australian Natives’ Association was founded in Melbourne in 1871 to promote:

the cultivation of national feeling, the federation of Australia, compulsory military training, a preference for Australian men and products in the market place, a white Australia, a strong

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<sup>97</sup> Thorold Waters, “Australian Composers—What are they?”. *AMN*, August 1927, 5–6.

<sup>98</sup> Taruskin Richard, “Nationalism”, in *Grove Music Online*, Oxford University Press, (2001); accessed 15 April 2013, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.virtual.anu.edu.au/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000050846?rskey=IBWkYK&result=1http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.virtual.anu.edu.au/subscribe/article/grove/music/50846.>

<sup>99</sup> Alan Howard Levy, *Musical Nationalism: American Composers’ Search for Identity* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1983).

hand in the Pacific area, better education, health, and conservation programs.<sup>100</sup>

By 1902 it had 20 000 members.<sup>101</sup> Nationalistic in character, the organisation championed Federation and under the motto "Advance Australia" promoted Australian-made goods and the commemoration of Australia Day.<sup>102</sup> Their involvement in the development of Australian music adds a new dimension to their cultural contribution not previously discussed by Australian historians or musicologists.

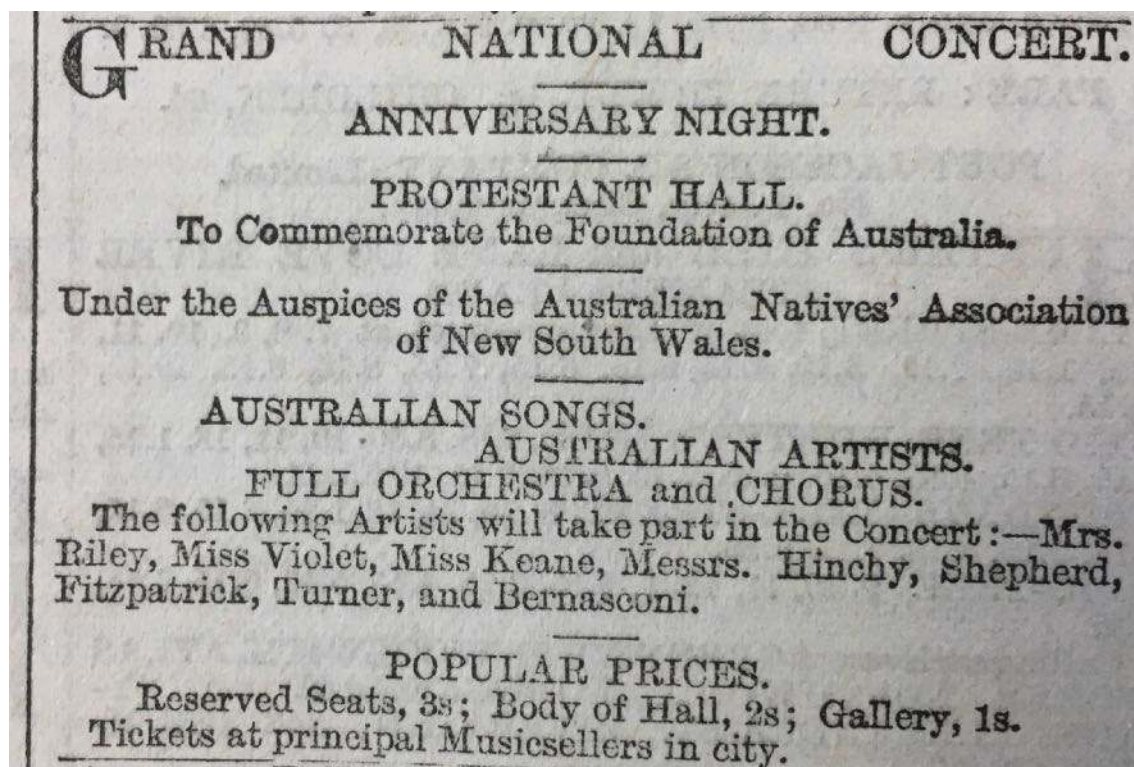


Image 6.5: Advertisement, *SMH*, 23 January 1892, 2.

The first record of a concert explicitly described as "Australian music" that I can find occurred in Ballarat, Victoria in 1903, organised by The

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<sup>100</sup> Charles Blackton, "Australian Nationality and Nativism: The Australian Natives' Association, 1885-1901", *The Journal of Modern History* 30, no. 1 (1958): 37.

<sup>101</sup> Blackton, 38.

<sup>102</sup> Susan Keen, "Associations in Australian History: Their Contribution to Social Capital." *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 29, no. 4 (1999): 649.

Australian Natives' Association (ANA).<sup>103</sup> Like the 1892 concert, it consisted of a miscellaneous program of songs and instrumental works. Similar events soon followed in other cities as well as competitions for songs by Australian composers. In 1905, for instance the Australian Natives' Association held a competition in conjunction with their exhibition of Australian manufactures, which included a section for the composition of a "song by an Australian composer".<sup>104</sup> Perhaps inspired by the ANA initiative, from this time onward it became commonplace for eisteddfods in both urban and rural areas to include a section entitled "song by an Australian composer", encouraging a broad base for participation in and expression of national sentiment in music. Concerts of "Australian music" continued to feature Australian songs until in 1911 a critic expressed disappointment that more "serious" Australian composers, including Ernest Truman, were not represented at the concert organised by local music promoter Nicholas Gehde.<sup>105</sup> The reviewer insisted that many of the pieces were "frankly and unblushingly of 'cricket supper' calibre" and complained that the program had been chosen to cater to the patriotic nature of the occasion rather than "from an art standpoint".<sup>106</sup> It is not until 1915 that I can find evidence of a concert of Australian music that would have satisfied this reviewer.

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<sup>103</sup> *The Ballarat Star*, 29 January 1903, 1.

<sup>104</sup> *SMH*, 28 October 1905, 2

<sup>105</sup> *SMH*, 19 April 1911, 18.

<sup>106</sup> *SMH*, 19 April 1911, 18.





piece orchestra and a choir of 140 voices,<sup>107</sup> the concert featured a setting of the Magnificat by Ernest Truman, *Vie Australienne Fantasia* for piano and orchestra also by Truman, *A Song for Belgium* for chorus and orchestra by Alfred Hill as well as two movements from his violin sonata, *Mirrie Solomon's Rhapsody for Piano and Orchestra*, a concert overture by Joseph Bradley and a chorus from Arundel Orchard's cantata *Uller the Bowman*. Numerous songs by Rex de Cairos Rego, Alfred Shea, Agnes Caspers, Christian Helleman and Arnold Mote filled out the program in the tradition of the miscellaneous concert. The strong focus on instrumental and choral music in the classical tradition suggests that the definition of "Australian music" was now becoming more classical.

The popularity of opera prompted many suggestions that it would be the most appropriate musical art form for expressing national sentiment. As early as 1893, the Chairman of the Australian Natives' Association, for instance, claimed that Australia was "essentially the land of music and of song", suggesting that Australia would therefore prove a "second Italy" and would excel in the area of opera.<sup>108</sup> "What of our future in music?" asked Australian playwright, Helen Jerome in 1908 in an article entitled "Australian Grand Opera! Why not?". To her the answer was clear:

We have our musical societies (and our reverential gratitude is theirs); but opera is the voice in which a great nation wants to speak, both to her own little ones, and to the big, splendid

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<sup>107</sup> *SMH*, 24 July 1915, 10.

<sup>108</sup> *SMH*, 27 June 1893, 6.

world beyond. There is no musical atmosphere like that of opera, both to its students and to its listeners.<sup>109</sup>

Most composers active in Sydney at that time with the requisite skill to do so, including Ernest Truman, Alfred Hill, Charles MacCarthy (father of the Australian violinist, Maud MacCarthy), Nao Theakstone, Auguste Juncker and Arundel Orchard, composed one or more operas. Truman's opera, *Mathis*, for instance, performed at the Criterion Theatre over six nights in 1902, was greeted as an important sign of the development of Australian musical culture. The opera advertisement claimed:

Mr. Truman's score should be welcome evidence that Australia may become as prominent in the department of Musical Composition as it has become in that of Vocalists.<sup>110</sup>

Opera predominated in Alfred Hill's early compositional output. Having spent most of his childhood in New Zealand, Hill's earliest efforts, including his Maori cantata *Hinemoa* (performed 1897) and his opera *Tapu* (performed 1903) had Antipodean themes but were not specifically Australian. In a bid to make his work more locally relevant, in 1914 Hill joined with Melbourne composer Fritz Hart to establish a National Opera League. The announcement of the Australian Musical News set out the objectives of the league as follows:

- (1) To encourage the composition of opera by Australian composers, and composers resident in Australia.

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<sup>109</sup> Helen Jerome, Australian Grand Opera! Why Not?, *Lone Hand* 224–6.

<sup>110</sup> *SMH*, 12 July 1902, 2

- (2) To give performances of operas by Australian composers resident in Australia, and also of such other operas as may be deemed advisable.
- (3) To provide opportunities for operatic appearances for Australian artists, and such other artists as may be deemed advisable.<sup>111</sup>

According to Alfred Hill, the group intended “to further the ends of Australian composers, and to see to it that their ‘stuff’ gets a hearing and a chance.”<sup>112</sup> They expressed the lofty goal of emulating the school of Russian composers who had established a national opera in the latter part of the nineteenth century.<sup>113</sup>

The League attracted broad based community support with all stakeholders supporting the initiative. It was established on a subscription basis and attracted considerable financial support so that by July the membership list was nearly full.<sup>114</sup> A lady’s committee was established to assist in raising funds.<sup>115</sup> The Musicians Union, presumably attracted by the potential employment opportunities for members, also donated a “substantial amount” to the Opera League and offered to co-operate in every way to make the project successful.<sup>116</sup> The NSW Musical Association also publicly supported League and number of those involved in the Opera

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<sup>111</sup> Australian Opera—Giving it a Chance, *AMN*, April, 1914, 290–291.

<sup>112</sup> *Australian Opera*, 290.

<sup>113</sup> *SMH*, 19 February 1914, 7.

<sup>114</sup> *SMH*, 5 July 1914, 6.

<sup>115</sup> *SMH*, 23 April 1914, 7.

<sup>116</sup> *SMH*, 10 July 1914, 13.

League were also involved with the Musical Association.<sup>117</sup> By promoting the “national character” of the initiative members of the League sought and obtained Government assistance of £100.<sup>118</sup>

Ultimately the League mounted only the one production with Hart’s *Pierette* and Hill’s *Giovanni* performed on the same bill. There were six shows in Sydney and three in Melbourne with the initial performance at the Repertory Theatre in Sydney on 4 August 1914. The *Herald’s* critic described a “crowded house” and commented that although “never rising to the heights of grand opera”, “there was much to admire in detail in both works”, suggesting that there was no radical departure from “light” operas that had preceded this initiative. Indeed the *Argus* reviewer pointedly made comment about the “somewhat curious inconsistency” that neither work had Australian associations. Rather, he claimed that Hart’s opera was born of the modern French and Italian schools and that Hill’s work was an “Italian romance ... with here and there a touch of the heavy last century German manner”, suggesting there were “too many influences to bring about any originality of musical tissue or atmosphere”.<sup>119</sup> Nevertheless, both reviewers commented on the enthusiastic reception the audience gave to the composers. The League was discontinued in 1915 due to the “disturbance of local artistic conditions” resulting from the war.<sup>120</sup> In any event, with the

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<sup>117</sup> *SMH*, 19 February 1914, 7.

<sup>118</sup> *SMH*, 11 April 1914, 17.

<sup>119</sup> *The Argus*, 28 August 1914, 11.

<sup>120</sup> *SMH*, 26 August 1915, 16.

establishment of the Conservatorium in 1915, there was a strong expectation that it would take the lead on the issue of Australian music.

Before considering the Conservatorium's role it is important to note that there was strong interest in promoting Australian musical dramas throughout the 1920s and 1930s from both composers and writers. For instance, in 1924 the somewhat awkwardly named Australasian Musidrama Society was established for the purpose of "assisting and encouraging composers and performers in this part of the world."<sup>121</sup> This group held concerts in 1924 and 1926 focusing on musical theatre works such as *Neryda*, "a story of the East", by Nellie Weatherill. Such groups suggest the ongoing popularity of music theatre and a desire to develop an Australian music based around theatre or opera as the focus rather than the orchestra. Similarly, the Australian Composers' League was established in March 1926, to "foster and encourage the work of Australian musicians, poets and literature" and to "give composers struggling for recognition the opportunity to present their works to the public."<sup>122</sup> This group broadcast several concerts between 1926 and 1927 on 2FC. In 1931 singing teacher Miss Nathalie Rosenwax offered a prize of £100 for the composition of a light opera.<sup>123</sup> Francis William Thring, successful film maker, sponsored a professional production of one of the winning works, Varney Monk's *Collit's*

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<sup>121</sup> *SMH*, 22 July 1924, 5.

<sup>122</sup> *SMH*, 6 March 1926, 9.

<sup>123</sup> *SMH*, 7 February 1931, 8.

*Inn*, in Melbourne in 1933 and Sydney in 1934.<sup>124</sup> Such groups provide a glimpse of the diversity of talent and creativity stimulated by the cause of promoting Australian music. However, they were often eclipsed by events at the Conservatorium, which in the early 1920s was still dominated by the dramatic persona of Verbrugghen. Paradoxically, his strong partiality for German music provided a major stimulus (albeit unintentionally) to the development of Australian music in the 1920s.

### **Verbrugghen and Australian Music**

The Musical Association clearly wished to impress Verbrugghen with the abilities of Australian composers when it presented a small concert of Australian works by Mirrie Solomon, Roy Agnew, Rex de Cairos Rego and Alfred Hill at the welcome reception they organised on his arrival.<sup>125</sup> Perhaps in allusion to this, a week later, at a reception by the Musical Association he assured his audience that he was a “staunch champion of nationalism in art”.<sup>126</sup> In an effort to prove this was not an empty claim, in his first year as director Verbrugghen launched a “useful movement” to introduce “new works of merit as might arise from time to time” by Australian composers.<sup>127</sup> As we have seen, this was hardly a new movement as there had been many previous concerts of Australian music. In any event, only three concerts

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<sup>124</sup> Bronwen Arthur, “The Pub with No Peer, or Collit’s Inn: The First Australian Musical Romance,” in *One Hand on the Manuscript*, ed. Peter Campbell et. al., (Canberra: The Humanities Research Centre, The Australian National University, 1995), 129–38.

<sup>125</sup> *SMH*, 21 August 1915, 14.

<sup>126</sup> *SMH*, 28 August 1915, 8.

<sup>127</sup> *SMH*, 28 August 1916, 10.

dedicated to the performance of Australian music were held while Verbrugghen was director of the Conservatorium. But Verbrugghen did include some Australian works in other concerts, such as a performance of works by Grainger and Hill in a concert of “favourite pieces by the best composers of the Allied nations” in December 1915 and Marshall-Hall’s *Symphony in E flat* in an orchestra concert in October 1917.<sup>128</sup> He also conducted a concert performance of the second act of Orchard’s music drama *Dorian Grey* in a Conservatorium orchestra concert in September 1919.<sup>129</sup> His first concert to focus purely on Australian music was held on 26 August 1916. The program included instrumental music and songs by leading figures associated with the Conservatorium and the NSW Musical Association including Norbert Wentzel, Mirrie Solomon, Fritz Hart, Rex de Cairos Rego, Alfred Hill and two conservatorium students, Vera Bedford and Winifred Carter. The majority of these works, according to the reviewer, had been heard previously.<sup>130</sup> The Conservatorium did not hold another such concert until 1919. It is probably no coincidence that such a concert was organised at this time since Verbrugghen had been attacked in the media for performing German music at a time when Sydney residents were still counting the costs in terms of lives lost or damaged in the war. Billy Hughes, then Australian Prime Minister, encouraged an outpouring of anti-German

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<sup>128</sup> *SMH*, 27 November 1915, 20.

<sup>129</sup> *SMH*, 12 September 1919, 10.

<sup>130</sup> *SMH*, 28 August 1916, 10.

sentiments at a rally in Sydney following his return from the Paris peace conference.<sup>131</sup>

In September 1919, the same month that Hughes returned home, Verbrugghen had planned two all-Wagner concerts with the Conservatorium Orchestra. This solicited the strongest attacks on the performance of German music during Verbrugghen's tenure at the Conservatorium. Lady Hughes, wife of Sydney solicitor and politician Sir Thomas Hughes, who had lost two sons in the war,<sup>132</sup> wrote to the *Herald* aghast that a program of "exclusively German music" would be played by the Conservatorium orchestra "with the encouragement of the State Government." She claimed such an outrage would "insult the memory of our glorious dead, and write ourselves down as decadent people".<sup>133</sup> Controversy raged for over a week. In the following days, the *Herald* received a stream of letters on the issue. The matter was even debated in Parliament where it was argued:

such a concert ... is highly offensive to the wives and mothers of Australian soldiers who have given their lives for the Allied cause, and many of these women, in common with many other Australians, deeply resent the expenditure of public money in

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<sup>131</sup> *SMH*, 6 September 1919, 17.

<sup>132</sup> Peter Spearritt, "Hughes, Sir Thomas (1863–1930)" *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University (1983), accessed 11 June 2013, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/coven-sir-frederic-hymen-3272> Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/hughes-sir-thomas-7078/text11687>.

<sup>133</sup> *SMH*, 17 September 1919, 12.



the glorification of a German composer, when the whole field of the other music of the world is open to selection.<sup>134</sup>

Others were more temperate, suggesting the problem was not German music *per se* but the fact that the program consisted entirely of German music without inclusion of music by composers from different nations.<sup>135</sup> One of Verbrugghen's strongest supporters, the then Minister of Education, Augustus James, was asked in Parliament whether he intended to "encourage Mr Verbrugghen in giving such musical performances." He replied:

I have noticed a program of music which is the best that could possibly be obtained in the world, and I do not intend to interfere, because music is not a matter that belongs to any particular nation.<sup>136</sup>

Presumably many agreed with James as, despite the controversy, according to the *Herald's* reviewer, the first concert was well attended by a "younger generation" who were attracted by the "mingling of the elevated and the mysterious" in Wagner's dramatic music.<sup>137</sup> Nevertheless, the criticism showing no sign of abating. With some suggestions that the Government should withdraw funding from the Conservatorium, Verbrugghen

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<sup>134</sup> NSW Parliamentary Debates, Legislative Assembly, 17 September 1919. Vol 25, accessed 12 December 2017, <https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/hansard/Pages/Comprehensive-index-to-all-parliamentary-document.aspx>, 992.

<sup>135</sup> NSW Parliamentary Debates, 25 September 1919. Vol 25, 1333.

<sup>136</sup> NSW, Parliamentary Debates, 17 September 1919. Vol 25, 847.

<sup>137</sup> *SMH*, 19 September 1919, 10.

abandoned the second concert in order to avoid “giving pain to those who are sensitive in the matter.”<sup>138</sup>

In the light of this controversy, it is probably no coincidence that Verbrugghen’s second all-Australian concert, this time an orchestral concert, was held shortly after the German music controversy in December 1919. The music according to the reviewer was confined to two styles “the melodious and the melodramatic.” According to the reviewer, the audience preferred works characterised by “poetic suggestiveness and tender grace of expression” rather than those marked by “sonorous strength, fantastic ingenuity and gorgeous colouring”. Specifically, the reviewer found the orchestral works of Hart and Kelly, which he described as “fine examples of art, without affectation”, more “elevating” than the excerpts from some operas by Orchard and Hill that were also included in the program.<sup>139</sup> However the audience itself was small. Verbrugghen later commented he had been “really ashamed at the unanimity with which the paying public stayed away” from this concert devoted to Australian compositions.<sup>140</sup> This stands in sharp contrast to the strong attendance recorded for earlier concerts of Australian music that had been held prior to the establishment of the Conservatorium which were devoted to opera and vocal music.

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<sup>138</sup> *SMH*, 25 September 1919, 6.

<sup>139</sup> *SMH*, 22 December 1919, 5.

<sup>140</sup> *SMH*, 25 September 9 1920, 13.

Australian music in a more classical vein clearly did not arouse the same level of support as Australian themed vocal music.

Verbrugghen's support of the British music Society was another way in which he was able to promote classical music as a universal art form and downplay German hegemony in the musical world. The British music Society organised regular concerts at the Conservatorium, focusing primarily on British music, but also Australian music and other modern music. They had quite a difficult task ahead of them since even British music was not favourably considered in Sydney at that time. Sydney pianist and Conservatorium professor Wilfred Arlom, for instance, argued that the "propaganda work" by the society was "especially required in Australia", where there was a "tendency to prejudge British music unfavourably" because of a bias towards music of "Teutonic origin".<sup>141</sup> Even while supporting the society, Verbrugghen cautioned against neglecting the study of "the works of the great masters of the past three or four centuries". Although he conceded that it was now generally accepted to include "one piece of British music" among the examination subjects "it would not be at all the right way to substitute largely modern examples of the art in the ordinary curriculum."<sup>142</sup> Thus while Verbrugghen agreed that British or

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<sup>141</sup> *SMH*, 9 August 1919, 6.

<sup>142</sup> *SMH*, 25 September 1920, 13.

Australian music might be acceptable within classical music programs it was clearly to be relegated to a subordinate position to the “great masters”.

Much of the Australian music on offer clearly owed much to the Germanic heritage in which most Australian composers were immersed. This is not surprising given that prior to the war, any aspiring Australian composer with the means to do so studied in Germany rather than England. This included Alfred Hill, Percy Grainger, Henry Handel Richardson, Ernest Hutcheson and Town Hall organist Ernest Truman. English composers such as Elgar, Stanford and Parry were similarly trained in German techniques and had found it difficult to shed their Germanic training, even while they proclaimed an English “renaissance”.<sup>143</sup> Indeed, most British and Australian composers used German composers as their primary models until well into the twentieth century (and arguably continue to do so).

With the rise of nationalism in the latter part of the nineteenth century and the growing trend to perform works of the musical canon rather than contemporary works, many European and American composers who were struggling to have their music performed strategically chose to include exotic elements, which they claimed to derive from folk culture, to enhance the cultural relevance of their music. Taruskin, for instance, has suggested that the impetus for the Russian Five was not Russian nationalism, but their

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<sup>143</sup> Andrew Blake, *The Land without Music: Music, Culture and Society in Twentieth-Century Britain* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), 37.

perception that the musical establishment of the day was “inimical to their interests and therefore to be opposed”. They chose to fight what they perceived as a “discriminatory status quo” by appealing to patriotism and thus obtain their authority not from any institution but from national tradition which predated the musical establishment by some millennia.<sup>144</sup> As I will discuss in the next section, some Australian composers took a similar path, seeking their authority not from the musical establishment, but from the broader population. The British music Society was particularly pivotal in promoting Australian music and composers.

On 22 June 1921 the British music Society presented a concert devoted to Australian music as part of Verbrugghen’s lecture-concerts program. This concert was particularly notable because of the performance of Agnew’s *Wild Men* which, according to Kate Bowan, marked a radical departure from the bounds of tonality and an embrace of modernist ideas previously thought to be absent from Australian music until the 1960s.<sup>145</sup> Bowan has captured well the astonished reception this work received, but this was not just because of its modernist tendencies.<sup>146</sup> The concert also presented works by the Melbourne composer Fritz Hart, and South Australian composer Hooper Brewster-Jones, as well as Sydney composers Dulcie Green and

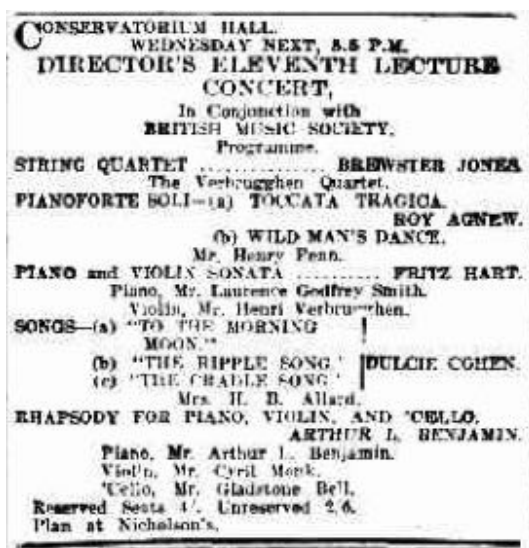
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<sup>144</sup> Richard Taruskin, *On Russian Music* (Berkeley, Calif.; London: University of California Press, 2009), 38.

<sup>145</sup> Kate Bowan, "Musical Mavericks : The Work of Roy Agnew and Hooper Brewster-Jones as an Australian Counterpart to European Modern Music 1906-1949" (PhD diss., Australian National University, 2007), 1.

<sup>146</sup> Kate Bowan, "Wild Men and Mystics: Rethinking Roy Agnew's Early Sydney Works," *Musicology Australia* 30 (2008): 1.

Arthur Benjamin, all of whom composed in quite different styles (See **Image 6.7**) leaving the audience somewhat perplexed about which of these composers (if any) best represented Australian music.



**Image 6.7:** Advertisement, *The Daily Telegraph*, 18 June 1921, 18.

The *Conservatorium Magazine's* reviewer expressed confusion about whether the works presented at the British Music Society concert should be viewed as “Australian music”, or as “emanations from composers who are Australian” and claimed to have difficulty discerning “anything distinctly Australian about any of the compositions”. After some reflection, the reviewer questioned whether the music needed to be distinctively Australian or merely “connected” with “Australian life and conditions” even if composed in a traditional European style. Eventually, unable to resolve the issue, nor his or her expectations of Australian music, the reviewer concluded that the works should be judged “merely—as *music*.”<sup>147</sup> The

<sup>147</sup> Alpha, Australian Composers, *Conservatorium Magazine*, 2 No. 3: (1921), 30.

reviewer had signalled a change in expectations of Australian composers and Australian music and introduced a critical question that was to preoccupy Sydney composers during the course of the next decade—how to make Australian music sound Australian. If Australian music was to break overtly German links what other options might there be?

### **The quest to make Australian music distinctively Australian**

In the 1920s, composers became increasingly organised in promoting their own interests and the cause of Australian music. At that time the market for sheet music had begun to decline with the advent of radio.<sup>148</sup> According to the manager of Paling's music store, during the course of the 1920s Australian composers were "practically [forced] out of business" as a consequence of broadcasting. He claimed that in 1925, his store had published 302 Australian compositions but by 1932, this had fallen to only 16.<sup>149</sup> With little other outlet, Australian composers had few options but to try to find a role for themselves within the classical music world.

In 1926 composers, like other musicians, began to promote themselves collectively by organising the Society of Australian Composers and Authors to encourage Australian composers, poets and authors and offer presentation of their works.<sup>150</sup> According to the Secretary, composer Hilda

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<sup>148</sup> Prue Neidorf, "The Composing and Publishing Ventures of the Marsh Brothers," *Bibliographical Society of Australia & New Zealand Bulletin* 25, no. 3 & 4 (2001): 2.

<sup>149</sup> *Sun*, 7 October 1932, 10.

<sup>150</sup> *SMH*, 21 August 1926, 9.

Keith, it should not be left to the Conservatorium “to assist Australian composers, and give their works a hearing”. Rather, she claimed that this group should have the authority to assess the merits of submitted works by their own board of “eminent musical and literary men and women”.<sup>151</sup> This placed Australian music firmly within the broader sphere of developments within the Australian literary community. Several composers were clearly influenced by developments in the literary field. In this section, I will discuss four composers who published their thoughts about “Australian music” in various newspapers and journals in the 1920s. These composers were not necessarily the most successful or best known composers of their time, but they are of interest here because of their role in articulating the key parameters of a contemporary debate about Australian music. These composers were Fritz Hart and Henry Tate from Melbourne, both of whom have attracted interest by contemporary musicologists.<sup>152</sup> Although not from Sydney their writings about Australian music had a national distribution and they are of importance here as they influenced debate in Sydney. Phyllis Campbell and Adolphe Beutler were from Sydney although today they are not well known and not highly regarded as composers. Nevertheless, the latter two composers both had definite ideas about Australian music which

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<sup>151</sup> *SMH*, 11 October 1926, 6.

<sup>152</sup> See for example Anne-Marie Forbes, “An Expatriate Englishman: Fritz Hart in Australia,” in *The Soundscapes of Australia: Music, Place and Spirituality*, ed. Fiona Richards (Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2007), 199-211; Peter John Tregear, “Fritz Bennicke Hart: An Introduction to His Life and Music” (M.Mus. diss., University of Melbourne, 1993); Hollis Taylor, “Composers’ Appropriation of Pied Butcherbird Song: Henry Tate’s “Undersong of Australia” Comes of Age,” *Journal of Music Research Online* 2 (2011): 1–28.



they expressed publicly in journals and other publications, thereby influencing contemporary debate. These composers were the most dominant writers about “Australian music” during this period. Although all four composers disagreed quite dramatically about what Australian music should sound like, each defined Australian music within classical music parameters as a transcendent form of music that should express more abstract notions of Australianness than those explicitly represented in Australian parlour songs.

Melbourne composer Fritz Hart was in a unique position to offer an alternative to Germanic styles, since, although his name suggested a German heritage, he was born and trained in England. In 1915 his English background helped him to prevail in a power struggle against those who favoured a more Germanic approach, including Marshall-Hall and his staff at the University of Melbourne.<sup>153</sup> Hart was very influenced by the development of an English national school of composition and saw this as a starting point for an Australian school of composers. In 1922, he published his proposed blueprint for Australian Music in *Art in Australia*. In this piece, Hart lamented that much British and Australian music was “notably Teutonic in origin” and so “never possessed any real life of its own”.<sup>154</sup> According to Hart, while the Australian composer must know all schools of music, “he must not be taught that all great music is German music—that

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<sup>153</sup> Thérèse Radic, "Hart, Fritz Bennicke (1874–1949)" *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University (1983), accessed online 19 February 2017, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/hart-fritz-bennicke-6589/text11341>, published first in hardcopy 1983.

<sup>154</sup> F. Bennicke Hart, "Australian Music," *Art in Australia* 3, no. 2 (1922).

the only way to develop a theme is Beethoven's way, or that Schumann, Brahms and Hugo Wolf have laid down the lines upon which he should make his songs."<sup>155</sup> If Australian or indeed British composers used a French or German idiom, Hart claimed, this smacked of "insincerity". For Hart, the challenge for Australian as well as British composers was to create "authentic music".<sup>156</sup> Hart suggested that "the key of national music" was found in folk music and that "Australian creative music ... must necessarily share characteristics with British folk song or it will have no foundations".<sup>157</sup> Although the starting place was Britain, he hoped in time that "the influence of abundant sunshine, and of a relatively free and unconventional mode of living" would "enable Australian music to contribute something definitely its own to the music of the world."<sup>158</sup>

Yet "Australian music" for Hart must still provide moral uplift and spiritual renewal within the parameters advocated by Haweis. It should not appeal to the "cruder aspects of Australian life" but rather, like all music of higher aesthetic value, it must "ennoble and uplift":

it must find its own poetry in the vast open spaces, in the mystery of the lonely bush. The composer must seek to express the spiritual relationship of himself to those things in Nature which are undreamt of in the philosophy of most people. It is his duty to teach his fellow-countrymen to discern that spirit of

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<sup>155</sup> Hart.

