O'Malley's 'Sight Singing and Harmony' Method: A Nineteenth-century Pedagogical Oddity

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This article documents the development and promotion of a choral music pedagogy devised and employed by a Jesuit priest, Joseph O'Malley, during the latter part of the nineteenth century in Australia. Several similar methods employing the principle of solmisation—the use of sol-fa syllables as a mnemonic aid to sight singing—were developed in Britain as part of what Percy Scholes has described as 'a most extraordinary mania' for choral singing during the nineteenth century.[1] All of these methods were essentially Protestant in origin and most had a dual purpose in both promoting congregational hymn singing and fulfilling a philanthropic role through the social reform of the working class population in Britain. O'Malley's method, however, was not intended to achieve social reform, but rather to promote Catholic worship and education. This article argues that O'Malley's 'Sight Singing and Harmony' method represents a manifestation in Australia of the Cecilian reform movement that had swept through Western Europe and, after some liberalisation, resulted in the development of a vernacular hymnody in the Catholic Church. Moreover, whether by design or otherwise, O'Malley's method represents a major departure from the pedagogical approaches to teaching sight singing that had originated from Protestant sources. Indeed, O'Malley promoted his method in opposition to British pedagogical approaches being employed in the overtly secular school systems established by the Victorian and New South Wales education departments.

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[1] Percy A. Scholes, *The Mirror of Music, 1844–1944: A Century of Musical Life as Reflected in the Pages of the Musical Times,* vol. 1 (London: Novello, 1947)*,* 3.

O'Malley's Irish background

Joseph O'Malley was born in Dublin on 7 October 1832 into a Catholic family. He was educated at Tullamore College, County Offaly between 1844 and 1846,[2] before he entered All Hallows Missionary College in Dublin in 1848. After completing the preliminary phases for entry to the Jesuit Order, he was sent to Rome in 1862. In 1868, he was ordained a priest, becoming a full member of the Society of Jesus in February 1870. He emigrated from Ireland to Melbourne in 1870.

Given his Irish origins, his upbringing and schooling in Offaly and his early training for the priesthood in Dublin, O'Malley was undoubtedly influenced by the Cecilian reform movement. This movement, by the mid nineteenth century, had begun to re-establish the role of music both within the formal liturgy of the Mass and in para-liturgical devotions—for example Eucharistic exercises, Marian feasts, and confraternities—in the Catholic Church in Ireland.[3] The Cecilian reform movement originated in Germany, and represented a reaction to more liberal musical practices of the Enlightenment such as the sung masses by Bach, Haydn and Mozart. It advocated for a return to *a capella* singing, particularly the polyphonic music of Palestrina, an insistence on Latin texts, and a reinstatement of Gregorian chant to the liturgy.[4]

Gerard Gillen has pointed out that, given the oppressive regime imposed by the English authorities, Irish Catholics during the pre-Emancipation period had been isolated from the artistic and cultural developments of Catholic Europe. It was only with the appointment of Paul Cardinal Cullen to leadership roles within the Irish Church from the mid nineteenth century that devotional reforms could begin and music was given a more central role in the Irish Church.[5] Gillen also notes that, although the Catholic hierarchy in Ireland was certainly committed to 'Latinized sacred music,' there was influence from German Catholicism through 'Song-Mass' (*Singmesse*) hymnals dating from the eighteenth century which encouraged congregations to 'participat[e] in the liturgy … by singing hymns, chorales and pieces that paraphrased or approximated the Latin that the priest said at the altar.'[6] Furthermore, as Emmet Larkin has shown, with the gradual loss of Irish language and culture under British occupation, the Catholic Church in Ireland, through this 'devotional revolution,' was able to provide its people with a new cultural heritage with which to identify.[7] Congregational hymnody was to become an integral part of this cultural reform.

O'Malley in Australia

O'Malley's arrival in Victoria undoubtedly pleased James Goold, Bishop of Melbourne, who was grateful to have another Jesuit from Ireland to take up teaching duties at St Patrick's College in East Melbourne. O'Malley taught languages, history and music and was choirmaster at

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[2] Unless otherwise referenced, biographical and other details of the life and work of Joseph O'Malley are included in Stephen James, 'Joseph O'Malley, S.J.—A Nineteenth-century Australian Music Educator' (MEd Research Paper, Deakin University, 1999).

[3] Gerard Gillen, 'Irish Catholics and Hymns,' *The Furrow* 51, no. 10 (2000): 553.

[4] Nevertheless, the president of the German Cecilian Society, Franz Xavier Witt, specifically included the promotion of congregational singing in the objectives of the Society at its inauguration in 1868. See Mary Regina Deacy, 'Continental Organists and Catholic Church Music in Ireland, 1860–1960' (MLitt Diss., National University of Ireland, 2005), 17.

[5] Gillen, 'Irish Catholics and Hymns,' 550.

[6] Gillen, 'Irish Catholics and Hymns,' 552.

[7] Emmet Larkin, 'The Devotional Revolution in Ireland, 1850–1875,' *American Historical Review* 77, no. 3 (1972): 649.

