

# Theme and Variations: Benefit Concerts and other Funding Mechanisms in Australia at the End of the Long Nineteenth Century

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Between 1890 and 1915 in excess of 460 women left the security of their Australian homes and families to embark on overseas music study in London and other European study centres, at a time when women were still relatively restricted, by virtue of their gender, to access tertiary education and professional careers.<sup>1</sup> Australia was, however, in the process of becoming an independent nation, and women's lives and careers were forging ahead in new and modern directions. The passing of the Married Women's Property Act in all the Australian colonies between 1884 and 1897 heralded a period of change in family dynamics with the mother now placed on 'some sort of equality with the father.'<sup>2</sup> This changing family dynamic gave the mother more involvement in her daughter's schooling and overall education than previously, and 'women began to have legal personalities separate from their husbands and fathers.' This allowed them to take advantage of the new educational opportunities available to them.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See Lorraine Granger-Brown, 'The Hallmark of European Approval: The Exodus of Australian Female Musicians to London and European Study Centres between 1890 and 1915' (PhD thesis, University of Melbourne, 2019).

<sup>2</sup> Coral Chambers, *Lessons for Ladies: A Social History of Girls' Education in Australasia 1870–1900* (Sydney: Hale and Iremonger, 1986), 48.

<sup>3</sup> Chambers, *Lessons for Ladies*, 55.

Music had always formed part of the well-bred young lady's education and was 'the core to a lady's curriculum ... and to her culture.'<sup>4</sup> According to Jill Halstead, the music education on offer was, however, not sufficient to 'enable a woman to compete as a professional musician,' and was little more than 'instrumental tuition.'<sup>5</sup> This emphasis on the superficialities of a music education was seen by some female campaigners at the start of the twentieth century as preventing women from being able to focus on the more "'academic" and "serious" subjects' needed if they were to prove their intellectual capacity and 'gain access to higher education.'<sup>6</sup>

By 1908 the women's movement had seen all of the Australian states legally recognise women's rights, and the question of young women's access to education and future employment opportunities had become an emotive topic for debate.<sup>7</sup> Women were slowly beginning to emerge from an imposed 'homogenous section of humanity,' where education had been seen as less important for them than for their male counterparts.<sup>8</sup>

By the early 1900s, the University of Melbourne Conservatorium, the Albert Street Conservatorium, Melbourne, and the Elder Conservatorium, Adelaide, all offered tertiary music study courses, although New South Wales did not have a conservatorium until 1916.<sup>9</sup> Approximately 12% of the total cohort of women undertaking overseas study between 1890 and 1915 had already studied music at a tertiary level at an Australian conservatorium, and many had obtained recognised qualifications. Relatively equal numbers chose to study in London and across continental Europe. These included approximately 52% vocalists, 32% keyboard players and 16% string players. A large proportion, around 40%, took up places at prestigious music-teaching institutions.<sup>10</sup>

Many factors were involved in the decision to undertake overseas music study. Some of the key motivations that drove these decisions included the desire to emulate the success of Nellie Melba (1861–1931), the prospect of studying in places associated with the great composers and musicians of the past, and the belief that overseas study was essential to to pursue a career in music.<sup>11</sup>

This article will focus on one significant element of these journeys: the concerts given in their honour prior to leaving Australia. In addition, it will identify and discuss some of the more elaborate funding mechanisms associated with these benefit concerts that extended beyond the provision of a modest gift and good wishes. It will briefly discuss how the Australian concerts differed from the benefit concerts in nineteenth-century London, and will examine the apparent parallels between the individual musician's social status and the types of concert afforded to them. Examples are drawn from the cohort of Australian women who undertook formal music study overseas between 1890 and 1915.

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<sup>4</sup> Chambers, *Lessons for Ladies*, 172.

<sup>5</sup> Jill Halstead, *The Woman Composer: Creativity and the Gendered Politics of Musical Composition* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1997), 87.

<sup>6</sup> Mary Irene Cathcart Borer, *Willingly to School: A History of Women's Education* (Guildford: Lutterworth Press, 1976), 163, quoted in Halstead, *The Woman Composer*, 102.

<sup>7</sup> Chambers, *Lessons for Ladies*, 31.

<sup>8</sup> Chambers, *Lessons for Ladies*, 31.

<sup>9</sup> Doreen Bridges, 'The Role of Universities in the Development of Music Education in Australia, 1885–1970' (PhD thesis, University of Sydney, 1970), 2.

<sup>10</sup> Granger-Brown, 'The Hallmark of European Approval.'

<sup>11</sup> Granger-Brown, 'The Hallmark of European Approval,' 52–8.