<sup>156</sup> Hart.

<sup>157</sup> Hart.

<sup>158</sup> Hart.

eneration for noble and beautiful things within themselves  
which is in danger of failing them in these materialistic days.<sup>159</sup>

Such a line of argument placed the Australian music that Hart promoted firmly within the classical tradition. It made it very easy to promote contemporary “Australian music” as an essential but subordinate component of the project of establishing a classical musical culture.

Hart’s views were very influential among other composers of the music establishment even though their output usually retained a more romantic aesthetic which reflected their Germanic training. The titles of many of the works by Frank Hutchens, Lindley Evans, Mirrie Hill and Alfred Hill, all composers associated with the NSW State Conservatorium, reflect a pastoral influence.<sup>160</sup> Their role as Conservatorium staff added to their authority as composers and they often performed each other’s works at Conservatorium concerts, thereby helping to establish their bona fides as recognised composers.

Most of these composers continued to write sonatas, string quartets, trios, concerti and, in Hill’s case at least, a symphony, using compositional

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<sup>159</sup> Hart.

<sup>160</sup> For instance, *Always Afternoon* (1927), *At the Bathing Pool* (1932), and *Weeping Mist* (1932) were key works by Frank Hutchens. Lindley Evans wrote pieces entitled *The North has my Heart* (1925), *Fragrance* (1934), and an extended choral setting of George Essex Evans poem *An Australian Symphony* which is a celebration of the Australian landscape. Mirrie Hill also focused on pastoral themes in works entitled *Out of the Midwood’s Twilight* (1916), *How Sweet the Moonlight Sleeps* (1917), and *Gum-Trees* (1925). Hart’s former collaborator, Alfred Hill, wrote a mythically based opera, *Auster* (performed in 1922) providing an imaginative recasting of Australia’s origins as well as numerous pastoral-themed works including *Through a veil of Mist* (1924), *The Moon’s Gold Horn* (1927), *Summer Heat and the South Wind* (1932), and *The Sacred Mountain* (1932).

methods traditionally used in the works of the European canon. Similarly, in England, even when composers used British folk elements, modal harmonies or reinvented Tudor musical styles they continued to rely heavily on traditional German forms, diatonic harmony and compositional techniques which often impacted on their originality.<sup>161</sup> Creating a uniquely national music that was still recognisable within the tradition of the Western canon and its tonal conventions was a considerable creative challenge which composers in a range of western countries addressed with varying degrees of success. Because of this, some Australian composers (like their European and American counterparts) decided to explore the use of non-conventional tonal systems which might enable them to sound less obviously German and suggest a local connection. Many modernist composers in Europe and the United States explored the use of alternative scales and modes from non-Western sources as a way to rejuvenate what they considered to be a tired and corrupted culture.<sup>162</sup> These techniques were surprisingly well known within Australia in the 1920s and were widely discussed – and often denigrated – in music magazines, cultural journals and even the general press.<sup>163</sup>

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<sup>161</sup> Meirion Hughes and Robert Stradling, *The English Musical Renaissance, 1840–1940: Constructing a National Music* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), 155–63.

<sup>162</sup> Walter L. Adamson, *Embattled Avant-Gardes: Modernism's Resistance to Commodity Culture in Europe* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 176.

<sup>163</sup> See for example the discussion in the *Music and Drama* column, *SMH*, 9 September, 1933, 8.

Henry Tate, like other Australian composers would have known about European non-diatonic experiments. He compiled his collected thoughts about Australian music in a book entitled *Australian Musical Possibilities* which he published in 1924.

Our animals, our birds, our flowers and trees exhibit traits which are peculiarly their own. Our blue-grey distances, suffused with clearest sunlight, have a voice if we could hear it. The green light of our gullies does not vibrate with memories of the past, but it is eloquent with the deeper music of the future.<sup>164</sup>

The idea that composers should explore the inherent harmonies, melodies and rhythms arising from “the tonality of the bush” led Tate to suggest divaricating from diatonic forms of harmony that had become “cheapened” and “wearisome” as a consequence of modern [popular] music.<sup>165</sup> He was particularly interested in Australian birdsong as a source for a unique Australian harmony which, he believed, could not fail to “evoke a sweet unwritten symphony”.<sup>166</sup> He devised a scale based on the song of the butcher bird (a major scale with a flattened second and sixth) suggesting that the use of such scales might provide a “brightening factor”. He also advocated the exploration of Aboriginal material as a potential source for alternative scales.<sup>167</sup> However, Tate was not overly optimistic as to how useful Aboriginal material might be, given that he believed Aboriginal people were

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<sup>164</sup> Henry Tate, *Australian Musical Possibilities*, ed. Bernard O'Dowd (Melbourne: Edward A. Vidler, with an introduction by Bernard O'Dowd, 1924), 13.

<sup>165</sup> Tate, 27.

<sup>166</sup> Tate.

<sup>167</sup> Tate, 26.

“more or less estranged from the psychology of the modern Australian.” He suggested the use of such material would depend on “the somewhat oblique rays cast upon it by the sympathetic imagination it encounters.”<sup>168</sup>

Others were equally ambivalent about drawing on Aboriginal culture, although views varied. Hart, for instance, agreed that Aboriginal legends and other Australian subject matter could be appropriate subjects for composition, so long as a composer incorporated such material without compromising his or her “artistic sincerity”.<sup>169</sup> The author of the *Herald's* Music and Drama column, however, thought the “barbaric drummings and chantings of the aborigines” were unusable. Hugh McMenemy, president of the British music Society, claimed the Aborigines were “singularly devoid of any musical instinct.”<sup>170</sup> Such attitudes are unsurprising given that, as previously suggested, for many people performances of classical music celebrated the triumph of European culture on the Australian continent. This aversion to incorporating Aboriginal music continued until the Jindyworobak literary movement in the late 1930s which influenced some composers, most notably John Antill, Margaret Sutherland, Mirrie Hill, Clive Douglas and James Penberthy who, like the writers associated with this movement, sought to join with Aboriginal people in a more nuanced if not

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<sup>168</sup> Tate.

<sup>169</sup> Hart, “Australian Music”.

<sup>170</sup> Hugh McMenemy, Letter to the editor, *SMH*, 26 May 1924, 13.

totally unproblematic way to better express their connection to Australia and the Australian environment.<sup>171</sup>

Although what is now known of Tate's work<sup>172</sup> does not radically depart from normal tonal conventions his ideas were widely discussed in the media and among his peers. Tate was an active member of the Australian Institute of the Arts and Literature established in 1921 to promote artistic and literary appreciation and further develop the arts in Australia.<sup>173</sup> He regularly lectured on music, literature and related matters and found a ready audience for performances of his own music.<sup>174</sup> His treatise on Australian composition included a foreword by "poet, radical and parliamentary draughtsman",<sup>175</sup> Bernard O'Dowd. Tate associated with other politically active writers such as Vance Palmer, Louis Esson and William Moore. This group also had associations with some of the more progressive visual artists including Basil Burdett, Danila Vassilieff<sup>176</sup> and Max Meldrum. Such artists were deeply critical of the pastoral influence on a previous generation of artists, and sought to locate Australian culture within a social reform

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<sup>171</sup> For a good discussion of this phenomenon see David Symons, "The Jindyworobak Connection in Australian Music, c. 1940-1960." *Context* 23 (2002): 33-47.

<sup>172</sup> For a discussion of Tate's music see Taylor, "Composers' Appropriation of Pied Butcherbird Song: Henry Tate's "Undersong of Australia" Comes of Age," Cited (2011): 1-28.

<sup>173</sup> Lurline Stuart, "Vidler, Edward Alexander (1863-1942)," *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University (1990), accessed online 16 March 2017 <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/vidler-edward-alexander-8921/text15677>.

<sup>174</sup> See for instance, *The Argus*, 26 May 1922, which describes a performance of Tate's songs based on bird calls at a meeting of the Australian Institute of the Arts and Literature.

<sup>175</sup> Chris Wallace-Crabbe, "O'Dowd, Bernard Patrick (1866-1953)," *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University (1988), accessed 8 March 2017, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/odowd-bernard-patrick-7881/text13701>.

<sup>176</sup> Felicity St J. Moore, "Vassilieff, Danila Ivanovich (Daniel) (1897-1958)" *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University (2002), accessed 25 February 2017, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/vassilieff-danila-ivanovich-daniel-11916/text21347>.

framework that echoed a more modernist aesthetic. This put them at odds with right wing conservative artists in debates about Australian national art.<sup>177</sup> Even so, they shared a common goal with more conservative colleagues to create a national form of culture that could provide spiritual inspiration<sup>178</sup> and protect Australia from “vulgar” or “corrupt” imported popular culture, particularly American culture.<sup>179</sup> Both groups were essentially seeking community and government support for Australian art that would, in their opinion, be morally and spiritually uplifting. Their disagreement, in essence, revolved around whether Australian culture should be imposed from above by an institutional hierarchy or derived in a somewhat nebulous fashion from the broader Australian community and the environment. The debate about Australian music, then, was firmly located within cultural debates about Australian national culture which pitted conservative forces against modernist social reformers. These two groups were not sharply delineated from each other. There were many interlinkages between both conservatives and modernists. It would perhaps be an exaggeration to describe Tate and his colleagues as an avant-garde group since they typically worked both within and outside of the various artistic institutions of the day. Tate, unlike Hart, had little support for his efforts from within the musical establishment, but he did acquire considerable

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<sup>177</sup> Richard Haese, *Rebels and Precursors: The Revolutionary Years of Australian Art*, 2nd ed ed. (Ringwood, Vic: Penguin, 1988), 57.

<sup>178</sup> David Walker, *Dream and Disillusion: A Search for Australian Cultural Identity* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1976), 145.

<sup>179</sup> Walker, 99.



authority on the subject of Australian music within his lifetime because of his links within the artistic community.

Sydney composer Phyllis Campbell (1891–1974) similarly advocated that Australian music must be found within the Australian landscape. Although Campbell has received little recognition for her theosophically inspired musical experimentation of the 1920s and early 1930s it is clear that she was contributing directly to a contemporary discourse on Australian music. As an active broadcaster and writer she expressed her thoughts in her many articles on music written for theosophical journals such as *Advance Australia* and lecture notes for talks at Adyar Hall and on radio station 2GB, which was founded by the Theosophical Society.

Campbell argued that the musical “super-power”, Germany, was no longer the “one and only Mecca of the art”.<sup>180</sup> Rather than imitating German composers, Campbell suggested that composers should embrace “a national spirit” and seek inspiration from within their own country.<sup>181</sup> Like Tate she looked to the natural environment where she believed one could find “the very essence of music.”<sup>182</sup> In this quest, she demurred from music as a mere description of natural phenomena but advocated the use of non-diatonic sounds to arrive at a deeper insights, translating “Nature’s very

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<sup>180</sup> Phyllis Campbell, *Modern Music—What it is and What it is not*, Lecture at Adyar Hall, 19 November 1926, Campbell Archive, UTS, 11.

<sup>181</sup> Phyllis Campbell, *Music of To-Day* Campbell Archive, UTS, 4.

<sup>182</sup> Phyllis Campbell, *Nature and Music*, Campbell Archive, UTS.

consciousness in terms of sound".<sup>183</sup> She believed that her era represented a "musical renaissance" or a new "Golden Age", where new spiritual insights were finding expression in contemporary music and art.<sup>184</sup> As a new nation, she believed that Australia had the opportunity to take a leading part in the dawning of this new age,<sup>185</sup> which promised to usher in a "new stage of human progress".<sup>186</sup> For her, Australian music should have the same spiritual objectives as all forms of classical music. The two were inextricably linked. In her view classical music without a national focus would lack relevance.

Australia had become something of a centre for theosophy in the 1920s with regular visits from leading theosophical figures including Annie Besant and Henry Steel Olcott.<sup>187</sup> Boasting up to 2000 members at its peak,<sup>188</sup> it promoted education about eastern esoteric religious ideas which attracted involvement from many of Australia's leading artists and musicians.<sup>189</sup> Henri Verbrugghen was himself a theosophist,<sup>190</sup> lending respectability to many of its beliefs. During Verbrugghen's time as director, a leading figure in the

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<sup>183</sup> Phyllis Campbell, *Music of To-Day*, 6a.

<sup>184</sup> Phyllis Campbell, *Modern Music*, 11.

<sup>185</sup> Phyllis Campbell, *Modern Music*.

<sup>186</sup> Phyllis Campbell, *Music of To-Day*, 11.

<sup>187</sup> Jenny McFarlane, "A Visionary Space: Theosophy and an Alternative Modernism in Australia 1890-1934" (PhD. diss., Australian National University, 2006), 154.

<sup>188</sup> Jill Roe, "Theosophy and the Ascendancy," in *The Sydney-Melbourne Book*, ed. Jim Davidson (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1986), 209.

<sup>189</sup> For a good discussion of leading artists and musicians involved with the Theosophical Society see McFarlane, "A Visionary Space".

<sup>190</sup> Diane Collins, "Henri Verbrugghen's Auditory Utopianism," *History Australia* 6 (2009): 36.1-36.18.

Theosophical Society, C. Jinarājadāsa,<sup>191</sup> (later to be president of the society), then based in Adyar in India, was the guest speaker at one of Verbrugghen's lecture-concerts series at the Conservatorium. He spoke on "Music as Synthesis of Emotional and Intellectual Activity."

Theosophy promoted spiritual enlightenment through the arts, lending strong support to a range of cultural enterprises, including music. The Theosophical Society in Sydney conducted frequent concerts, including concerts of Australian music, at its centrally located meeting place, Adyar Hall (later the Savoy Theatre) in Bligh Street, Sydney. It provided strong support for artists who, among theosophists, had the status of mediums able to "penetrate beyond appearances" and show "spiritual realities".<sup>192</sup> This included many artists who, like Campbell, received little recognition from the official artistic establishment.

Campbell's output, mostly composed in the 1920s and early 1930s, included 128 piano works, 119 art songs, 36 works for violin and piano, three works for viola and piano, 18 chamber works, five orchestral sketches, one harpsichord suite, and several liturgical works. It is hard to imagine why she would continue to compose such a large output without the encouragement of her friends in the theosophical movement. In many of her compositions, particularly her more experimental piano miniatures entitled *Nature Studies*,

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<sup>191</sup> For information about, Jinarājadāsa visit Theosophical website accessed 12 November 2017, <http://www.ts-adyar.org/node/78>

<sup>192</sup> Jill Roe, *Beyond Belief: Theosophy in Australia 1979-1939*. (Kensington: NSWU Press, 1986), 316.

Campbell explored Scriabin's "mystic chord", the whole-tone scale, pentatonicism and aggregate chords designed to produce resonant overtones.<sup>193</sup> Her output of compositions virtually ceased when she broke her association with the Theosophical Society in the 1930s.

Campbell's approach to writing music reflected many of the ideas already explored by Roy Agnew, the Sydney composer of 'ultra-modern' works that created something of a sensation when first performed at the British Music Society concert mentioned above. Agnew's music was performed quite frequently at British Music Society concerts, which were often also held at Adyar Hall. He thrived in the early 1920s within an artistic community much animated by theosophical ideas about music and colour as demonstrated by the "colour in art" exhibition held in Sydney in 1919. This show included paintings by the "young musician turned painter" Roy De Maistre who chose colours "to harmonise like the notes in music."<sup>194</sup> De Maistre's work displayed many of the preoccupations of European artists like Kandinsky who was similarly concerned with the relationship between music and colour.<sup>195</sup> Kandinsky was a significant influence on the Russian mystic composer, Alexander Scriabin<sup>196</sup> and the Russian futurist Leo

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<sup>193</sup> For a discussion of Campbell's compositional technique see Fiona Fraser, "Phyllis Campbell and the Sounds of Colour," *Literature & Aesthetics* 21, no. 1 (2011): 213-35.

<sup>194</sup> Niels Hutchison, *Colour Music in Australia 1997* (revised 2011), accessed 2 April 2011, <http://home.vicnet.net.au/~colmusic/welcome.htm>.

<sup>195</sup> Zoe Alderton, "Colour, Shape, and Music: The Presence of Thought Forms in Abstract Art," *Literature & Aesthetics* 21, no. 1 (2011): 236-58.

<sup>196</sup> James M. Baker, "Prometheus and the Quest for Color-Music: The World Premiere of Scriabin's *Poem of Fire with Lights*, New York, March 20, 1915," in *Music and Modern Art*, ed. James Leggio (New York: Routledge, 2002), 73.

Ornstein<sup>197</sup> who both, in turn, influenced Agnew and Campbell. Several scholars have now identified a number of modernist composers, including John Foulds and Cyril Scott in England and Henry Cowell, Dane Rudhyar and Carl Ruggles in America, who were inspired to reach beyond normal tonal conventions by their study of theosophy and Scriabin.<sup>198</sup> These composers do not comfortably fit within either neo-classicism or serialism, the two strands of modernism most commonly studied by musicologists.<sup>199</sup> As a consequence, they have often been neglected.

The British music Society was generally much more cosmopolitan than its name might suggest. Although the group began by focusing on British music (including Australian) it expanded its brief in 1923 to perform contemporary works from other nations, finally affiliating in 1929 with the International Society of Contemporary Music (ISCM) which was at the forefront of musical modernism. One of the group's foremost patrons was the eclectic and charismatic Melburnian Louise Dyer, who also sponsored the publication of literary and artistic works. She was the president of Alliance Française and, after leaving Australia in 1927, she eventually settled in Paris where she established her music publishing business *Editions de l'Oiseau-Lyre*.<sup>200</sup> With their regular concerts and by compiling catalogues of

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<sup>197</sup> Bowan, "Wild Men and Mystics", 4.

<sup>198</sup> For a good discussion of Scriabin's influence see Richard Taruskin, *Music in the Early Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

<sup>199</sup> For a good discussion on the tendency to compartmentalise modernist music in one or either of these two schools see Alan Lessem, "Schoenberg, Stravinsky, and Neo-Classicism: The Issues Reexamined," *The Musical Quarterly* 68, no. 4 (1982): 527–42.

<sup>200</sup> Davidson, *Lyrebird Rising: Louise Hanson-Dyer of Oiseau-Lyre 1884–1962* (1994): 174.

Australian Music the British music Society provided an important outlet for composers, both within and without the musical establishment. They also championed the works of some less well known English composers including Gustav Holst who, like Agnew and Campbell, was inspired by esoteric religious ideas. Holst's opera *Savriti* was performed in Melbourne on 20 September 1926 and, as mentioned earlier, his orchestral suite *The Planets* was premiered in Australia by the NSW State Conservatorium Orchestra on 2 December 1925 a relatively short time after its first complete British performance in 1920. This gave credibility to Australian composers similarly influenced by Eastern esoterica.

Before moving to the 1930s, when eastern esoterica fell out of fashion, there is just one contrasting approach to Australian music that should briefly be mentioned. Swiss born composer Adolphe Beutler, an acolyte of the controversial artist and writer Norman Lindsay, wrote several articles on music, including Australian music, for Lindsay's short-lived vitalist journal *Vision*. Beutler, like Lindsay, took an anti-modernist approach, arguing that Australia could provide a vehicle for Europe's redemption through a "new Renaissance of Art".<sup>201</sup> In his view Australian composers must strive to purge European art of what he and Lindsay considered to be the "taint of modernism"<sup>202</sup> by returning to and revitalising the purity of form as

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<sup>201</sup> Adolphe Beutler, "The Liar in Music", *Vision* 2 (August 1923): 19.

<sup>202</sup> Peter Kirkpatrick, *The Sea Coast of Bohemia: Literary Life in Sydney's Roaring Twenties* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1992), 68.

represented by Beethoven.<sup>203</sup> With Lindsay's sponsorship, Beutler was able to organise a concert performance of his Beethoven-esque endeavours at the NSW State Conservatorium in 1923. Unsurprisingly the desire to be more German than the Germans failed to inspire much sympathy at a time when other composers were trying to escape the German influence. Beutler was devastated by the poor reception of his music<sup>204</sup> and he eventually fell out of favour with the Lindsays. Unable to obtain further support for his compositions he succumbed to tuberculosis in 1927 in straitened circumstances at the early age of 45. While his music did not have any lasting impact, his example demonstrated a form of co-patronage between different artistic groups as well as the centrality of music within broader cultural debates of the period.

### **The ABC Australian Music Competitions**

The vibrant cultural environment that nurtured lively debates about Australian music in the 1920s failed to endure for very long. The Theosophical Society's popularity waned after grandiose prophecies about the "coming of the World Teacher", Krishnamurti, who was to "theosophise Australia" failed to materialise.<sup>205</sup> Concerts of Australian music like those conducted by the British Music Society also became less common. There were numerous reasons for this. In Sydney, the British Music Society was

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<sup>203</sup> Beutler, "The Complacency of Critics," *Vision* 4 (August 1924): 21.

<sup>204</sup> See reviews, *SMH* 20 July 1923, 12 and *Telegraph*, 21 July 1923.

<sup>205</sup> Roe, *Beyond Belief: Theosophy in Australia 1979–1939* (1986): 359.

significantly less active than it had been in the 1920s.<sup>206</sup> According to the *Sydney Morning Herald's* music critic attendances at concerts given by local musicians and local musical bodies had declined in the early 1930s even though this had not been the case for visiting artists.<sup>207</sup> More modernist compositions failed to attract the broad support from the general population that Australian themed parlour songs had. In 1929, an article in *The Sydney Mail* lamented "the divorce between the classical composer and the general average citizen is becoming wider and wider". Astutely grasping the social change he was witnessing, the author mourned this change:

The people will never be recaptured by the music that is being written to-day by the big men. They will never bring back music into the every-day lives of the people. They are writing for the few, and the estrangement between serious writers and the popular writers and the popular music-loving people is becoming greater.<sup>208</sup>

Without broad-based support within the community the impetus for establishing an Australian school of composition weakened.

One of the main reasons for establishing the ABC was to encourage local talent<sup>209</sup> and as I will discuss in chapter eight, it often attracted criticism for not supporting local artists sufficiently.<sup>210</sup> It was therefore important for it

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<sup>206</sup> The British Music Society had a stronger following in Melbourne in the 1930s.

<sup>207</sup> *SMH*, 6 January, 1933, 8.

<sup>208</sup> *Sydney Mail*, 13 November 1929, 10.

<sup>209</sup> During the parliamentary debates on the establishment of the ABC, Earl Page (Country Party), for instance had stated that local talent should be encouraged to the greatest possible extent. See Commonwealth of Australia, "Parliamentary Debates" 134 (1932): 96.

<sup>210</sup> See for instance, *Today*, 1 August 1934, 5–6; *Wireless Weekly*, 3 August 1934, 11; *Sun*, 26 May 1935, 2; and *Smith's Weekly*, 6 April 1935, 12.



to stage very public initiatives designed to demonstrate its support for Australian artists. One of the first such initiatives was an Australian composers' competition held in association with the Music Council of Australia, announced in December 1932. The objective was to foster "creative art in Australia" and reveal to ABC listeners the "high quality of musical works by Australian composers in all branches of composition".<sup>211</sup>

The ABC's first composer competition was widely embraced by composers, with a total of 791 entries. The major awards for orchestral works went to Fritz Hart and Lindley Evans, with Victorian composer Margaret Sutherland winning the award for a composition for string orchestra as well as minor awards in some of the solo instrument categories. The winning orchestral compositions were performed at a special event devoted to the performance of Australian music as part of Music Week in 1933. While these works were generally well received, like similar concerts before it, the *Herald* reviewer complained that there was nothing distinctively Australian about the sound of the music.<sup>212</sup>

A second competition based on similar principles was held in 1935. This competition attracted only 269 entries. The most successful composers were perhaps something of a surprise as they were two of the younger, and for the time, more radical and relatively unknown composers. Alex Burnard,

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<sup>211</sup> *SMH*, 3 May 1932, 4.

<sup>212</sup> *SMH*, 9 September 1933, 8.

who had just taken up the position of Professor of Harmony, Counterpoint and Composition at the NSW State Conservatorium after Alfred Hill's resignation, joined Margaret Sutherland among the main prize winners. For the 1935 contest, the Commission decided not to hold a special live concert, claiming the 1933 concert had not been a success.<sup>213</sup> Instead it organised three or four different radio programs focusing on the winning entries in each state. Margaret Sutherland later complained that these broadcasts often occurred at an hour when few were able to listen.<sup>214</sup> There were few repeat performances although winning works by Margaret Sutherland, Clive Douglas and Fritz Hart were recorded by the BBC for use in their Regional program and subsequent use in Empire programs early in 1937. Margaret Sutherland wrote to the ABC asking if it would be possible to hear the recording made of the BBC performance because of the unsatisfactory nature of the ABC performance. William James, then Federal Controller of Music, advised against it:

I would not recommend the suggestion of purchasing the record of the three prize-winning entries in our last Composers' Competition, as recently performed by the BBC. The works are not of major importance: they have been adequately performed in Australia, and now by the BBC, and I consider the spending of £100 for these records unnecessary.<sup>215</sup>

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<sup>213</sup> Memo from Keith Barry to General Manager, NAA, SP1588/2 Item no. 881, Composers Competition 1934-5.

<sup>214</sup> *The Mail*, 2 April 1938, 26.

<sup>215</sup> William James to the General Manager, 2 March 1937, *ABC Archive*, NAA, SP1588/2 Item no. 881 Composers Competition 1934-5.

Although Agnew wrote to the ABC suggesting publication of the winning entries, he received only a non-committal response.<sup>216</sup> The ABC never provided Sutherland with the BBC recording and few of the compositions were published except by the efforts of the composer or because they were included in eisteddfod or examination syllabi. In 1938, Sutherland not surprisingly summed up her experience in the ABC composer competitions as “a good opportunity lost”.<sup>217</sup>

Without other avenues of support in the 1930s most composers took a relatively conservative approach more likely to be accepted by the musical establishment. Agnew, for instance, focused on a “simpler”, more conservative “pastoral” style following visits to England in the 1920s in a bid to obtain recognition from English publishers.<sup>218</sup> Despite a promising beginning in the 1920s with around 40 piano works published, his career languished in the 1930s. Both Sutherland and Burnard struggled to earn their livings as composers. Even today, neither composer is well known. Burnard ended up teaching in Newcastle in relative obscurity and his works were not published until recently revived by Larry Sitsky as part of the Australian Heritage Series published by Keys Press.<sup>219</sup> Sutherland fared somewhat better, partly because of the patronage of Louise Hanson-Dyer. However,

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<sup>216</sup> Roy Agnew to W.J. Cleary, 6 October 1935, ABC Archive, NAA, SP1588/2 Item no. 881 Composers Competition 1934–5.

<sup>217</sup> *The Mail*, 2 April 1938, 26.

<sup>218</sup> Bowan, “Musical Mavericks: The Work of Roy Agnew and Hooper Brewster-Jones as an Australian Counterpart to European Modern Music 1906–1949,” 172.

<sup>219</sup> Details of Burnard’s published works are provided at <http://www.australiancomposers.com.au/authors/alexander-burnard>

her struggles for recognition by the musical establishment are well known and described in her biography.<sup>220</sup> Campbell gave up composing altogether and turned her attention to poetry instead.

## **Conclusion**

During the 1920s the Conservatorium remained at the centre of Sydney's musical life, but it did not dominate it as it had under Verbruggen. Rather, a diverse range of musical performances proliferated, even while increased competition from a growing entertainment industry ensured there were always alternative options available. In response to anti-German sentiment after the war there was a conscious effort to distance classical music from its German origins. This provided an opening for Australian composers who, without options in the popular music world and spurred on by contacts in the literary world, were keen to exploit opportunities for the performance of Australian music.

During the 1920s a lively discourse on Australian music, engaging people within and outside of the musical establishment prompted a wide range of responses. While more conservative elements within the musical establishment promoted the adoption of English approaches, at least one outsider insisted on returning to an earlier purer Germanic aesthetic. Other composers, supported by a vibrant, idealistic, broad-based artistic community, sought inspiration from the Australian environment. Several of

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<sup>220</sup> David Symons, *The Music of Margaret Sutherland* (Sydney: Currency Press, 1997).

these composers experimented with alternative scales and harmonic systems derived from interacting with the environment. Their efforts to define Australian music lent support for an evolving classical music culture, providing it with credibility in the face of anti-Germanic sentiment following the First World War.

Composers like Agnew, Tate and Campbell were initially well received and encouraged within their communities. However, in the 1930s, as local music performers found it had to compete with new forms of entertainment such as talking movies and with the decline of groups such as the Theosophical Society, the support base for these composers collapsed leaving the musical institutions largely in charge of determining the direction of Australian music. Through activities such as its composer competitions the ABC took a leading role. While some composers continued with their experimentation, sometimes collaborating with literary and artistic colleagues, they found it difficult to find support for their work apart from the ABC's sporadic efforts to perform and/or broadcast Australian music. In this environment, Australian composers struggled for recognition and Australian music failed to find any distinct identity of its own. The ABC also played a pivotal role in displacing music entrepreneurs and in taking control of the music profession, which will be the subject matter of the next chapter.



## 7.

# A City of Orchestras

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The booming entertainment industry and diverse musical market place of Sydney in the 1920s had significantly improved the status and recognition of the music profession. In the process, it had grown substantially and was recognised by the payment of professional fees and pay rates scaled in accordance with the type of music performed. In the 1930s, however, the music profession faced the dual challenge of the introduction of “talkies” (which made theatre orchestras redundant) and the Depression. This revived the spirit of entrepreneurship of the early 1900s when the Musicians’ Union formed bands and, more ambitiously, the Sydney Symphony Orchestra which later became incorporated within Verbrugghen’s State Orchestra. This chapter will analyse the Musicians’ Union’s efforts to establish bands and orchestras in the 1930s, focusing on its partnerships with private industry and a visiting overseas conductor and the ABC. In particular, it will discuss the City of Sydney Orchestra formed by the Musicians’ Union, and the orchestra formed with sponsorship from Tucker and Company, the Australian distributors of Chateau Tanunda Brandy.

Like the founders of the original Sydney Symphony Orchestra, discussed in chapter 4, community orchestras of the 1930s were created

through the combined effort of musicians, private entrepreneurs and community supporters. The creation of an orchestra promised international recognition for Sydney and civic harmony amidst the uncertainty of the depression. It also provided a means of showcasing the capabilities of a growing and increasingly capable music profession. The sustained community effort prompted by the orchestral cause revealed a high level of commitment and energy that belies simplistic suggestions by Phillip Sametz and others that the ABC was solely responsible for the creation of a classical music culture, particularly the creation of orchestras.