Figure 1. The Rev. Fr Joseph O'Malley, S.J., from a wood engraving by Samuel Calvert, *Popular Preachers of Melbourne* (Melbourne: Ebenezer and David Syme, 1895), Pictures Collection, State Library of Victoria, IAN17/05/75/73.
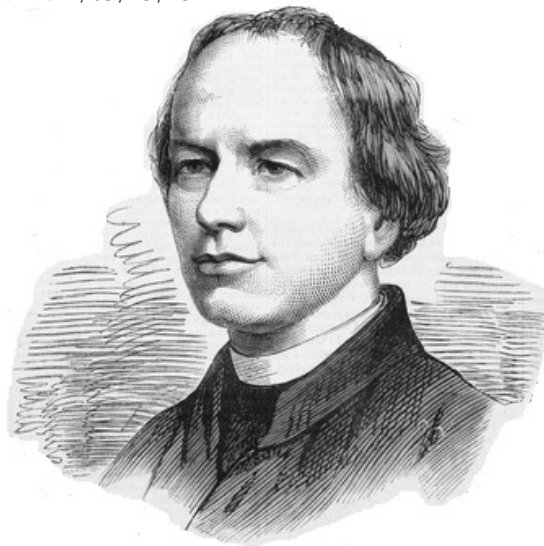
the nearby St Patrick's Cathedral.[8] It was during this time that his reputation was established as a staunch defender of Catholic education in the face of the 'free, compulsory and secular' provisions of the Victorian Education Act of 1872. He addressed this through his numerous press articles, sermons and addresses that extolled the importance of the Catholic press, the right of Catholic parents to send their children to Catholic schools, and the necessity for a Catholic school system as a means of maintaining the faith. A major statement by O'Malley on the importance of Catholic education at this time was his pamphlet *Secular Education and Christian Civilisation* (1875).[9] This work became the corner stone of his argument that the Catholic Church had the right to manage its own education system.

As well as performing priestly duties in his various parishes, O'Malley held several teaching appointments. He spent the period of 1878 to 1883 as a Superior at St Aloysius College in Dunedin, New Zealand, and then at another Jesuit school in Wellington.[10] From the beginning of 1884 until 1890 he was posted to St Ignatius College at Riverview in Sydney where he was choirmaster and conductor of the college orchestra and Rifle Club band.[11] When he returned to Melbourne in 1890, O'Malley was re-appointed to St Patrick's College but in 1892 he went to Manresa House at the Church of the Immaculate Conception in Hawthorn where he worked with the school choir and taught music at the parish school.[12] He then moved to St Ignatius Church, Richmond, from 1898 to 1903[13] before his final appointments to St Ignatius Church at Norwood, South Australia (where he taught singing using his 'Sight Singing and Harmony'

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[8] 'The Late Father O'Malley, S.J.,' *Southern Cross*, 26 Aug. 1910, 13.

[9] Joseph O'Malley, *Secular Education and Christian Civilisation* (Melbourne: Thomas E. Verga, 1875).

[10] Errol Lea-Scalett, *Riverview: Aspects of the Story of Saint Ignatius' College and its Peninsula, 1836–1988* (Sydney: Hale & Ironmonger, 1989), 128.

[11] Lea-Scalett, *Riverview*, 129.

[12] Joseph O'Malley, S.J., Curriculum Vitae, unpublished manuscript, Australian Jesuits Archive, Hawthorn.

[13] O'Malley, Curriculum Vitae.

method to school children), to Riverview again in 1904 to 1905, and lastly to Norwood in 1905. After a long illness, O'Malley died in Adelaide on 22 August 1910.[14]

The first version of what was to become O'Malley's 'Sight Singing and Harmony' method was a music manuscript entitled 'Complete Music Theory' exhibited at the 1875 Intercolonial Exhibition in Melbourne for which the exhibition commissioners awarded him a bronze medal.[15] This now non-extant work was apparently substantial in length. It was submitted for publication to Sampson, Low, Marston & Co., London, in 1881 but the Jesuit Society deemed the cost of printing the 244 pages of manuscript, estimated at between £240 and £300, too expensive and its publication did not proceed.[16]

In January 1895, the first of sixteen instalments of a serialised version of 'Sight Singing and Harmony' was published in the educational journal *Australasian Schoolmaster*.[17] After its March 1897 issue, O'Malley ceased sending instalments because, he argued, the journal did not use a suitable typeface for his music notation. Nevertheless, he submitted other articles such as 'Musical Doings in Elysium'[18] and 'The Blending of the Tonic Sol-fa with that of the Fixed Do.'[19] After a delay of five years, O'Malley finally sent the last instalments in 1903. 'Sight Singing and Harmony,' from a modern-day perspective, might seem to be an overly-complicated approach to music teaching. But in order to fully appraise its worth, it is first necessary to discuss its pedagogical antecedents and then to consider its method in some detail.

Antecedent British Music Teaching Methods and their Implementation in Australia

Percy Scholes has aptly described the nineteenth century in Britain as 'the Sight Singing Century.'[20] Christian churches and social reformers recognised the value of promoting choral singing, particularly for lower class workers in the factory and mining towns in the English Midlands, as a means of instilling moral and religious precepts.[21] Despite the relative lack of cultural sophistication in the Australian colonies during their early years, choral singing was embraced in colonial society, assuming a significant role in church, school and community life.[22] Certainly, in the case of school education, colonial authorities recognised the value of introducing singing to the school curriculum as a humanising and civilising influence. Many

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[14] 'General News. New System of Teaching Singing,' *Southern Cross*, 23 Oct. 1903, 9.

[15] Ferdinand Baron von Mueller, *Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition of 1876 (Melbourne, 1875): Official Record, Containing Introduction, Catalogues, Official Awards* (Melbourne: M'Carron, Bird and Socii, 1875), 205.

[16] O'Malley, Curriculum Vitae.