These concerts were usually described as either 'farewell' or 'benefit' concerts and were intended to provide the musician with good wishes and gifts to help them on their way and to remind them of home. Benefit concerts were relatively commonplace and usually involved local musicians and the community coming together in support of the young musicians. They often garnered support, attendance, and ultimately funding through the involvement of influential community members, and funds raised were frequently used to assist the musicians towards the costs of their tuition and travel.

The Australian benefit concerts are in essence the same as the benefit concerts described by Simon McVeigh in nineteenth-century London.<sup>12</sup> The only real difference was that the Australian benefit concerts were specifically for the purpose of raising funds to support the young musician's overseas study, while those discussed by McVeigh were typically annual events by leading London musicians with the purpose of making a profit.<sup>13</sup> The majority of the benefit concerts held in Australia were one-off events that were well publicised in the press and supported by the local community. In some instances, however, they became quasi-concert tours where several concerts were given, and often culminated in a grand finale prior to the individual's departure.

Given the popularity of the benefit concert, it is interesting to note that the majority of women who left Australia for overseas music study appear to have left without any formal send-off—as many as 65%—and it is unclear why this might have been the case. It could be as simple as press reports not being published for the concerts or perhaps it was indicative of how some families felt about women pursuing music study as a possible pre-cursor to careers as professional musicians. There was still a social stigma attached to women studying music for any reason other than as a 'delightful pastime or a social duty,'<sup>14</sup> with the vocalists in particular feeling the impact of this stigma more so than their instrumental counterparts. Women from the middle-classes with any ambition to perform publicly as singers were often steered into only performing in 'concert or oratorio settings removed from the dangerous influence of the theatrical milieu.'<sup>15</sup> Perhaps the families of these young women were trying to distance themselves from the fact that their daughters were considering careers as professional singers.

Although it is difficult to draw absolute conclusions, there is evidence to suggest that whether a benefit or farewell concert was given depended on the social standing of the musician and their family, and if they did receive one, whether it took a private or public form. Women such as Daisy Madden (1873–1946), the daughter of Sir John Madden, Chief Justice and Acting-Governor of Victoria, did not appear to have any kind of benefit or farewell concert when she left in 1895, and I have not come across any evidence to suggest that her parents opposed her decision to undertake music study overseas.<sup>16</sup> The same situation applied to Violet Clarke (1879–1909), daughter of Sir George Sydenham Clarke—Governor of Victoria between 1901 and 1903—when

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<sup>12</sup> Simon McVeigh, 'The Benefit Concert in Nineteenth-Century London: From "Tax on the Nobility" to "Monstrous Nuisance",' in *Nineteenth-Century British Music Studies* 1 (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999), 244.

<sup>13</sup> McVeigh, 'The Benefit Concert,' 244.

<sup>14</sup> Paula Gillett, *Musical Women in England, 1870–1914: 'Encroaching on All Man's Privileges'* (New York: Saint Martin's Press Inc, 2000), 6.

<sup>15</sup> Gillett, *Musical Women in England*, 151.

<sup>16</sup> Several newspaper articles reported that Madden was studying singing as a 'superior accomplishment' and not in pursuit of a profession. 'Gleanings,' *Evening Journal*, 4 Jan. 1896, 3.

she left in April 1903,<sup>17</sup> although one newspaper report stated that ‘society yearns to set going their farewell ‘at homes’ to the most popular person yet known in the viceregal quarters. Up to the present only one was arranged, Mrs Mars Buckley’s.’<sup>18</sup> I was not able to find any reports of this event and like many ‘at homes’, I assume that it was a private affair with invited guests only, as the Mars Buckleys were a well-known and influential family and part of an elite social circle.

Vera Deakin (1891–1978), daughter of Sir Alfred Deakin, a previous Prime Minister of Australia who retired from Parliament in 1913—the same year that his daughter left for London—also appears to have left without a farewell or benefit concert.<sup>19</sup> Ruby Rich (1888–1988), another young woman from a privileged background—her father was a successful businessman—left Australia in March 1907. Rich’s father strongly disapproved of her desire to become a professional pianist and in an interview in 1973 she explained why this was the case: ‘when it became clear I was determined to be a professional pianist my father took it very hard. It wasn’t done. People would think he couldn’t support me.’<sup>20</sup> Rich left Australia without a benefit concert, possibly her father’s way of not drawing attention to her departure for fear of the social stigma he attached to her endeavours.