In his history of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra Sametz claimed:

There is no story of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra that is not a story of the ABC. The orchestra was brought into being by the ABC, grew up with the ABC, and now finds itself turning sixty along with the rest of the organisation ... the ABC created a symphony orchestra for Sydney, and audiences to watch it take shape.<sup>1</sup>

In this chapter an alternative history is proposed showing how the music profession, along with a committed and enthusiastic audience and supporters, redoubled its efforts to create a world class orchestra in Sydney. Such efforts fostered a sense of community ownership and pride in the establishment of an orchestra which was much debated in the media. Ultimately, however, the Union simply could not match the Government funding available to the ABC. In 1936, the ABC finally responded to calls to

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<sup>1</sup> Phillip Sametz, *Play On: 60 years of music-making with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra* (Sydney: ABC Enterprises, 1992), 5.



resolve the orchestra situation by offering a series of subscription concerts, again adopting the name Sydney Symphony Orchestra in 1936. This orchestra was able to attract the best players available and with regular rehearsals was to significantly improve the standard of orchestral playing in Sydney. Its establishment marked the end of an era of community based initiatives.

By the end of 1939, the ABC had established orchestras in each state through a formidable bureaucracy that controlled both broadcast and performance of most classical musical events in Australia.

### **The music profession from boom to crisis**

From its inception, the Musicians' Union was concerned with ensuring its members obtained appropriate remuneration for their services.<sup>2</sup> The Union's initial schedule of fees adopted at a meeting in January 28 1901 was published as part of its rules and by-laws. The schedule provided for a scaled hierarchical fee structure for a range of musical events from "Grand Opera" to exhibitions and flower shows. Initially there was very little to distinguish between the recommended fee for grand opera, concerts and oratorios and general theatrical performances, which all attracted the highest pay rate of £1 11s 6d per performance with two rehearsals. The only differentiation between these categories was for weekly engagements, where "Grand Opera" attracted a weekly fee of £3 10s compared to a weekly fee of

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<sup>2</sup>Minutes of Annual General Meeting, 8 August, 1900, Minute Bk 3, NBA, T7 1/2,

£3 for general theatrical performances. From the beginning a distinction for principal instrumentalists was made with an additional weekly fee being payable for the leader of the orchestra and “principal instrumentalists in each department” which amounted to £5 for leaders and £4 for principals. The recommended fee for other sessional payments ranged from £1 11 shillings and 6 pence for a church performance with one rehearsal or a banquet or public dinner, to 15 shillings for a wedding, garden party, picnic or harbour cruise, 12 shillings and 6 pence for a procession, or 10 shillings for a ball, dance, dancing classes, assemblies, exhibitions, flower shows, bazaars or sports events.<sup>3</sup>

The 1909 Musicians’ Award from the Arbitration Board was somewhat less generous than the Union’s own schedule of fees, and equated “grand opera” with performances at “concerts, oratorios, and amateur operatic productions” with the same casual fee of one guinea per performance and five shillings per rehearsal. Such performances also attracted the same weekly fee of £4 per week compared to “general theatrical engagements” and “engagements for picture shows and circuses” which attracted £3 per week.<sup>4</sup> This award therefore placed a significantly higher value on classical music performances than other types of music.

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<sup>3</sup> Rules and Bye-Laws, *Minute Bk 3*, NBA, T7 1/2.

<sup>4</sup> Musicians Award, Government Gazette, 4 August 1909, NBA, Z401 Box 3.

As the Musicians' Union became more powerful in the high employment environment of the 1920s, it began to lobby for greater differentiation between classical music performances and other types of performances. The Musicians' Award of 1929 provided for different rates of pay for Category A performances including "grand opera, grand ballet, concerts or religious performances" and Category B performances or "general theatrical entertainments" which included "pantomime, variety show, vaudeville, revue, comic opera, musical comedy, drama, burlesque, minstrel show, and other entertainments similar to any of these not elsewhere provided for by this award."<sup>5</sup> The casual fee set for Category A performances was £1 5s<sup>6</sup> and for Category B performances, £1 2s<sup>7</sup> with an additional fee of 10s in the case of Category A or 7s in regard to any other work payable such as rehearsals.<sup>8</sup> Casual rates for picture shows were set at £1 1s<sup>9</sup>, 17s for a stage band<sup>10</sup>, and 7s 6d per hour for broadcasting.<sup>11</sup> Increasingly the music profession was being bureaucratized and distinctions made between various categories of music which were valued accordingly.

During the course of the 1930s, the dual impact of the advent of "talkies" and the Depression had a devastating effect on the employment

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<sup>5</sup> *Musicians Award*, prescribed on and after 18th October, 1929, NBA, Z401, Box 3, 3–4.

<sup>6</sup> *Musicians Award*, 4.

<sup>7</sup> i *Musicians Award*, 5.

<sup>8</sup> Weekly performance rates in this award are not comparable as they are based on different assumptions about the number of performances and rehearsals.

<sup>9</sup> *Musicians Award*, 1929, 5.

<sup>10</sup> *Musicians Award*, 6

<sup>11</sup> *Musicians Award*, 7.

options open to musicians. Australian census data indicate that in the first quarter of the twentieth century the music profession was a consequential occupation broadly comparable to or even more prominent than the profession in England/Wales when considered on a per capita basis.<sup>12</sup>

Additional people were employed in related industries. For instance, in 1921 an additional 3301 persons were employed as instrument and music dealers and instrument makers or repairers.

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<sup>12</sup> These figures must be used with caution as it is not clear how the various categories were defined or how census respondents self defined when responding to the census. The high figures in 1911 may therefore be deceptive. The downturns in 1921 and 1931 might be explained by the impact of the war on the music profession and subsequently by the Depression. It is unfortunate that there are no census figures available for the mid-1920s where another peak might have been recorded. In any event, it is clear that the profession was at least equal with Great Britain in terms of representation in the community, and may have formed a higher proportion of the population than in Great Britain, at least for a time.

Year	Musicians and Music Teachers in Australia	Per 10 000 of population in Australia	Per 10 000 of population in England/Wales (from Ehrlich)
1911	9453	20.7	13.0
1921	7879	14.3	11.6
1931	8004	12.0	12.1

**Figure 7.1: Musicians and Music Teachers in Australia and England/Wales<sup>13</sup>**

The Depression had a significant impact on the music profession. According to musicologist Bronwen Arthur, by mid 1930 80 per cent of professional musicians in Australia were unemployed.<sup>14</sup> In July 1932, the General Secretary of the Musicians' Union, Cecil Trevelyan, claimed that although there were about 1500 Union members in Sydney, only 250 or about 16 per cent of members had worked under weekly engagement at any time during the past three years.<sup>15</sup> In response to this crisis, the Union made laudable efforts to assist its members both by lobbying governments for assistance and by engaging in entrepreneurial activities to promote opportunities for their members. Some of these efforts, particularly a campaign to ban the use of any form of mechanical music, were doomed to

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<sup>13</sup> Australian data is taken from ABS Census data. Data for England/Wales is taken from Table II in Ehrlich, *The music profession in Britain Since the Eighteenth Century: a social history* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1985), 236.

<sup>14</sup> Bronwen Arthur, "Ban the Talkies! Sound Film and the Musicians' Union of Australia 1927-32," *Context* 13, Winter (1997): 47.

<sup>15</sup> Letter to the Prime Minister, December 1, 1932, NBA, E156 2/6.

failure.<sup>16</sup> However, efforts to promote opportunities for musicians and engage in relief activities were far more effective, mobilising significant support from Sydney's musical community.

Initially, as in the early years of the Union, the first response was to hold band concerts. Although tensions still existed with amateur bands, the Union had cleverly managed the problem of competition by bringing amateurs into the fold. In 1914, the rules and by-laws of the Musicians' Union of NSW included a provision to enable amateur band members (who typically only worked part time as a musician) to affiliate with the Union "and be entitled to its rights and privileges" on conditions they not accept less than union rates for any engagement or undertake any independent professional work unless as members of the Union.<sup>17</sup> This meant that if amateur bands that performed in the place of professional bands could not undercut professional bands. On this more even playing field, the Union band found it easier to obtain regular engagements, performing in parks and for civic occasions throughout the 1920s. The Union's first course of action following the retrenchment of musicians after the introduction of talkies was to secure an immediate grant of £1000 from the City Council to conduct open air performances in the city parks.<sup>18</sup> From the first, there was considerable sympathy for the plight of musicians and an initial concert at Bondi attracted

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<sup>16</sup> *Daily Pictorial*, 19 February 1930, 8.

<sup>17</sup> The Musicians Union of NSW, *Rules and By-Laws*, 1914, NBA, Z401, Box 3.

<sup>18</sup> *SMH*, 14 January 1930, 10.

an audience of 40 000 people to hear an orchestra of 100 performers, despite poor weather.<sup>19</sup>

The Union's next initiative was a partnership with *Evening News* and Columbia Records to produce two recordings, which also garnered considerable community support. The plan was to produce a twelve-inch double-sided recording of the waltz from *Coppelia* by Delibes on one side and the Hungarian march from *The Damnation of Faust* by Berlioz on the other; and for the second recording, a ten inch double-sided record of military band numbers.<sup>20</sup> Royalties were to be provided for the aid of the musicians. It was claimed to be the first time that a string orchestra and military band had been recorded in Australia on such a lavish scale, and "specimen records" were to be sent throughout the world to demonstrate the talent of Australian artists.<sup>21</sup> The *Evening News* heavily promoted the initiative and even sought volunteers to drive the musicians to the recording session.<sup>22</sup> The initiative caught the public imagination and volunteer drivers including "several enthusiastic women motorists" readily responded to the call for assistance, demonstrating the depth of support in the community for the musicians.<sup>23</sup> The managing director of Columbia Records expressed the hope that the recording would showcase the "high standards of

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<sup>19</sup> *SMH*, 14 January 1930, 10.

<sup>20</sup> *EN*, 29 January 1930, 13.

<sup>21</sup> *EN*, 20 January 1930, 5.

<sup>22</sup> *EN*, 23 January 1930, 8.

<sup>23</sup> *EN* 27 January 1930, 5.

instrumentalists we have in our midst” and lead to the establishment of a State Symphony Orchestra.<sup>24</sup>

Wisely, however, the Union did not focus exclusively on band music. Although it was still popular, in the 1920s and 1930s interest in band music was waning along with other amateur music-making endeavours.<sup>25</sup> As in the early 1900s, the Musicians’ Union set great store by the establishment of a permanent full-time orchestra. Here their main competition was the ABC.

### **The ABC orchestras**

When the ABC was established in 1932 it was widely assumed that it would take charge of the orchestral situation. Paragraph 24 of the *Australian Broadcasting Commission Act 1932* provided:

The Commission shall endeavour to establish and utilize in such manner as it thinks desirable in order to confer the greatest benefit on broadcasting groups of musicians for the rendition of orchestral, choral and band music of high order.<sup>26</sup>

This did not mean that the ABC needed to establish permanent orchestras, but clearly many parliamentarians had strong expectations that it would.

When the Federal Parliament debated the proposed Broadcasting Bill in 1932

Billy Hughes, for instance, then representing the United Australia Party,

argued:

We want a national orchestra in Australia. It should have been established long ago; when it is, it will have a direct and

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<sup>24</sup> EN, 7 February 1930, 5.

<sup>25</sup> John Whiteoak, "Popular Music, Militarism, Women, and the Early 'Brass Band' in Australia," *Australasian Music Research* 6 (2001): 46–8.

<sup>26</sup> Quoted in Martin Buzacott, *The Rite of Spring: 75 Years of ABC Music-Making* (Sydney: ABC Books for the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, 2007), 10.



powerful influence on the character and spiritual life of our people.<sup>27</sup>

Similarly, Victor Charles Thompson of the Country Party claimed that “one of the factors necessary for the success of broadcasting in Australia is the establishment of a national orchestra.”<sup>28</sup> Roland Green, also of the Country Party, argued that the need to establish a national orchestra was itself an argument for setting up the broadcast commission.<sup>29</sup> Joseph Daly of the Australian Labor Party also supported the creation of a national orchestra to provide jobs for musicians who had been put out of work by “canned music”.<sup>30</sup> One of the few dissenting voices was that of Jack Duncan-Hughes of the United Australia Party, who thought that the expense of an orchestra could not be justified as people could listen to relayed broadcasts from Europe. He argued that those who make up the programs should have appeal to all tastes, not merely lovers of “classical music”.<sup>31</sup> However, Duncan-Hughes’ arguments held little sway. A change had clearly taken place since the days of the original Sydney Symphony Orchestra when the NSW Government was exceedingly reluctant to intervene in an area it thought should be the province of private patronage. There was now broad

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<sup>27</sup> Commonwealth of Australia, “Parliamentary Debates, Senate and House of Representatives,” 133 (1932): 962.

<sup>28</sup> “Parliamentary Debates”, 975.

<sup>29</sup> “Parliamentary Debates”, 955.

<sup>30</sup> “Parliamentary Debates”, 134 (1932): 504.

<sup>31</sup> “Parliamentary Debates”, 633.

support and an expectation that the ABC would intervene to ensure that Australia might at last obtain a permanent full-time orchestra.

Despite such expectations, the ABC's initial intervention was quite modest. No new orchestra was established on 1 July 1932 when the ABC began. It simply adopted the 20 piece orchestra already engaged in the Sydney studio by the ABC's predecessor, the privately run Australian Broadcasting Company, and expanded it to a 'concert orchestra' size of 24 players within the year.<sup>32</sup> This orchestra was known by various names including the National Broadcasting Orchestra, the ABC (Sydney) Concert Orchestra, the ABC Orchestra and the ABC (Sydney) Symphony Orchestra, as distinct from the ABC (Melbourne) Symphony Orchestra. It combined with the Conservatorium Orchestra under the name of the ABC Symphony Orchestra in 1934 when the conductor Hamilton Harty<sup>33</sup> was engaged for a tour by the ABC. In 1935 a series of concerts was held under the name of the NSW State Symphony Orchestra. This was, in reality, a combination of Conservatorium and ABC players that came together for concerts organised by the Conservatorium and broadcast by the ABC. A similar group was brought together to perform with Yehudi Menuhin for his 1935 tour.<sup>34</sup> This was not unlike the situation that had existed prior to the establishment of the ABC when different orchestras were periodically brought together on an *ad*

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<sup>32</sup> Buzacott, *The Rite of Spring*, 16.

<sup>33</sup> Phillip Sametz, *Play On!*, 19.

<sup>34</sup> Buzacott, *The Rite of Spring*, 46.

*hoc* basis drawing their members from the same pool of available players. Essentially, under its early administration, the ABC's policy was to assist and support local groups, rather than establish its own orchestras.<sup>35</sup>

Such "scratch orchestras" did not greatly impress the *Smith's Weekly's* critic who complained that the permanent orchestras in both Melbourne and Sydney were now smaller than they had been in 1933.<sup>36</sup> Similarly, the *Herald's* Music and Drama columnist, after a particularly unsatisfactory and poorly attended concert by the State Symphony Orchestra at the Town Hall on Wednesday 15 May 1935, wrote scathingly about the "unsatisfactory state into which [orchestra] affairs have drifted." The problem, according to the reviewer, was not the audience who had "over and over again ... responded in their thousands to artists with a quiet manner who possessed authentic musical worth," but the ABC which "is largely responsible for control of the State Orchestra concerts" and "holds the purse strings."<sup>37</sup> By February 1936 there was clearly considerable frustration that the "fine, homogenous body of players" known as the "broadcasting orchestra" had been "confined rigorously to the studio" and had not been allowed to merge into the "healthy atmosphere of the concert hall."<sup>38</sup> However, in that year things were about to change as a new management structure within the ABC began

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<sup>35</sup>David Garrett, "The Accidental Entrepreneur—How ABC Music Became More Than Broadcasting" (PhD diss., University of Wollongong 2012), 127–8.

<sup>36</sup> *Smith's Weekly*, 18 May 1935, 10.

<sup>37</sup> *SMH*, 18 May 1935, 10.

<sup>38</sup> *AMN*, 1 March 1936, 20.

to make an impact. These changes (which will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter) facilitated a more prominent role for strong supporters of classical music within the ABC. These included William James Cleary and Charles Moses in Sydney and Herbert Brooks, Bernard Heinze and William James in Melbourne who, seeking to emulate the BBC's high ideals<sup>39</sup> of cultural "improvement, elevation and enlightenment"<sup>40</sup> took to establishing permanent orchestras with missionary zeal.<sup>41</sup> However, prior to these changes taking effect, the Musicians' Union again tried to fill the gap that the ABC had clearly not filled.

### **City of Sydney Orchestra**

The difficulties that the music profession faced in the 1930s significantly boosted the ongoing campaign to create a permanent professional orchestra. In a letter to the *Herald* on 17 July 1929, Sydney barrister Frank Louat suggested, perhaps somewhat insensitively, that the disaster that had befallen theatre musicians might be a "heaven-appointed and fleeting moment at which a Sydney Symphony Orchestra can be formed with the happiest prospects of success." Louat argued that the talent now available would "enable us to rival in perfection and finish the other great orchestras of the world." The Musicians' Union cleverly capitalised on such sentiments by successfully lobbying the Sydney City Council to provide free use of the

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<sup>39</sup> Alan William Thomas, *Broadcast and Be Damned: The ABC's First Two Decades* (Carlton, Vic: Melbourne University Press, 1980), 19.

<sup>40</sup> K.S. Inglis, *This Is the ABC* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1983), 43.

<sup>41</sup> Buzacott, *The Rite of Spring*, 47. .

Town Hall for four orchestra concerts to be given by unemployed professional musicians, to commence in 1930.<sup>42</sup> The Union's intention, according to the Secretary Frank Kitson, was "to establish the orchestra on a permanent basis."<sup>43</sup>

From the first, the concerts, which were also broadcast on radio station 2FC<sup>44</sup>, were well received. One member of the audience even described the first concert of the season on 12 February 1930 as "the most masterly rendering of beautiful music I have ever experienced" and described the audience's enthusiastic response as "exhilarating".<sup>45</sup> The concert reviews repeatedly commented on the good attendance<sup>46</sup> and "enthusiastic response"<sup>47</sup> of the audience and were generally complimentary about the standard of playing, although there were some suggestion of "unsteadiness" at times and a lack of preparation.<sup>48</sup> Nevertheless, reviewers were positive about the possibility of using this orchestra as the nucleus for a permanent orchestra, given the encouraging beginnings:

Permanency is the aim of the Professional Symphony Orchestra, and it is sincerely hoped that it will live ... it is hoped, too that the band will attain to the state of perfection that must be its natural aspiration...<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> *SMH*, 24 January 1930, 9.

<sup>43</sup> Minutes of Quarterly General Meeting, 24/2/30, Minute Bk 11, *NBA*, T7/1/9.

<sup>44</sup> *EN*, 15 February 1930, 7.

<sup>45</sup> *SMH*, 14 February 1930, 14.

<sup>46</sup> *Sun*, 9 March 1930, 5.

<sup>47</sup> *SMH*, 21 April 30, 4.

<sup>48</sup> *SMH*, 21 April 30, 4 & 23 June 1930, 6.

<sup>49</sup> *Sun*, 15 June 1930, 38.

The high level of public sympathy for professional musicians at a time when the effects of the depression were beginning to affect many parts of the economy is striking. Editorials decried the “stark poverty” that musicians faced as a result of the introduction of “canned” or “mechanical music” from abroad.<sup>50</sup> The plight of professional musicians united people from different backgrounds who were concerned about foreign, specifically American contamination of Australian culture. From the perspective of workers, for instance, the plight of the Musicians’ Union represented a broader struggle to promote Australian goods and Australian jobs. A correspondent to *Labor Daily* who signed himself “Australia First” argued for restrictions on imported culture. He suggested that, since they mostly employed Australians who earned and spent their salaries “here”, theatres should be privileged over pictures which should only be screened between six in the morning until six o’clock at night. Theatres would then be the sole form of entertainment available at night.<sup>51</sup> Representing middle class interests Louat’s correspondence in the *Herald* similarly claimed that an orchestra was necessary to counter the adverse effects of “machine music.” While he believed that in an “older land” the “roots of culture would have struck deeper”, in a newer culture like Australia “the grey future is very close”, “unless a strong course is taken” and an orchestra is at last formed.<sup>52</sup> This

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<sup>50</sup> *Truth*, 23 February 1930, 10.

<sup>51</sup> *Labor Daily*, 23 May 1930, 7.

<sup>52</sup> *SMH*, 17 July 1929, 16.

overlap between middle class and working class interests goes some way to explaining the ongoing sympathy for musicians.

As a patriotic cause, Government ministers and even the premier were keen to associate themselves with the Union's orchestra initiative. At its concert on 8 March 1930, the then premier, Thomas Bavin (nationalist) appeared on stage to announce that Government funding would be provided to support ongoing concerts by professional musicians.<sup>53</sup>

Continuing the public association with the orchestra, at its fifth concert on 22 March 1930, the then Minister for Labour, Ernest Farrar, announced that the Government now proposed to extend the concert season by arranging for ten additional concerts.

The general public's enthusiasm for the concerts also continued to grow. A *Herald* article claimed that the concerts "seem to have stimulated public interest in orchestra music."<sup>54</sup> A visiting London musician pledged £100 from the London College of Music and £50 from his own money for an orchestra fund.<sup>55</sup> There is no record of such a fund actually being initiated although there was talk of a public meeting "to decide whether we are for ever doomed to hear toe-tapping negro inspired tunes or make a welcome return to the more elevating form of true music."<sup>56</sup> Visiting artists, Australian

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<sup>53</sup> *Sun*, 9 March 1930, 5.

<sup>54</sup> *SMH*, 1 April 1930, 15.

<sup>55</sup> *SMH*, 1 April 1930, 15.

<sup>56</sup> *SMH*, 15 March 30, 12.

soprano Florence Austral,<sup>57</sup> Canadian mezzo-soprano Alicia Muma<sup>58</sup> and British violinist John Dunn,<sup>59</sup> also appeared with the orchestra.

Such positive reactions encouraged a second series of orchestra concerts in 1931. Although these concerts were popular, they did not raise sufficient funds to ensure the orchestra's permanency.<sup>60</sup> In 1932, just as the Musicians' Union was reviewing the venture, an opportunity arose when the Council announced that they were considering "abolishing" the City Organist's Sunday concerts due to a lack of patronage. The tradition of Sunday afternoon organ concerts had continued through the 1920s, but with increased competition from other forms of entertainment the audiences had significantly declined in the latter part of the 1920s.<sup>61</sup> On the suggestion of the Musicians' Union, the Council agreed to establishing an orchestra "in the hope of making the recitals more attractive".<sup>62</sup>

The new orchestra was essentially the Union's orchestra rebadged as the "City of Sydney Orchestra" which held a regular season of Sunday afternoon winter concerts from 1932 until 1937 documented here for the first time. For the first few concerts early in 1932 while the audience was enthusiastic the turn-out was disappointing.<sup>63</sup> However, attendance grew

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<sup>57</sup> *SMH*, 9 June 1930, 4.

<sup>58</sup> *Sydney Mail*, 28 May 1930, 16.

<sup>59</sup> *SMH*, 16 June 1930, 7.

<sup>60</sup> *Sun*, 21 July 1931, 11.

<sup>61</sup> *SMH*, 19 April 1932, 10.

<sup>62</sup> *SMH*, 6 January 1933, 8.

<sup>63</sup> *SMH*, 15 August 1932, 4.



during the course of the season and by the final concert of the 1932 season it was agreed that the concerts were sufficiently popular to continue in 1933.<sup>64</sup>

In 1933 the efforts of the Musicians' Union were vindicated when as the *Herald* recorded "with keen pleasure", attendances were so large that "hundreds of people had to be turned away."<sup>65</sup> **Image 7.1** shows what was described as a "large and enthusiastic audience"<sup>66</sup> attending the Sunday afternoon concert on 4 June 1933, which stood in stark contrast to concerts by the Conservatorium Orchestra at that time. With some exceptions (notably a Wagner concert) the Conservatorium's orchestra couldn't attract more than "a spare to medium assemblage" while the ABC orchestra had similar difficulties except for their much feted celebrity concerts (discussed in more detail in the next chapter).<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> *SMH*, 5 September 1932, 4.

<sup>65</sup> *SMH*, 1 January 1934, 2.

<sup>66</sup> *The Labor Daily*, 5 June 1933, 7.

<sup>67</sup> *SMH*, 6 January 1933, 8.



Image 7.1: *Sun*, 5 June 1933, 9.

The glowing reviews of the City of Sydney Orchestra concerts capture something of the atmosphere that must have been present during the concerts:

If every Town Hall recital were patronised as well as the Sunday afternoon concerts given by the City of Sydney Orchestra, New South Wales could boast of one of the world's finest symphonic orchestras. At yesterday's concert many

people remained standing on both sides of the platform, and the applause was very hearty.<sup>68</sup>

As in former times, it was not unusual for audiences to insist on immediate encores.<sup>69</sup> Interestingly, the critics didn't disparage this behaviour even while favourably comparing performances of the Union's orchestra with the ABC orchestra:

Above all, the woodwinds and the brasses ... made their entries clearly, without interrupting the flow of the melody. (One remembered the trying unevenness which beset the Australian Broadcasting Company's orchestra recently in its playing of two concerts ... a performance whose poorness that orchestra will take some time to live down.)<sup>70</sup>

The ABC's orchestra continued to disappoint in the following year while the Union's orchestra grew from strength to strength:

The Broadcasting Commission's forces have still some way to go before they reach the standard which obtained in Henri Verbrughen's day ...<sup>71</sup>

The City of Sydney Orchestra concerts, like the earlier Union orchestra concerts rallied support for the orchestra cause from both the middle and working classes. The *Labor Daily* provided strong endorsements applauding the Union for promoting employment for Australians and as a means of resistance to foreign influences:

Tinned music, so dear to the heart of the entrepreneur because it is cheaper than paying wages to musicians, received a setback

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<sup>68</sup> *SMH* 31 July 1933, 5.

<sup>69</sup> *SMH*, 15 August 1935, 6.

<sup>70</sup> *SMH*, 15 August 1932, 4.

<sup>71</sup> *SMH*, 23 August 1933, 18.

yesterday afternoon in the great triumph of the City of Sydney Orchestra in the last of a series of 11 concerts of the season.<sup>72</sup>

An entry fee had been charged for the initial City of Sydney Orchestra concerts in 1931–32 to enable payment for the unemployed musicians who performed. However, in 1933 the orchestra players and conductors gave their services for free. A collection was taken with funds distributed to unemployed musicians by the Union. The orchestra was augmented for each concert by a theatre orchestra, and, on one occasion, by the ABC's broadcasting orchestra. In this way sizeable orchestras of up to 80 players became feasible. Concerts were usually broadcast on 2FC, but also on occasion by commercial radio, specifically 2UE and 2UW.

The City of Sydney Orchestra programs were well described as “miscellaneous”<sup>73</sup> which harked back to the programs for the “civic concerts” which had been popular Town Hall events at the turn of the century. An example of one of the City of Sydney Orchestra's programs at **Image 7.2** shows a broad ranging program which included serious orchestra works such Sibelius's Symphonic Poem *Finlandia*, Rossini's *William Tell* overture and, perhaps with a family audience in mind, *A Children's Overture* by the English composer Roger Quilter, intermingled with songs, organ solos and contemporary works including those of the conductor, Howard Carr.

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<sup>72</sup> *Labor Daily*, 28 August 1933, 4. *The Labor Daily* regular reported on the orchestra's concerts and provided strongly supportive reviews. See, for instance, *Labor Daily*, 28 August 1933, 5.

<sup>73</sup> *SMH*, 21 April 30, 4.

Critics praised the orchestra's programming for its emphasis on the more "popular" orchestra repertoire which did occur at the expense of the works of the great master composers. As one reviewer put it:

While most of the music was more or less popular, it was so only by reason of the enduring quality in the work of such composers as Berlioz, Liszt, Delius, Bizet, Dvorak, and Gounod.<sup>74</sup>

When performing the great works of the canon,<sup>75</sup> as in former times, the orchestra did not always play a work in its entirety. Rather, they often played just a single movement or excerpt of the work with no apology. The orchestra also ventured into more modernist realms with Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue* and Debussy's *Fêtes* (the latter, and possibly the former in its orchestra form, Australian premieres).

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<sup>74</sup> SMH, 29 July 1935, 5.

<sup>75</sup> City of Sydney Orchestra programs included Beethoven's *Symphony No. 4* and *5*, *Piano Concerto No. 3* and *Leonora Overture*, Mozart's *Symphony No. 40 in G minor*, Haydn's *Piano Concerto in D major*, Schubert's *Unfinished (Eighth) Symphony*, Dvorak's *Symphony No. 9* ("New World" Symphony) as well as works by Mendelssohn, Liszt and of course the ever popular Wagner.

Town Hall, Sydney :: Sunday, 25th June  
1933, at 2.45 p.m.

## City of Sydney Orchestra

(Augmented)

Conductor: Mr. Howard Carr. Leader: Mr. Theo Turner.  
In conjunction with Mr. Ernest Truman, A.R.C.O. (Leip.), R.C.M.  
Vocalist: Miss Philippa Alston.  
Accompanist: Mr. George Taylor.

### PROGRAMME

1. Organ Solo—(a) "Hungarian March" ..... (Liszt)  
(b) "Liebestraum" ..... (Liszt)  
(c) "Silver Trumpets" ..... (Viviani)
2. Orchestra—Overture, "Semiramide" ..... (Rossini)
3. Song—"Softly Awakes My Heart" ..... (Saint-Saens)  
MISS PHILIPPA ALSTON
4. Orchestra—(a) "Moorish Dance"  
(b) "The Chiffon Frock" ..... (Howard Carr)
5. Organ Solo—The celebrated "Andante in G" ..... (Batiste)
6. Orchestra—"A Children's Overture" ..... (Roger Quilter)  
Introducing the following Nursery Rhymes:  
"Girls and Boys, Come Out to Play";  
"Upon Paul's Steeple Stands a Tree";  
"Dame, Get Up and Bake Your Pies";  
"I Saw Three Ships Come Sailing By";  
"Sing a Song of Sixpence";  
"There Was a Lady Loved a Swine";  
"Over the Hills and Far Away";  
"The Frog and the Crow";  
"The Frog He would A-wooing Go";  
"Baa! Baa! Black Sheep";  
"Here We Go Round the Mulberry Bush";  
"Oranges and Lemons."
7. Song—(a) "Some Distant Day" from "Collits' Inn" ..... (Varney Monk)  
(b) "Morning" ..... (Oley Speaks)  
MISS PHILIPPA ALSTON
8. Orchestra—Yorkshire Patrol, "Bah Goom" ..... (Howard Carr)  
"If tha does owt fer nowt do it fer tha sen"
9. Orchestra—Symphonic Poem, "Finlandia" ..... (Sibelius)

### NATIONAL ANTHEM

These Concerts have been arranged by the Municipal Council of Sydney, in conjunction with the Professional Musicians, and will be held, it is hoped, every Sunday afternoon during the Winter Season. A factor which will determine the duration of the series is the patronage accorded, numerically and financially. As no admission charge is made, all are expected to contribute liberally, according to their means.