[17] The *Australasian Schoolmaster and Literary Review* was published by Melbourne printer and publisher Alex McKinley and Company for the Victorian Teachers Union from 1879 to 1910. This professional journal, which included both general and subject-specific articles, was produced monthly and totalled 369 issues. As well as O'Malley's articles, it published reports on the state of music in Victorian State Schools by school inspectors, articles by other music educators, and 'Notes of the Month' that reported news of general interest with regard to music in schools.

[18] 'Musical Doings in Elysium,' *Australasian Schoolmaster,* Jan. 1899, 128–9; Feb. 1899, 147–8.

[19] 'The Blending of the Tonic Sol-fa with that of the Fixed Do,' *Australasian Schoolmaster,* July 1899, 19–20; Aug. 1899, 35–6; Nov. 1899, 90–1; Dec. 1899, 116–18.

[20] Scholes, *Mirror of Music,* 1.

[21] See Reginald Nettel, *Music in the Five Towns, 1840–1914: A Study of the Social Influence of Music in an Industrial District* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1945); Charles Edward McGuire, *Music and Victorian Philanthropy: The Tonic Sol-fa Movement* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 16–17, footnote 20.

[22] Robin S. Stevens, 'Music: A Humanising and Civilising Influence in Education,' in *The Colonial Child*, ed. G. Featherstone (Melbourne: Royal Historical Society of Victoria, 1981), 63–72.

children, it was believed, were being brought up in an inherently degenerate social environment resulting from the influx of gold prospectors during the 1850s.[23] Singing hymns and other parts of the liturgy by mainly Protestant church congregations—Methodist, Presbyterian, Baptist and Congregational—was as much an integral part of public worship in the Australian colonies as it was in Britain, and choral music also played a prominent role in community social and recreational activities.

An important factor that facilitated the choral singing mania in Britain was the importing and adapting of European methods for teaching music reading, and many of these found their way to the Australian colonies.[24] The first—John Hullah's fixed-do solmisation method—was promoted in English choral singing and elementary schools, and was then introduced to government-supported schools in New South Wales and Victoria during the early 1850s.

Hullah's method was adapted from a system promoted by the French music teacher Guillaume Louis Boquillon Wilhem. This method employed the fixed do solmisation principle—namely, the syllables *do, re, mi, fa, sol, la* and *si* were applied to the C major scale (with C always being *do*) as a mnemonic aid to reading staff notation. Hullah published his method in a manual entitled *Wilhem's Method of Teaching Singing Adapted for English Use* in 1841[25] and produced a series of teaching aids, all of which were officially sanctioned by the British Committee of Council on Education and adopted by the Irish National Schools Board. Hullah also employed a mnemonic system of time names to facilitate rhythm reading. This was, however, as explained in Figure 2, a comparatively complex system of fixed solmisation in which the vowels of the respective sol-fa names were changed to accommodate chromatic

Figure 2. Page xv from Hullah's *Wilhem's Method of Teaching Singing, adapted to English Use under Supervision of Committee of Council on Education* (London: J.W. Parker, 1841) outlining his application of sol-fa to sight singing.

Every musician knows that C♯ and D♭ are not theoretically identical. For all practical purposes they are regarded as such, in pitch, by the greatest composers. The system of "equal tempera-ment," on which all pianofortes and most organs are now tuned, is universally accepted, even by the most skilful and refined performers on stringed instruments, capable as these are of infinite variety of intonation. We may confidently adopt a mode of tuning, even though it be theoretically incorrect, which satisfies the ears of a Joachim or a Piatti.

The modifications here proposed of the time-honoured *sol-fa* syllables would, of course, be introduced to beginners one at a time, as the necessity for each arose. The figure above is for teachers and advanced students only. When a student was first made acquainted with the scales of F or G, he would be simply told to call B♭ no longer *Si* but *Se*, F♯ no longer *Fa* but *Fe*, and so on. And in doing so he would show that he was conscious of the alteration in pitch of those notes, and knew what key he was singing in.

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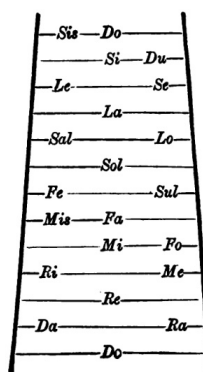
[23] Stevens, 'Music: A Humanising and Civilising Influence.'

[24] Unless otherwise referenced, details of the discussion of the sight singing pedagogies of Hullah, Waite and Curwen and their usage in Australian schools are fully described in Robin S. Stevens, 'Music in State-Supported Education in New South Wales and Victoria' (PhD thesis, University of Melbourne, 1978).

[25] John Hullah, *Wilhem's Method of Teaching Singing, adapted to English Use under Supervision of Committee of Council on Education* (London: J.W. Parker, 1841).

alterations to the syllable names in keys other than C major. Unlike many other teaching methods based on the solmisation principle, Hullah's approach did not include the placement of sol-fa syllables under staff notation as a mnemonic aid. Students of this method were expected to apply the system to keys outside that of C major, as well as to any accidentals encountered solely from memory.