From the seventy-five Australian women who attended either the Royal Academy of Music, London (RAM), or the Royal College of Music, London (RCM) between 1890 and 1915,<sup>21</sup> approximately seventeen had benefit concerts reported in the press, with fifteen of these occurring between 1900 and 1915. From this small group, the majority of the women appear to have been from the working or middle classes, with their father’s occupations variously detailed as warehouseman, farmer, post and telegraph master, builder and contractor, marine engineer, an inspector of Crown purchased land, and retired. From these same seventeen women, twelve had scholarships to attend their chosen institutions, although some of their overall costs may not have been covered by these scholarships.<sup>22</sup>

For those who did not have formalised benefit concerts, they appear to have enjoyed more intimate and informal farewells with friends. Eileen Boyd (1890–1975), a vocalist from New South Wales, was presented with a purse of sovereigns at a ‘farewell conversazione’ at the ABC rooms in Sydney.<sup>23</sup> Purses of sovereigns proved to be popular gifts and would have been most useful to the young women.

<sup>17</sup> It is interesting to note, however, that following the untimely death of Violet in 1909, a collection of her poetry was published later that year by William Heinemann. Her father wrote the preface and in it he clearly supports her decision to study music and her aim to have a career as a singer. This is written in hindsight and in extremely difficult circumstances. In it he stated ‘looking back on my daughter’s short and eager life, I feel that music was her earliest inspiration and her greatest gift ... Later she studied strenuously in Paris and in London, and it seemed at one time, as if she would make a notable career as a singer. This was not to be.’ Violet Clarke, *Leaves* (London: W. Heinemann, 1909), v.

<sup>18</sup> ‘The Gay Metropolis,’ *Critic*, 11 Apr. 1903, 37.

<sup>19</sup> ‘Alfred Deakin Timeline,’ *Deakin University Library*, <http://www.deakin.edu.au/alfreddeakin/alfred/timeline.php>.

<sup>20</sup> ‘Five Famous Women Who Won’t Retire,’ *Women’s Day*, 3 Sep. 1973. Cutting from Ruby Rich Archive, University of Sydney. Folder 17, Shelf 40.

<sup>21</sup> Records exist in the student/scholar’s registers at the RAM or the RCM. The Australian press frequently referred to attendance at one or other of the London music schools and were often incorrect. I have only included the details here of students who appear in the actual registers. RCM Scholars Register 1, 1883–1893; Scholars Register 2, 1893–1913; Scholars Register 3, 1913–1930 and Student Registers 4, 5, 6, 7, 10, 11, 1894–1918. RAM Student Registers A–H, 1893–1910 and Registers 1–4, 1910–1915.

<sup>22</sup> Various Scholars and Student Registers of the RAM and the RCM.

<sup>23</sup> ‘Society Doings in Sydney,’ *Australasian*, 3 Dec. 1910, 50.

The majority of the 'benefit' concerts can, however, be best described as vehicles through which the local community could publicly acknowledge the skills and contributions of the young musicians. Fundraising was a way to thank the performer for their past musical community involvement, and assist towards their future endeavours. In these instances the women were usually acknowledged by a gift, often with the addition of money. Some examples include Linda de Leuse (dates not known), a vocalist from Tasmania, who was given the gift of a travelling bag inscribed with a message and a purse of sovereigns,<sup>24</sup> whereas Kathleen Narelle (dates not known) received the less useful gift of a gold medal and chain prior to leaving for London.<sup>25</sup>

In many cases the benefit concert became an indispensable element in the young aspirant's journey to overseas study and some elaborate and creative mechanisms were used in order to secure funding. For some women with several benefit concerts, the sums of money earned could be substantial. Amy Castles (1880–1951), a vocalist from Bendigo, falls into this category, with audience numbers for her concert at the Exhibition Building, Melbourne, on 31 May 1899, ranging between 9000 and 14,000 people. Regardless of which of these figures is most accurate, the attendance was huge and the ensuing profit was equally generous, estimated at £800.<sup>26</sup> Her earlier concert on 28 May 1899 had also netted £476, and in addition she received a donation from an anonymous source of a further £100, bringing the grand total to approximately £1376.<sup>27</sup> When one considers that the Associated Board scholarships (Exhibitions) provided tuition at one of the London music schools for three years and were valued at approximately £300, this was a huge sum of money, and not typical of the outcomes for most of these women.<sup>28</sup> Funds raised usually ranged from around £60, as was the case for Nellie Archer (1884–?), a vocalist from Tasmania,<sup>29</sup> up to £300 and £400 in the case of Beatrice Miranda (1881–1964), a Melbourne vocalist, in 1906.<sup>30</sup> Other women who received generous funds from their benefit concerts include: Catherine Mary Ryan (Marie Narelle) (1870–1941), a New South Wales vocalist who left Australia in 1902 and received £300, a diamond ring and a dressing case;<sup>31</sup> and Eva Mylott (1875–1920), a vocalist from New South Wales who left in 1902 and received approximately £290.<sup>32</sup>

In some cases, quite elaborate strategies were employed in order to maximise community support and funds. Several examples of these strategies are detailed below and almost all of

<sup>24</sup> 'Launceston,' *Mercury*, 27 Mar. 1899, 3.