Sunday Next, July 2nd, at 2.45 p.m.—

City of Sydney Orchestra, augmented by "The Regent" Theatre Orchestra, conducted by Mr. Stan Porter (courtesy of "Regent" Theatre Management), and assisting artists. The programme will include overture "Der Freischutz," "Rhapsody in Blue" (Gershwin) and, by request, Liszt's "Rhapsody No. 2," with pianoforte ensemble.

### ACKNOWLEDGMENT.

Thanks are extended to Mr. Howard Carr and those members of the Orchestra who have this afternoon so generously co-operated with their unemployed confreres, for whose benefit this concert has been organised; also to the assisting artist, Miss Philippa Alston and Mr. George Taylor (accompanist); ~~the~~ Berlei Ltd., who have sponsored the broadcast of this programme by Station 2UW, which was responsible for the arrangements enabling this to be done.

Image 7.2: Program for City of Sydney Orchestra concert, 25 June 1933, PROMPT Collection, NLA.

The City of Sydney Orchestra concerts continued in 1936 along with a new orchestra enterprise sponsored by Tucker and Company, who, as previously discussed, were Australian distributors of Chateau Tanunda Brandy. In January 1936 they announced that they would be sponsoring a series of symphony orchestra concerts with pianist and composer Isador Goodman conducting.<sup>76</sup> Goodman, who came to Australia in 1929 to somewhat controversially take up a position as piano teacher at the Conservatorium,<sup>77</sup> did not eschew playing "light music or even jazz at clubs and cinemas"<sup>78</sup> despite his training at the Royal College of Music in London and his high standing as an artist often engaged to play with the ABC. Like the Musicians' Union Goodman's aim was the creation of a permanent orchestra. Also like the City of Sydney Orchestra, the Chateau Tanunda Orchestra presented miscellaneous programs which might include only portions of a work, interspersed with songs and other novelty items. Goodman particularly targeted workers in an article outlining his objectives which appeared in *Labor Daily* rather than the *Herald* or other mainstream

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<sup>76</sup> *Truth*, 19 January 1936, 33.

<sup>77</sup> See Diane Collins, *Sounds from the Stables: The Story of Sydney's Conservatorium* (Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2001), 68–9. Goodman's engagement ahead of local candidates had been highly controversial given the high unemployment among musicians at that time.

<sup>78</sup> Ann Carr-Boyd, "Goodman, Moses Isidore (Isador) (1909–1982)," *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography (2007), accessed 2

February 2018, Australian National University

<http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/goodman-moses-isidore-isador-12552/text22595>.

newspaper. This article, appearing with the headline “Plea Made for State Orchestra: People hungry to hear the best music”,<sup>79</sup> made a strong case for live music. Goodman claimed that while it was a “great advance” that people could now become familiar with the “famous musical compositions” on the radio, it would be preferable if the people of Sydney had an orchestra “to give music-hungry people, at first hand, the creations of masters.” According to Goodman, it was not necessary “to feed the public on learned works” since “all classics and no other entertainment would make Jack a dull boy.” Rather, he aimed for the older “promenade” style of concert, suggesting that over time “a critical sense” would develop “until we could lay claim to a discrimination which would insist on hearing the best compositions of their kind, and a general and permanent uplifting of our national cultural standards.”<sup>80</sup> While such programming would have prompted little comment earlier in the century it was now viewed by the editor of *Australian Musical News* as something of an oddity which would “not be tolerated by a strictly musical audience.” Nevertheless the editor did agree somewhat paternalistically that it might be justifiable to change the perception of “a host of worthy people who have been taught to fear anything even suspected of being ‘classical’ or ‘artistic’.”<sup>81</sup> The admission

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<sup>79</sup> *Labor Daily*, 20 January 1936, 4.

<sup>80</sup> *Labor Daily*, 20 January 1936, 4.

<sup>81</sup> *AMN*, 1 February 1936, 24.



cost for the concerts was set at an affordable price of one shilling so that “the concerts may be brought within the reach of all”.<sup>82</sup>

The initial “gala night” was held on Wednesday 22 January 1936 (see advertisement **Image 7.3**) with the Town Hall “specially decorated” for the occasion.<sup>83</sup> The concert attracted a large and enthusiastic audience which almost filled the Town Hall. According to the *Herald’s* reviewer the program consisting of “well-trying popular favourites” including Handel’s *Largo in G*, Brahms’ *Hungarian Dances* and part of Grieg’s *Piano Concerto* (with the solo performed by Goodman himself) was “genuinely exciting” and was deemed a “great success.”<sup>84</sup> Like the City of Sydney orchestra concerts, the Chataeu Tanunda Orchestra concert was broadcast on a commercial radio station—this time 2SM, which, following the success of the initial concert, agreed to continue broadcasting these concerts of “the more melodious classics” when the concert season continued later in the year.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> *Smith’s Weekly*, 25 January 1936, 22.

<sup>83</sup> *Truth*, 19 January 1936, 33.

<sup>84</sup> *SMH*, 23 January 1936, 6. See also review in *Labor Daily*, 23 January 1936, 4.

<sup>85</sup> *Labor Daily*, 3 February 1936, 8.

**A Brilliant Orchestral Night**

AT THE  
**TOWN HALL**  
SYDNEY

January 22nd ————— at 8 p.m.

40 ARTISTS  
UNDER THE BATON  
of  
ISIDORE GOODMAN

A Banquet of thrilling interpretations of Popular Numbers. If you are a lover of music, COME. You will be helping to establish a permanent Symphony Orchestra for the Chief City of Australia.

**MUSIC THAT YOU LOVE — AND KNOW**

An Evening that you will remember with gratitude and delight.

For the purpose of determining Sydney's love of music, Tucker and Co. Limited, the distributors of Chateau Tanunda Brandy, are sponsoring an orchestral concert conducted by Isidore Goodman, and comprising the pick of Sydney musicians.

Admission, **1/-** Admission, **1/-**

It is fully expected that the response to this gesture will be tremendous, and that it will be the prelude to the formation of a permanent Symphony Orchestra for the City of Sydney.

1/- ADMISSION TO ALL PARTS OF THE HALL 1/-  
DAY SALES AT PALING'S.

TUCKER & CO. LIMITED ————— SYDNEY.

Image 7.3: Advertisement for orchestra concert sponsored by Tucker & Co., *Truth*, 19 January 1936, 5.

The “winter” concert series commenced with a Town Hall concert on 21 April 1936. The concerts continued to attract excellent audiences and, as acknowledged by *The Australian Musical News*, created additional interest in orchestral music among the public.<sup>86</sup> Reviewers were often somewhat constrained about the quality of the “fairly good”<sup>87</sup> performances and somewhat bemused by the audience’s enthusiastic response even in a performance of Chopin’s *Andante Spinato* and *Grand Polonaise* for piano and orchestra despite an evident problem with balance. Seemingly impervious to this problem the reviewer noted that the audience gave a “splendid

<sup>86</sup> *AMN*, 1 May 1936, 9.

<sup>87</sup> *Sun*, 22 April 1936, 16.

ovation”<sup>88</sup> where “the applause became like that of thunder-cloud rain on an iron roof.”<sup>89</sup>

The programs for the concert contained the motto “to be admired fine music need not be weighty” and attracted a strong following with programs drawn from the “more melodic and joyous emanations of the great masters.”<sup>90</sup> Demonstrating an innovative approach, the final concert of the season on 10 June 1936 included a ballet, *Chopiniana* (also known as *Les Sylphides*) which was performed on an enlarged platform in front of the orchestra.<sup>91</sup> After a successful season, Tucker and Company declined to undertake another season of concerts, arguing that they did not wish to clash with “the efforts of established musical organisations”.<sup>92</sup>

The company was possibly referring to the fact that the ABC had by then taken responsibility for establishing an orchestra (to be discussed below). At that time the Sydney orchestra scene was actually a very crowded one with three professional orchestras (probably comprised of many of the same people)—the State Orchestra (which essentially combined the ABC and Conservatorium orchestras), the City of Sydney Orchestra and the Chateau

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<sup>88</sup> *Labor Daily*, 11 May 1936, 8.

<sup>89</sup> *SMH*, 11 May 1936, 4.

<sup>90</sup> *SMH*, 25 May 1936, 4.

<sup>91</sup> *SMH*, 6 June 1936, 12.

<sup>92</sup> *Souvenir Program*, Sixth and Farewell Orchestra Concert, Chateau Tanunda Orchestra, 10 June 1936, ANL, Concert Ephemera.

Tanunda Orchestra, none of which were “permanent” or “full-time” but all of which aspired to be a permanent symphony orchestra (**Table 7.2**).

<b>Orchestra</b>	<b>Description</b>
Conservatorium Orchestra	This orchestra was established in 1915 and operated throughout the 1930s. It was also called the State Orchestra or the NSW State Symphony Orchestra. This was primarily a student-based orchestra supplemented by professional musicians (including members of the ABC Symphony Orchestra) for special concerts.
City of Sydney Orchestra	This orchestra was formed by the Musicians Union and operated between 1930 and 1937. It was also called the Professional Musicians' Orchestra and the Professional Symphony Orchestra. The Musicians Union also formed an orchestra for two concerts with conductor Maurice Abravanel in 1935 known as the "Professional Orchestra".
Chateau Tanunda Orchestra	This orchestra undertook a series of concerts in 1936 sponsored by Tucker and Company with Isador Goodman as conductor.
ABC Symphony Orchestra	This was an expanded version of the privately owned Australian Broadcasting Company's broadcasting orchestra rebranded when the government run Australian Broadcasting Commission was established in 1932. This orchestra was also known as the National Broadcasting Orchestra, and the ABC (Sydney) Symphony Orchestra. It was primarily a broadcasting orchestra but on occasions performed in combination with other orchestras.
Sydney Symphony Orchestra	The ABC Symphony Orchestra was supplemented with full time professional players in 1936 and rebranded as the Sydney Symphony Orchestra. This initially had no connection with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra which operated between 1908 and 1917 although the ABC formally purchased the title "Sydney Symphony Orchestra" from George Plumber (Secretary of the original Sydney Symphony Orchestra) in 1937.

**Table 7.2: Major orchestras of Sydney operating during the 1930s.**

In addition to the competing symphony orchestras there was also a raft of theatre orchestras and amateur or semi-professional orchestras which included Alfred Hill's fifty piece amateur orchestra,<sup>93</sup> a women's orchestra,<sup>94</sup> and the Marrickville Municipal Symphony Orchestra which had been formed by unemployed musicians in 1930 and continued to operate until 1952 with some support from the Marrickville Municipal Council. (See **Image 7.4**)<sup>95</sup> Sydney was truly a city of orchestras.

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<sup>93</sup> *AMN*, 1 June 1936, 4.

<sup>94</sup> *SMH*, 29 August 1935, 5; *Labor Daily*, 30 August 1935, 13.

<sup>95</sup> Dictionary of Sydney, accessed 3 February 2018

[https://dictionaryofsydney.org/organisation/marrickville\\_municipal\\_symphony\\_orchestra](https://dictionaryofsydney.org/organisation/marrickville_municipal_symphony_orchestra). In 1948 the orchestra changed its name to the Civic Symphony Orchestra



**Image 7.4: Marrickville Municipal Symphony Orchestra, SLNW, Hood 14698, Home and Away Collection.**

Meanwhile, the City of Sydney Orchestra continued a regular winter season until 1937. Reviews commented on the large and enthusiastic audience and high quality of performances.<sup>96</sup> It is unclear why these concerts were discontinued in 1938 although, as I will discuss later in this chapter, by 1938 the ABC's reconstituted Sydney Symphony Orchestra had expanded and was now offering permanent positions. The ABC's policy of prohibiting its full-time orchestra players from taking other engagements must have been a major impediment to obtaining good players. Despite the success of

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<sup>96</sup> *SMH*, 7 June 1937, 6, and 21 June 1937, 3. See also *The Labor Daily*, 7 June 1937, 4 which comments that despite "incessant rain" the Town Hall was "packed" for the City of Sydney Orchestra Concert conducted by Isidor Goodman.

the City of Sydney Orchestra, the dream of permanency had not been achieved and the initiative was reliant on donations, support from the City Council and other orchestras who often worked with it—support that was by no means assured on an ongoing basis, particularly since the cause of unemployed musicians was no doubt beginning to seem less urgent as the worst effects of the Depression started to dissipate.

Before moving on to discuss the ABC's intervention in the orchestra cause in 1936, there is one more significant initiative by the Musicians' Union that deserves attention.

### **Abravanel and the Musicians' Union**

The Musicians' Union's most ambitious project was the engagement of German Conductor Maurice de Abravanel to conduct a series of concerts in Sydney and Melbourne in 1935. Abravanel was a Jewish refugee musician from Berlin who had come to Australia in 1934 as part of Sir Benjamin Fuller's Opera Company's tour.<sup>97</sup> The "remarkable personality and power" of Abravanel's conducting immediately attracted attention.<sup>98</sup> Even the anti-establishment paper *Truth* gave "chief honors" to Abravanel for his "handling of the orchestra which brought out both the beauty of the score and the best from the vocalists".<sup>99</sup> The enthusiasm for the opera company's

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<sup>97</sup> Albrecht Dümpling, "Welcome Enrichment or Annoying Competition? How Refugee Musicians from Greater Germany Were Received in Australia," in *Paper presented Public Lecture*, School of Cultural Inquiry, Australian National University, 22 November 2011 (A written copy of the paper kindly provided by Dr Dümpling, 2012), 4.

<sup>98</sup> *SMH*, 19 January 1935, 10.

<sup>99</sup> *Truth*, 20 January 1935, 29.



performances even prompted suggestions that the whole opera company should be retained as a foundation of a national opera.<sup>100</sup> After Fuller's opera initiative collapsed following a financially disastrous Melbourne season, the focus switched to establishing a permanent orchestra based in Sydney with Abravanel as its conductor.<sup>101</sup>

In February 1935 an article appeared in *The Sun* suggesting that Abravanel was not only a "great conductor of opera" but also a "symphonic conductor" and that the orchestra engaged to conduct the Fuller's operas, consisting of ABC and Conservatorium players as well as five players brought from Melbourne, might be the basis of a national orchestra which could be funded (in part at least) by abolishing both the ABC Sydney and Melbourne orchestras.<sup>102</sup> Those wishing to establish an orchestra rallied around Abravanel. Opportunities were not immediately forthcoming and according to a *Herald* report, Abravanel had already booked his passage to London when theatre entrepreneur Ernest C. Rolls engaged him to conduct "light musical plays" in Melbourne.<sup>103</sup> Abravanel was open to the suggestion of staying in Australia but he indicated that he was unwilling to undertake music of the "lighter sort" unless he had some opportunity of directing a concert orchestra in "works of larger dimensions" as well.<sup>104</sup> The Musicians'

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<sup>100</sup> *Sun*, 1 February 1935, 9.

<sup>101</sup> *Sun* 3 February 1935, 19. The proposal was also analysed (and rebutted) in *SMH*, 9 February 1935, 10.

<sup>102</sup> *Sun*, 10 February 1935, 18.

<sup>103</sup> *SMH*, 20 April 1935, 10.

<sup>104</sup> *SMH*, 20 April 1935, 10.

Union was then consulted and they subsequently engaged Abravanel to conduct two orchestra concerts each in Sydney and Melbourne in July 1935 with sponsorship from *The Sun* newspaper.<sup>105</sup>

In the interim, the ABC also engaged Abravanel to conduct the Yehudi Menuhin concerts in Sydney, with the Melbourne-based Bernard Heinze to conduct the Melbourne concerts with Menuhin to be held later in July. This inevitably prompted comparisons between the two conductors. *The Sun's* reviewer gushed over Abravanel's conducting in Sydney. He claimed that the orchestral playing was "without exception", the best since Verbrugghen had left Sydney.<sup>106</sup> Menuhin was also very flattering about both the orchestra and Abravanel's conducting<sup>107</sup> and *The Sun* insisted that Australia should keep Abravanel to take control of a permanent orchestra.<sup>108</sup> The Sydney reviewers were less favourably impressed with Heinze's conducting of Menuhin's Melbourne concert on 22 July 1935, heard in Sydney via an ABC broadcast. The *Telegraph* complained of the melancholy thinness of the orchestral support" and a lack of balance which meant the orchestra blurred over themes and drowned out melodies.<sup>109</sup> Heinze supporters blamed the quality of the broadcast for the "stupid attack" on Professor Heinze. Sydney's championing of Abravanel was denounced as

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<sup>105</sup> *Sun*, 4 July 1935, 21.

<sup>106</sup> *Sun*, 30 June 1935, 20.

<sup>107</sup> *Sun*, 26 June 1935, 15.

<sup>108</sup> *Sun*, 30 June 1935, 20.

<sup>109</sup> Quoted in Therese Radic, *Bernard Heinze : A Biography* (South Melbourne: Macmillan, 1986), 64–5.

“jealousy” in *Smith’s Weekly*,<sup>110</sup> which also printed a statement by the Menuhin family supporting the “fine” work of the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra.<sup>111</sup> Abravanel’s future in Australia had now been caught up in a rivalry between Heinze, his supporters in Melbourne and within the ABC who championed an Australian-born conductor, and the Musicians’ Union’s support base in Sydney, who championed Abravanel.

On the back of the Menuhin concert, expectations in Sydney regarding the Musicians’ Union concerts were high. Rehearsals for Abravanel’s first concert with the Musicians’ Union scheduled for 13 July 1935 attracted considerable attention (**Image 7.5**).<sup>112</sup> As the concert approached, newspapers provided daily updates on the progress of rehearsals. Abravanel fuelled expectations by flattering the “fine” playing of the eighty-piece orchestra, most of whom he had already worked with during the previous year’s opera season and during the Menuhin concert.<sup>113</sup> Such newspaper reports supported the ongoing campaign to use these concerts as a platform to establish a permanent orchestra in Sydney with Abravanel as conductor:

the two concerts are to be an effort on the part of the musicians and the conductor to encourage the production of the best orchestra music in the State, an opportunity being placed before

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<sup>110</sup> *Smith’s Weekly*, 31 August 1935, 5.

<sup>111</sup> *Smith’s Weekly*, 31 August 1935, 3.

<sup>112</sup> *SMH*, 4 July 1935, 7.

<sup>113</sup> *SMH*, 8 July 1935, 6. See also *Sun*, 5 July 1935 11 & 6 July 1935, 4 & 5.

the public to test whether there is an actual desire for a permanent orchestra.<sup>114</sup>

Such press coverage was part of a “musical crusade” to rally public support for the endeavour so that Abravanel, like Verbrugghen, was not forced to leave the country because “the public did not rally sufficiently.”<sup>115</sup> *The Sun* expressed the view that if he stayed in Australia, within two years Abravanel would revive and surpass the standards of Verbrugghen’s conducting, insisting “a broadcasting orchestra under his control would be an immense force for musical culture and understanding, and enthusiasm, in Australia.”<sup>116</sup> Abravanel himself compared the orchestra’s playing favourably with “the first-class orchestras of the German opera-houses”.<sup>117</sup> Arrangements were made for both concerts to be broadcast on the ABC’s radio station 2FC.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> *SMH*, 8 July 35, 6.

<sup>115</sup> *SMH*, 13 July 1935, 14.

<sup>116</sup> *Sun*, 30 June 1935, 4.

<sup>117</sup> *Sun*, 19 July 1935, 11.

<sup>118</sup> *SMH*, 11 July 1935, 5.



**Image 7.5: Abravanel with a “section of the huge orchestra” at rehearsal, *The Sun*. 10 July 1935, 24.**

The enthusiasm for Abravanel continued as the concert approached. The program included Beethoven’s *Eroica Symphony*, Debussy’s *Prélude à l’Après-Midi d’un Faune*, Richard Strauss’s tone poem *Don Juan* and Wagner’s *Meistersinger Overture* with tickets ranging in price from two shillings and sixpence to ten shillings, a similar price to the Hamilton Harty concerts conducted by the ABC the previous year.<sup>119</sup> The NSW Premier, Bertram Stevens, wished the orchestra “hearty good wishes” for what he hoped would be “a decisive occasion for the progress in Australia of the highest music,” claiming “a great orchestra represents one of man’s most inspiring efforts for harmonious co-operation in a noble aim.”<sup>120</sup> As Sydney was still recovering from the worst effects of the Depression and the associated social

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<sup>119</sup> *SMH*, 12 July 1935, 2.

<sup>120</sup> *Sun*, 13 July 1935, 5.

and political unrest it evoked, the creation of an orchestra under a world class conductor represented a cogent symbol for a more prosperous post-Depression era.

The concerts did not disappoint and concert reviews acclaimed the “amazing range of emotional expression and tonal colour”<sup>121</sup> achieved by the orchestra, hailing Abravanel as “the man eminently equipped to lead” a “permanent symphony orchestra” in Sydney:

It became apparent on Saturday night—if any proof were necessary ... that Mr. de Abravanel has both a technical command and an abundance of temperamental fire. At the end of “Die Meistersinger” overture, which closed the program, one felt thoroughly roused and exalted. That the audience as a whole experienced such a stimulus was demonstrated unmistakably in the thunders of applause.<sup>122</sup>

*The Sun* was even more enthusiastic, claiming “last night when Maurice de Abravanel conducted a professional orchestra of 80 at the Town Hall, the clouds of 15 years were dispelled in a sunburst of music, the like of which Sydney has never heard before.”<sup>123</sup> The newspaper also insisted that the audience’s response for a program consisting of “four orchestra classics” without relief from a vocal or instrumental soloist should dispel “any sceptical Philistine who doubted whether our public really wanted orchestra music”.<sup>124</sup> Of particular importance, according to *The Sun*’s colourful editor

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<sup>121</sup> *Sydney Mail*, 17 July 1935, 25.

<sup>122</sup> *SMH*, 15 July 1935, 7

<sup>123</sup> *Sun*, 14 July 1935, 3.

<sup>124</sup> *Sun*, 15 July 1935, 8.

F.E. Baume,<sup>125</sup> was the breaking of the “yoke of academic music” that had prevented the establishment of a symphony orchestra “outside the control of the Conservatorium of Music”.<sup>126</sup> The achievement that Baume aspired to was an orchestra comprised of local musicians for local people.

The second concert, according to *The Labor Daily*, similarly “satisfied a long-felt want with music-lovers”.<sup>127</sup> The *Herald* reviewer admitted to being “swept up into a great state of enthusiasm” along with the audience.<sup>128</sup> The program consisted of Weber’s *Oberon Overture*, Brahms’ *Symphony No. 2*, and various excerpts from Wagner operas. *The Sun*’s review claimed that the Sydney Town Hall had seldom echoed to “such expressive playing, or to so rich an orchestra tone”<sup>129</sup> and again urged that Abravanel and the orchestra put together for the Sydney concerts should be fixed as a “permanent ensemble”.<sup>130</sup>

Abravanel’s conducting re-awakened dreams that Australia might “at last” take “its long-vacant chair at the Round Table of great orchestras.”<sup>131</sup> The orchestra’s performance of Wagner was described as “not only the most brilliant that [has] been heard in Sydney for many a year,” but as equal to

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<sup>125</sup> Valerie Lawson, " Baume, Frederick Ehrenfried (Eric) (1900–1967) " *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University (1993), accessed 2 February 2018 <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/baume-frederick-ehrenfried-eric-9456/text16631>.

<sup>126</sup> *Sun*, 14 July 1935, 3.

<sup>127</sup> *Labor Daily*, 20 July 1935, 4.

<sup>128</sup> *SMH*, 19 July 1935, 7

<sup>129</sup> *Sun*, 19 July 1935, 9.

<sup>130</sup> *Sun*, 21 July 1935, 18.

<sup>131</sup> *Sun*, 14 July 1935, 3.

“interpretations one would encounter in the concert-rooms and opera-houses of Europe”.<sup>132</sup> Abravanel was adopted as the Messiah who could take Sydney’s musical aspirations onto the world stage and there was keen enthusiasm for keeping him in Australia.

Judging from the enthusiasm Mr. De Abravanel inspired, it is by no means unlikely that he could fill the Town Hall once a week over quite a long season, if the opportunity offered.<sup>133</sup>

*The Sun* similarly hailed it as an opportunity for “our music-loving public” to at last acquire “an orchestra of the standard recognised in Europe and America,”<sup>134</sup> exclaiming:

Maurice Abravanel wants to stay in Australia ... Only by public support of this great undertaking can the powers of our players be recognised. A year of that support, and the name “Sydney” will be on the list of the world’s greatest symphony orchestras.<sup>135</sup>

Not everyone shared such a positive view of Abravanel and the Union’s orchestra. The nationalistic, right wing *Smith’s Weekly*, a strong supporter of the “white Australia policy”<sup>136</sup> suggested that Abravanel’s real talent was as an opera conductor rather than an orchestra conductor and urged readers not to “blindly follow the strong Press campaign to give charge of [the Sydney Symphony Orchestra] when formed to Maurice de Abravanel” without fully assessing the qualifications of other available

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<sup>132</sup> *SMH*, 19 July 1935, 7

<sup>133</sup> *SMH*, 20 July 1935, 10

<sup>134</sup> *Sun*, 5 July 1935, 11.

<sup>135</sup> *Sun*, 14 July 1935, 3.

<sup>136</sup> John Arnold, “Newspapers and Daily Reading,” in *A History of the Book in Australia 1891–1945: A National Culture in a Colonised Market*, ed. Martyn Lyons and John Arnold (St Lucia, Qld.: University of Queensland Press, 2001), 265.



conductors.<sup>137</sup> *Smith's Weekly* had published a highly critical exposé of the Union earlier in the year.<sup>138</sup> It clearly favoured leaving the establishment of an orchestra and suitable conductor or conductors to the ABC,<sup>139</sup> a sentiment that many Melburnians shared. Its view was that the ABC should give first preference to Australian conductors and then to British. "Only after those two fields have been exhausted" should the ABC consider a "foreigner" for the role.<sup>140</sup>

Melbourne audiences also gave Abravanel a very restrained reception compared to Sydney audiences when he conducted two concerts in Melbourne with a similar program the week after the Sydney concerts. The reviews of these concerts were notably lacking in superlatives, even criticising Abravanel's interpretation of Mozart's *Jupiter Symphony* claiming that Abravanel was "not a master of the classic style".<sup>141</sup> This prompted a response from an obviously offended Abravanel outlining the positive reception for his interpretation of Mozart symphonies in Europe<sup>142</sup> along with subsequent claims that the standard of orchestra playing in Sydney now eclipsed that in Melbourne<sup>143</sup> — a claim that was hardly likely to endear Abravanel to Melbourne audiences, even though it was something that

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<sup>137</sup> *Smith's Weekly*, 3 August 1935, 6.

<sup>138</sup> *Smith's Weekly*, 2 February 1935, 5.

<sup>139</sup> *Smith's Weekly*, 3 August 1935, 6.

<sup>140</sup> *Smith's Weekly*, 18 April 1936, 13.

<sup>141</sup> *Age*, 29 January 1935, 10. See also *The Argus* 29 July 1935, 11. The reviewer also comments that while Abravanel's conducting was atmospheric and emotionally exciting it at times seemed hasty and rhythmically impatient.

<sup>142</sup> M. De Abravanel, "Letter to the Editor", *Age*, 30 July 1935, 13.

<sup>143</sup> *Argus*, 8 August 1935, 10.

Melburnians themselves had previously acknowledged.<sup>144</sup> Thorold Waters, the Melbourne based editor of *Australian Musical News*, was a notable exception. Like Sydney reviewers, he drew parallels with Verbrugghen and suggested that Abravanel would be “an invaluable man to keep around these parts for several years, to devote his knowledge and ability exclusively to orchestras.”<sup>145</sup>

The less favourable response to the Musician’s Union’s Abravanel concerts in Melbourne no doubt reflected local musical politics, where orchestra concerts had been hampered during the 1930s because of a dispute with the Musicians’ Union and ongoing negotiations between the ABC and the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra about which organisation should bear the primary financial burden.<sup>146</sup> At that time, many Melbourne newspapers had, like *Smith’s Weekly*, been mounting a campaign that the ABC should provide additional support to create a national orchestra in Melbourne. *The Age*, for instance, insisted that only the ABC could sustain “a national symphony orchestra” which could provide “a generous diet of good music” insisting that “as important managerial changes are now pending, the moment is opportune for a review of policy.”<sup>147</sup> It had a less favourable view of the Musicians’ Union given disputes that had disrupted orchestra concerts

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<sup>144</sup> *The Australasian*, 13 July 1935, 15.

<sup>145</sup> *AMN*, 1 August 1935, 4.

<sup>146</sup> This issue is covered in some detail in Garrett, “The Accidental Entrepreneur”, 132–39.

<sup>147</sup> *Age*, 3 July 1935, 8. See also *Argus*, 8 July 1935, 8; and Henry E. Spry, Letter to the editor, *Argus*, 20 July 1935, 22.

in 1933.<sup>148</sup> On the day after Abravanel's concert with the Union's Orchestra in Sydney, Melbourne's *Argus* published an article questioning whether the Union was doing all that it could to support orchestra music in Melbourne and insisting that the ABC had a "responsibility" as well as the resources to better support orchestra concerts in Melbourne.<sup>149</sup>

While Sydney supported the role played by the Union in establishing orchestras Melburnians felt the ABC's new management team, many of whom were Melbourne based, would resurrect Melbourne's orchestra. At that stage, as foreshadowed in the parliamentary debate on the establishment of the ABC (quoted above), it was envisaged the ABC would create only one national orchestra following the model of the national orchestra created by the BBC.<sup>150</sup> Given the long-standing competition between Melbourne and Sydney on orchestra matters each city was keen to promote the standing of its own orchestra. Melbourne had long harboured an ambition to form a "national" orchestra based on the existing Melbourne Symphony Orchestra.<sup>151</sup> Indeed as the most "orchestra-minded"<sup>152</sup> of all the cities, most music-lovers in Melbourne had simply assumed that a Melbourne orchestra would form the basis of any national orchestra.<sup>153</sup> Now Sydney was threatening to eclipse Melbourne with its own orchestra

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<sup>148</sup> Garrett, "The Accidental Entrepreneur", 134.

<sup>149</sup> *The Argus*, 19 July 1935, 6.

<sup>150</sup> *AMN*, 1 August 1935, 4.

<sup>151</sup> Garrett, "The Accidental Entrepreneur", 88.

<sup>152</sup> *SMH*, 1 August 1934, 1.

<sup>153</sup> Garrett, "The Accidental Entrepreneur", 88.

forming the basis for a national orchestra. *Australian Musical News* condemned “the business of dragging the politics of music into criticism”<sup>154</sup> although it is clear that politics had influenced the musical reviews of both Abravanel’s and Heinze’s concerts for the past two months.

