

Review Article

The Invention of Australian Music

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Reconsidering a selection of key documents and artefacts, this review article traces a 'brief history of early colonial Australia in nine musical objects'. Composed, devised, improvised, and merely imagined 'works', each is identifiable in some way as Australian. They are presented roughly chronologically, and include complete and partial survivals, and records of lost works; Indigenous and settler, gentry and working class music; musicians' and some non-musicians' music; most by men, but - when the documentary record admits them - quite a few by, for, or about women. Each is an early example of an ongoing stream in Australian colonial music, and serves as a useful historical paradigm/pattern for parsing clusters of related later materials, some of which are also briefly introduced. Demonstrating the ongoing process of musical and national invention from the 1770s into the 1840s, they challenge us to re-engage with 'the muddy issues of Australianness', and suggest that acts of cultural naming, claiming, and owning are not necessarily so superficial or problematically nationalistic as they are often assumed to be.

Anticipation is to a young country what antiquity is to an old.¹

The late Peter Sculthorpe once characterized Australian music as emerging finally in the 1960s 'Minerva-like, fully grown', while pointing out that it had 'of course, been there all the time; it was simply awaiting the right moment and, above all, the conjunction of a handful of caring people'.² It was then 1979, and Sculthorpe was paying his dues to people like his own musical mentors, Bernard Heinze and Donald Peart, who in their roles as policy-makers, practitioners, and educators were crucial advocates of modern Australian art music in the middle and late 1960s. Sculthorpe also had in mind dedicated practitioners such as John Hopkins and the Austral String Quartet, and reviewers and writers like Curt Prerauer and Roger Covell, for taking the new wave of Australian concert music seriously. From the academy, Sculthorpe's personal pantheon of caring people included the likes of ethnomusicologists Alice Moyle and Trevor Jones, and musicologists, high among them—not least, but not only, as Heinze's biographer—Therèse Radic.

But was he right about the 1960s? Across the musical spectrum, caring people who went looking at that time found a great deal more than Sculthorpe probably had in mind: Johnny O'Keefe and The Seekers as well as Richard Meale and Malcolm Williamson, Little Pattie and the Australian Ballet, Slim Dusty and Joan Sutherland, Jimmy Little's 'The Royal Telephone', and George English's *Death of a Wombat*—and into the 1970s, George Dreyfus's

¹ Epigraph to the poem 'On Reading the Controversy between Lord Byron and Mr. Bowles', in Barron Field, *First Fruits of Australian Poetry*, 2nd ed. (Sydney: [s.n.], 1823).

² David Hush, 'Interview with Peter Sculthorpe', *Quadrant* 23/12 (December 1979), 33.

Rush, the Australia Council, and the National Anthem referendum. But by then such was the clamour for Australian music, they might as easily have settled for a less impressive list.

Nor, as Sculthorpe well knew, was it the first time Australians had gone looking for Australian music. In the 1950s they responded warmly to John Antill's *Corroboree* ballet, Graeme Bell and Joan Hammond, the Elizabethan Opera Company and Harold Blair singing 'Maranoa Lullaby', and most of them probably assumed they had always known it when Percy Jones and Burl Ives taught them 'Click go the Shears'. Between the wars, there was Varney Monk's *Collit's Inn*, Gladys Moncrieff and Essie Ackland, Peter Dawson's campaign to teach 'The Song of Australia' to every school child, Chauvel's *Uncivilised* (in 1936, the first soundtrack to include recorded snatches of an Indigenous corroboree), the Music Week movement, and the Australian Broadcasting Commission. Generation by receding generation, it had been much the same since the days of Charles Packer's oratorio *Crown of Thorns* and Vincent Wallace's ours-by-adoption opera *Maritana*. Indeed, Australian music probably first came of age in the 1850s and 1860s, when gold rush booty underwrote the first inter-colonial tours, by Catherine Hayes and Anna Bishop, Miska Hauser and Ali-Ben Sou-Alle, the Carandinis and the Howsons, Lyster's Opera, Rainer's Serenaders and the Lancashire Bellringers, linking audiences in colonial capitals and regional towns together in a proto-national circuit that, well before Melba put Australia 'on the map', put it on international touring schedules.