<sup>25</sup> 'In the Armidale Diocese: Notes and News: Concert at St. Ursula's,' *Catholic Press*, 1 Dec. 1910, 34.

<sup>26</sup> 'Intercolonial: Victoria: Amy Castles' Benefit Concert,' *North Western Advocate and Emu Bay Times*, 2 June 1899, 3.

<sup>27</sup> This equates to approximately \$211,000 today. 'Pre-Decimal Inflation Calculator,' *Reserve Bank of Australia*, <https://www.rba.gov.au/calculator/annualPreDecimal.html>.

<sup>28</sup> The RCM and the RAM combined forces in Britain in 1898 to provide a system of graded music examinations under the mantle of the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music (ABRSM). David C.H. Wright, *The Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music: A Social and Cultural History* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2013), 63. These examinations and associated scholarships (Exhibitions) gradually moved into other centres throughout the Empire, quickly becoming an important provider of scholarships in Australia, with a total of fourteen Australian women receiving Exhibitions between 1906 and 1914.

<sup>29</sup> 'Launceston,' *Mercury*, 23 Sep. 1898, 3.

<sup>30</sup> 'A Lady's Letter from Melbourne,' *Mornington Standard*, 28 Apr. 1906, 2.

<sup>31</sup> 'Miss Marie Narelle,' *Illawarra Mercury*, 31 May 1902, 2.

<sup>32</sup> 'Miss Eva Mylott's Farewell,' *Sydney Morning Herald*, 27 Nov. 1902, 3.

them involved borrowing money, interest repayments, contractual obligations and in at least one instance the intervention of the Supreme Court. The following specific examples detail a Trust Fund, a Share Syndicate, a Public Fund, a fund to supply instruments, and a Syndicated voice arrangement.

### The Trust Fund

Clara Kleinschmidt (1890–1972), who went by the stage name Clara Serena, was a farmer's daughter who came to the attention of local philanthropists, David Waite and Arthur Lough.<sup>33</sup> The Serena Trust was established and sold a thousand shares at £1 each in order to raise £1000 for her overseas tuition. A board comprising Waite his daughter, and a Mr F. Basse was established to look after her interests.<sup>34</sup> In return Kleinschmidt was bound for a period of ten years. The agreement stipulated that she kept the first £300 from her annual earnings and was to repay the amount owing to her subscribers plus an additional 20% of any further income earned during this period.<sup>35</sup> A newspaper in 1912—four years after Kleinschmidt had commenced study at the RCM—reported of Waite's desire to take over the financing of Kleinschmidt himself for the remainder of her training. He proposed to pay for the shares at face value plus 5% interest, however, this proposal was later rejected.<sup>36</sup> These were quite detailed financial negotiations and one wonders if Waite's interest was driven solely by goodwill or the prospect of making financial gains on his own initial investment. Kleinschmidt's career was interrupted by the outbreak of WW1, at which time she returned to Australia.<sup>37</sup> It is not clear if she repaid her subscribers, but she went on to enjoy a successful career in opera in London and continental Europe.<sup>38</sup>

### A Share Syndicate

Margaret Gard, (stage name: Margherita Grandi) (1892–1972), a Tasmanian vocalist, provides another example of a relatively complex financial plan. In Gard's case a local resident, Mrs Hempseed, was preparing to travel to London to visit her own daughter, Vera Hempseed (Vera Tasma) (1887–?), who was studying music.<sup>39</sup> She agreed to provide Gard with board and lodging for twelve months in Paris,<sup>40</sup> but did not intend to cover all her expenses. A newspaper article reported that Mathilde Marchesi (1821–1913) had agreed to take Gard as a student,<sup>41</sup> and the figure of £400 was suggested as a reasonable amount to try to fundraise for her. One assumes that Hempseed was already well-versed in the costs associated with her own daughter's vocal

<sup>33</sup> 'A Legacy of £10,000 to Madame Clara Serena: Mrs Macmeikan's Will,' *Barrier Miner*, 9 Mar. 1932, 3.