Despite the success of the Union’s Abravanel concerts the audience was not in keeping with expectations. The concerts did not attract anything like the numbers that packed the Town Hall for the City of Sydney Orchestra concerts, probably because of a significantly higher admission price.

Although attendance for the second concert was better than the first<sup>155</sup> and £513 was available for distribution among the 74 players who performed on a profit-sharing basis,<sup>156</sup> their fee barely compensated for the many rehearsals and concert performances. The hard realities of concert management meant that without ABC support it was not possible to continue with these concerts. The Musicians’ Union approached the ABC suggesting further concerts with Abravanel but did not receive a response.<sup>157</sup>

*The Sun* claimed that three private citizens offered to guarantee the cost of additional concerts with Abravanel as conductor but that the ABC would not state whether it would allow players under contract with them to again

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<sup>154</sup> *AMN*, 1 September 1935, 5.

<sup>155</sup> *SMH*, 20 July 1935, 10

<sup>156</sup> Secretary’s Report, August 1935, *Minute Bk 11*, NBA, T7 1/10. The 1933 Musicians award provided for payments of £2 10 pence per performance and £1 10 pence per rehearsal.

<sup>157</sup> *SMH*, 10 August 1935, 10.

perform with Abravanel.<sup>158</sup> Without ABC support the bid to form a Sydney orchestra with Abravanel as conductor faltered.

Abravanel's career did subsequently prosper but not in Australia. In August 1935 the ABC announced it had engaged Abravanel on a short term contract to conduct a series of opera broadcasts in Sydney.<sup>159</sup> Upon finishing the contract, with prospects in Australia uncertain, Abravanel accepted a contract in the United States to conduct at the New York Metropolitan Opera.<sup>160</sup> The author of the *Herald's* "Music and Drama" column was devastated.

One had hoped that Mr. de Abravanel might have been engaged as conductor of the New South Wales State Symphony Orchestra during 1936. Repeatedly, in conversations with the writer of this column, he had expressed his readiness to remain in Australia if a reasonable offer were made. But the Broadcasting Commission has dilly-dallied; and now the opportunity has gone. Orchestrally speaking, Sydney seems destined to be a backwater, which world celebrities occasionally visit, then hasten away from as fast as boat will take them.<sup>161</sup>

It seemed as if history was repeating itself and, as in the case of Verbrugghen, Australia was to lose a "distinguished conductor" for "an American appointment".<sup>162</sup> This time, however, from the perspective of

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<sup>158</sup> *Sun*, 8 August 1935, 30. This may have reflected concern about whether or not the ABC would have broadcasting rights. They would not grant leave for ABC performers to appear if concerts were broadcast on commercial radio. See letter from A. L. Holman to Kitson, 4 July 1935, ABC archive, SP1588/2 Item 766.

<sup>159</sup> *Sun*, 19 August 1935, 7.

<sup>160</sup> *SMH*, 14 March 1936, 12.

<sup>161</sup> *SMH*, 14 March 1936, 12.

<sup>162</sup> *Sun*, 29 March 1936, 4.

Abravanel's supporters, it was not a musically illiterate government that had let them down but short-sighted infighting within the musical establishment. According to *The Sun*, "a saddening feature of Mr. De Abravanel's stay here has been the attitude of musicians who should have welcomed him, but instead decried him".<sup>163</sup> The ABC engaged Abravanel to conduct a series of celebrity concerts with Australian pianist Eileen Joyce before his departure. The Sydney concert occurred on 17 June 1936 amid "remarkable scenes of enthusiasm,"<sup>164</sup> with the Musicians' Union continuing to advocate on Abravanel's part.<sup>165</sup>

Abravanel went on to have a distinguished career as the youngest conductor to appear at the Metropolitan Opera in New York (on the recommendation of Wilhelm Furtwängler and Bruno Walter) and as the long-term conductor of the Utah Symphony, being awarded the Gold Baton from the American Symphony Orchestra League in 1981 and the National Medal of Arts in 1991.<sup>166</sup> Even if many of the claims made about Abravanel's Sydney concerts were exaggerated, there is little doubt that he could have made a significant contribution to the development of classical music culture in Australia had he been engaged on a permanent basis.

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<sup>163</sup> *Sun*, 29 March 1936, 4.

<sup>164</sup> *SMH*, 18 June 1936, 10.

<sup>165</sup> *Sun*, 19 June 1936, 11.

<sup>166</sup> *Independent*, 20 October 1993, accessed 30 January,

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/people/obituary-maurice-abravanel-1512112.html>.

There was a certain gentlemanly coyness evident as to where the difficulty lay in keeping Abravanel in Australia, although there was clearly an issue of inter-city rivalry. According to *The Sun*:

It is freely declared and admitted that certain influences from another State have set themselves against the continuance of the present state of affairs: that these influences are antagonistic to the engagement of Mr. de Abravanel as a permanent conductor of the Sydney A.B.C. Orchestra. The question which will naturally be asked is whether a Commission of which the chairman is a Sydney man, and of which Sydney members form a majority, will allow itself to be led by a minority.<sup>167</sup>

Abravanel himself insisted it was a regretful departure and that “despite repeated inquiries he could not get any answer” from the ABC about his ongoing employment with the Commission.<sup>168</sup> It was not until he was about to embark on a ship in Perth, leaving the country, that he revealed some bitterness in an off-hand comment to a reporter, alleging that the “dictatorship” of the Commission by a small but powerful Victorian minority was responsible for his services not being retained in Australia.<sup>169</sup> The Chairman of the Commission, William Cleary, asked Abravanel to publish a denial. Abravanel hedged, claiming he had been misquoted, but declined to publish the requested denial.<sup>170</sup> Buzacott, whose sympathies clearly lie with Heinz and the ABC, has claimed that Abravanel had been

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<sup>167</sup> *Sun*, 2 February 1936, 46.

<sup>168</sup> *Sun*, 19 June 1936, 11.

<sup>169</sup> *SMH*, 22 June 1936, 9.

<sup>170</sup> *SMH*

“abrasive” and difficult to work with, suggesting that the ABC could not have afforded to engage him permanently although he did acknowledge:

Musically it was a mismatch in Abravanel’s favour, but politically, socially and administratively, the wily Heinze could run rings around the distinguished visitor.<sup>171</sup>

By 1936 Abravanel’s relationship with the ABC was tense.<sup>172</sup> However, Abravanel’s relationship with the Musicians’ Union had been more than amicable throughout. Abravanel often expressed “sincere praise” for the Union musicians and thanked them for their support during his sojourn in this State.<sup>173</sup> In turn, the Union strongly championed his cause. His close relationship with the Union clearly contributed to his downfall.

This episode reveals how important it is to examine the social history of music-making in Australia from the perspective of each stakeholder. Simplistic explanations that glorify the role of the ABC and vilify the Union, particularly those focusing on Union efforts to restrict competition from immigrant musicians, are simplistic. Kay Dreyfus, for instance, describes the Musicians’ Union as an “obstructionist oligarchy” whose attitude toward foreign musicians driven by “the racist sentiments of an all-White, all-British Australia” exerted a “profound (and arguably detrimental) influence on the development of musical culture in Australia for several decades”.<sup>174</sup> Albert

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<sup>171</sup> Buzacott, *The Rite of Spring*, 56.

<sup>172</sup> There is a detailed report on some of the difficulties the ABC experienced negotiating with Abravanel at in the ABC archive, NAA, SP1588/2 Item 108.

<sup>173</sup> Minutes of Committee Meeting, June 22, 1936, *Minute Bk 12*, NBA, T7 1/9.

<sup>174</sup> Kay Dreyfus, “The Foreigner, the Musicians’ Union, and the State in 1920s Australia: A Nexus of Conflict,” *Music and Politics* 3, no. 1 (2009): 1–2.



Dümling is highly critical of the Musicians' Union for combining "the traditional task of a trade union to safeguard jobs with a xenophobic and racist policy."<sup>175</sup>

While not in any way excusing the actions of the Musicians' Union or belittling the prejudice and petty-mindedness faced by many Jewish musicians who came seeking refuge in Australia, the Abravanel example shows that the Musicians' Union could also embrace Jewish emigres when it suited their purposes. In many ways the actions of the Musicians' Union were strategic rather than racially motivated. Opposition to overseas musicians had been a long-standing issue going back to the first decade of the twentieth century when, as observed in chapter four, the Union had opposed both the engagement of amateurs and foreign bands and the importation of foreign musicians by entertainment entrepreneurs. This is not to say that individuals within the Musicians' Union, along with many other Australians, were not racist or that they did not hesitate to appeal to xenophobic attitudes held broadly within the community to achieve their goal of reducing competition from overseas performers.

The Musicians' Union approach to Jewish refugees was not entirely unsympathetic although clearly they gave priority to the needs of their members and could well have been more encouraging to more refugees. The

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<sup>175</sup> Albrecht Dümling, "Welcome Enrichment or Annoying Competition?"

General Secretary of the Musicians' Union, Cecil Trevelyan, outlined the Union's dilemma in a letter to the Hon T Patterson, the then Minister for the Interior, in 1935. In this letter, Trevelyan acknowledged "Hitler has dealt harshly with the Jews, driving them from Germany. There are many good musicians among them."<sup>176</sup> However, he expressed concern that there were already "good highly qualified musicians idle" in Australia as a result of the havoc wrought by "mechanical music" and the "talkies."

If a foreigner is admitted to membership any position he obtains must be at the expense of an Australian, but is it fair for the Government to admit a foreigner and our Union refuse him admission, knowing that without membership he will not obtain musical employment? There is hardship either way.<sup>177</sup>

Trevelyan then went on to say "we have no desire to be harsh or impose hardship on others."<sup>178</sup> But in his opinion, "Australians and British Subjects come first and we have to be just to our members".<sup>179</sup>

The Musicians' Union were, in short, behaving like any other union. Right from the beginning of the formation of the Musicians' Union there had always been a disjunction between the Union's priorities which focused on the material needs of their fellow musicians and those who believed that classical music should be above such material considerations. This was at the heart of the conflict between the Musicians' Union and the NSW Musical

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<sup>176</sup> General Secretary to Musicians Union, April 3rd, 1935, NBA, E156 2/6.

<sup>177</sup> General Secretary.

<sup>178</sup> General Secretary.

<sup>179</sup> General Secretary.

Association in 1912, discussed in chapter four, and it continues to this day in judgmental attitudes towards the role of the Musicians' Union. It was particularly intense during the 1930s as the demarcation between classical and other forms of music became more sharply delineated.

In 1933, an article in *The Sun* asked "is music a profession or a trade?" It suggested that musicians in the entertainment sphere who had forsaken art for a "steady job" were "tradesmen" rather than artists. It claimed that the Musicians' Union had an unfortunate tendency to "reduce music merely to a matter of wages and hours", differentiating between "union players" and "real players", suggesting that one could not be both. For the writer of the article, a "real musician" must assume a monk-like persona, preparing themselves spiritually for performances of Beethoven by "fasting and prayer." Such attitudes increasingly devalued the importance of the Musicians' Union as an active agent directly involved in the creation of a classical music culture. Critics of the Union clearly believed that a career in classical music was essentially a high class profession while providing entertainment was a mere "trade" like being a "carpenter" or "wharf-labourer".<sup>180</sup> Here musicians were increasingly differentiated by class, depending on the type of music they performed. Music had become a marker of class identity.

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<sup>180</sup> *Sun*, 9 July 1933, 48.

Such attitudes have meant that the significant contribution the Union made to establishing orchestras has until now largely been ignored. It is true that the Union was quite catholic in its tastes and was just as happy to support traditional miscellaneous concerts as more high-brow entertainments like the Abravanel concerts. However the popular following that the Union's orchestras obtained generated excitement and community interest in the possibility of establishing an orchestra across a broad spectrum of the population. The ABC was able to capitalise on this enthusiasm by establishing not just one orchestra, as had been the expectation, but several orchestras in NSW, Victoria, South Australia and Queensland. In the process, the Musicians' Union contribution was forgotten.

### **The rebirth of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra**

In 1936 a Federal Music Department was established within the ABC, among other things to maintain a "uniform standard of musical performance throughout the Commonwealth" and nurture orchestras and other musical units within each state.<sup>181</sup> As mentioned in chapter five, by this stage Bernard Heinze was the part-time musical advisor for the ABC. The resolution of the orchestra situation was a high priority for Heinze who was intent on establishing an orchestra in each state. This was at odds with ongoing advice from visiting conductors such as Malcolm Sargent who proposed the

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<sup>181</sup> Kenneth Morgan, "Cultural Advance: The Formation of Australia's Permanent Symphony Orchestras, 1944–1951," *Musicology Australia* 33, no. 1 (2011): 71.

establishment of a single national orchestra similar to the one established by the BBC.<sup>182</sup> It was an ambitious approach that took into account interstate politics and the large geographical distances that made a national orchestra less feasible in Australia than in the United Kingdom. In addition, it assumed that it would not be possible to establish orchestras without Government support, given the lack of private patronage in Australia compared to the United States and England where orchestras had been established through the private patronage of individuals.<sup>183</sup> Heinze also understood that Australian cities had a sense of ownership of their orchestras which was symbolically important for each city as a focus for civic pride.<sup>184</sup> However, such an undertaking also involved a large recurring expenditure<sup>185</sup> which risked adverse public opinion. The ABC therefore needed to ensure strong public support for such a venture. The way they managed this will be discussed in the next chapter. What is important here is that, as acknowledged by Frank Kitson, the then Secretary of the Musicians' Union, the ABC was now the largest employer of musicians in the country.<sup>186</sup>

Earlier in this chapter I provided evidence of a growing differentiation in pay rates awarded to musicians performing different types

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<sup>182</sup> Malcolm Sargent, Notes on Orchestras in Australia, SP1588/2 Item 750. (As late as 1940, Antal Dorati had expressed a concern that he did not think Australia could support more than one orchestra, NAA, SP1588/2 Item 750.

<sup>183</sup> See for instance Stephen R. Couch, "Class, Politics, and Symphony Orchestras," *Society* 14, no. 1 (1976): 28 which discusses the process by which Thomas Beecham had established his own orchestra which operated as an alternative to the BBC orchestra,

<sup>184</sup> Garrett, "The Accidental Entrepreneur", 92.

<sup>185</sup> Buzacott, *The Rite of Spring*, 52–3.

<sup>186</sup> NAA, SP1588/2 Item 767 Musicians Union II 1936–Jun 1937.

of music. The 1932 Musicians' Award differentiated between a payment rate of £10 per week for those engaged to play in "grand opera, grand ballet, concerts, or religious performances" compared to £7 for those engaged in general theatrical engagements. A broadcast rate was set at £8 10 shillings noting that broadcast orchestras were typically required to play a mixture of different musical genres. As the ABC increased its focus on symphony orchestra concerts, the Musicians' Union negotiated improved rates of pay based on a hierarchical classification of musical genres, which reinforced the increasing differentiation between classical and popular music. In presenting their case to the Commonwealth Court of Conciliation and Arbitration in 1933, the Union argued:

The symphony work is perhaps the highest work done, because it is abstract music. It is sheer cold-blooded performance, which requires to have the life infused into it by the orchestra and conductor.<sup>187</sup>

That is, the Musicians' Union now argued for special treatment for those working in symphony orchestras.

In 1936 with a greater focus on orchestra concerts the Union stepped up its campaign for increased payment for orchestra players, arguing that when the original award rates for broadcast orchestras had been agreed in

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<sup>187</sup> Proceedings of the Commonwealth Court of Conciliation and Arbitration, 28 March 1933, NAA, SP1588/2 Item 765.

1932, the orchestras were expected to perform a general range of music. As Trevelyan explained it to his colleagues:

when the present award was made it was argued by the employers that the musicians would be called upon to play all classes of work ... It was generally believed at the time that the band might have to play, say, musical comedy or vaudeville one night, operatic music another, perhaps a symphony concert another night, but generally light musical programs ... It was never thought that an opera season [would spread] over a period of six months ... nor was it contemplated that public performances would be given ... opera and concert work is admitted to be the highest class of work, needing the very best players that can be got. With outside employers we have always succeeded in getting more than the bare award rates.<sup>188</sup>

With an increasing differentiation and segregation of the types of music its members were expected to perform, the Musicians' Union was in effect accepting the ABC's hierarchical categorisation of musical genres.

This put them in a bad negotiating position in regard to their other main area of contention—the ABC's desire to audition players. This was quite a significant departure from the original Sydney Symphony Orchestra's cooperative approach in 1908, where player positions were drawn by lots and rotated. This was not consistent with the demands of a symphonic orchestra of elite players. Despite strong protests from the Musicians' Union, ABC musicians were forced to submit to regular tests to ensure they should retain their position in the orchestra. Players were ranked by an officially sanctioned group of arbiters—in this case, Professor

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<sup>188</sup> Proceedings.

Laver (from Melbourne University), Sydney conductor and composer Howard Carr, and Bernard Heinze.<sup>189</sup> The Musicians' Union had, in effect, accepted the ABC as an arbiter of standards. Musical standards now had a higher priority than mutual cooperation. In January 1938, the Musicians' Union was able to do little but plead the case for a particular second trumpet player who was displaced by a trumpeter deemed a more capable player, despite being a "returned soldier suffering from the effects of war injuries" with a large family of six children.<sup>190</sup> Modern understandings about music which focused on musical standards had little role for a Union founded on the protection of workers' rights and mutual aid.

Finally, the management of the ABC's Sydney Symphony Orchestra relegated its original namesake to a bare historical footnote. At the beginning of 1936 the ABC took a more proactive role in organising orchestra concerts. Instead of lending its support to existing orchestras, the ABC used its own studio orchestras as the core of larger orchestras which would now operate under the ABC's management.<sup>191</sup> This resulted in an increase in the size of ABC orchestras in Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide, Brisbane and Perth.<sup>192</sup> As a consequence, the State Symphony Orchestra in Sydney was increased to forty-five permanently employed players and, renamed the Sydney

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<sup>189</sup> Frank Kitson to W.H.S. Lamble, December 29, 1936, *NBA*, E156 2/6.

<sup>190</sup> Letter to C. J. A. Moses, January 11, 1938, *NBA*, E156 2/6.

<sup>191</sup> Garrett, "The Accidental Entrepreneur", 144.

<sup>192</sup> Buzacott, *The Rite of Spring*" 50-1.



Symphony Orchestra, offered a subscription series of orchestra concerts.<sup>193</sup> Effectively, this meant that the ABC would now take the lead in providing orchestra concerts, prompting other orchestras like the aforementioned Chateau Tanunda orchestra to leave the field.

The advertisement of concerts by the “Sydney Symphony Orchestra” in 1936 prompted George Plummer, who featured briefly in chapter four as an office bearer in the first Sydney Symphony Orchestra, to write to the ABC expressing polite concern that the ABC had been using the “name and title of their Symphony Orchestra as the Sydney Symphony Orchestra” possibly in ignorance “that such an organisation already exists.” Plummer, who signed himself as “Secretary trustee, Sydney Symphony Orchestra,” indicated that the organisation was “in recess” and that its registration had not been cancelled. Begging forgiveness for his handwriting as “I have mislaid my reading glasses”, he asked to see Moses, indicating that he thought an arrangement could be reached “to the satisfaction of those concerned” regarding the issue.<sup>194</sup>

Moses, to his credit, did not ignore Plummer’s letter, but his response demonstrated a quite different perspective, one that had little time or respect for the community-based initiatives of the past. Moses obtained legal advice and made inquiries regarding Plummer confirming his role in the original

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<sup>193</sup> *Rite of Spring*, 50.

<sup>194</sup> George Plummer to Charles Moses, 24 May, 1937, ABC Archive, NAA, SP724 Box 8.

Sydney Symphony Orchestra. The transparent subtext of the various internal memos that went back and forth across their desks was that the original “Sydney Symphony Orchestra” was of little account compared to the current initiatives of the ABC. This view was summarised by legal advisor Mr Sholl who stated in one of his memos:

I have no doubt ... that any damages we could be called upon to pay would be purely nominal, since our augmented orchestra has clearly more moral right to the title than any other at present in existence.<sup>195</sup>

In the ensuing correspondence Plummer suggested that the ABC pay him a fee or invite him to concerts in return for transferring the title. However, he may have hoped for some greater recognition for himself and the orchestra, adding, “if you consider some other way better, I am willing to consider it in a reasonable manner”.<sup>196</sup> On 13 July 1937 Moses asked Plummer to put a “cash value” on the right to use the title “Sydney Symphony Orchestra”.<sup>197</sup> This obviously disappointed Plummer and elicited the longest and most emotional response, detailing the orchestra’s history and Plummer’s own efforts “sometimes doing two and three days to get enough money to pay debts which I did at the same time paying for music stands, a library of music, some instruments, tympani etc”.<sup>198</sup> Clearly frustrated, he concluded “After hundreds of pounds put in by me personally you ask me what cash

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<sup>195</sup> E. K. Sholl, Memo to the General Manager, 2 June 1937, *ABC Archive*, NAA, SP724 Box 8.

<sup>196</sup> Plummer to Moses, 10 June 1937, NAA, SP724, Box 8..

<sup>197</sup> Moses to Plummer, 13 July 1937, NAA, SP724, Box 8.

<sup>198</sup> Plummer to Moses, 16 July 1937, NAA, SP724, Box 8.

value I put on it ... To be brief I say pay me £15 and I will assign.”<sup>199</sup> In the end, the ABC paid Plummer £10 rather than £15. But it never gave him or his orchestra the recognition for which he clearly yearned.

## **Conclusion**

The lost history of Sydney orchestras presented in this chapter invites a serious revision of Phillip Sametz’s assertion, presented at the beginning of this chapter, that there was no history of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra without the ABC. The story of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra is not the ABC’s story alone. The rise and fall of various orchestras in the 1930s reveal the priorities and motivations of the various stakeholders and rivalries within the classical music field not covered in previous histories, which consider only the ABC’s orchestra initiatives.

Sydney’s music lovers had dreamt of having their own orchestra from the latter part of the nineteenth century. They imagined the creation of a well-ordered society where the citizens of Sydney could metaphorically join with the ‘civilised’ cities of the world in an activity that might convey a sense of social harmony and civic pride, facilitating participation in a cultured and democratic urban sphere. In the absence of any single source of patronage, those with an interest in orchestras joined together, working on a cooperative basis which ensured engagement with and negotiation between

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<sup>199</sup> Plummer to Moses, 16 July 1937, NAA, SP724, Box 8.

diverse sections of the community including middle class merchants, middle class professionals, musicians and the union movement. While various orchestras struggled to achieve the same standard of playing as the ABC orchestras were later to achieve, they attracted good audiences and a sense of community ownership and pride.

The Musicians' Union was particularly active in the development and establishment of orchestras in the straitened economic circumstances of the 1930s, promoting regular orchestra concerts in the Town Hall as well as a more ambitious project to engage the European trained conductor Maurice de Abravanel to establish a permanent symphony orchestra. The Musicians' Union was able to rally support for these concerts from within the labour movement which owned and widely reported their success. The concerts were well attended by an enthusiastic audience who were more engaged in enjoying the experience than assessing the quality of the performance.

The Musicians' Union's initiatives were important because they simultaneously advanced the cause of classical music and promoted community consensus for orchestra endeavours which involved the investment of significant community energy. Yet ultimately the Musicians' Union was caught between older styles of music-making which evoked sympathy for the plight of musicians and a newer emphasis on music as a form of artistic expression that should be above such material considerations. The Musicians' Union grounded itself within the broader

community which was often at odds with those with an idealised aesthetic vision of an enlightened classical musical culture. As the ABC became more powerful, the options open to the Musicians' Union became more limited. By the latter part of the 1930s, it was acting reactively and strategically within a paradigm that was essentially defined by others.

With the groundwork already laid by earlier orchestra initiatives, the ABC eventually took up responsibility for meeting community expectations by expanding and formalising its own orchestras. As old understandings about music as a community enterprise gave way to new understandings which focused on music as an internalised subjective experience, the focus moved away from the audience's enjoyment and ownership of the music to the quality of the music and its performance. The ABC's highest priority was to raise musical standards and to ensure that high class classical music was performed in an appropriately sacralised environment without being debased by lesser forms of music. Gradually, this made it less relevant to many members of the audience who had supported it in the past.

As the ABC bureaucracy grew in power it celebrated the end of the miscellaneous concert. As the then Music Controller, W.G. James, boasted in the 1938 annual report on music:

Time and experience have more than fully justified the expressed policy of the Commission of treating each type of musical program as an artistic unit, having an appeal to a definite audience. The day of the miscellaneous musical

program, presented in the vain endeavour to satisfy all listeners, may well be said to have passed.<sup>200</sup>

Despite efforts to broaden their audience by holding concerts in the suburbs and through school concerts, the ABC never managed to achieve the broad base of support for orchestra concerts that the City of Sydney Symphony Orchestra had achieved. In the next chapter I will further examine the impact of the hierarchical differentiation of different types of music for the audience, as well as the ABC's entrepreneurial activities, which ensured it was able to minimise competition from commercial operators.

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<sup>200</sup> Annual Report Music, Year ended June, 1938, 1 *ABC Archive*, SP1588/2 Item 872 Music Department

## 8.

# From Musical Diversity to Musical Monopoly

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Previous chapters have discussed how the ABC effectively took control of Australian music and Australian orchestras by providing one of the few available outlets for Australian composers and by becoming the major employer of Australian musicians in the 1930s. Yet the ABC still had to win over audiences and competition from entertainment entrepreneurs was a major stumbling block. In the more economically straitened atmosphere of the 1930s, with the new, powerful and well financed musical bureaucracy of the ABC now in a controlling position, tensions with private entrepreneurs reached breaking point.

In this chapter I will argue that the ABC garnered support for its leadership role by fostering an alliance with middle class music lovers who acknowledged the ABC as the arbiter of musical taste. This was achieved by enlisting the support of many of the female-led community groups that had formed earlier in the century and recruiting them as key ABC supporters. This united these groups around the concerts and broadcasts presented by the ABC. While music-listening clubs were enlisted as an arm of the ABC, many music-making groups simply folded if they did not obtain sponsorship from the ABC.

The ABC segmented the musical market place into different taste categories. While it acknowledged a variety of musical styles and tried to appeal to all, it asserted a clear hierarchy of taste with classical music at the apex. This was resented by some ABC listeners who asserted their right to identify with other types of music. As a consequence a battle erupted between the “high-brows” and the “low-brows”. The ABC tried to side-step the issue by assuring the public it was not high or low-brow, but middle-brow like the vast majority of Australians. Musical taste became a means of demonstrating one’s position on the taste hierarchy and, by implication in society. This enabled the ABC to claim that it appealed to all tastes while clearly favouring those who preferred classical music. Ironically, however, in its bid to increase audience numbers the ABC sold classical music like any other commodity by linking orchestra concerts to celebrity events.

To minimise public criticism of its activities, the ABC needed to emphasise its support for Australian composers and performers in response to allegations that it was importing artists from overseas and insufficiently supporting Australian talent. This enabled the ABC to appeal to nationalistic sentiment even while many community members questioned the level of its support for Australian music as amateur choirs and orchestras began to fold.

### **Entrepreneurs *versus* the ABC**

The economic downturn of the 1930s had a significant impact on the entertainment industry. J.C. Williamson, for instance, had lost £50 000 by the



end of the first year of the Depression.<sup>1</sup> The financial decline took a while to have an impact on the arrival of artists given that tours were often planned years in advance. However, by 1934 there were clear signs that there were fewer visiting artists and theatrical entrepreneurs Gravestock, the Carroll management, Musgrove and Hugh Larsen became less conspicuous as concert organisers.<sup>2</sup>

Initially, the ABC, like the Conservatorium before it, worked cooperatively with entrepreneurs. However, in contrast to the Conservatorium, as discussed in the previous chapter, the ABC had been established in 1932 with a broad and open ended charter to promote music of a high order. To meet its objective, from its inception, the first Chairman of the ABC, David Lloyd Jones indicated that the ABC would be engaging “visiting artists of distinction” as well as encouraging “local talent”,<sup>3</sup> although he did not indicate that it would be doing this in direct competition with private concert promoters. Initially, the relationship between concert promoters, particularly J.C. Williamson, and the ABC was more than cordial. This was no doubt aided by W.T. Conder, the ABC’s General Manager from 1933 until 1935, who had worked as an administrator for J. C. Williamson during the 1920s. His particular responsibility had been broadcasting.<sup>4</sup> He

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<sup>1</sup> Viola Tait, *A Family of Brothers: The Taites and J. C. Williamson: A Theatre History* (Melbourne: Heinemann, 1971).

<sup>2</sup> *SMH*, 8 August 1936, 12.

<sup>3</sup> *SMH*, 2 July 1932, 14.

<sup>4</sup> Martin Buzacott, *The Rite of Spring: 75 Years of ABC Music-Making* (Sydney: ABC Books for the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, 2007), 21.

managed the radio station 3LO in Melbourne on J.C. Williamson's behalf, until the Australian Broadcasting Company took it over in 1928 when he left to organise Melbourne's centenary celebrations.<sup>5</sup> On his appointment to the ABC, with the ABC's head office in Sydney co-located in J.C. Williamson's buildings in Sydney, Conder was ideally placed to continue the tradition of musical institutions forming alliances of mutual convenience with entertainment entrepreneurs.

The initial celebrity tours organised by the ABC complemented rather than competed with the tours of operatic singers and virtuosic soloists usually organised by private entrepreneurs. For instance, the ABC was keen to organise tours of conductors to assist the development of orchestra playing in Australia, which clearly had little interest for entertainment entrepreneurs not responsible for managing an orchestra.<sup>6</sup> One of the first conductors they hoped to tour was the well-regarded English conductor Malcolm Sargent. In December 1932 Claude Kingston wrote to H.G. Horner, then the ABC's NSW Manager, on behalf of J. & N. Tait regarding the ABC proposal to engage Dr Malcolm Sargent for a tour.<sup>7</sup> He referred to a personal discussion between himself and Horner and indicated he had given "great thought" to Horner's idea of "making the visit synchronize with the visit of

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<sup>5</sup> Alan Thomas, "Conder, Walter Tasman (1888–1974)," *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, (1981), accessed 18 February 2018, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/conder-walter-tasman-5747/text9731>.

<sup>6</sup> Alan William Thomas, *Broadcast and Be Damned: The ABC's First Two Decades* (Carlton, Vic: Melbourne University Press, 1980), 35.

<sup>7</sup> This tour was eventually deferred and a tour by Sir Hamilton Harty took place instead in 1934.

some international celebrity under our direction." He then stated: "I would like my Firm to be associated with the Broadcast Commission on the Concert side. I am sure it would be possible for us to get together on some 50/50 basis".<sup>8</sup> This plan did not come to fruition and the proposed Sargent visit was postponed until 1936 due to Sargent's illness. However, it did demonstrate a desire to work together with private entrepreneurs rather than compete with them. In the meantime, the ABC organised tours by the military band conductor Captain H.D. Adkins in 1933 (reflecting a broader focus than classical orchestra music), the Hallé orchestra conductor Hamilton Harty in 1934, and the Budapest String Quartet in 1935.