Earlier still, the colonial press habitually noted the regular arrival of emigrating creative professionals as proof of the community's advancement in the arts. After one of William Vincent Wallace's Sydney concerts in June 1836, a reviewer mused on the colony's particular good fortune in having recently welcomed not only Wallace (who, incidentally, arrived in Sydney on the same day as Charles Darwin) but former Hobart musician John Philip Deane, and the artists Conrad Martens and William Nicholas:

The encouragement given in a young Country to the Professors of the Fine Arts, is the best and most certain indication ... of the nascent taste, refinement and liberal spirit of its community—and it has been, therefore, with especial pleasure that we have witnessed first, the arrival on our shores of [these] men ... and then the enlightened appreciation of their merits ... and it must, we think, be a source of secret satisfaction to [them] that they may be now laying the foundation-stone of future schools of art that may flourish in this far land, when the Institutions of the older nations of Europe (... whose fame has probably already passed its zenith) may be dying and dwindling away into the inertness and inanity of exhausted energy and age-enfeebled efforts. And when we recollect [whether] the genius of the Greek, Roman, and Italian nations, as manifested in their great works in painting, sculpture, and music, did not in a great measure result from the inspiring influence of their fine climates—it is surely not too far-fetched to suppose that the blue cloudless skies, and brilliant atmosphere of our own beautiful climate, will ultimately exercise the same *moulding* influence on the mental constitution and temperament of our community.³

Aspirational, certainly; but, in fact, it turned out to be only a comparatively short step of a half-century to 1892, when Frank Brewer claimed, in a promotional booklet the New South Wales (NSW) government distributed at the Chicago World Fair, that 'Australians are a very music people', and—no doubt with Nellie Melba, Amy Sherwin and so forth in mind as proof, mental and physical—that indeed 'the climate ... of parts of Australia is suited to the vocal organ, particularly in females'.⁴ Also not impossibly further on to the Whitlam

³ 'Mr Wallace's Concert', *The Sydney Herald* (9 June 1836), 2.

⁴ F.C. Brewer, *The Drama and Music in New South Wales* (Sydney: Government Printer, 1892), 54.

years, when Barry Mackenzie put it to his cobber Col in Paris: 'Don't let this clapped out culture grab you, mate ... back in Oz now, we've got culture up to our arseholes'.⁵

Very early on, however, the colonial precursors of Sculthorpe's 'caring people' first had to anticipate the possibility of 'Australian music', before they could 'invent' it, either in the old connotation of discovering something (as, for instance, colonists 'discovered' Indigenous Australian music) or actively devising it. Unlike us, watching the owl of Minerva flying closer to dusk, in the 1820s, the self-styled first 'Austral harmonist' Barron Field (whose epigraph is borrowed above) could only look forward. So what was it that he and his colonist contemporaries envisaged?

In what is still the most important corporate output of Australian musicology to date, the editors of the *Currency Companion to Music and Dance in Australia* framed their coverage around 'music and dance in Australia rather than Australian music and dance ... allowing us to bypass the muddy issues of Australianness'.⁶ The result was more fascinating separate musical histories than any of us, singly, ever imagined. But we were left to seek out our own overviews, as the editors suggested, by using the index to follow works, individuals, or institutions from one narrative to the next, thus connecting the dots ourselves to show, for instance, that 'A cappella' singing and 'Zither' playing do not inhabit parallel universes, but co-exist, and sometimes even rub along together, just as they did for a few days in 1854, when concertgoers in Hobart could choose between Tyrolese zither virtuoso Veit Rahm and the Carandini company singing the witches' glees in Locke's *Macbeth*.⁷ The book's encyclopaedic format was perfectly suited to displaying the new diversity in Australian musical scholarship and its embrace of multi-ethnic and popular traditions. An impressive main entry on 'Indigenous traditions' was one of the largest and most thorough, a statement in it itself. However, its incorporation of sub-entries on the musical traditions of nine major regional areas had its drawbacks. Separate entries on each might not only given them more space, but also have put separate Indigenous traditions on a par with the huge number of settler traditions given separate entries. Is it too soon to imagine an even more historically representative successor with entries on the traditions of dozens—perhaps hundreds—more Indigenous nations and clans?