<sup>34</sup> 'About People,' *Daily Telegraph*, 14 Oct. 1908, 10. Elizabeth Waite became a friend of Kleinschmidt and acted as her chaperone when she went to the RCM in 1908. Waite later left Kleinschmidt £10,000 in her will when she died on 5 April 1931, under her married name of Mrs Elizabeth Macmeikan. 'A Legacy of £10,000 to Madame Clara Serena: Mrs Macmeikan's Will,' *Barrier Miner*, 9 Mar. 1932, 3.

<sup>35</sup> 'A Legacy of £10,000 to Madame Clara Serena: Mrs Macmeikan's Will,' *Barrier Miner*, 9 Mar. 1932, 3.

<sup>36</sup> 'A Talented Adelaide Singer: Studies in Europe: Generous Offer to Help,' *Advertiser*, 30 Nov. 1912, 23.

<sup>37</sup> 'The Ladies Letter,' *Punch*, 21 Dec. 1916, 34.

<sup>38</sup> Jo Peoples, 'Serena, Clara (1890–1972),' *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/serena-clara-13191/text23881>.

<sup>39</sup> Vera Hempseed, soprano, left Australia on the Orvieto II on 25 February 1910 and studied in Paris, London and Rome with a variety of teachers including Marchesi, Ponsot, Franklin Clive, Henry Martyn Van Lennep, Mano Colgni, and Otto de Tullie.

<sup>40</sup> 'Meetings: Miss Maggie Gard's Farewell,' *Mercury*, 18 Jan. 1911, 3.

<sup>41</sup> 'Miss Maggie Gard: Cabled Opinion of Madame Marchesi,' *Mercury*, 30 Mar. 1911, 4.

tuition and would have guided her supporters towards this decision. A syndicate was formed of eighty shares at £5 each and an executive committee was appointed. By September 1911 Gard was studying under Marchesi in Paris and the Tasmanian public and the funding committee were kept abreast of her progress. An article in the *Mercury* on 9 September indicated that the number of shares available for purchase had risen to one hundred and would now be 'bearing deferred interest at the rate of 4 per cent.'<sup>42</sup> A later article described an additional fundraising activity: 'A Maggie Gard Garden Fête,' in order to 'pay off the interest of the debt incurred by the Maggie Gard syndicate.'<sup>43</sup> It would appear that additional funding was required as Gard had been ill with typhoid in Paris for three months and the funds were directly related to that period of illness.<sup>44</sup> By June 1912, Gard was studying under Jean de Reszke, one of the most famous teachers of the time, and was paying four guineas for a thirty minute lesson. Newspaper articles urged the committee to continue fundraising for Gard as 'there could be no doubt that shareholders would get their money back when the girl began to reap her golden harvest, as no doubt she would.'<sup>45</sup> This requirement to pay back the money to shareholders had, to my knowledge, never previously been discussed. Additional fundraising events continued and the share price was again raised, this time from £5 to £6.<sup>46</sup>

By February 1914 the efforts of the Tasmanian people had finally come to fruition with the report that Gard had won the Open Scholarship to the RCM from approximately six hundred entries. This was worth £100 a year for a period of three years,<sup>47</sup> and was an outstanding achievement of which her Tasmanian supporters would have been extremely proud. Presumably, however, some investors may have felt that study at the RCM was not really necessary, as Gard had left Hobart in February 1911 for Paris and London, and completed her study with Marchesi and Jean de Reszke. If she took up her place it would be at least another three years before she returned, and six years since she had first left Hobart. This represented a significant period of time before any of the subscribers got their money back.

Student records show that Gard actually entered the RCM as a student in September 1912 and continued until April 1914.<sup>48</sup> She then re-entered as a scholar having won the Open Foundation Scholarship on 4 May 1914 and remained there until June 1917. The Tasmanian public were kept updated of her progress from her debut in London at Queen's Hall on 31 October 1918 to her debut in *Carmen* in Paris in 1921 and many other successful performances. A letter to the editor of the *Mercury* in February 1924 from a subscriber to the fund, some thirteen years after Gard had first left Hobart for Paris, stated:

About 11 or 12 years ago a syndicate was formed to raise money to enable a young Tasmanian, the fortunate possessor of a splendid vocal organ, to proceed to England, and the continent, with the view of obtaining the best finishing training possible. The money was subscribed amongst the music loving public on the condition that should the young lady ever succeed in her profession, and be in a position to perform her

<sup>42</sup> 'Miss Maggie Gard: Cabled Opinion of Madame Marchesi,' *Mercury*, 30 Mar. 1911, 4.

<sup>43</sup> 'Maggie Gard Garden Fete [sic],' *Mercury*, 10 Jan. 1912, 3.