Another opportunity for cooperation presented itself when Percy Grainger visited Australia in 1934. In anticipation of this tour, the Taitts wrote to Conder in August 1933 to ask if Conder might be interested in broadcasting Grainger with the proviso that "it would be suicidal from our point of view to permit Mr. Grainger to make any broadcasting appearances before his actual recital."<sup>9</sup> They eventually negotiated that Grainger would provide a series of lectures on ABC radio during his 1934 tour on dates that ensured there would be no direct competition that might detract from the concert audiences.<sup>10</sup> This provided the ABC with access to the famous

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<sup>8</sup> Claude Kingston to H.G. Horner, 19 December 1932, ABC Archive, NAA, SP1588/2 Item No. 797 JCW Negotiations.

<sup>9</sup> J. & N. Tait to W.T. Conder, 4 August 33, ABC Archive, NAA, SP1588/2 Item No. 797 JCW Negotiations.

<sup>10</sup> Buzacott, *Rite of Spring*, 18-19.

Australian while the Tait benefitted from free publicity, continuing the mutually beneficial relationship that had previously existed with the NSW State Conservatorium. As discussed in the previous chapter, the ABC also successfully collaborated with Fuller's Theatre Circuit for a six-month season of twice-weekly Grand Opera Broadcasts using the conductors Fuller's had engaged for their opera season, Maurice Abravanel and Robert Ainsworth.<sup>11</sup>

However, even in the early years there were tensions between the ABC and concert promoters. On 20 July 1934, E. J. Tait, then managing director of J.C. Williamson's, wrote to ABC Chairman, W.J. Cleary, concerned that the ABC had approached "a certain celebrated artist" (possibly Yehudi Menuhin) "with a view to this Artist undertaking a Concert Tour in public halls in Australia." Since the Tait's were also negotiating with the same artist they were clearly concerned:

We are under the impression that the Commission was brought into being by the Federal Government with the object of giving Broadcasting performances in Studios belonging to the Commission only, and it was never contemplated that the Commission should be permitted to enter into the business of Entrepreneurs.<sup>12</sup>

W.T. Conder responded on the Commission's behalf:

It is difficult to forecast accurately what the policy of the Commission will be in the future, but at the present moment it is not intended to enter into direct competition with public entertainers, such as your own Company.

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<sup>11</sup> Buzacott, *Rite of Spring*, 18.

<sup>12</sup> E.J. Tait to W.J. Cleary, 20/7/1934, ABC Archive, NAA, SP1588/2 Item No. 797 JCW Negotiations.

Conder further contended that the ABC would not “contravene the intention of Parliament as expressed in the Australian Broadcasting Commission Act of 1932.”<sup>13</sup> It is unclear what Conder was referring to here as *The Australian Broadcasting Commission Act* of 1932 did not directly prohibit competition with private entrepreneurs. However, it is apparent that Conder believed that the intention of the Act was to cooperate rather than compete with existing entrepreneurs in accordance with paragraph 24 (quoted above) and paragraph 21 which provided that the ABC might broadcast “a program supplied by any organization, firm or person engaged in artistic, literary, musical or theatrical production”.<sup>14</sup> The ABC subsequently changed its view on the intention of the Act.

Conder’s time at the ABC became limited in June 1934, when Charles Lloyd Jones, the initial Chairman of the ABC, resigned his position because of business pressures.<sup>15</sup> His replacement was W.J. Cleary, a most “persistent advocate” of the ABC’s educative and cultural responsibilities, who held firm views about the need to address “cultural torpidity”.<sup>16</sup> He was philosophically at odds with Conder who he felt expressed a “J.C. Williamson view of the world”.<sup>17</sup> Conder’s subsequent dismissal over alleged improprieties opened the way for a new General Manager, Charles

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<sup>13</sup> W. T. Conder to E.J. Tait, 21 July 1934, ABC Archive, NAA SP1588/2 Item No. 797 JCW Negotiations.

<sup>14</sup> Paragraph 21 *The Australian Broadcasting Commission Act*, 1932.

<sup>15</sup> Buzacott, *Rite of Spring*, 40.

<sup>16</sup> Thomas, *Broadcast and Be Damned*, 48.

<sup>17</sup> K.S. Inglis, *This Is the ABC* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1983), 42.

Moses, who, as discussed in the last chapter, worked closely with Cleary, Bernard Heinze, William James and Herbert Brooks. Buzacott describes this group of men as a “dream-team” for music lovers:

With Cleary, Moses and James in Sydney, and Brookes and Heinze in Melbourne, the Commission from 1935 had a senior management team of incomparable musical passion and ability. The five member chain of command from Chairman down to Controller of Music, had no weak links, administratively or in terms of cultural ambition. Like Cleary, they were keen to promote higher musical standards.<sup>18</sup>

All members of Buzacott’s “dream-team” had a clear commitment to establishing orchestras. During the latter part of the 1930s this mission became inseparable from the conduct of celebrity concerts.

Since the 1920s Bernard Heinze had held the view that orchestras, in and of themselves, were not “inherently marketable”, but that they could “attract large and enthusiastic audiences when paired with soloists of international stature”. This was the motivation behind the arrangement Heinze made with Frank Tait to manage concerts of the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra featuring celebrity artists and sharing the box office takings on a fifty-fifty basis with the commercial operator.<sup>19</sup> As discussed in chapter six, it was also a strategy utilised by Orchard in Sydney. It was therefore not surprising that as the ABC moved to substantially increase expenditure on orchestras they should look to cross subsidisation from

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<sup>18</sup> Buzacott, *Rite of Spring*, 46.

<sup>19</sup> Buzacott, 17.

celebrity artists. This would simultaneously increase the audience for orchestra concerts while making them more financially viable.

The catalyst that prompted the ABC to question its policy of cooperating with private entrepreneurs occurred in 1935 when Yehudi Menuhin toured under the Williamsons' banner (then controlled by the Taits). According to Buzacott, Menuhin was the biggest act that the Taits had bought to Australia since the 1920s and public interest was at "an all-time high". The ABC suggested two concerts with their augmented studio orchestras with a view to broadcasting these concerts nationally. The Taits expressed concern that a broadcast would impact on their box office receipts and insisted not only that the ABC cover the full cost of the orchestra and rehearsals as well as a broadcast fee of £500 for Menuhin (then equivalent to the annuity payable to the ABC chairman) but that the ABC refrain from advertising the broadcast until twenty-four hours in advance of the event, and that they not name the soloist. Sametz claimed that Cleary was "really shocked" at these conditions and that Moses felt the ABC had been "held to ransom".<sup>20</sup>

The tension between the ABC and private entrepreneurs finally exploded into a public controversy in 1936, when the ABC ventured more directly into the area previously dominated by private entrepreneurs by

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<sup>20</sup> Buzacott, 46-7.

organising a tour of the Italian bass-baritone Ezio Pinza and German soprano Elisabeth Rethberg, commencing in July 1936. This was in addition to tours in the same year by Malcolm Sargent and returning Australians pianist Eileen Joyce and singer Dorothy Helmrich, marking a considerable expansion of the ABC's concert management activities. Unsurprisingly without the same concert management infrastructure as the Taits, the ABC struggled with the organisation of the tour with attendances at the Pinza-Rethberg concerts unfavourably compared with a tour by the American Tenor Richard Crooks organised by the Taits commencing in June 1936.<sup>21</sup>

The editor of the *Australian Musical News*, Thorold Waters, warmly applauded the ABC's new ventures in organising celebrity artists on the basis that it would raise artistic standards. He disparaged the haphazard arrangements which depended on the goodwill of entertainment entrepreneurs and the whims of a celebrity who might change plans and leave everyone waiting.<sup>22</sup> Instead of the celebrity being the focal point of the concert, Waters insisted that the conductor should be in charge of "the imaginative art of program building."

It is a misfortune of conductors in Australia that they have so often to "wait and see" what the celebrities do for them, whereas the conductors in Europe and American commission the chosen celebrity for a date a year or so ahead.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> *Truth*, 9 August 1936, 22. The *Herald* later claimed that while the ABC tour of Rethberg and Pinza had not been the same "box-office triumph" of the Crooks, they had attracted a following as the tour had progressed. See *SMH*, 1 January 1937, 6.

<sup>22</sup> Thorold Waters, "Music In the Role of the Micawber", *AMN*, 1 April, 1936, 1.

<sup>23</sup> Waters, 2.



Waters speculated that ABC management of celebrity tours would ensure more efficient management of celebrity concerts to achieve artistic ends.

The entertainment entrepreneurs were not so favourably impressed. In August 1936, the Taitts sent a protest to the Prime Minister (then the fiscally conservative Joseph Lyons of the United Australia Party) claiming that by entering into direct competition with private concert entrepreneurs the ABC threatened to “cripple” the concert management industry.<sup>24</sup> They asserted that private theatre managers could not hope to compete on equal terms with a Government agency which could finance its concert activities with public funds. In addition, they claimed the ABC’s involvement had undermined their negotiations with prospective artists by offering higher prices. They argued that the Commission should confine itself to performances of imported artists for studio broadcast and not for concerts.<sup>25</sup>

In response Cleary issued a statement on behalf of the ABC claiming that the Taitts had not served the public well in recent years, bringing out only one artist in 1935, Yehudi Menuhin and another, Richard Crooks, in 1936. Certainly with fewer entertainment entrepreneurs surviving the depression there were fewer international artists arriving in the mid 1930s than there had been in the mid 1920s. This may have also reflected a general reluctance to book more high risk artists in the early years of the depression,

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<sup>24</sup> *SMH*, 5 August 1936, 16.

<sup>25</sup> *SMH*, 5 August 1936, 16.

leading to a reliance on musical theatre productions which could assure good audiences. However, Cleary failed to mention that in 1935 the Taites had organised a tour by the very popular Vienna Boys Choir and were competing with Fullers, who occupied much of their prospective audience with their popular “Grand Opera Company” which toured between 1934 and the early part of 1935. In 1936, under the J.C. Williamson banner they had also organised a much-feted tour of the Ballets Russes (then billed as Colonel de Basil’s Russian Ballet) which pre-empted the better known tour of the associated Covent Garden Russian Ballet from 1938 and the Original Ballets Russes tour in 1940. Cleary also claimed that although the Taites wanted their celebrities to appear with ABC orchestras, they had placed restrictions on the ABC’s ability to broadcast these concerts. He opined that the ABC would ensure a greater audience for visiting artists by facilitating both live concerts and broadcasts outside the major population areas focused on by the Taites. Given that more was required of such artists by the Commission he claimed it was only fair that artists be paid more.

Cleary’s most vehement claim, however, was that the ABC aimed to “improve the Australian musical taste” while private entrepreneurs were more concerned with box office returns.<sup>26</sup> He claimed that under the Commission “programs ... are not adulterated artistically because of the narrow commercialism which seems inseparable for the concert business

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<sup>26</sup> *Truth*, 9 August 1936, 22.

depending only on box office."<sup>27</sup> Tait bitterly objected to such assertions, arguing that during the previous thirty years they had brought out many leading artists from other countries and had assisted in "raising the musical and artistic level of the community."<sup>28</sup> The Taites claimed there was not an audience in the world that would be "satisfied with the classics all the time" and that they aimed to appeal to "all classes of the public" rather than relying on the "intelligentsia alone".<sup>29</sup> The clear inference was that the ABC was using the license fees obtained from all listeners to subsidise those with more selective tastes.

Public opinion was divided. Not surprisingly there was an "influential section of the community" who supported the ABC's focus on standards. The *Herald's* Music and Drama columnist best articulated this view, arguing that the "standard must inevitably be set high" since the "urge to educate the public into appreciating what long tradition has consecrated as the most solidly pleasure-giving and noble in music is inescapable". He argued that the Taites were ignoring "the general welfare of the musical art".<sup>30</sup> Others felt that the ABC made classical music more accessible for the general community. "Listener" from Cremorne, for instance, argued that the Taites had been exploiting the public by charging "prohibitive prices" which could only be afforded by "comparatively few wealthy people". In contrast

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<sup>27</sup> *SMH*, 5 August 1936, 16.

<sup>28</sup> *SMH*, 5 August 1936, 16.

<sup>29</sup> *SMH*, 6 August 1936, 10.

<sup>30</sup> *SMH*, 8 August 1936, 12.

the ABC was providing a broad range of offerings “from the noisiest jazz to the highest of high-brow” to radio license holders.<sup>31</sup> Similarly *The Sun* argued that the “musical public” supported the ABC and that the Rethberg-Pinza concerts had been “notable for the excellent quality of the programs ... not in any way debased by box-office considerations”.<sup>32</sup> On the other hand *Smith’s Weekly*, which had previously supported the ABC’s involvement in funding orchestras, suggested that the government was overstepping the mark by competing with private entrepreneurs. It gave little credence to the argument that the ABC was raising artistic standards. Rather it claimed if it wanted to “do good ... the A.B.C. could start a cafeteria for the public on the pretext that artists must eat”. *Smith’s* resented additional government “trespass upon popular rights” and urged the Tait to take the government to the High Court.<sup>33</sup> It also resented the “gratuitous insult” offered by the ABC “to artists who dare sing music which appeals to those who have not been favoured with a high musical education” which they claimed constituted “at least 75 per cent of the public”.<sup>34</sup>

On 12 August 1936, music critic and broadcaster Keith Barry, then Federal Program Advisor within the ABC, wrote a memorandum to Moses describing a meeting he had had with the president of the NSW Musical Association, Faunce Allman, regarding “their feelings on the Tait

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<sup>31</sup> *SMH*, 13 August 1936, 4.

<sup>32</sup> *The Sun*, 16 August 1936, 32.

<sup>33</sup> *Smith’s Weekly*, 15 August 1936, 3.

<sup>34</sup> *Smith’s Weekly*, 5 September 1936, 22.

controversy". According to the memo, Allman "greatly favours us" but had expressed the view that such support was not unanimous. According to the memo those who were critical expressed concern that the ABC imported celebrity artists without adequately supporting Australian talent. The memo sought approval for various arguments that Allman might use to "swing opinion" towards the ABC's position. Allman undertook to call a "special meeting" of the association with a view to "making a declaration in our favour". The meeting must have had the desired result as a letter soon appeared in the *Herald* indicating the Musical Association's support for the ABC policy of "bringing distinguished artists to Australia" and affirming the "great gain to the public, students, and the profession alike to be enabled to hear them in public".<sup>35</sup>

In response to the concerns about the ABC's lack of support for Australian artists Barry undertook to "do something more about having resident artists perform with our orchestra".<sup>36</sup> This became a new focus for the ABC in the latter part of the 1930s replacing the desultory support for composers discussed in chapter six. As I will discuss later in the chapter, the approach was selective and not entirely conducive to encouraging diversity since there was a strong tendency to elevate some artists while excluding others. However, what is significant here is that supporting local artists was

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<sup>35</sup> *SMH*, 21 August 1936, 6.

<sup>36</sup> Keith Barry, Memorandum to the General Manager, 12 August 1936, *ABC Archive*, NAA, SP 1588/2 Item 360, *JC Williamson Ltd V ABC re. concerts*.

still an essential part of promoting the classical music cause, as it had been in the 1920s.

Given the diverse views expressed in the media there was some nervousness within the ABC about its ability to win the day without strong audience support. Heinze sent a memo to Moses in November 1936 suggesting they reconsider a more cooperative approach with the Taits, arguing that public concert activities would require the allocation of resources for work which, it might logically be argued, did not come within the province of broadcasting:

We may get away with it for a while, stacking the houses as we have done in the past, but the uproar and clamour will increase as time goes on unless we can do something to stop it.<sup>37</sup>

He argued that the ABC should try to enlist the service of the Taits on “reasonable terms” to utilise the “most efficient concert organisation we have here” and to stop the “noisy press clamour opposed to our concert policy”.<sup>38</sup>

In the end, it was not necessary for the ABC to make a new arrangement with the Taits. The ABC prevailed for two reasons. Firstly, J.C. Williamson was not in a financial position to take the ABC to court in the latter part of the 1930s, and secondly, as Barry’s memo on his meeting with

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<sup>37</sup> Memo, Bernhard Heinze to Charles Moses, 5 November 1936, *ABC Archive, NAA, SP1588/2 Item 360 J C Williamson Ltd V ABC re. concerts.*

<sup>38</sup> Bernhard Heinze to Charles Moses.

Allman indicated, the ABC was beginning to form a close alliance with influential members of the community who assisted the ABC to win over the audience.

### **The battle of the brows**

As discussed in chapter six, in the 1920s audiences had feted entrepreneurs for bringing some of the leading opera stars and virtuoso performers in the world to Sydney. Despite this, by the latter part of the 1920s, a small group of music lovers with more select tastes began to complain that they were not being sufficiently well served by entertainment entrepreneurs. With visits by celebrity artists becoming almost commonplace, some concert-goers also questioned the motivation of concert promoters who had an “eye firmly fixed on the box office receipts”.<sup>39</sup> A Mr A. Teece (whose sister Gladys Teece was a very active member of the British Musical Society) wrote a letter to the *Herald* differentiating between two types of concert-goers—those who were keen to hear more interesting programs including modern composers, or the “real musicians”, and those “who go [to concerts] because it is considered the thing to do.” The correspondent described the latter group as “star-worshippers”.<sup>40</sup> This letter, which attracted a defensive response from the Tait brothers<sup>41</sup>, an alarmed response from those concerned that modern music might replace the

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<sup>39</sup> *SMH*, 9 June 1927, 7.

<sup>40</sup> A. Teece, Letter to the editor, *SMH*, 8 June 1927, 10.

<sup>41</sup> J. and N. Tait, Letter to the editor, *SMH*, 9 June 1927, 7.

“classics”,<sup>42</sup> and strong support from like-minded members of the British Musical Society,<sup>43</sup> suggested the emergence of a group who wished to distinguish themselves from other concert-goers. It also represented a challenge to the power of the concert promoters and a perception that their focus was monetary profit rather than musical culture.

In 1929, a visit by the renowned operatic soprano Dusolina Giannini prompted a campaign to organise a concert with a more select program for “music lovers”. The Conservatorium’s singing teacher, Roland Foster, active in Music Week activities, and amateur musician Dr R.J. Silverton, organised a Guarantee Fund, raising £300 to underwrite the costs of a higher risk, special concert by Signora Giannini. Contributors to the fund included the aforementioned Gladys Teece, Faunce Allman (President of the Musical Association), Ernest Wunderlich and prominent members of the Conservatorium staff.<sup>44</sup> The concert was held at the Conservatorium where, according to the organisers, the “more delicate phases of the singer’s art would be heard to far greater advantage” than the “vast echoing spaces of the Town Hall.”<sup>45</sup> Such a venue, according to the *Herald’s* Music and Drama columnist, would enable the selection of music of “a more uniformly higher standard than is ordinarily chosen for public performance.”<sup>46</sup> The concert,

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<sup>42</sup> Jean MacDonald, Letter to the editor, *SMH*, 25 June 1927, 10

<sup>43</sup> Cyril Monk, Letter to the editor, *SMH*, 28 June 1927, 6.

<sup>44</sup> *SMH*, 16 July 1929, 6.

<sup>45</sup> *SMH*, 16 July 1929, 6,

<sup>46</sup> *SMH*, 20 July 1929, 10.



consisting mainly of German lieder with “an Italian group to give diversity”, attracted a sufficiently large audience to ensure that guarantee funds were not actually called on and was declared an artistic and financial success.<sup>47</sup> Such an initiative demonstrated the emergence of an organised and coherent group of music lovers who sought to distinguish themselves from the general population on the basis of highly selective musical tastes which were often termed “high-brow”.

Almost from the outset the ABC faced constant criticism about the types of music they broadcast with some claiming there was too much “classical” or “high-brow” music and some claiming there was not enough.<sup>48</sup> Those who did not feel the ABC catered to them were particularly resentful of the compulsory radio license fees that they paid, which funded the ABC. In the 1930s, as the *Women’s Weekly* described it, the “battle of the brows” erupted.<sup>49</sup> Scholars have interpreted similar debates in Europe and the United States in the inter-war years as a desire to “stake out territory” by defining the “high-brow”, and its opposite, “the low-brow”<sup>50</sup> as part of a growing recognition of increasing cultural divisions. Similarly, in Australia, disputes about what should be broadcast on the radio fed growing divisions

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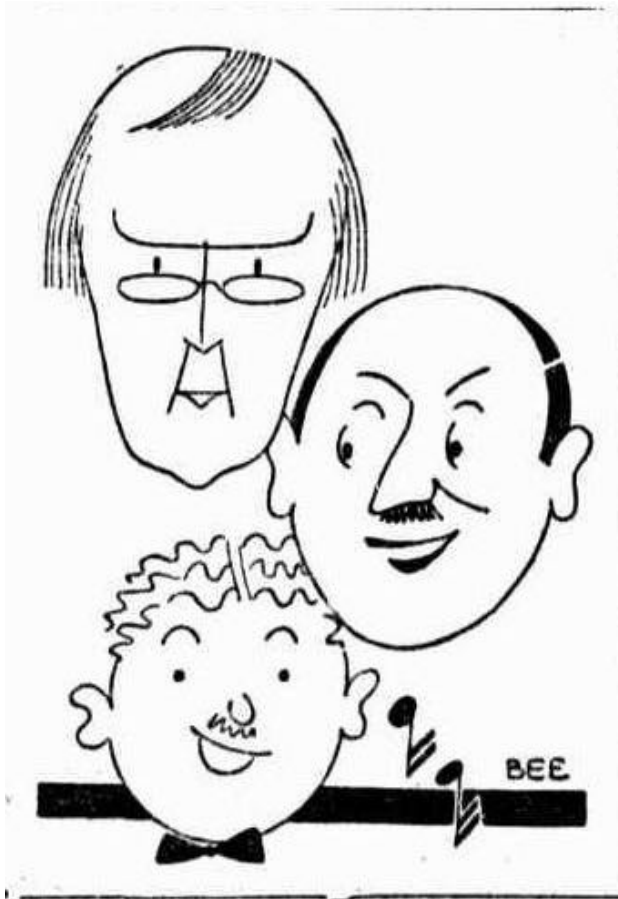
<sup>47</sup> *SMH*, 24 July 1929, 16.

<sup>48</sup> For a good discussion of this debate see Lesley Johnson, *A Cultural Study of Early Australian Radio* (London: Routledge, 1988), 126ff.

<sup>49</sup> *Australian Women’s Weekly*, 2 December 1933, 10.

<sup>50</sup> For a good discussion of the scholarly debate on this issue see David Carter, “The Mystery of the Missing Middle-brow or the C(O)Urse of Good Taste.”, in *Imagining Australia: Literature and Culture in the New New World.*, ed. Judith Ryan and Chris Wallace-Crabbe (Cambridge, Mass.; London: Harvard University Press), 176.

between and among middle and working classes in regard to aesthetic preferences. All paid the same license fees and no doubt felt equally entitled to broadcasts that suited their taste.



**Image 8.1:** *The Sun*, 8 August 1937, 3.

In the early twentieth century “high-brow” was often used to describe someone who was overly intellectual, snobbish or with no sense of humour, a judgement that most would prefer to ignore.<sup>51</sup> Steuart Wilson, a visiting

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<sup>51</sup> See for instance *EN*, 2 March 1907, 6 which states that “high-brow” is “popularly held to indicate high intelligence”; *Sun*, 7 September 1912, 5 which described the “high-brow element” as having a “deadly lack of humour”; *Australian Worker*, 6 February 1919, 3 derides “high-browed intellectuals, standing aloof from the multitude in the isolation of self conceit”.

tenor on tour in Australia in 1933 observed that the “fear of being classified as high-brow” was preventing Australians from “expressing unstinted appreciation of good music”.<sup>52</sup> Despite such antipathy to the term “high-brow”, there was a continued call to educate people to appreciate the highest forms of classical music as a means of national development. In an opinion piece written for the *Sunday Sun* in 1930, Heinze acknowledged that many people “will not tolerate a preponderance of classic music”. Nevertheless, he expressed confidence that the radio could play an important role in developing taste for “music of the best kind”. He expressed confidence that “classic music is coming into its own” with “an ideal class of music lover who is tolerant and amused with light music, and is appreciative of good music.” Whilst lighter forms of music might be tolerated in the short-term, Heinze, like many of his contemporaries, simply felt that once educated the general population would happily share the same high aesthetic values. For Heinze, such musical appreciation would nurture “an intelligent and cultured community” that would be a “national asset” and a sign of “high-minded citizenship”.<sup>53</sup>

When H. P. Williams, the original General Manager of the ABC, declared that most Australians leant toward “medium to low-brow” tastes<sup>54</sup> Conservatorium staff claimed the “broadcasting authorities” were

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<sup>52</sup> *The Labor Daily*, 25 August 1933, 7.

<sup>53</sup> Bernard Heinze, “Classic Music: Place in Broadcasting” *Sun*, 19 January 1930, 5.

<sup>54</sup> *Sun*, 29 November 1932, 15.

misrepresenting public taste as “lower than it actually is.” Rather, they insisted the general public was “anxious” to educate itself to appreciate “all that is best and noblest in musical art”.<sup>55</sup> Similarly, in 1933, the *Women’s Weekly* declared the “high-brows” “who started off as a plaintive minority” to now be “almost the ruthless majority”.<sup>56</sup> Yet, despite such optimism, attendance at concerts remained disappointing and, according to an article in the *Sun*, Sydney audiences looked on music as “an entertainment” rather than “as an art which ... awakens an interest and beauty which should make better men and women of us.”<sup>57</sup>

The term “low-brow” which had traditionally implied an inferior racial or criminal type of person<sup>58</sup> was not a label often evoked to describe oneself in the early twentieth century. Yet the denigration of mass culture as “low-brow” provoked a reaction from those who felt it was their right to choose the type of entertainment they preferred. The *Worker’s News* expressed concern that “high-browism” was “rampant among the intelligentsia” exposing a greater divide with the “innate vulgarity” of “ordinary folk”. Although the author acknowledged a “need” for “cultured people” he insisted that the “primitive force of humanity in the mass” was

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<sup>55</sup> *Sun*, 30 November 1932, 10.

<sup>56</sup> *Australian Women’s Weekly*, 2 December 1933, 10.

<sup>57</sup> *Sun*, 14 May 1933, 3.

<sup>58</sup> See for instance *Sun*, 9 August 1912, which referred to “low-browed Chinese”; *Australian Worker*, 13 November 1919, 17 which included a poem entitled “The Felon” described as “Low-browed, course-featured, furtive”; and *Labor Daily*, 30 July 1938, 9 which refers to “‘Rogues galleries’ of every criminal investigation branch in the Commonwealth” which “contain a startling number of photos of low-browed, dark-visaged villains whose birthplace was Southern Europe”.

the “living source of all creative energy” that provided the “strenuous vitality” of the breed.<sup>59</sup> Similarly, a 1937 article in *Australian Worker* expressed disdain for the “haughty high-brow” insisting that that the “low-brow” rendered invaluable service in mines, at sea, providing food and building cities. “Why, then, begrudge him a little entertainment in the cinema?”<sup>60</sup> Class and musical taste were now becoming interlinked and some even defiantly adopted the label “low-brow” to describe themselves despite its unsavoury implications. For instance in 1935, a *Herald* correspondent signing himself as “low-brow” claimed there were many people “who actively dislike classical or semi-classical music” and who resented the ABC’s efforts to “change their taste from low-brow to high-brow”.<sup>61</sup> Similarly, *Truth* railed against the ABC’s “verbal ‘blah’ and high-brow musical bleakness”.<sup>62</sup>

For those who wished to avoid the derogatory insinuations of both high and low-brow categories, a third option gradually evolved known as the “middle-brow”. This category was embraced by the *Labor Daily* for those who still liked “good music”, just not “high-brow” music.<sup>63</sup> Rather than disdain the middle-brow as Virginia Woolf famously did,<sup>64</sup> the ABC

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<sup>59</sup> *Australian Worker*, 30 October 1935, 7.

<sup>60</sup> *Australian Worker*, 21 April 1937, 7.

<sup>61</sup> *SMH*, 20 December 1935, 5.

<sup>62</sup> *Truth*, 22 May 1938, 27.

<sup>63</sup> *Labor Daily*, 18 November 1935, 8.

<sup>64</sup> Virginia Woolf, “Middle-brow,” in *The Death of the Moth and Other Essays*, ed. Virginia Woolf (Adelaide: ebooks Adelaide, 2015), accessed 16 February 2018, <https://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/w/woolf/virginia/w91d/index.html>.

embraced it as an ally. The General Manager of the ABC, Charles Moses, announced in 1937 that the ABC recognised that the middle-brows represent the “bulk of the listening public.” Dismissing the high-brow as a “musical snob” and the low-brow as “the all jazz or low comedy type”, Moses claimed the ABC aimed to present programs that are “as well balanced as possible, catering for all tastes.”<sup>65</sup> Despite the fact that increasing amounts of the ABC budget were now going to orchestra concerts, as a public broadcaster the ABC needed to downplay accusations of elitism. It argued instead that its focus on classical music was meeting the demands of the vast bulk of people whom they had defined as “middle-brow”.

*Smith's Weekly* was unconvinced by the ABC's attempt to describe itself as “middle-brow”, publishing a satirical poem indicating their belief that the ABC primarily appealed to the middle class (**Image 8.2**).<sup>66</sup> Such scepticism was justifiable. Under a headline stating “all ‘brows’ are middle-brow”, an anonymous article in *The Sun* also argued that the listening public should not be divided into “high, middle, and low-brows” since it could be anticipated that low and perhaps even middle-brow taste would eventually become outmoded. Without any sense of contradiction, the writer went on to insist that radio programs should be both “simple and high class”. Again, appealing to nationalism, the author argued that given the threats to

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<sup>65</sup> *Sun*, 8 August 1937, 3.

<sup>66</sup> This poem was presumably based on the song *In an Old-fashioned Town*, with words by Ada Leonora Harris and music by W.H. Squire.

civilised culture presented by political unrest in other parts of the world, Australia should make it a national calling to promote itself as a bastion of taste.

The ideal program is the one that will MAKE the public discriminating. Even if the world is unhappy because of its conflicts, the world to-day at least is vividly awake. That is why Australia, which is a young country ... should seize the opportunity of this mood of special alertness to recognise assured standards of taste, to become keenly discriminating.<sup>67</sup>

For this writer, Australia rather than Europe might now become the model of civilisation to which all countries might aspire. He perceived the middle-brow as a temporary transition point only. It is little wonder that *Smith's Weekly* perceived such concessions as patronising.

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<sup>67</sup> *Sun*, 10 August 1937, 4.

***Middlebrow***

"Convinced that at least 80 per cent of radio listeners are neither highbrow nor lowbrow, the Australian Broadcasting Commission intends to devote an increasingly large proportion of its programmes to items to please the 'middlebrow audience.'"