Hullah's method was introduced to New South Wales public schools (then known as national schools) in 1848 as part of the Board of National Education's use of the teaching materials produced by the Irish National Schools Board. Although the New South Wales Denominational School Board did not prescribe the use of Hullah's method, it was being used in several Church of England schools by the 1860s. In Victoria, Hullah's method was used by singing masters appointed by the Denominational School Board from 1852 and by singing masters in National Board of Education schools by 1855. However, school inspectors employed by the dual education boards operating in both colonies reported difficulties with Hullah's method; for example, Inspector James Bonwick in Victoria described it as 'unsuitable for the schools of this colony: the course is too long, the exercises too tedious and the music generally not sufficiently pleasing and attractive to children.'[26]

The second method used in the colonies was the so-called 'tonic numeral' method, promoted in England by the Rev. John James Waite. His method involved the use of cipher notation—that is, the addition of the numerals 1 to 7 on a moveable tonic basis below the staff notation as a mnemonic aid for reading pitch. Numerals were 'figured' beneath each staff and any chromatic notes were indicated by adding *s* and *f* respectively for sharp and flat accidentals. Waite promoted his 1841 hymn book, *The Hallelujah or Devotional Psalmody,* in which all hymns had 'figuring' under the staff notation (see Figure 3) in English Congregational Churches. He claimed to have taught the method in sixteen counties in England, having travelled twenty thousand miles in doing so.[27]

Figure 3. An example of Waite's notation adapted by the authors from Figure 4, below.

[26] Victorian Board of National Education, Selected Correspondence, 'Reports of Teachers of Singing for 1856,' 1856/2201 (Victorian State Archives).

[27] Bernarr Rainbow, 'Waite, John James,' *Grove Music Online*, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.

Although not used in New South Wales, Waite's tonic numeral method was adopted in Victoria during the 1850s by the senior singing masters appointed to denominational schools, chief among whom was George Leavis Allan. This method became fairly standard under successive education bodies including the Council of Education and the Victorian Department of Education.

The third and ultimately most successful school music teaching method was Rev. John Curwen's Tonic Sol-fa system.[28] In 1841 Curwen received a commission from a conference of Congregational Sunday school teachers to discover and promote the simplest way of teaching music for use in Sunday school singing. Curwen made several modifications to a movable solmisation method and notational system devised by Sarah Glover. First, although using the first letter of the sol-fa syllables as a mnemonic aid, Curwen employed lower-case letters rather than upper-case forms as Glover had done. He also introduced a rhythmic notation system of bar lines, half bar lines, and semicolons to denote strong beats, medium beats, and weak beats respectively. To mark the subdivisions of beats he used a full stop for half divisions and a comma for quarter divisions, and for continuation of a tone from one beat to the next he employed a dash. As he originally conceived it, Curwen aimed to develop music literacy in three successive phases: first, reading from sol-fa notation, second, reading from staff notation in conjunction with sol-fa notation included below the stave (see Figure 4) and third, reading from staff notation alone.

Figure 4. An example of Curwen's application of solmisation to staff notation from his *Standard Course of Lessons on the Tonic Sol-fa Method of Teaching to Sing* (London, England: Tonic Sol-fa Agency, n.d. [c.1866]), 19-20.

Curwen also adapted Glover's Sol-fa Ladder to what he called the Tonic Sol-fa Modulator. Later still, Curwen incorporated French time names (adapted from Aimé Paris's *Langue de durées*) into his method as a mnemonic aid for realising the rhythm.

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[28] For a fuller explanation of the Tonic Sol-fa method and a history of its propagation in Victorian England, see McGuire, *Music and Victorian Philanthropy*, 9–29.

One of the means Curwen used to propagate his method was *The Standard Course of Lessons on the Tonic Sol-fa Method of Teaching to Sing* which was first published in 1858. However, in the 1872 edition, Curwen allowed the tonic sol-fa notation to overstep its former function as a mnemonic aid to sight singing from the staff and to become an end in itself. He took this decisive step by excluding the staff system of notation altogether from the course, henceforth relying solely on his own notational system in the publication of textbooks, choral music and even instrumental music (see Figure 5).

Figure 5. An example of Curwen's Tonic Sol-fa notation from his *Standard Course of Lessons and Exercises in the Tonic Sol-fa Method of Teaching Music* (London, England: Tonic Sol-fa Agency, 1872), 93.

The Tonic Sol-fa method was introduced to Australia by James Churchill Fisher, who employed the method to teach adult singing classes in Sydney from 1853.[29] However, it took some years before the method was adopted in schools. After unsuccessfully trialling Hullah's method in New South Wales schools, William Wilkins—the Council of Education's school inspector—suggested the use of the Tonic Sol-fa method. This was officially adopted in 1867 when James Fisher was appointed as the Council's Singing Master. In Victoria, a protracted battle was waged by Tonic Sol-fa's principal advocate, Samuel McBurney, for Curwen's approach to be recognised alongside existing staff notation methods. This was finally achieved in 1890.[30]

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[29] Robin S. Stevens, 'James Churchill Fisher: Pioneer of Tonic Sol-fa in Australia,' *Proceedings of the XXIInd Annual Conference of the Australian Association for Research in Music Education*, ed. J. Southcott and R. Smith (Melbourne: AARME, 2002), 173.

[30] 'Education Act 1890–Regulations (16 October 1890), *Parliamentary Papers (Victoria)*, vol. 4, 1890, App. I, 33–4.

'Sight Singing and Harmony'

From the outset, Joseph O'Malley asserted that his sight-singing method was an effective and efficient way to learn music, stating that 'the theory of music, usually so complicated, can be made so simple that it may be mastered by any intelligent person in a few hours of reading.'[31] O'Malley maintained that 'Sight Singing and Harmony' was superior to both Hullah's fixed-do method and Curwen's movable-do method because it was able to successfully 'unite the tonic sol-fa system with the ordinary staff notation so as to enable both to be taught at the same time.'[32] The method was designed for both adults and children, although O'Malley seems to have directed most attention to its use with children.