<sup>44</sup> 'Fair at St. Virgil's: Benefit for Miss Maggie Gard,' *Mercury*, 22 Jan. 1912, 6.

<sup>45</sup> 'Maggie Gard Fund: More Money Required,' *Mercury*, 19 June 1912, 3.

<sup>46</sup> A euchre tournament (the largest ever held in Hobart) and dance were held on 17 July 1912 ('Maggie Gard Fund,' *Mercury*, 18 July 1912, 3), and a fair in October 1912 were further events organised for fundraising.

<sup>47</sup> 'Maggie Gard: Her Great Success: Wins a Scholarship,' *Mercury*, 28 Feb. 1914, 4.

<sup>48</sup> Student Register 10, RCM, 3788.

part of the contract, the subscribers should have their money refunded, with interest added. We have heard nothing definite since regarding the success, or otherwise, of our protégé. On behalf of the subscribers to the fund I shall be pleased to inform the public what has been the result of our venture.<sup>49</sup>

A Mr W.G. Harwood responded, explaining that only Gard's tuition was covered and that her scholarship did not include any financial assistance for board or other expenses. He explained that her circumstances were challenging and many young women in her position would have given up and gone home. He pointed out that between £3000 and £4000 were required and that she was currently studying with Madame Calvé and preparing for an appearance at the Opera Comique, Paris.<sup>50</sup> He finished by stating, 're[:] paying back funds. I have every confidence that she will, and with interest, but first of all she has to learn, and that takes years of slow intelligent study.'<sup>51</sup>

Gard continued her study, completing it in Milan between 1923 and 1925 and did not return to Tasmania. To date, I have not found any evidence to suggest that she ever repaid the debt to the subscribers or indeed that she had made any agreement to do so. However, with the prolonged efforts of her Tasmanian supporters and her success, one would have expected that she would have at least returned home and given something back to her supporters.

#### **A Public Fund and Supreme Court Action by a Musician's Teacher against the Local Press**

Another interesting set of circumstances arose around the benefit concert for a Queensland musician, Margaret Ferguson (dates not known). Ferguson had a keen interest in composition and had already written and performed works across several instruments and genres including organ, violin, voice, and piano and orchestra, before leaving for overseas study. Community fundraising activities to support this study, however, took an unusual twist, culminating in action being taken in the Supreme Court by her teacher, Charles Henry Allen. Allen took action against the proprietors of the *Herald*, Charles Moffat Jenkinson and Walter Joseph Mahoney, alleging defamation and claiming damages of £1000. This suit was directly related to printed material that Allen had circulated outlining the need to send Ferguson to London to further her music study. It also highlighted her talents and success as a composer and stressed the fact that Ferguson would be the first musician from Warwick—and even Queensland—to 'seek the suffrages of the old country.' Subscriptions were to be paid to the 'Ferguson Fund.'<sup>52</sup> A further article was published by the proprietors of the *Herald* on 26 January 1906 suggesting that Allen's motives were not only for the benefit of the student, but for himself, stating:

Warwick wails. Can anyone suggest why a certain music teacher wants to entice the young Scotch lassie composer to London? Is he on the look out for cheap trip or a big advertisement? It's all a bluff. What about the subscription circulars? All skite.<sup>53</sup>

<sup>49</sup> 'Maggie Gard Syndicate,' *Mercury*, 4 Feb. 1924, 8.

<sup>50</sup> This is a large amount of money, and Harwood stressed the importance of not rushing the process. He pointed out that study and Gard's work towards preparing for the operatic stage took time and patience, and financial assistance was a necessity if she were to succeed.

<sup>51</sup> 'Maggie Gard Fund,' *Mercury*, 11 Feb. 1924, 8.

<sup>52</sup> 'Defamation Case: C.H. Allen v. "The Herald." Damages Awarded £145 and Costs,' *Warwick Examiner and Times*, 16 May 1906, 5.

<sup>53</sup> 'Alleged Defamation: Action Against the Member for Fassifern,' *Queensland Times, Ipswich Herald and General Advertiser*, 15 May 1906, 2.