(To the tune of "In An Old-fashioned House in An Old-fashioned Street")

***I'M a middle-aged person on middle-size pay,  
With a quaint little middle-class brow,  
And I live in a middle-class kind of a way,  
Which is middling indifferent now;  
And I muse as I sit in my middle-priced home  
In the middle of millions like me  
Why the world is upset by such fury and fret  
Because Highbrow and Low disagree.***

***I've a middleweight son and a middleweight wife  
In the middlemost point of my mind,  
And I've stuck to the middle way most of my life  
Like a million or more of my kind.  
But the Highbrow is mystic and scornful and proud,  
And the Lowbrow is vulgar of speech,  
So between High and Low, as they rage to and fro,  
I get kicked in the middle by each!***

—K.S.




Image 8.2: *Smith's Weekly*, 7 August 1937, 7.

Yet even if the middle-brow was a transitional point, the process of moving between the various brows remained unclear. In earlier decades the middle classes had embarked on clear programs of music education to promote an appreciation of classical music. By the 1930s such programs were still often suggested, but there was also a subtle shift in emphasis which focused on the innate sensibility of the individual and their ability to experience the music appropriately. The focus now become the quality of the musical experience rather than an understanding of the music. In 1938, Sydney art critic Howard Ashton asserted that a "real love" of music, "and even taste in music" was not demonstrated by musical knowledge but by the



intensity of one's response. This could mean the listener might experience "a sudden enlargement of the spirit" that "goes past his head, past his calculations, past his shield against the world, deep into the guarded places of his heart".<sup>68</sup> From this perspective, one's subjective experience defined one as a music lover who experienced life more deeply than someone who enjoyed the relatively shallow, temporary distraction provided by mere entertainment. Superficially this seemed to democratise the musical experience by making it potentially available to those without a musical education while prescribing an appropriate response to classical music that might require a certain sensibility.

Ashton's article suggested that by the late 1930s an appreciation of classical music required an ability to absorb and inwardly respond to the music on an emotional level. William Reddy's insights in the field of emotional history provide important clues as to how leisure activities came to promote certain emotional responses that came to be perceived as "normal".<sup>69</sup> He has implicated what he calls the "cult of sensibility", that played a role in cultural currents as diverse as Methodism, antislavery agitation, the rise of the novel, the French Revolution and the birth of Romanticism.<sup>70</sup> According to Reddy, such "sensibility" promoted an inward

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<sup>68</sup> Howard Ashton, "What Does Music Give Us", *The Sun*, 8 May 1938, 17.

<sup>69</sup> William M. Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling: A Framework for the History of Emotions* (Cambridge, U.K.; New York: Cambridge University Press, ProQuest Ebook Central, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com.virtual.anu.edu.au/lib/anu/detail.action?docID=202058>, 2001), 325.

<sup>70</sup> Reddy, x.

search for moral good grounded on “natural feeling”.<sup>71</sup> He argued that dominant groups were able to legitimate particular “emotional regimes” which reinforced their privileged position in society. According to Reddy such styles of emotion were communicated by means of “sensory-rich participatory performances” including literature, art and, importantly for this study, through music.<sup>72</sup> Ashton’s aforementioned article articulated a new understanding of music that firmly indicated that a certain emotional response to classical music now signified membership of a privileged social and cultural group. Even while participating in an activity that was promoted as available to all, those with the required response could justify a sense of superiority.

In her study of middle-brow culture in the United States, Joan Rubin has argued that between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the “genteel” tradition represented in the transcendentalism of Emerson, with its implicit link between moral character and aesthetic appreciation, gradually changed to a more consumeristic approach that focused on personal experience. To become “someone” meant to pursue intense experiences and immersion in “real life”, allowing for “spontaneity” and “sensuousness” that was frowned on in the more austere drawing rooms of the zealous moral improvers of the nineteenth century.<sup>73</sup> Nevertheless, there was a teleological

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<sup>71</sup> Reddy, 160.

<sup>72</sup> Reddy, 331.

<sup>73</sup> Joan Shelley Rubin, *The Making of Middle/Brow Culture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 23.

logic implicit in Rubin's concept of the middle-brow, an insistence on the development of self that implied a hierarchical cultural progression that could and should be guided by experts of taste and fashion. It did not so much bridge cultural distinctions between high and low-brow as introduce a staged process for self improvement. As Bourdieu puts it, "heteronomous, middle-brow culture is objectively condemned to define itself in relation to legitimate culture."<sup>74</sup> As discussed in chapter one, several theorists and historians have pointed to similar shifts in perspective where a focus on character training shifted to one of personality and self expression. The concept of middle-brow culture did not resolve cultural contest but increased it and promoted a questioning of the relative aesthetic values of different cultural commodities which in turn became a reflection of social hierarchy.

As different commodities became incorporated within an aesthetic hierarchy, classical music, while at the apex of that hierarchy, lost much of its exclusivity. Rather, classical music became another prop which could be used like any other commodity to enhance the self. Australian cultural historian David Carter has suggested that, as in the United States, the development of middle-brow culture in Australia enabled the incorporation of high culture values into the "commodity form of quality entertainment or

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<sup>74</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, "The Market of Symbolic Goods," in *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*, ed. Randal Johnson (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1993), 129.

discerning lifestyle choice".<sup>75</sup> By linking orchestra concerts with celebrity culture, the ABC was clearly working in a commercial framework. With Moses proclaiming the ABC as the bastion of middle-brow culture and Ashton prioritising the experiential nature of discernment and taste, classical music was becoming increasingly commercialised as a means of demonstrating a high status social identity.

### **ABC musical classifications**

From its inception the ABC clearly differentiated between different types of music on a hierarchical basis. Commencing in 1933 ABC annual reports collated data on the types of music broadcast, defined as "classical", "popular" or "modern dance" music.<sup>76</sup> In 1933 music comprised around 58% of total program time with classical music providing 33% per cent of all music broadcast.<sup>77</sup> "Popular" music was the single biggest category of music comprising 56% of all music broadcast, with "modern dance" music comprising 10%. From 1938 ABC annual reports included additional categories. Classical music was divided into two categories: "classical" or "serious" music, as opposed to "light classical". "Light" music (which included military and brass band music) was used instead of "popular" music. A new category of "sacred music and oratorio" was introduced while

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<sup>75</sup> Carter, "Mystery of the Missing Middle-brow", 174.

<sup>76</sup> Until 1938, opera had been defined as a "dramatic" type of program rather than a "musical" one in ABC annual reports.

<sup>77</sup> ABC, *First Annual Report of the Australian Broadcasting Commission*, 1933, 10. NB. Includes opera and musical comedy broadcast.

“dance music” retained its own category. Operatic music was now included as a musical program and was divided between “grand” and “light” opera or musical comedy. Between 1933 and 1939, although different labels were used, the proportion of classical music (both serious and light) remained relatively stable at just over thirty per cent of all music, with a slight drop off in the two years preceding Cleary’s appointment in 1935 (**Figure 8.1**).<sup>78</sup>

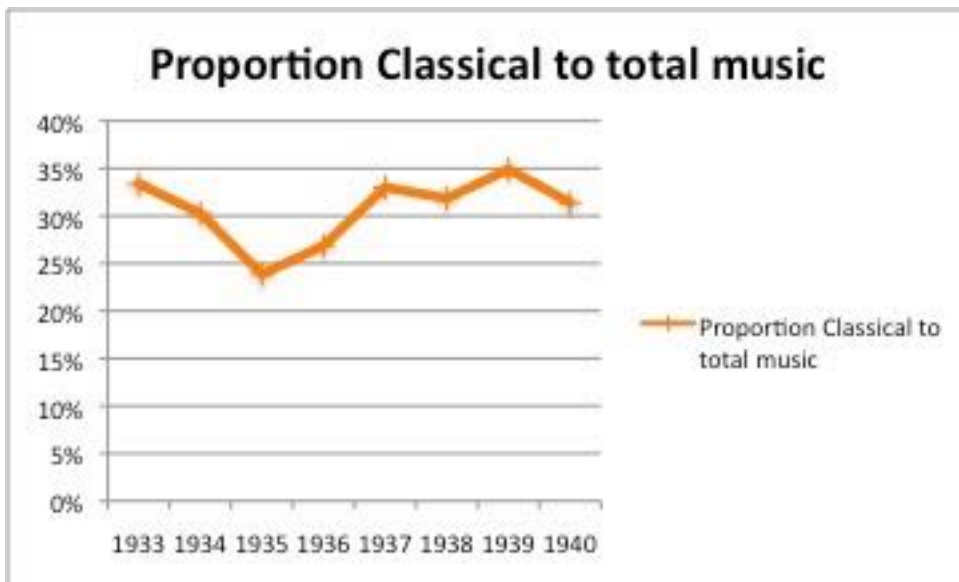
Scannell has claimed that the BBC similarly divided its audience into different “taste publics”, sometimes appropriating a “non-cultural” genre like “dance music” and transforming it into a “cultural category for the connoisseur”.<sup>79</sup> While the figures suggest that classical music was no more privileged than any other type of music, what is significant here is that the ABC was clearly trying to delineate between and categorise different types of music. The constant change in categories and definitions demonstrated the difficulties they had in strictly defining different musical styles.

Nevertheless they continued to pursue a bureaucratic dictate that required strict classification between different musical styles, gradually adding additional categories.

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<sup>78</sup> In making this classification “serious” and “light” classical music has been added together.

<sup>79</sup> P. Scannell, “Music for the Multitude? The Dilemmas of the Bbc’s Music Policy 1923-1946,” *Media, Culture and Society* iii (1981): 252.



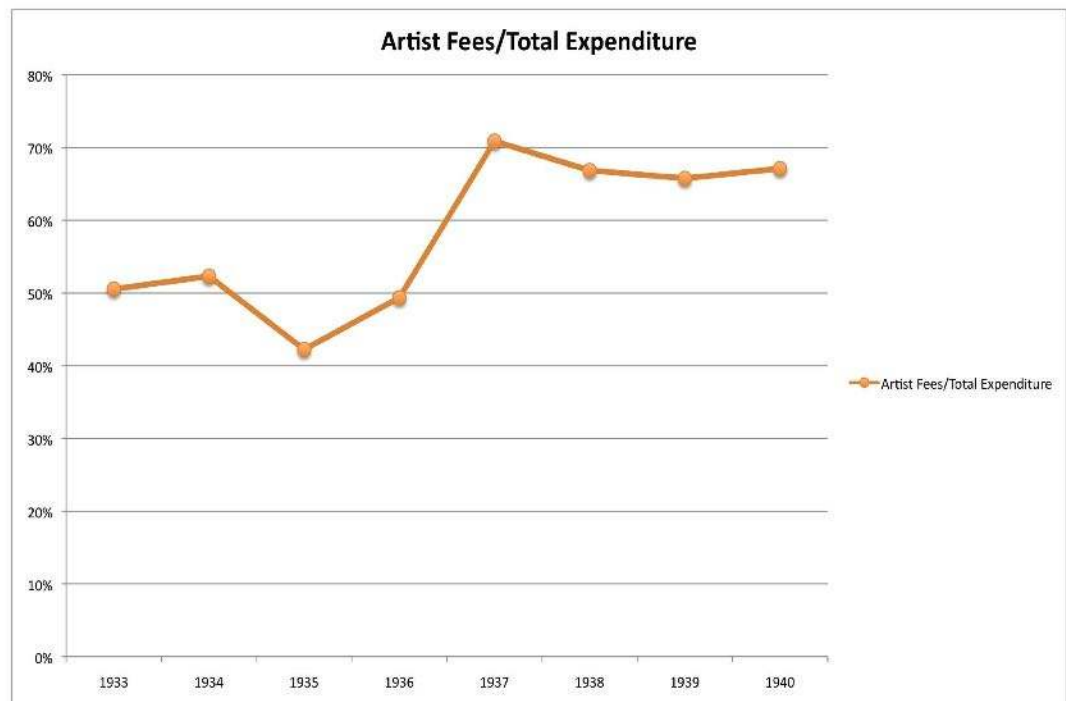
**Figure 8.1: Proportion of classical music as a percentage of total music broadcast, compiled from ABC Annual Reports, 1933–1940.**

While the proportion of classical music broadcast by the ABC did not change significantly, from 1936, ABC Annual reports show a marked increase in expenditure on artists' fees (which includes orchestras). Both the overall expenditure increased as well as the proportion of the total budget spent on artists' fees (**Figure 8.2**). The Report proudly proclaimed:

During the year the Commission completed its plan of establishing permanent concert orchestras in each capital city ... this section of the Commission's activities has involved a large, recurring expenditure, but the Commission is satisfied that it has already been, and will continue to be, a most potent factor in raising the standard of musical performance in all parts of the Commonwealth. Without such regular bodies of competent and highly-trained musicians, the presentation of major symphonic and operatic works has, in the past, often involved an element of risk which should not exist in any country with serious pretensions to musical culture.<sup>80</sup>

<sup>80</sup> ABC, *Fourth Annual Report and financial statement of the Australian Broadcasting Commission*, 1936, 13.

The music section of the report detailed “notable performances” which focused on the celebrity appearances with orchestras. There were significantly smaller sections on dance and band music but nothing at all about “popular” music which still constituted about half of all music broadcast.<sup>81</sup> Clearly the ABC privileged classical music above other musical categories.



**Figure 8.2: Artist fees as a percentage of total expenditure, 1933–1940, taken from ABC Annual Reports.**

### **Creating an audience for symphony concerts**

As musical categories were increasingly defined, the audience, too, became segmented into taste groups. The ABC deliberately sought alliances with middle class groups, promoting classical music as the music of the

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<sup>81</sup> ABC, *Fourth Annual Report*, 14-19.

middle class. Chapter six detailed the evolution of music-listening clubs as rallying points for music lovers and lobbyists for the classical music cause during the 1920s. This role was extended in the 1930s as music lovers were urged to fight for the desired “orchestra Utopia.” The *Herald’s* Music and Drama columnist considered the music clubs and their social committees could play an important role making orchestra music “fashionable and talked-about.” He described them as “centres [of] propaganda” that might “form a nucleus round which concert-goers in general can assemble.”<sup>82</sup> To this end, he envisaged that music clubs could organise group parties of their members to attend orchestra concerts. As discussed earlier, the ABC had already used its connections with the Musical Association to obtain some public support in its dispute with the Tait brothers. The music clubs now provided the ABC with a ready network to promote their concerts and expand their audience. The ABC now articulated a new strategy to actively engage with such groups to lift attendance at ABC concerts.<sup>83</sup> The reason for this strategy, according to Moses, was to “persuade more and more people to believe it is ‘the correct thing’ to be seen at orchestra concerts”.<sup>84</sup>

In her work on ‘feminine cultural agency’, Jane Hunt has traced how the ABC engaged in partnerships with influential women of means and social standing to organise social committees in each state to boost

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<sup>82</sup> See for example, *SMH*, 2 March 1935, 10.

<sup>83</sup> *Sun*, 7 June 1936, 62.

<sup>84</sup> Memo from Moses to the Qld Manager, 27 October 1938, *ABC Archive*, NAA, SP 1588/2 Item 392.



attendance at orchestra concerts.<sup>85</sup> Its approach was influenced by the work of Ivy Brookes (wife of Herbert Brookes, Vice-Chairman of the ABC) who had organised a Ladies' committee to attend concerts in Melbourne to support the University Symphony Orchestra during the 1920s.<sup>86</sup> The Sydney Committee was spearheaded by an indomitable group of well-to-do socialites and music lovers—Ruth Fairfax, Lady Gordon and Beatrice Swinson—known as “the Three Musketeers”.<sup>87</sup> It also involved representatives from the Musical Association.<sup>88</sup> According to Swinson, in 1936 Cleary had enlisted their support out of concern that audiences for ABC concerts were unsatisfactory with “the Town Hall being only half full”. She claimed that Cleary argued that it would be difficult for the Commission to justify giving such concerts if the public did not attend.<sup>89</sup> The Committee's role was to enlist subscribers for the forthcoming subscription series of celebrity orchestra concerts.

The Sydney Ladies' Committee took to this task enthusiastically organising meetings and social and media events designed to enlist like-minded audience members for orchestra concerts. By September 1936, the committee had enlisted a total of 1089 subscribers, which compared

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<sup>85</sup> Jane Hunt, "Cultivating the Arts" (PhD diss., Australian National University, 2010).

<sup>86</sup> David Garrett, "The Accidental Entrepreneur—How ABC Music Became More Than Broadcasting" (PhD diss., University of Wollongong, 2012), 81.

<sup>87</sup> Hunt, "Cultivating the Arts", 356.

<sup>88</sup> Garrett, "The Accidental Entrepreneur" 175–6.

<sup>89</sup> H. Beatrice Swinson, *The Creation of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra 1922–47* (Unpublished article, n.d.), 4.

favourably with Melbourne's efforts.<sup>90</sup> Their success was short-lived. The ABC again struggled to achieve respectable audience sizes in 1937 and 1938. In early 1938, with four concerts planned featuring Italian tenor Dino Borgioli as a part of the NSW sesquicentenary celebrations, the ABC was panicking after a "box office flop" at the second concert.<sup>91</sup> Again the ABC enlisted support from the Ladies' Committee, which in turn called on support from Lady Street and Lady Gowrie who played a prominent role in meetings and receptions, ultimately selling a total of 1231 subscriptions.<sup>92</sup>

The priority of these Ladies' Committees, according to Hunt, was not "taste"<sup>93</sup> but, "a sense of duty ... a perception of responsibility to city, state and nation" and a belief that "orchestras were necessary civic institutions in modern societies".<sup>94</sup> This was not dissimilar to the male patrons of the early Sydney Symphony Orchestra who were similarly motivated by a desire to serve their community. However, in the 1930s the ABC specifically targeted a relatively narrow segment of society which Hunt suggests included the 'upper four hundred' as well as those within the 'suburban middle class' who were somehow connected to this august group or aspired to join it.<sup>95</sup> This group was not universally admired and was no doubt considered part of the group which *Smith's Weekly* considered "the arty and high-brow

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<sup>90</sup> Hunt, "Cultivating the Arts," 377. See also Garrett, "The Accidental Entrepreneur" 176.

<sup>91</sup> Keith Barry to Federal Controller of Music, 22 February 1938, *ABC Archive*, NAA, SP1588/2 Item 392 Celebrity Concert Season 1938

<sup>92</sup> Hunt, *Cultivating the Arts*, 385–6.

<sup>93</sup> Hunt, 385.

<sup>94</sup> Hunt, 391.

<sup>95</sup> Hunt, 385.

clique” who competed to have their photographs in fashionable pages of the newspapers.<sup>96</sup> While they might have been influential among the middle class, their involvement alienated people in lower classes.

Swinson, Gordon and Fairfax urged ABC subscribers to wear “full evening dress” to ABC concerts with the men to don “white ties”.<sup>97</sup> The resulting fashion displays attracted considerable media attention. The *Herald*, for instance, published pictures of the most fashionable attendees in prominent positions in the women’s columns as well as detailed lists of prominent citizens who attended concerts (**Image 8.3**).

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<sup>96</sup> *Smith’s Weekly*, 23 October 1937, 21.

<sup>97</sup> *SMH*, 6 June 1936, 12.



Image 8.3: Sydney Morning Herald, 23 July 1937, 5.

Since the creation of the Philharmonic and the Sydney Amateur Orchestra in the latter part of the nineteenth century such concerts had always been an occasion where the social elite was well represented. The dress of the Governor's wife and other prominent members of the audience often received some media coverage although more often the artist's attire was the key focus of attention.<sup>98</sup> However, in the 1930s all members of the audience were urged to wear formal attire and there was extensive coverage

<sup>98</sup> See for instance, *The Sydney Mail and NSW Advertiser*, 10 August 1904, 367; *Telegraph*, 5 October 1908, 3; *Sydney Mail and NSW Advertiser*, 9 June 1909, 44.

of what many women were wearing, along with photographs and detailed descriptions of clothes in the women's pages of the newspaper and various women's magazines.



**Image 8.4:** Sam Hood, *Two fashionable women, Sydney Town Hall, (1930s?),* SLNSW, Home and Away, 447224.

The prominent fashion displays at orchestra concerts distorted the civic minded ambitions of the orchestra's main champions, creating an impression that orchestra concerts were gatherings of the social elite, which was clearly off-putting for other members of the community. For instance, a woman from the 'industrial suburb' of Erskineville agreed that ticket prices for Town Hall concerts were affordable but she confessed she would not contemplate attending such concerts as she saw them as "dress parades",

commenting “it’s like going to a ball, and I couldn’t afford a new frock”.<sup>99</sup> In a bid to be inclusive, the ABC undertook concerts in the “industrial suburbs”. However, these concerts failed to garner the same level of support that the City of Sydney Orchestra attracted with their concerts in the Sydney Town Hall. Inglis describes one event in a suburban town hall with the visiting conductor Schneevoigt where there were more people in the orchestra than the audience.<sup>100</sup> Similarly, as Keith Barry himself admitted in a memo to the Federal Controller in 1938, attempts made to organise “popular concerts” were not popular.<sup>101</sup> While the ABC archives indicate there was considerable heart searching about how to make their concerts more popular, the problem was not the programs, but the social context in which orchestra concerts now occurred. As Hunt indicates, Swinson and her associates were “active participants in the process of cultural bifurcation” and instrumental in establishing cultural institutions that “enshrined what was then spoken of as high-brow”.<sup>102</sup>

In her work on women’s philanthropy in America, McCarthy has described similar philanthropic efforts by women which significantly enriched and supported the development of key cultural institutions even though the women subsequently received little recognition for their efforts.

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<sup>99</sup> *SMH*, 5 December 1938, 12.

<sup>100</sup> Inglis, *This is the ABC*, 51.

<sup>101</sup> Keith Barry to Federal Controller of Music, 22 February 1938, *ABC Archive*, NAA SP1588/2 Item 392 Celebrity Concert Season 1938

<sup>102</sup> Hunt, *Cultivating the Arts*, 380.

Nevertheless, their involvement gave legitimacy to the “institutionalisation of authority” and unwittingly bolstered elitist attitudes that ultimately excluded women from key decision making positions.<sup>103</sup> Similarly, the involvement of the “Three Musketeers”, virtually ignored prior to Hunt’s work, legitimated the ABC’s policies on orchestra concerts. The ABC promoted itself as the arbiter of “musical standards” aiming for programs unadulterated by the taint of “narrow commercialism” despite the obvious commercial tactics it used to recruit an audience.<sup>104</sup> This led to a mutually reinforcing reciprocal relationship where assertions of the higher aesthetic value of the music were validated by the “higher class” composition of the audience and vice versa. In this way, the music being performed, along with its audience, acquired an elevated status that justified special treatment. This is not to say that Swinson and her associates were universally complicit in supporting the ABC. Hunt also noted the existence of female resistance to the decisions made by the male-dominated ABC hierarchy in terms of what they decided to broadcast and their selection of musicians.<sup>105</sup> Nonetheless, gender relations in the music arena replicated the power relationships within the ABC bureaucracy with women acting as helpmeets rather than full business partners.

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<sup>103</sup> Kathleen D. McCarthy, *Women’s Culture* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press 1991), 115.

<sup>104</sup> *SMH* quoting W.J. Cleary, 5 August 1936, 16.

<sup>105</sup> Hunt, *Cultivating the Arts*, 379.

The alliance between the ABC and well-to-do women's groups represented a very different alliance from that of the middle class merchants, professionals and unionists in support of the early Sydney Symphony Orchestra, described in chapter three. The business side of the orchestra was now managed by the ABC rather than a committee consisting of all interested parties. This effectively stopped cross-communication between the stakeholders, with the ABC being the main conduit for all negotiations. In any event, the ABC had successfully co-opted other stakeholders. As discussed in the last chapter, the influence of the Musicians' Union had effectively been neutered so that it no longer played a significant role in rallying the audience. Rather, the Union now readily accepted the notion that orchestral music was of a higher value, to justify their case for an increase in award rates of pay.<sup>106</sup> Similarly, the few composers who received ABC patronage were given a limited role in the ABC and, in the latter part of the 1930s, as the closing section of this chapter will now show, the Commission effectively limited the role of entertainment entrepreneurs and other groups.

### **The loss of the old musical world**

The declining role of the amateur had been apparent since the establishment of the Conservatorium discussed in chapter five. During the 1920s there was a growth in musical societies that focused on listening rather

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<sup>106</sup> W.H. S. Lamble, Musicians Union (Melbourne), to Frank Kitson, (Sydney), 13 May 1936, NBA, E156 2/6.



than playing music. As discussed in chapter six, many of these groups supported Australian composers. At the same time there was a commensurate decline in the number of amateur performing groups along with a significant decline in their status. Such changes did not go unnoticed or unmourned. In November 1929 one Spartacus Smith, writing in *The Sydney Mail* with some prescience, sadly opined that “music is dying”.

The amateur musician, once the pride of his town, is giving up. Babylon is in a hurry to get to the dance, and hasn't time to practise scales. Music-making is slowly being handed over to the professional music-makers. Soon it will transfer swiftly, and there will be only professional musicians giving us our music.<sup>107</sup>

There were a number of factors contributing to this decline. The growing entertainment industry meant there was less need for people to invent their own forms of entertainment. As *The Sun* argued, the “catastrophic” state of the music profession reflected the fact that people were buying radio sets instead of pianos and concert tickets.<sup>108</sup> The ABC, like the Conservatorium, accelerated the decline of the amateur groups.

In February 1933, the NSW State Manager, H.G. Horner announced that the ABC had decided against engaging any of Sydney's choral societies for broadcasts until standards had improved. Instead they had formed their own radio choir which was associated with the Musical Association's choir to provide any required choral content.<sup>109</sup> This news sent shock waves

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<sup>107</sup> *Sydney Mail*, 13 November 1929, 10.

<sup>108</sup> *Sun*, 7 January 1934, 2.

<sup>109</sup> *Sun*, 4 February 1933, 7.

through the choral community. Many groups had supplemented their income and elevated their profile by providing broadcasts for different radio stations through the 1920s.<sup>110</sup> Immediately following the ABC's announcement, the Royal Sydney Apollo Club (formerly the Liedertafel) called for representatives of the major musical societies to attend a crisis meeting. Arundel Orchard, then conductor of the Royal Apollo Club, suggested that the "octopus-like" grip of the Commission destroyed "individuality" and that the Commission should endeavour to "build up rather than to destroy".<sup>111</sup> Some agreed there was room for improvement in their performances, but most insisted they did not accept the "dictum" of the Sydney manager of the ABC.<sup>112</sup> The *Herald* devoted a whole editorial to the subject, mournfully noting:

Music-lovers must observe with no little concern a development of modern times in the decline of one of the important features of cultural life as represented by choral and instrumental societies ... with dwindling numbers of performers as well as of subscribers there is evidence of mutation that is not to the advantage of the musical community. ... The stately concerts of the Philharmonic were Sydney's pride in bygone years ... In those days amateur societies were in high favour. Music flourished through their existence ...<sup>113</sup>

The Philharmonic responded with a campaign to raise their musical standard, re-auditioning their choristers and subsequently making the

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<sup>110</sup> Clare Thornley, "The Royal Philharmonic Society of Sydney: The Rise and Fall of a Musical Organisation" (Sydney Conservatorium of Music, University of Sydney, 2004), 153.

<sup>111</sup> *Sun*, 4 February 1933, 7.

<sup>112</sup> *Sun*, 8 February 1933, 15.

<sup>113</sup> *SMH*, 14 February 1933, 8.

difficult decision to terminate the membership of some long-standing members. Despite these efforts the ABC refused to make an ongoing commitment to the Philharmonic Society, employing choirs on a temporary basis until it chose to enter into an ongoing contract with the Hurlstone Choral Society in 1941.<sup>114</sup> With the support of the ABC, the Hurlstone Choral Society (founded in 1920) soon eclipsed the Philharmonic as Sydney's premier choral group, continuing a tradition of public concerts and broadcasts to the present day under the name of the Sydney Philharmonia, often in combination with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra. Without ABC support the Philharmonic struggled to retain an audience and, after many difficult years, eventually folded in 1973.<sup>115</sup> The male singing group Sydney Apollo Club, the Madrigal Society and even the Conservatorium Choir met their demise during the period of the second world war.<sup>116</sup> Melbourne suffered a similar upheaval among amateur groups with a vitriolic debate erupting in the newspapers in 1936 as a result of the ABC's decision to support the Philharmonic Society at the expense of other groups such as the Postal Institute Choir and the Malvern Choral Society. A feature article in *The Age* by "Enquirer" entitled "Monopolising Music: Activities of Broadcasting Commission", presented a damning critique of the ABC, focusing on its "virtual monopoly of the better class of orchestra music in

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<sup>114</sup> Thornley, "The Royal Philharmonic Society of Sydney: The Rise and Fall of a Musical Organisation," 158, 63.

<sup>115</sup> Thornley, 185.

<sup>116</sup> *Sunday Herald*, 4 March 1952, 8.

Melbourne” and its lack of support for local talent or adequate assistance for musical societies.<sup>117</sup> The article also questioned the ABC’s use of public funds to assume the role of the entrepreneur, asking whether it was a good thing for the musical culture of Australian cities to be concentrated in the hands of a tiny group of specialists, backed by a huge Government body.<sup>118</sup>

In February 1938 J.C. Williamson took out an injunction to restrain the ABC from sponsoring public concerts, arguing that the ABC had no constitutional right to promote, organise, conduct and hold public concerts.<sup>119</sup> The ABC obtained three sets of legal advice, all of which differed as to the likely outcome if the case proceeded to court. Most agreed that its Act did provide for the ABC to organise concerts for broadcast in their studios or other suitable accommodation which did essentially cover the celebrity concerts. Not all concerts were in fact then broadcast, but as a consequence of the legal challenge, the Commission quickly changed its policy and began to broadcast at least part of each concert. The biggest challenge, however, turned out to be whether the Commonwealth had the authority to legislate under Section 51(v) of the Australian Constitution in relation to the “provision of entertainments” for transmission or only for “the provision of means to effect that service and the operation of those

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<sup>117</sup> “Monopolising Music: Activities of Broadcasting Commission”, *The Age*, 3 July 1937, 25

<sup>118</sup> “Monopolising Music”.

<sup>119</sup> *The Sun*, 8 February 1938, 9.

means”.<sup>120</sup> While in the view of the lawyers, the Act provided for the provision of the “means of communication”, there was some uncertainty as to whether it extended to the provision of the actual material to be broadcast<sup>121</sup>. This threatened to affect not only concert broadcasts but news and every other broadcast prepared and recorded by the ABC. This made it difficult for the ABC to reach a settlement with J.C. Williamson given any compromise threatened to disrupt the broader activities of the ABC. Given this, the Postmaster-General, Alexander John McLachlan, then a minister in the Lyons United Australia Party Government responsible for administration of the ABC, supported Cleary’s view that the ABC should let the action go to court.<sup>122</sup>

As it happened, the J.C. Williamson challenge was not ultimately tested in court. J.C. Williamson had its own financial problems at that time. The Taits had temporarily lost control of the J.C. Williamson board in 1937 after Victorian businessman John McKenzie purchased a majority shareholding. In taking control McKenzie split the company into property and theatrical arms, giving control of theatres to Australian and New Zealand Theatres Limited, and appointing producer/director Ernest C. Rolls

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<sup>120</sup> William Ham, Legal Opinion, Attorney-General for Commonwealth of Australia at Relation of J.C. Williamson Ltd., V Australian Broadcasting Commission, 5, *ABC Archive*, NAA, SP1588/2 Item 360 J C Williamson Ltd V ABC re. concerts

<sup>121</sup> Ham, *ABC Archive*, 6.