'Sight Singing and Harmony' was divided into three sections—the first part explained the theory of the different components of music, the second part provided exercises that taught these components, and the third part briefly explained counterpoint and fugue, concluding with advice on classroom management. The first section introduced a set of new solmisation syllables for letter name notes. O'Malley explained that he did not use Hullah and Curwen's solmisation names because they 'obstinately refused to fall in with my views' and he was 'reluctantly … compelled to discharge them.'[33] Instead, O'Malley designated each of the notes within an octave range to start with a specific consonant—for most notes, the same consonants as Hullah and Curwen employed—but followed by a particular vowel to indicate sharp, natural or flat. Pitched notes were classified into three types—the natural notes ended in the vowel sound *o*, the sharp notes sounded *i* (as in 'pier'), and the flat notes sounded *a* (as in the sound 'are'). For example, the note A in the musical score would be sung Lo, A sharp would be Li, and A flat would be La. The table below indicates the names that O'Malley used for each note.

Figure 6. Representation of O'Malley's solmisation syllables, adapted from *Australian Schoolmaster*, Nov. 1899, 91.

Letter Names	C	D	E	F	G	A	B
Sharp	Di	Ri	Mi	Fi	Si	Li	Bi
Natural	Do	Ro	Mo	Fo	So	Lo	Bo
Flat	Da	Ra	Ma	Fa	Sa	La	Ba

These note name mnemonics were associated with the written staff notes and, using Waite's moveable number (cipher) system, numbers to indicate the position of notes in a particular key were used where necessary. These numbers were therefore the only movable aspect of the method and obviously included to provide a tonal base for melodic lines. It was presumably intended that singers would audiate (mentally hear) the pitch of notes before realising the syllable as a sung note. The English folksong 'The Harp that Once' (see Figure 7), shows how O'Malley combined standard staff notation with his numbering system. The song is written in the key of 'Ma' (E flat).

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[31] 'Sight Singing and Harmony,' *Australasian Schoolmaster*, Jan. 1895, 123.
[32] 'Sight Singing and Harmony,' *Australasian Schoolmaster*, Feb. 1895, 144.
[33] 'Sight Singing and Harmony,' *Australasian Schoolmaster*, Mar. 1895, 165.

Figure 7. An example of O'Malley's numbering system applied to staff notation, *Australian Schoolmaster,* Mar. 1897, 161 (State Library of Victoria).

As illustrated, O'Malley also used a modified form of staff notation. The natural notes—those on white keys of a keyboard—were written as open or unfilled, while the flats and sharps were filled.

O'Malley identified the greatest difficulty in sight singing was 'to read the [pitched] notes rapidly and to read them in time.'[34] To indicate the rhythm—essentially, the duration of notes—O'Malley used the mnemonic names La and Va. The name La, in the context of a conducting pattern in quadruple metre, was for the 'Down, Left, Right and Up' notes—that is, notes of beat value—and Va for the other notes that may come in between these beats—that is, notes off the beat. O'Malley demonstrated this in an exercise (Figure 8) that contained what he referred to as 'the chief difficulties in time.'[35] In this exercise he introduced a set of rhythm names to teach children note rhythms that had no set values but were relative to the beat. Note the use of the conducting pattern D (down), L (left), R (right) and U (up) to indicate rests for the whole or part of the first, second, third and fourth beats respectively.

Figure 8. An example of O'Malley's rhythmic mnemonic system, 'Excercise Containing the Chief Difficuties in Time', *Australasian Schoolmaster,* May 1896, 216 (State Library of Victoria).

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[34] 'Sight Singing and Harmony,' *Australasian Schoolmaster*, Dec. 1895, 100.

[35] 'Sight Singing and Harmony,' *Australasian Schoolmaster*, May 1896, 215.

O'Malley required students to learn all the intervals, scales, and cadences in the different keys by rote using both syllable names and numbers. After learning all of these through regular drilling, pupils could commence sight-singing simple tunes and supposedly master these quickly and easily. O'Malley maintained that it should

> not be imagined that all this repetition is a waste of time. The little children require all this drilling, and the more grown up ones will get through it quickly. But even if they spent weeks over it the weeks would be well spent. Change of key is naturally for children a serious difficulty. They are learning to master it without even knowing there is a difficulty.[36]

To teach the various components of sight reading, the teacher was to start with the most frequently used elements and, once these were mastered properly, proceed to the next most frequently used. This process of regular and thorough practice would continue until all the elements had been learnt by rote. In the case of learning intervals, the teacher would start with the most frequently used interval, the second—as 'most of the work is done in 2nds'[37]—and continue until all the intervals had been learnt. Figure 9 shows a sample interval exercise, which progressively introduces more of the intervals.

Figure 9. O'Malley's 'Exercis on the Intervals', *Australasian Schoolmaster,* Nov. 1896, 81 (State Library of Victoria)

Cadences were taught the same way—learnt by rote in all of the different keys using both solmisation syllables and numbers. Figure 10 shows O'Malley's list of the different cadences.

O'Malley recognised that there were what he referred to as 'dry and boring' aspects of music reading, but he argued that 'instead of being put off as long as possible, they should be attacked at once and conquered.'[38] An example of this approach was the way in which he

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[36] 'Sight Singing and Harmony,' *Australasian Schoolmaster,* May 1896, 216.

[37] 'Sight Singing and Harmony,' *Australasian Schoolmaster*, Feb. 1895, 144.

[38] 'Sight Singing and Harmony,' *Australasian Schoolmaster*, Dec. 1895, 100.

Figure 10. O'Malley's cadences chart, *Australasian Schoolmaster,* Nov. 1896, 82 (State Library of Victoria)

Com. Ch rd.		Semits.		Three Primary Cadences.			Two Secondary.		8ve Higher.	Semits. Repeated.	