Historically, a far larger proportion of all surviving documentation from the first fifty years of Australian settlement is concerned with Indigenous music than from any later period. Even so, historians of Australian music have tended to overlook it in favour of chronicling settler music, while general historians have done the reverse. Oddly, it has seldom occurred to anyone to try to do both. Admittedly, unmediated Indigenous evidence is scarce (rock paintings, archaeological finds) and early colonists' accounts are often prejudiced, misleading, or incorrect. But many are honest attempts to observe and respond openly to the novelty and curiosity of Indigenous contact. Until the 1820s, there was actually more documentation of Indigenous than settler music. But by then, such liberal interests were often enough to lay observers open to ridicule or censure from powerful colonist interests. The darkest year of the 'Black War' in Tasmania was not the best time, but some perhaps feared that it might be a last chance. In October 1830 the Hobart *Courier* reported that 'some of our musical amateurs have lately made some progress in recording the native melodies

5 Stuart Ward, "'Culture up to our Arseholes": Projecting Post-imperial Australia', *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 51/1 (2005), 53–66.

6 John Whiteoak and Aline Scott-Maxwell (eds.), *Currency Companion to Music and Dance in Australia* (Strawberry Hills: Currency House, 2003), 5.

7 'Public Amusements', *The Courier* (7 November 1854), 2.

of our Van Diemen's land Blacks'.⁸ Unimpressed with the results (none of which, alas, survives) and apparently disapproving the object, the *Courier* suggested that the 'amateurs' might better turn their attentions to transcribing native bird-songs. He (it surely was he) conceded, however, that although the melodies he had seen were of 'the rudest and most uncouth kind', they must be 'no doubt not without their charms' to Indigenous ears, as his own native national music was to him. To make a generous point, he quoted a passage from a newly-landed Edinburgh journal, perhaps as relevant to his own emigrant nostalgia as to the dilemma of the native Tasmanians:

It is an amiable prejudice that people generally entertain in favour of their national music. This lowest degree of patriotism is not without its merit; and that man must have a hard heart, or dull imagination, in whom ... no sweet emotions would arise on hearing in his riper years, or in a foreign land, those strains that were the delight of his childhood. What though they be inferior to the Italian? What though they be even irregular and rude? If is not their merit which ... would interest a native, but the charming ideas they would recall ... of innocence, simplicity, and leisure, of romantic enterprise and enthusiastic attachment; and of scenes ... we are inclined to think, that a brighter sun illuminated, a fresher verdure crowned, and purer skies and happier climes conspired to beautify, than are now to be seen in the dreary paths of care and disappointment.⁹

This article, then, will review what early commentators believed to be examples of 'national music' peculiar to Australia and Australians, Indigenous and settler; materials out of which a representative history of early colonial music might be written. It rests on a documentary literature only gradually pieced together over two centuries out of scarce and partial surviving sources, and the patchwork of secondary literature that, across several disciplines, grew up haphazardly around it. It focuses principally on artefacts ('works') or, where they no longer exist, their documentary traces, presented more or less chronologically; a sort of 'brief history of the early colonial music in nine objects'. Composed, improvised, or in a couple of cases perhaps just imagined, they are all identified in some measure by ownership or location. The settler music includes gentry, working-class, musicians', and some non-musicians' music, mostly by men, but when the documentary record admits them also by women. Each serves as a paradigm for later materials, some of which are mentioned in each case, illuminating ways in which Australian music continued to be 'invented' into the 1840s.¹⁰ They invite us to re-engage, back at entry level—simple, aspirational naming and claiming—with 'the muddy issues of Australianness', and to reconsider whether national identification and ownership need necessarily be so superficial or problematically 'nationalistic' as they are often held to be. An Indigenous example is instructive, as one of our early *de facto* musical historians, David Collins, noted in 1796:

each of the principal tribes had something peculiar, by which it was known to what part of the country they belonged. The same peculiarity extended to their fishing-lines, nets, and even to their dances, songs, and dialect.¹¹

8 [News], *The Hobart Town Courier* (16 October 1830), 2.