<sup>122</sup> A.J. McLachlan to W.J. Cleary, 6 July 1939, *ABC Archive*, NAA, SP1588/2 Item 360 J C Williamson Ltd V ABC re. concerts

as managing director.<sup>123</sup> Rolls effectively locked the Taites out of management decisions. It is not clear why, in October 1938, the new J. C. Williamson management decided not to proceed with legal action against the ABC,<sup>124</sup> although ongoing difficulties within the firm's operation no doubt contributed to this decision. Ultimately, the ABC compromised by proposing an addition to the Act to broadcast all or part of any public concert for which a charge was made.<sup>125</sup> The Taites regained control of J.C. Williamson in 1939 after Rolls was forced to resign having run up significant losses for the company.<sup>126</sup> While operating on their own, John and Nevin Tait came to an independent agreement with the ABC to broadcast recitals by the pianist Benno Moiseiwitsch and acclaimed Wagnerian soprano Kirsten Flagstad, whose tours they organised in 1938.<sup>127</sup>

By 1939, the ABC had an effective monopoly and had become "the primary importer of classical music talent into Australia".<sup>128</sup> While the Taites and other entrepreneurs continued to engage occasional concert artists such as the Vienna Boys Choir in 1939, pianist Pnina Salzman and violinist Yehudi Menuhin in 1950, violinist David Oistrakh in 1958, tenor Jan Peerce in 1959 and contralto Marian Anderson in 1962, the ABC was in a dominant position. Almost overnight, the ABC gained control of the entrepreneurial

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<sup>123</sup> Australian Variety Theatre Archive, accessed 9 May 2018 <http://ozvta.com/organisations-a-l/>

<sup>124</sup> *SMH*, 15 October 1938, 12.

<sup>125</sup> Inglis, *This Is the ABC*, 51.

<sup>126</sup> Australian Variety Theatre Archive, accessed 9 May 2018, <http://ozvta.com/organisations-a-l/>

<sup>127</sup> *Labor Daily*, 28 May 1937, 8.

<sup>128</sup> Buzacott, *The Rite of Spring*, 105.

concert management industry, organising, according to Barry Jones, “more concerts than any other organisation in the western world.”<sup>129</sup>

Aspiring entrepreneurs found it very difficult to compete with the ABC. In 1938, Archie Longden (**Image: 8.5**) signed the highly successful Australian soprano Marjorie Lawrence, then making her career in London, for a triumphant return tour of Australia in 1939.<sup>130</sup> As the worst effects of the Depression lifted, Longden had been developing his entertainment business by managing artists such as singer Florence Austral in 1934, and the Spanish dancer Madame La Meri in 1936. In both Melbourne and Sydney Lawrence’s concerts struggled to attract a strong audience. Longden claimed this was because of competing concerts organised by the ABC. In Sydney Lawrence even had to cancel one of her concerts, provoking a strong response when a tearful Lawrence appeared in front of the media to make the announcement.<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> See Barry Jones' forward in Radic, *Bernard Heinze*, xv.

<sup>130</sup> *Sun*, 22 July 1938, 5.

<sup>131</sup> *Sun* 31 July 1939, 8.



Image 8.5: A.D.M. Longden, Concert Manager, *SMH*, 31 July 1939, 9.

Longden claimed that the sheer number of concerts organised by the ABC made it difficult for entrepreneurs to compete.<sup>132</sup> Longden had become involved in organising Lawrence's tour after the ABC had declined to engage her, following an approach by Lawrence. The ABC claimed they had already booked a soprano, Lotte Lehman, to tour in 1939 and suggested Lawrence tour in 1940 instead. Lawrence was unhappy with this attitude by the ABC claiming that as an Australian singer she should have preference over a "Continental singer".<sup>133</sup> Longden capitalised on this impasse by

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<sup>132</sup> *Daily News*, 3 August 1939, 3.

<sup>133</sup> *SMH*, 12 June 1939, 10.



offering to organise a 1939 tour in line with Lawrence's original suggestion to the ABC. However, he claimed that at every turn he had been thwarted by the ABC who had continued to discourage the visit.<sup>134</sup> Longden also railed against Town Hall officials who acknowledged that they gave precedence to the ABC for concert dates allocating them some of the dates he wanted, even though Longden had applied for them first.<sup>135</sup> The Director of the Conservatorium Edgar Bainton agreed that there were "too many concerts" in Sydney, making it difficult for them all to obtain an adequate audience.<sup>136</sup> Even the highly pro-ABC *Herald* Music and Drama columnist claimed that when the Commission began giving public concerts "it was never intended that this activity should crowd individual impresarios from the field. If and when it does, musical life in Australia will be the poorer".<sup>137</sup>

Longden claimed that the ABC was "killing all incentive among Australians" to organise their own musical activities. According to Longden, "if it keeps going the way it is, it will become a great octopus with an entire monopoly over all musical culture in Australia."<sup>138</sup> The ABC, however, resented being blamed when Lawrence had ignored their advice not to come

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<sup>134</sup> *SMH*, 3 August 1939, 11.

<sup>135</sup> *Sun* 1 August 1939

<sup>136</sup> *Sun*, 31 July 1939, 8.

<sup>137</sup> *SMH*, 17 June 1939, 12.

<sup>138</sup> *Daily News*, 3 August 1939, 3.

to Australia in 1939<sup>139</sup> and claimed that Longden was whipping up resentment to obtain publicity.<sup>140</sup>

The publicity did evoke sympathy for the entrepreneur's cause but even more particularly for Lawrence herself. Concert attendances increased significantly when a women's committee convened by Mrs Crawford Vaughan (whose husband was Premier of South Australia from 1915 to 1917) was formed to promote women's attendance at Lawrence's concerts.<sup>141</sup> The ABC subsequently organised for Lawrence to appear with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra for a concert on 8 August 1939.<sup>142</sup> Longden joined the Royal Australian Air Force during the war. He later made a failed attempt to revive his career as an entertainment entrepreneur in the post-war era but found himself unable to make headway in an already crowded sphere.

By international standards, the situation was unusual. The BBC, unlike the ABC, had control of the radio waves in the United Kingdom. It also engaged an orchestra and organised some concerts, most notably the Promenade concerts. However it continued to compete with other orchestras and concert promoters. The Hungarian conductor Antal Doráti, who was the visiting conductor for the ABC in 1940 commented on the situation as follows:

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<sup>139</sup> *Daily News*, 2 August 1939, 8.

<sup>140</sup> *SMH*, 12 June 1939, 10.

<sup>141</sup> *Sun*, 3 August 1939, 9.

<sup>142</sup> *SMH*, 4 August 1939, 13.

Controlling as it does all Symphony Orchestras in Australia, the A.B.C. is much more a “Musical Institution” than any other Broadcasting Organisation I know of. Being so responsible for this whole musical life of the country, it has already, and will have increasingly more musical responsibilities and duties than a Broadcasting Organisation usually has ... This unique situation is extremely interesting and worthy of thorough analysis.<sup>143</sup>

Unfortunately, this is the first study to follow up Doráti’s suggestion.

While it is beyond debate that the ABC did improve musical standards and the establishment of orchestras was a significant achievement, when the perspective of all stakeholders is taken into account, as it is in this thesis, the ABC’s impact clearly had other less positive impacts. Buzacott’s claim that the ABC’s concert ventures represented the “triumph of a new world order” over the entertainment entrepreneurs in the “services of Mammon” simply ignores the full implications of this venture.<sup>144</sup> Writing in 1971, for instance, Claude Kingston, who worked for J.C. Williamson managing many of its concert activities during the 1920s and 1930s, had a different perspective:

The Firm’s concert management division survives, though on a heavily reduced scale, but many small men have given up the unequal struggle. I know there are compelling arguments why all high-grade entertainment, embracing theatre and music of every kind, should be run by semi-public organisations like the Elizabethan Trust and the Australian Broadcasting Commission who can operate without worrying about the box-office. There are also compelling arguments against it, and I believe

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<sup>143</sup> Antal Dorati, “General Report on the Orchestra Situation in Australia”, *ABC Archive*, NAA, SP1588/2 Item 750 Reports on Orchestras etc.

<sup>144</sup> Buzacott, *The Rite of Spring*, 45.

Australians will suffer in the long run if the private entrepreneur and the private concert manager are blotted out.<sup>145</sup>

Arundel Orchard's memoirs similar question the impact of the ABC, ending with the following comment:

Broadcasting Commissions in Australia or elsewhere have become a power in the land, so that as far as music is concerned, little can be done without taking them into consideration. Beginning as institutions merely for broadcasting, they are now almost concert agents and control musical affairs very considerably, so that it is not easy for local choirs to make satisfactory arrangements, to say nothing of the difficulty of holding their members together. To engage an orchestra of efficient players is difficult, as the best of them are absorbed by the Commission.<sup>146</sup>

While a range of musical styles now proliferated, the ABC clearly prioritised classical music initiatives.

The ABC's segmentation of the musical market failed to fully recognise the broader benefits people found in creating a shared community which embraced many different styles of music. Such people gave greater priority to building community and promoting participation rather than raising musical standards. There is some evidence that they resented that classical music had been differentiated from other forms of music and appropriated by the middle class. As late as 1952, a flyer for a concert by a group called the "Civic Symphony Orchestra" or as the *Tribune* called it a

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<sup>145</sup> Claude Kingston, *It Don't Seem a Day Too Much* (Adelaide: Rigby, 1971).

<sup>146</sup> Orchard, *The Distant View*, 192.

“people’s symphony orchestra formed by the people for the people”,<sup>147</sup>  
proudly proclaimed that “music is not a rich man’s luxury.”

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"Music is not a rich man's luxury"  
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Unionists applaud a concert for workers by the  
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**Sydney Town Hall, Saturday November 22** 1952  
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Conductor: **HAYDN BECK**

Soloist: **Igor Hmelnitzky** (playing the Tchaikowsky Piano Concerto)

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Image 8.6: Flyer for concert by Civic Symphony Orchestra, Prompt collection, NLA.

<sup>147</sup> *Tribute*, 19 November 1952, 8.

## Conclusion

In chapter five, I argued that the Conservatorium provided a means of defining and differentiating classical music from other forms of music. However, the Conservatorium could not control the musical market and had to work with government and with entertainment entrepreneurs. As DiMaggio has observed, concert promoters presented a challenge to those who wished to establish firm boundaries between classical music and other forms of music as they were readily prepared to mix genres and cross boundaries to reach out to larger audiences. Although, in DiMaggio's terms, the Conservatorium controlled the "classification" of music by erecting strong and clearly defined boundaries between art and entertainment, it did not provide for the creation of an organisational form that members of the elite could control and govern.<sup>148</sup>

Although in Australia there was no equivalent to the Boston Brahmins who, as outlined in DiMaggio's study, were able to take control of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, in the 1930s an equivalent group emerged in Sydney as a socially sanctioned group of leading culturists, not through their own economic enterprise, but through bureaucratic fiat. The "dream team" of Heinze, Brooks, Cleary, Moses and James represented a powerful group of men. While Brooks and, to a lesser extent, Cleary had strong

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<sup>148</sup> Paul DiMaggio, "Cultural Entrepreneurship in Nineteenth-Century Boston: The Creation of an Organizational Base for High Culture in America," in *Rethinking Popular Culture: Contemporary Perspectives in Cultural Studies*, ed. Chandra Mukerji and Michael Schudson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 377.

business connections, the other members of this group gained their power through cultural colonialism. They were able to exert considerable influence on music policies within the ABC while simultaneously enhancing their own careers. They created a musical environment in their own image that would have a lasting impact on Australia's musical culture. In the process classical music was sharply defined and delineated from other forms of music and Sydney lost much of the musical diversity that had been a feature of the 1920s.

This inevitably resulted in a backlash with some groups proudly asserting their right to "low-brow" entertainment as musical styles became a means of signifying social identity. The ABC attempted to neutralise accusations of elitism by claiming to appeal to "middle-brow" tastes and so suggest they were encompassing the taste of the majority of Australians. This was not a simple compromise between high and low-brow culture. Rather it imposed a cultural hierarchy that differentiated between different styles of music and musical consumers. Classical music sat at the apex of this hierarchy but became, like other musical genres, a commercial product sold to the public as a means of expressing their middle class identity. In this way the high spiritual and moral aspirations that inspired early "music lovers" became secondary to a broader commercial outlook. While classical music was certainly not to everyone's taste, there was a growing consensus that accepted the cultural hierarchy implied by middle-brow culture.





9.

## Conclusion

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Between 1889 and 1939, classical music gradually became differentiated from and privileged above other types of music-making in Sydney. By 1939, classical music was no longer an activity that was owned by, negotiated with and focused on the local community. Instead it was administered by a national bureaucracy that tightly controlled access by performers, composers and audience members. Entertainment entrepreneurs who had promoted the high aesthetic value of classical music had been assigned a peripheral role. The professional musician was clearly differentiated from and given higher status than amateur musicians resulting in a significant decline of amateur music endeavours. A Conservatorium had been established and the Sydney Symphony Orchestra had been fully constituted as a full time permanent orchestra in its modern form. The audience at classical music concerts was expected to listen rather than participate in musical events. Concert auditoriums had been darkened and audience etiquette was prescribed and ritualised, minimising the likelihood of interaction between audience members and performers. Composers and other Australian musicians had an important although subordinate role in justifying classical music as an Australian art form.

Within a short 50 year time frame, a musical transformation had taken place within Sydney.

The creation of a classical music culture in Sydney was a complex process that was widely discussed and debated within the Sydney community. The process began well before the ABC came into existence in 1932. It involved many thousands of women and men from all walks of life who gave countless hours of their time and what they could spare of their money to support musical events and musical groups that they believed would significantly contribute to the well being of the whole community. It occurred during a period of significant population growth, economic change, technological development and within the context of a growing entertainment industry.

The preceding chapters have focused on the way in which interactions between entertainment entrepreneurs, performers, musical institutions, composers and audience members shaped the creation of a classical music culture in Sydney between 1889 and 1939. At times these agents worked co-operatively together, sometimes compromising their own priorities to focus on common objectives. At other times, overt conflict arose within and between stakeholder groups that reflected some of the deep seated social issues of the day. In relating their stories it is apparent that a classical music culture was not crudely imposed from above. Nor did it occur within a social vacuum. Rather, it was a process that was mediated

through ongoing negotiation and interaction between active agents pursuing their own interests. As the process unfolded four key themes emerged.

## **1. Diversity to Monopoly**

The creation of a classical music culture in Sydney moved through two distinct stages. During the first stage, prior to the establishment of the ABC, no single stakeholder was able to assert cultural authority over the others. Rather stakeholders had to work with others resulting in a diverse musical landscape that continued until well into the 1930s. During the second stage, the ABC came to assume a virtual monopoly enabling it to assert rigid boundaries between classical music and other forms of music. It strictly controlled interaction between stakeholders and established itself as the musical authority requiring little input from the general community. During the period from 1889 to 1939 then, Sydney demonstrated characteristics similar to both musically eclectic cities such as New York and London and more rigidly controlled cities such as Boston where a unified social elite exercised cultural monopoly.

During the first stage each of the stakeholders staked out their position and their area of control. This particularly impacted amateur musicians as professional musicians deliberately sought to differentiate and elevate the role of the professional. To achieve this, they formed a union which worked to both support musicians and promote opportunities for the profession. Many amateurs became influential audience members who came

to identify themselves as particular advocates of the classical music cause. Entertainment entrepreneurs encouraged an interest in classical music by placing Australia on international touring schedules for some of the foremost musicians and singers of the era. Once orchestras were established entrepreneurs helped to popularise orchestra concerts by using them as vehicles for their international artists. In these circumstances, musical institutions prior to the establishment of the ABC found it difficult to control programs or assert performance standards on musicians who were well organised and only casually engaged in orchestral work. Significant musical initiatives such as the creation of an orchestra typically energised large sections of the community, promoting a sense of community ownership and pride in such endeavours.

Music lovers also formed influential groups which, during the 1920s, supported a diverse array of musical endeavours. In particular they provided a support base for Australian composers and encouraged the development of an Australian form of cultural expression within a classical music framework. During this period stakeholders frequently argued among and within themselves as to how or even if classical music should be differentiated from other forms of music. This encouraged a rich and lively debate as boundaries between classical music and other forms of music remained porous allowing for the continuation of many traditions including the miscellaneous concert, opera and musical theatre.

By 1936 a small oligarchy of similarly minded classical music enthusiasts within the ABC had assumed control of music programming and its budget. Uniquely in Australia a musical monopoly was formed under the auspices of a publicly funded institution rather than a privately run not-for-profit board as DiMaggio has documented in Boston. While the ABC was not able to assert the same level of control in relation to radio broadcasting as the BBC it was able to exercise a high degree of control of the musical marketplace by establishing its own orchestras and displacing entertainment entrepreneurs. This was not a premediated cultural coup. Rather, the ABC asserted its role opportunistically on an ad hoc basis taking advantage of social and economic circumstances as they presented themselves. As the ABC asserted its monopoly control, it was able to enforce rigid controls on the presentation of classical music, differentiate classical music from other forms of music and, by forming an alliance with elite social groups, control audience expectations.

After the ABC was established, music eclecticism became more of a rarity. Yet some community groups continued to organise orchestra concerts with more broadly based musical programs until well into the 1950s, demonstrating some resistance to the ABC's control of the musical marketplace.

## **2. Music makers became music listeners**

Between 1889 and 1939 the individual, subjective personal experience of listening to music became prioritised over making music or being an active participant in the musical performance. The decline of amateur music-making began early in the process of developing a classical music culture. The sound of the new Town Hall organ, the performance of orchestral music and visiting celebrity artists provided overwhelming aural experiences for many listeners which invited new attitudes toward music which obviously merited more attention than music provided as an accompaniment to other activities.

New understandings about the role and function of music which prioritised the quasi-spiritual, transcendental qualities of classical music above the social utility and functionality of other forms of music became the subject of debate in Sydney in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Such new ideas took some time to permeate throughout society. The many thousands of people from all walks of life who engaged in concert life held a range of different views about music.

Social reformers supported classical music endeavours as a means of providing a morally uplifting alternative source of entertainment for members of society they perceived to be problematic. Liberal idealists inspired by visions of a civilised, well-ordered, harmonious nation hoped to engage broad community participation in musical events where all could

share in the benefits of culture and the privileges of public life. Those with socialist sympathies were inspired by the liberating potential of the great symphonic works of Beethoven and the Russian composers. Music lovers found spiritual renewal as they absorbed themselves in a musical journey which provided for an expression of emotion in the constrained and ritualised atmosphere of the concert hall where resolution and order were inevitable. All these groups initially welcomed the opening of the NSW State Conservatorium and the creation of an orchestra which could deliver regular programs of orchestral music.

Eventually, many became disillusioned with Verbrugghen's efforts to create a world class orchestra that focused on the German masters at a time when many were counting the costs of war and suffering economic hardship. Although committed music lovers remained faithful to the ideal of an elite orchestra, letters to the editor and newspaper editorials questioned the focus on elite music-making endeavours. The alternate position was that the benefits of a musical education should be shared more broadly across the community. Yet it was difficult to revitalise the role of the amateur musician in the face of technological developments such as the pianola and the gramophone which meant that people could hear music without making it themselves. The rise of the professional musician had also relegated the amateur to an inferior role. Musical commentators observed and mourned

the passing of the amateur musician as it became increasingly noticeable during the 1920s.

With their focus on high musical standards the ABC further exacerbated the decline of amateur music-making by favouring some amateur music groups over others. Their main focus was professional music performances and they targeted an audience of listeners who became increasingly peripheral to the actual performance of music.

### **3. Classical music as an expression of national identity**

Classical music was able to attain a privileged position by becoming an essential component of a nationalist agenda. As a settler society, Australia was keen to present evidence that it could match cultural achievements in the United States and Europe as it aspired to independence. The classical music cause was able to rally support from those keen to expunge the last vestiges of what they viewed to be a “primitive” Aboriginal culture along with the stain of the country’s penal settlement past. The creation of a classical music culture represented a new era for those preoccupied with differentiating between the civilised nation they believed they were becoming and what they perceived to be a chaotic, uncivilised past. This provided assurance that Australia was ready for nationhood even though frontier wars with indigenous peoples were still a living reality and the ambitions of an organised and newly unionised working people generated



fears of renewed chaos and disorder. Classical music generated a hope for a different world where such memories and fears could be ignored.

Music was thus a rallying point for nationhood. It reflected an understanding that national identity required more than the pomp and circumstance of a military march. Rather as Australia moved towards Federation the development of a classical music culture prompted a quest for a music that might provide a spiritual expression of their unique experience as Australians.

Initially, few envisaged classical music should be an exclusive art form isolated from the performance of other types of music. Generally, classical music was understood as one of a number of forms of musical expression that might be a focal point for celebrations of national identity. Only the most dedicated music lovers believed that classical music should be performed to the exclusion of other forms of music. Yet civic reformers, entrepreneurs, music lovers and performers all agreed that classical music was a necessary component of nationhood. They felt that the temperate Sydney climate, the fresh air and the youthful vigour of the people were the hallmarks of a musical people who should celebrate their national identity with music and song.

Given the traditional focus on vocal music, many initially felt that opera captured the national spirit more than orchestral music and many

early efforts at promoting a uniquely Australian music were focused on vocal music and opera. In the days when international sporting competitions were still in their infancy, they hoped that Australia's musical achievements might bring the nation to the forefront of international attention enabling Australia to outgrow its colonial status and obtain recognition as an independent nation. The development of a national opera was to have been one of the Conservatorium's goals. Instead Verbrugghen prioritised orchestral work and initial hopes that Australia, like Italy might be an operatic nation became forgotten.

After the First World War, classical music based on a Western musical canon with strong Germanic links became antithetical to the national agenda. As a consequence the Conservatorium and groups like the British Music Society began to place a greater emphasis on the performance of British works which might also include works by Australian composers even while continuing to support the performance of the works of the Western musical canon (including German works). This allowed the continued framing of the classical music project as a nationalistic endeavour. At that time, many Australian composers found it hard to make a living. Previously they had published popular songs which provided many of them with a reasonable source of income. Australian song publications declined in the 1920s with the increased popularity of imported music now widely promoted on radio. Nor were Australian composers able to obtain much

support from musical institutions focused on performing the works written in the tradition of the European musical canon. Several of the composers discussed in this thesis instead experimented with ways of developing a spiritually enlightening form of music that was uniquely Australian. This appealed to many of the musical and literary groups which lent support to such experimentation. This in turn reinforced the nationalistic nature of the classical music endeavour.

#### **4. Gender roles, class and religion**

Fourthly, the development of classical music both mirrored and contributed to the ongoing tensions and renegotiations about gender, class and religion that were an integral component of the Federation era. Even while classical music became intertwined with an emerging national identity, a small but influential group of musicians and professional people with more exclusive tastes promoted classical music as a distinguishing sign of class. Those who identified themselves as music lovers felt that classical music could only be fully appreciated by those with more discerning tastes and while they often supported efforts to promote musical engagement more generally within the community, their focus was on creating an audience that would understand and appreciate the higher aesthetic value of classical music. They were influenced by new understandings about the role and function of music that emphasised the spiritual, cathartic experience that listening to classical music might provide and which dovetailed well with middle class behaviour

expectations and moral values. This provided a sense of identity and purpose to those who saw music as an expression of their personal ideals.

Women were able to participate in public music-making activities as an extension of their role as spiritual and moral gatekeepers on behalf of their family. By engaging in musical activities women were able to affirm their family's middle class aspirations and engage in the public sphere in a socially acceptable way. Initially, while women became more active in promoting classical music, many uniquely male forms of music-making, including brass bands, male choirs and smoke concerts, continued in parallel. Male music-making activities emphasised the social, participative role of music and did not strictly demarcate between classical music and other forms of music. As musical boundaries rigidified many of these uniquely male music-making activities declined as part of a general move away from amateur music-making. Even while women and girls constituted the vast majority of classical music students, teachers and audience members, men tended to claim the most prestigious positions within the musical establishment often obtaining such roles with support and patronage from women.

During the course of the 1920s musical listening associations acted as a focal point and meeting place for a middle class audience. This set the scene for increasing disputation in the 1930s as rival taste groups emerged

proudly claiming an identity as “low-brow”, “high-brow”, or even “middle-brow” listeners.

Perhaps most significantly, the ABC overtly promoted classical music concerts as an activity for the middle classes and more elite social groups. The ABC specifically targeted a high class audience for their celebrity orchestra concerts as a means of shoring up support for expending large amounts of money establishing orchestras. This marked a shift away from the community ownership generated by previous orchestra initiatives. Ironically, although the ABC claimed to be isolating classical music from commercial interests they were in essence packaging and promoting it in much the same way as entertainment entrepreneurs had. While there is no doubt many music lovers had a genuine love and appreciation of classical music there were clear social benefits in choosing to attend classical music concerts. It had become a mark of distinction in much the same way as other consumer products targeting the middle class.

As different musical genres became increasingly differentiated within the musical market place older ways of making music gradually became forgotten. This marked a new consensus which Bourdieu has described as an “intellectual space”, defined as a “system of common references appearing so natural, so incontestable that they are never the object of conscious

position-takings at all.”<sup>1</sup> Few now questioned why classical music should be differentiated from and privileged above other forms of music. While the ABC did not neglect other musical styles including vocal music and dance music they differentiated between classical music and other forms of music on a hierarchical basis with classical music at the apex of that hierarchy. In this context, “classical music” was one musical genre along with other musical genres designed to appeal to a particular segment of the audience.

By 1939 there were signs that classical music was laying the seeds for its demise in the post-war era when it failed to compete effectively in an increasingly segmented musical marketplace where it was not the only musical genre targeted at the middle classes. Additional research in the post-war era would be required before reaching a definitive conclusion on this issue. A starting point for such research would be Peterson’s speculation that elite groups who can display a range of distinct cultural tastes, described as cultural omnivores, are a relatively recent phenomenon emerging from more restricted or univore tastes in the earlier part of the twentieth century.<sup>2</sup>

Classical music is now more commonly associated with social status rather than with the enhanced democratic and nationalistic appeal of earlier endeavours, although some vestiges of the past do remain. Most would still

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<sup>1</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, “The Market of Symbolic Goods,” in *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*, ed. Randal Johnson (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1993), 139.

<sup>2</sup> Richard A. Peterson, “Taste as Distinction,” in *The Routledge Reader on the Sociology of Music*, ed. John Shepherd and Kyle Devine (New York, NY; Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2015), 158.

expect music of symphonic proportions at grand civic events to create a sense of occasion and unite the audience. The opening of the 2000 Olympics in Sydney was such an occasion. A post-modern tendency to mix different musical genres has done little to break down the boundaries between the performance of classical music or other forms of music even if the boundary posts are changing as a part of the ongoing efforts to increase audience patronage. There are of course exceptions. Amateurs and professionals might occasionally join together to perform music of different genres at charity events or local community events.

### **Significance of this work and implications for future projects**

This thesis has confirmed and extended some of the existing work relating to the development of musical culture as a means of social differentiation. In this sense, the creation of a classical music culture in Australia was part of a transnational process that paralleled developments in the United States, Europe and other western societies as they confronted modernisation and urbanisation. Sydney, like many cities experienced a significant transformation marking a shift from a shared musical culture to one where music became a means of social differentiation. The musical institutions created in Australia mirrored European and North American models. As in some other countries, classical music became rigidly controlled by a small musical monopoly which demarcated and enforced rigid boundaries between classical music and other forms of music.

Yet there are also several distinctive features to the creation of a classical music culture in Sydney. Nationalism features much more prominently in this account of the creation of a classical music culture than in others. Furthermore, the Government played a critical role, often intervening in ways which disrupted the balance of power between key stakeholders. The Musicians' Union in Australia played a more prominent role than elsewhere forming orchestras and promoting orchestral music as a means of expanding opportunities for its members. The existence of parallel forms of male music-making, particularly the "smoke concert" has provided an extra dimension to past accounts that focus on the key role of women in promoting classical music. Finally, my analysis of newspaper reports has enabled a stronger focus on the way in which elite music-making initiatives were contested by those more interested in promoting musical opportunities more broadly across the community.

This thesis is the first comprehensive study of the evolution of classical music in an Australian city. It links Australian musical development to the broader story of the modernisation of Australian culture, providing linkages with developments in the related fields of literature, the visual arts and popular culture. It demonstrates that the reluctance to acknowledge German cultural influences after the First World War prompted a renewed interest in unique forms of Australian cultural expression. As a consequence, composers began to explore ways music might express their relationship to



the environment, esoteric religious ideas and progressive political ideals. Similar dilemmas were confronting many early twentieth century Australian writers and artists. Debates about Australian culture highlighted tension between more conservative forces that preferred to control cultural standards and impose cultural values from above and those who wished to encourage a form of national expression that arose from the general population.

This thesis presents a complex account of the creation of a classical music culture that takes into account the perspectives of key stakeholders. It has provided many new insights making it clear that previous accounts focusing on the singular role of the ABC in supporting the development of classical music in Australia need to be considered within a broader framework. In particular, this research has revealed a highly committed and engaged audience who have to date received too little credit for their work. It has also featured the achievements of influential musicians, composers and organisers such as George Plumber, Rivers Allpress, Phyllis Campbell and Ernest Wunderlich who have not featured in previous studies of classical music in Australia. It has revealed the widespread and innovative nature of many classical music initiatives and the broad impact of classical music culture on the whole community. It suggests that more holistic approaches to exploring musical culture can provide significant insights that

prompt different ways of thinking about the way classical music has become differentiated from other forms of music.

With dwindling audiences and a scarcity of funds, classical music has now lost some of its earlier prestige and is struggling to assert its relevance in the broader cultural sphere. It is my hope that by returning to the questions and the debates about music that challenged earlier generations, we may give voice to the underlying and largely inaudible assumptions on which our own music-making is based. This may provide insights that can assist in bridging the historical divide between classical music and popular music in a way that can promote accessible and enriching forms of music-making activities for all.

In Federation era Sydney people engaged passionately with music and looked to music as a means of resolving many of the pressing problems of a growing urban society and a newly emerging nation. Music mattered to people since then as now, people came to define themselves by their musical choices. The creation of a classical music culture in Sydney evolved as the key protagonists argued and compromised about different ways to realise their dreams. Through their musical choices, Federation era Sydneysiders expressed their hopes for nationhood, articulated a vision for their community and claimed a means of expressing an individual identity.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/?q=>

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