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135	15	43	71	21	71	51	321	671	671	43	71
Domoso	Doso	Fomo	Bodo	Rodo	Bodo	Sodo	Morodo	Lobodo	Lobodo	Fomo	Bodo
Soboro	Soro	Dobo	Fiso	Loso	Fiso	Roso	Boloso	Mofiso	Mofiso	Dobo	Fiso
Rofilo	Rolo	Sofi	Diro	Moro	Diro	Loro	Fimoro	Bodiro	Bodiro	Sofi	Diro
Lodimo	Lomo	Rodi	Silo	Bolo	Silo	Molo	Dibolo	Fisilo	Fisilo	Rodi	Silo
Mosibo	Mobo	Losi	Rimo	Fimo	Rimo	Bomo	Siflmo	Dirimo	Dirimo	Losi	Rimo
Folodo	Fodo	Balo	Mofo	Sofo	Mofo	Dofo	Losofo	Romofo	Romofo	Balo	Mofo
Barofo	Bafo	Maro	Loba	Doba	Loba	Foba	Rodoba	Soloba	Soloba	Maro	Loba
Masoba	Maba	Laso	Roma	Foma	Roma	Bama	Sofoma	Doroma	Doroma	Laso	Roma
Ladoma	Lama	Rado	Sola	Bala	Sola	Mala	Dobala	Fosola	Fosola	Rado	Sola

RELATIVE MINOR KEYS

613	63	21	si 6	76	si 6	36	176	sosi 6	sosi 6	21	si 6
Loaomo	Lomo	Rodo	Silo	Bolo	Silo	Molo	Dobolo	Fisilo	Fisilo	Rodo	Silo
Mosobo	Mobo	Loso	Rimo	Fimo	Rimo	Bomo	Sofimo	Dirimo	Dirimo	Loto	Rimo
Borofi	Bofi	Moro	Libo	Dibo	Libo	Fibo	Rodibo	Siliko	Silibo	Moro	Libo
Filodi	Fidi	Bolo	Mifi	Sifi	Mifi	Difi	Losifi	Rimifi	Rimifi	Bolo	Mifi
Dimosi	Disi	Fimo	Bidi	Ridi	Bidi	Sidi	Moridi	Libidi	Libidi	Fimo	Bidi
Rofolo	Rolo	Sofo	Diro	Moro	Diro	Loro	Fomoro	Bodiro	Bodiro	Sofo	Diro
Scbaro	Soro	Doba	Fiso	Loso	Fiso	Roso	Baloso	Mofiso	Mofiso	Doba	Fiso
Domaso	Doso	Foma	Bodo	Rodo	Bodo	Sodo	Marodo	Lobodo	Lobodo	Foma	Bodo
Folado	Fod	Bala	Mofo	Sofo	Mofo	Dofo	Lasofo	Romofo	Romofo	Bala	Mofo

taught the different note values. He gave each note a monetary value ranging from three pence to four shillings saying that 'if you explain to them [child learners] the value of a note in coin, they will pick it up far more quickly than if you insert it into their heads in the usual way.'[39]

O'Malley stressed that, when teaching sight-singing, children needed to learn to sing in all keys but, by starting with the most frequently used keys, children would learn to establish their sounds, thus avoiding any one key becoming dominant in their inner ears. O'Malley criticised Hullah's fixed-do system for effectively limiting singers to music in the key of C major.[40] If pupils only learnt to sight sing in the one key, they would be unable to sight sing music that modulated. O'Malley defined modulation as 'when we proceed first from a chord of unrest, and thence to one of repose.'[41] He pointed out that children needed to learn the pivot notes that were used to modulate, namely the sharpened fourth and fifth and the flattened seventh. O'Malley recommended the following activity when teaching modulation: 'A very useful exercise to give children from a pitch pipe [is] the same note seven times and let them treat it each time as a different number. Thus: 1-7, 2-1, 3-2-1, 4-3, 5-1, 6-5-1, 6-7-1, 7-1-1-7, 7-1, 6-7-1, 5-1, 4-3, 3-4, 3-2-1, 2-1 etc.'[42] O'Malley also provided the sample modulation exercise shown in Figure 11.

At the beginning of 'Sight Singing and Harmony,' O'Malley claimed that he was able to teach harmonic progression[43] by simplifying the rules of music theory so that even children could learn them.[44] In order to understand harmonic progression, pupils needed to see the

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[39] 'Sight Singing and Harmony,' *Australasian Schoolmaster*, May 1896, 215.

[40] Interestingly, as Kenneth Simpson points out in Appendix 1 of *Some Great Music Educators* (Borough Green, Kent: Novello, 1976), 116, Hullah himself recognised fixed do solmisation as problematic when modulating to keys outside C major in his *Time and Tune in the Elementary School* (London: Longmans, Green, Reader & Dyer, and Lamborn Cock, 1875).

[41] 'Sight Singing and Harmony,' *Australasian Schoolmaster*, May 1895, 201.

[42] 'Sight Singing and Harmony,' *Australasian Schoolmaster*, Nov. 1896, 182.

[43] 'Sight Singing and Harmony,' *Australasian Schoolmaster*, Apr. 1895, 183.

[44] 'Sight Singing and Harmony,' *Australasian Schoolmaster*, Jan. 1895, 123.