9 'Musical Literature', *Blackwood's Magazine* 27/164 (March 1830), 477, from James Beattie, *Essays on Poetry and Music as they Affect the Mind* (Edinburgh: Creech, 1776), 174.

10 More information on works, people and issues introduced here can be found on the author's research website Australharmony (University of Sydney, 2014–ongoing), <http://sydney.edu.au/paradisec/australharmony/the-invention-of-australian-music.php>

11 David Collins, *An Account of the English Colony in New South Wales* 2nd ed. (London: Cadell and Davies, 1804), 377. Compare 1st ed. (London: Cadell and Davies, 1798), 586.

1. Song (20 May 1770)

These strangers, where are they going? Where are they trying to steer? They must be in that place Thoorvoor, it is true. See the smoke coming from the sea. These men must be burying themselves like sand crabs. They disappeared like the smoke.

This may be the earliest words-only record of an Indigenous contact song about the European 'strangers'. It comes from far outside historical musicology and, as an historical record, at a problem-posing remove of time from the event described. However, its links with place, owners, and tradition have convinced many otherwise. After re-entering the anthropological literature in 1977, it was powerfully invoked by Tony Swain in his 1993 book *A Place for Strangers: Towards a History of Australian Aboriginal Being*,¹² its arresting imagery since appealing to such general historians as Alan Atkinson and Grace Karskens.¹³

This song first appeared in print in 1944, in an appendix to a collection of Indigenous vocabularies published by the Royal Geographical Society of Queensland. If its author Frederick Watson is virtually unknown (he was 'an associate member of the Queensland Place Names Committee, University of Queensland' and 'for 25 years an itinerant officer of the Queensland Department of Agriculture and Stock'),¹⁴ the source of the appendix is an even more unexpected figure. Dublin-born Edward ('Ned') Fitzgerald Armitage (1848–1943) came to Queensland, via Melbourne, as an adolescent. After an honourable fight in 1868, aged twenty, with some strong men of the 'Wide Bay tribe', he was admitted to their clan as a 'bunda'. He settled in Maryborough, worked as a logger and saw-miller, and became the community's paradigmatic old-timer.¹⁵ Nevertheless, Armitage's 1923 account has considerable authority. With the help of unidentified Indigenous informants, he transliterated and translated two songs in the Badtjala language, identified its reference to a dangerous shoal near Indian Head, and advanced this interpretation of the song in question:

This short song clearly refers of Captain Cook, who passed the high, rocky bluff so close that he saw there, and mentioned in his log 'a number of Indians.' The blacks saw him and his men on the deck and noted the man at the wheel ... They thought he was going to hit the Thoorvoor shoal. His disappearance over the horizon they compared to the sand crabs and the smoke and clouds ...¹⁶

Armitage believed that the second song referred to a landing by Matthew Flinders's party on Fraser Island in July 1802, and Watson was likewise in 'no doubt that the songs refer to the visits of Cook and Flinders, and that the traditions and songs have been perpetuated ever since their visits occurred'. The Cook song has recently been re-transliterated

12 Raymond Evans and Jan Walker, 'These Strangers, Where are They Going? Aboriginal-European Relations in the Fraser Island and Wide Bay region 1770–1905', *Occasional Papers in Anthropology* 8 (1977), 39–105; and Tony Swain, *A Place for Strangers: Towards a History of Australian Aboriginal Being* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 114.

13 Alan Atkinson, *Europeans in Australia: A History, volume 1* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1997), 181; and Grace Karskens, *The Colony: A History of Early Sydney* (Crowns Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2009), 48.

14 F.J. Watson, *Vocabularies of Four Representative Tribes of South Eastern Queensland* (Brisbane: Royal Geographical Society of Australasia [Queensland], 1944), 1, 3.

15 *Maryborough Chronicle* (24 November 1943), 2.