The implication was that Allen was inducing Ferguson to study in London and that the funds raised were in part to assist him in having a cheap trip. This in turn made it a 'fraudulent scheme in order to advance himself and his profession.' Allen felt that he had been injured, both personally and professionally, by this defamatory material, with some 5000 copies of the paper printed and circulated. Several witnesses were called and questioned with regard to Allen's character and whether or not they themselves considered the material defamatory. Allen won his case and was awarded damages of £145 plus costs.<sup>54</sup>

It is hard to believe that such a course of action could be linked to a young musician's benefit concert—an uncomfortable situation for all concerned. Additional concerts were arranged at Centennial Hall, Brisbane, on 28 November 1906 and at her home town of Warwick on 6 December 1906, where several of the items performed were works by Ferguson herself.<sup>55</sup> Before these scheduled concerts, an article in November 1906 stated that the fund had amassed a total of £112.<sup>56</sup> This reflects the importance and prestige associated with some farewell or benefit concerts, particularly within smaller regional communities. Ferguson went on to study with one of her former teacher's masters, Mr Gadsly, at the Guildhall School of Music, London.<sup>57</sup>

### Fundraising to Supply a Musical Instrument

Allen appeared undeterred by the above set of circumstances, and some years later he was again involved with a benefit concert for another of his students, the violinist Dorothy Curran (1892–?). Curran had been one of the performers in Ferguson's benefit concert in December 1906, playing several of Ferguson's compositions including a duet for violin entitled *Sweet Memories* with Ethel Holden, and a complex violin solo, *Chant de Tzigane*.<sup>58</sup> Networking and support between local artists was common at this time and there are many instances where a supporting artist at one benefit concert later enjoyed her own benefit concert prior to overseas study. Curran is one such example. Curran was awarded an Associated Board Exhibition for the RAM in 1910, and in recognition of her ability the community planned to organise benefit concerts for her.<sup>59</sup> Curran requested that she did not want any money from these concerts. Instead, Allen selected five violins for her to try,<sup>60</sup> from which she chose an extremely rare model by Matthias Albani, dating from 1665 and valued at approximately £50. A complete listing of donors and donations was published in the *Warwick Examiner and Times* on 16 December 1911.<sup>61</sup> This is a relatively unusual example of a gift purchased that is directly relevant to the recipient's musical study.

<sup>54</sup> 'Defamation Case: C.H. Allen v. "The Herald." Damages Awarded £145 and Costs,' *Warwick Examiner and Times*, 16 May 1906, 5.

<sup>55</sup> The range of Ferguson's works and the various instrumental genres covered by her suggests her early promise as a composer. The following works were performed: *Leider Ohne Worte* in D flat Major, *Chant de Tzigane* and *Réverie* for violin solo; *Memory's Isle*, for bass voice; *Elle et Lui*, for solo piano; *Sweet Memories*, for violin duet; *Alwyn* for orchestra; *The Crown of Life*, for unidentified female voice. 'Benefit Concert,' *Warwick Examiner and Times*, 8 Dec. 1906, 3.

<sup>56</sup> 'Miss Margaret Ferguson's Farewell Concert,' *Warwick Examiner and Times*, 10 Nov. 1906, 5.

<sup>57</sup> 'Miss M. Ferguson,' *Warwick Examiner and Times*, 4 May 1907, 8.

<sup>58</sup> 'Benefit Concert to Miss Margaret Ferguson: Highly Successful Function,' *Warwick Examiner and Times*, 8 Dec. 1906, 3.

<sup>59</sup> 'Musical Honors [sic],' *Mount Barker Courier and Onkaparinga and Gumeracha Advertiser*, 19 May 1911, 2.

<sup>60</sup> 'Miss Dorothy Curran,' *Warwick Examiner and Times*, 18 Oct. 1911, 5.

<sup>61</sup> 'Miss Dorothy Curran Violin Fund,' *Warwick Examiner and Times*, 16 Dec. 1911, 3.

Curran enjoyed great success at the RAM winning the bronze medal for violin and sight-singing in the midsummer term of her first year (1912), the silver medal for violin in her second year, and achieving her final certificate in violin in her third year.<sup>62</sup> Initially the Exhibition was for a two-year period but owing to her excellent progress this was extended for an additional year. But her continued success created potentially serious problems for her. A letter from Allen in July 1914 drew the public's attention to the fact that although Curran's scholarship had already been extended for twelve months to December 1914 with a further extension possible to December 1915, she would not be able to cover her living expenses without additional funding. Allen included an excerpt from a letter from her London based teacher, Rowsby Woof that stated:

Let me beg you not to be so foolish as to send for her a minute before the expiration of her scholarship. I shall do my best to get it renewed for next year, and, if successful, I must ask you to allow her to remain at all costs ... it will make a very great deal of difference to her work and prospects when she returns. I want to send her back head and shoulders above anyone in the colony both in knowledge and executive powers, and then her future cannot but be a good one. You must not send for Dorothy. It would be suicidal. You will have reason to be proud of her when she returns.<sup>63</sup>

This is a most impassioned plea from her teacher. The Academy—out of their respect for her musical prowess—bestowed a further honour on her by allowing her to use a valuable Guadagnini violin for the duration of her scholarship, bequeathed to the Academy by Luigi Strauss. Allen finished his letter by stating, 'I feel confident that her friends will come forward to help her now, especially as her present need is not the result of failure, but of great success. I have already £12 in hand, and should feel grateful if you would receive subscriptions.' Unfortunately, no further information is available regarding the fundraising activities undertaken to assist Curran. Her student record, however, shows that she was enrolled at the RAM until the end of the Michémas term 1915.