Figure 11. An exercise demonstrating O'Malley's approach to accommodating modulations, *Australasian Schoolmaster*, Dec. 1896, 101 (State Library of Victoria).

different vocal parts written correctly in their proper positions on the music stave using standard music notation. This would allow pupils not only to see the music written correctly but to hear the relationships between the parts. His basic rule for harmony was 'give each part an air [a melody line] and let two of the parts run in thirds and sixths.' To develop a harmonic sense, pupils would learn all of the parts and this would allow them to experience sight-singing in harmony and then progress to writing out their own simple harmony parts using thirds and sixths.

O'Malley maintained that those children with a talent for composing should aim to write four-part harmony arrangements using this approach. He called such arrangements 'symphonies' and identified three ways of writing them. The first was by using the melody directly, the second by writing a variation of the melody, and the third by composing an original melody over the existing harmonic structure. He provided the arrangement shown in Figure 12—the first page of 'Cadet Rouselle'—as an example of a 'symphony.'

In the final section of 'Sight Singing and Harmony,' O'Malley briefly discussed contrapuntal forms and recommended the study of Cherubini's 'Counterpoint and Fugue.' He also gave advice about classroom management for singing practice and how to set up the singing classroom: 'It was very important that the best singers should be behind the others,'[45] with the teacher singing to the class and listening attentively to what the children echoed back. He further advised that the teacher should take particular care not to strain the children's undeveloped vocal chords and, by employing the various singing exercises, develop the children's voices more naturally.

Given both O'Malley's lifetime efforts to develop and promote his 'Sight Singing and Harmony' method, and its apparent neglect by his contemporaries, several questions arise;

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[45] 'Sight Singing and Harmony,' *Australasian Schoolmaster*, Dec. 1895, 99.

Figure 12. An example of the arrangement of a pre-existing melody as a 'symphony,' *Australasian Schoolmaster*, Mar. 1897, 162 (State Library of Victoria).

however, a lack of definitive evidence necessitates that the answers can remain only speculative. With existing pedagogical methods such as Waite's tonic numeral method and Curwen's Tonic Sol-fa not only available but already widely and successfully in use in school, church and community settings, the first question is, why did O'Malley feel the need to develop a rival new choral music pedagogy?

As Charles McGuire argues, Tonic Sol-fa, not only represented an 'easy, cheap and true' means of enabling adults and children to learn to sing at sight, but had a much larger role as a form of 'Victorian philanthropy.' Part of this philanthropic role was to morally reform those participating in its classes and performances and, by extension, to become a means for transforming society for the better though music. McGuire argues that this wider societal purpose occupied three broad fronts—temperance, missionary work (both domestic and foreign) and universal suffrage.[46] Many of the Tonic Sol-fa movement's socially-reforming objectives were common to other nineteenth-century choral music methods such as those by Glover, Hullah and Mainzer.[47]

O'Malley, on the other hand, appears to have given little consideration to the potential for music to have a morally- and socially-reforming influence. Rather he saw church music and particularly congregational singing much more narrowly as an act of worship, as a means of attaining emotional and spiritual elevation, and as a medium for redemption. Perhaps demonstrating the influence of the Cecilian reform movement, O'Malley fervently believed in the central role of music in Catholic worship as he demonstrated in a sermon preached at the re-opening of the organ of St Francis Church in Lonsdale Street, Melbourne in 1873. Here, O'Malley referred to several Old Testament sources to establish that, as he summarised it, 'music exercises a powerful influence over the heart, and the Catholic Church avails herself of this influence for a good end.'[48] He argued that, essentially, music had a cathartic function,

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[46] See McGuire, *Music and Victorian Philanthropy,* chapters 2, 3 and 4.

[47] McGuire, *Music and Victorian Philanthropy*, 16–17, footnote 20.

[48] ''Catholic Intelligence. Victoria. Diocese of Melbourne. Re-opening of the Organ of St. Francis' Church', *Advocate*, 29 Nov. 1873, 6.

stating that it had 'the twofold effect of exciting and relieving the feelings … the relief of hearts weighed down by affliction.' In addition, O'Malley stressed the aesthetic function of music as a channel of communication to God. The Church, he asserted, understands that 'the soul is to rise from the beauty of the *creature* to the beauty of the *Creator*,' and that 'the beauty of the music in many of our Church hymns … reach[es] the soul by the natural channels God has appointed to this end.' As demonstrated in this sermon, his preoccupation with the emotional and spiritual attributes of church music for his Catholic brethren seems to have excluded any broader philanthropic or socially-reforming objectives for the wider population. Twenty years later, in an article entitled 'Discourse on Music,' O'Malley reiterated these ideas almost verbatim, asking in conclusion, 'how many a soul would be preserved from sin by singing those holy sentiments … would be brought back to repentance by some simple air sung.' [49]

O'Malley may well have wished to differentiate his method from those with a wider societal purpose such as Tonic Sol-fa. Despite publishing his 'Sight Singing and Harmony' articles for a wide audience, O'Malley's purpose may have been limited to promoting the method principally for the Catholic community. Moreover, given his fervent belief in the right of the Catholic Church to establish and promote its own school system as a means of maintaining the faith, O'Malley may have resisted the use of existing choral music methods to avoid any potential influence of Protestantism on Catholic worship, particularly with regard to congregational hymnody. Waite's method had a direct connection to Congregationalism, as did Curwen's, and O'Malley may have been keen to avoid any association with Protestantism. Accordingly, he seems to have deliberately promoted his method as an instrument through which the Catholic faith could be maintained. Thus, O'Malley's sole purpose in promoting congregational singing was to enhance the act of Catholic worship and thereby to 'save the souls' of the Catholic faithful.

Further, as Dianne Gome suggests, unlike Italian Catholics who represented a smaller immigrant group, the more numerous Irish Catholics coming to Australia during the colonial period brought with them a rich heritage of folk music, but little experience of congregational singing.[50] Perhaps O'Malley perceived this absence, and therefore developed and promoted his method of teaching singing as being more aligned with Catholic rather than Protestant religious and cultural life. Indeed, with the Catholic Church so strongly resenting the Education Act of 1872 and its provision for secular education, the serialisation of 'Sight Singing and Harmony' can be viewed as an attempt on the part of the Catholic Church to separate itself from Protestant and non-denominational schools and to maintain its own independent school system.

Given that 'Sight Singing and Harmony' does not appear to have been widely adopted, the second question that arises is why O'Malley's method had so little appeal for other music teachers? There is no evidence to suggest that O'Malley's method was employed other than by O'Malley himself at his various teaching posts across eastern Australia and New Zealand, and there is no evidence that this method was used elsewhere.

Perhaps the main reason that O'Malley's contemporaries ignored his 'Sight Singing and Harmony' is that they did not regard it as superior to other methods, particularly Tonic Sol-

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[49] 'Discourse on Music', *Advocate*, 20 May 1893, 7–8.
[50] Dianne Gome, 'Australian Catholics and Congregational Singing: An Historical Investigation,' *Australian Catholic Record* 74, no. 4 (1997): 442.

fa. In his introduction to the serialised version of 'Sight Singing and Harmony,' O'Malley dogmatically claimed that his new method was superior to those of both Hullah and Curwen.[51] Later, in his article 'The Blending of the Tonic Sol-fa with that of the Fixed Do,' O'Malley maintained that he was able to teach sight singing using standard music notation, unlike Hullah and Curwen. He presented his method as the 'new T.S.F. [Tonic Sol-fa].'[52] He outlined the weaknesses, as he saw them, in Hullah's fixed do and Curwen's movable do methods and concluded that, by adopting his 'new T.S.F.,' the problems presented by these two methods would be solved. O'Malley's main issue with Tonic Sol-fa was that each pitched note had a different sol-fa name depending on the key in which it occurred. The Tonic Sol-fa notation, which avoided the traditional music staff, would cause such confusion that the learner would not even be aware that they were reading music. The problem with Hullah's fixed solmisation method, O'Malley maintained, was that the 'same note name was, in this system, constantly applied to different intervals.'[53] He provided an example to demonstrate this point (Figure 13). If O'Malley had used the correct 'old names' (Hullah's pitch names), then these three intervals would have been named 'Doma,' 'Domi,' and 'Dimi,' instead of using 'Domi' for all three. This incorrect naming of the intervals suggests that O'Malley may not have properly understood how the 'old names' were applied in different tonal contexts.

Figure 13. A comparison of the 'old' solmisation names with O'Malley's 'new' names, *Australasian Schoolmaster*, Nov. 1899, 91 (State Library of Victoria).
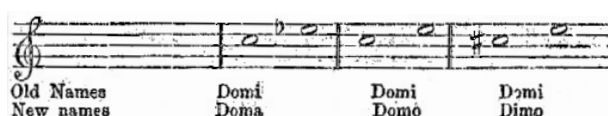
The only known criticism of 'Sight Singing and Harmony' was by Arthur Batson, Secretary of the Victorian Tonic Sol-fa Association, who drew attention to O'Malley's faulty interpretation of Tonic Sol-fa principles in a letter to the editor of the *Australasian Schoolmaster*: 'The Rev. Mr. O'Malley's efforts to simplify the teaching of music are interesting, but it is to be regretted that his want of practice in the Tonic Sol-fa method has led him to misrepresent its value as a teaching instrument.'[54] With criticism such as this and the inherent complexity of 'Sight Singing and Harmony,' there may have been little incentive for music teachers to adopt the method. Moreover, O'Malley's claims may have antagonised other music teachers who were content to employ other simple and proven methods. O'Malley's intransigent approach was a characteristic of his volatile personality, and as 'a meddlesome priest' (his nickname was 'Geyser'[55]) he had certainly antagonised his ecclesiastical superior Bishop Goold on several occasions.

Apart from his music articles, O'Malley also contributed to Catholic Education in late-nineteenth-century Victoria and New South Wales by being its staunch, unceasing and uncompromising defender. 'Sight Singing and Harmony,' together with his religious, musical

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[51] 'Sight Singing and Harmony,' *Australasian Schoolmaster*, Nov. 1895, 123–4.

[52] 'Sight Singing and Harmony,' *Australasian Schoolmaster*, Nov. 1899, 90.

[53] 'Sight Singing and Harmony,' *Australasian Schoolmaster,* Nov. 1899, 91.

[54] 'Sight Singing and Harmony,' *Australasian Schoolmaster,* Mar. 1895, 173.

[55] Lea-Scalett, *Riverview*, 128.

and educational articles, are a legacy to his commitment as a Jesuit to Catholic education and culture in colonial Australia. 'Sight Singing and Harmony' is, from a contemporary viewpoint, an exceptionally complicated teaching method and, aside from O'Malley himself, it is unsurprising that it was not adopted, even by other Catholic music teachers and choir directors. Accordingly, the method appears today as a pedagogical oddity and, in its day, appears to have had little if any impact on school music education or community choral singing. Nevertheless, it still deserves to be recognised in our music education history because it is an example of a unique music teaching method developed in Australia during the late nineteenth century. Indeed, if it had not been serialised in the *Australasian Schoolmaster,* this method and the work of its inventor and promoter may well have been lost to posterity.

About the Authors

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