### A Syndicated Voice

Another exceptional set of circumstances arose surrounding one of Melba's protégés, the singer Elizabeth Newbold (c.1890–?)<sup>64</sup> where it was reported that 'her voice had been floated into a company.'<sup>65</sup> A syndicate was established offering shares to interested parties at twenty one shillings each with the capital raised facilitating her overseas training.<sup>66</sup> There was such a strong interest in her future that she later attracted the interest of a figure—only ever referred to in the press as an English entrepreneur—who offered to buy out the original syndicate members although this did not appear to happen.<sup>67</sup> Like Maggie Gard, Newbold was bound to perform one hundred concerts in a year upon her return to Australia, with the proceeds expected to assist in recouping the syndicate's costs. This seems like an excessive and highly exploitative number of concerts for her to have agreed to. It is however, more likely to have

<sup>62</sup> Student Register 2 1913, RAM.

<sup>63</sup> 'An Appeal: Help for a Music Student,' *Warwick Examiner and Times*, 11 July 1914, 4.

<sup>64</sup> Newbold left Australia in May 1908 and studied with Marchesi.

<sup>65</sup> 'Theatrical Notes,' *Queensland Figaro*, 18 Aug. 1910, 19.

<sup>66</sup> 'The Elizabeth Newbold Syndicate,' *Punch*, 11 June 1908, 16.

<sup>67</sup> 'Floated into a Company,' *Clarence and Richmond Examiner*, 5 July 1910, 7.

resulted from general ignorance and a lack of understanding of the musician's craft from an otherwise well-meaning group of individuals. Melba had reportedly said to Newbold at the start of her study in Paris, 'guard your voice as you would a crown of gold.'<sup>68</sup> One wonders if this was said in light of such a potentially questionable decision by Newbold.

Unlike Gard, Newbold returned to Australia in 1911 and gave three concerts in Melbourne in December.<sup>69</sup> Following her Melbourne appearances the original syndicate met on 27 May 1912 and agreed to 'release her of her engagements so that she might be unfettered in her endeavour to gain further distinction in the profession.'<sup>70</sup> Newbold continued her studies in grand opera for a further two years in Milan between 1913 and 1915 with Signor Pizzi,<sup>71</sup> eventually settling in America where she enjoyed a career as a professional singer.<sup>72</sup>

The importance of the benefit concert as part of the ritual of overseas study, cannot be overstated. It was a facilitator of the journey, as without it, for some at least, the journey would not have occurred. For many, it was a visible means of demonstrating to their communities and Australia that they had achieved a certain level of success and were ambitious enough to pursue their musical goals in the largest arena of them all. The benefit concert, in conjunction with the attention of the local press, was one of the main vehicles through which these women could publicly acknowledge and thank their teachers, colleagues, family members, and local communities prior to their departure. This important relationship between the local press, the individual musician, and the public meant that there was a dialogue between all interested parties that continued to evolve, even when the musicians were on the other side of the world. This created an ongoing feeling of community involvement in the futures of these young women. The outcomes for these women were remarkably positive with approximately 51% of them going on to enjoy visible careers, either directly or indirectly related to their music training, post study.<sup>73</sup>

#### About the Author

Lorraine Granger-Brown recently completed a PhD at the Melbourne Conservatorium of Music. Her research interests include women in music, British and Australian music history, and the influence of J.C. Williamson on Australian theatre.

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<sup>68</sup> 'Floated into a Company,' *Clarence and Richmond Examiner*, 5 July 1910, 7.

<sup>69</sup> 'A Successful Singer,' *Sunday Times*, 26 Nov. 1911, 2.

<sup>70</sup> 'About People,' *Examiner*, 31 May 1912, 5.

<sup>71</sup> 'Music,' *Punch*, 22 Apr. 1915, 8.

<sup>72</sup> 'Social,' *Table Talk*, 26 July 1923, 33.

<sup>73</sup> Granger-Brown, 'The Hallmark of European Approval,' 251–5. By 'visible careers' I am referring to details of careers that are supported by publicly available documentary evidence, either through archival records, newspapers, or other publications.