16 Watson, *Vocabularies*, 96–7. Compare: 'Sunday, 20th ... we passed ... a black bluff head or point of land, on which a number of the Natives were Assembled, which occasioned my naming it Indian Head ...'. W.J.L. Wharton (ed.), *Captain Cook's Journal during his First Voyage Round the World* (London: Elliot Stock, 1893), 256.

and re-translated by Badtjala linguist and poet Gemma Cronin.¹⁷ The most notable similar account of a ceremony (song-and-dance) relating to Flinders's circumnavigation is that given to Daisy Bates in Western Australia in 1908 by Nebinyan, a Nyungar songman of the Mineng people.¹⁸ Later examples include contact songs from the New England area of NSW from the time of the wars around 1840, one taken down as recently as 1996 from Hazel Vale of Armidale:

Bulagiri wambul-wambul double-barrel li gu djanna-ya. That means the white men comin' with their guns you know, and tellin' them, our people, to ... get away from them. Yir, that means 'go'.¹⁹

2. Song at Botany Bay (December 1790)

Bennelong ... had lately been at Botany-Bay, where, he said ... one of the tribe had sung a song, the subject of which was, his house, the governor, and the white men at Sydney.

One of the most tantalizing documentary references to a contact song comes down to us from a colonist source with an excellent musical pedigree. In the 1750s, before he joined the navy, John Hunter was encouraged by Charles Burney in his first youthful ambition to train as a musician.²⁰ Hunter mentioned the song in a carefully nuanced consideration of Bennelong's trustworthiness, as a Wangal clansman, when reporting on his erstwhile enemies, including the Botany Bay clan (Cammeraygal or Gweagal) to which the singer belonged.²¹ Governor Phillip had begun 'to suspect, though very unwillingly, that there was a great deal of art and cunning in Bennelong [*sic*]'. One subject of the song was 'his house', the brick hut Phillip had built for Bennelong on his rivals the Cadigal's territory at what is now Bennelong Point. Bennelong had earlier claimed that the Botany Bay people refused to come to his house at Port Jackson because of the white men; now he reported that one of them had sung a song about it. There are several plausible explanations, each interesting: that the song was indeed a positive development, as Bennelong seems to suggest; that it was sung, but took a dim view of the house and the whites; or that Bennelong concocted the story and invented the (non-existent) song to flatter Phillip with news he wanted to hear.

Keith Vincent Smith has also proposed that the song was part of a 'contact corroboree' that transformed the colonists into 'mythic creatures and ceding respect to Bennelong'.²² But whether Bennelong's account is simple fact, wilful misinterpretation, or strategic fabrication, it positions song-making powerfully in cultural contact. Hunter gave several other examples of Indigenous deployment of song-and-dance in strategic response to the colonists. On first meeting Bennelong, Hunter observed:

17 Lisa Chandler (ed.), *East Coast Encounter* (Collingwood: One Day Hill Publishing, 2014), <http://www.eastcoastencounter.com.au/eastcoastencounter/about.html>

18 Isobel M. White, 'The Birth and Death of a Ceremony', *Aboriginal History* 4 (1980), 33–42; and Clint Bracknell, 'Kooral Dwonk-katitjiny (Listening to the Past): Aboriginal Language, Songs and History in South-Western Australia', *Aboriginal History* 38 (2014), 1–19.

19 Barry McDonald, 'Evidence of Four New England Corroboree Songs Indicating Aboriginal Responses to European Invasion', *Aboriginal History* 20 (1996), 176–94.

20 [William Hunter], 'Biographical Memoir of Captain John Hunter, Late Governor of New South Wales', *The Naval Chronicle* (November 1805), 350.

21 John Hunter, *An Historical Journal of the Transactions at Port Jackson* (London: Stockdale, 1793), 493.

22 Keith Vincent Smith, '1793: A Song of the Natives of New South Wales', *eBLJ (Electronic British Library Journal)* (2011), 7, <http://www.bl.uk/eblj/2011/articles/pdf/ebljarticle142011.pdf>

he sings, when asked, but in general his songs are in a mournful strain, and he keeps time by swinging his arms: whenever asked to dance, he does it with great readiness; his motions at first are very slow, and are regulated by a dismal tune, which grows quicker as the dance advances, till at length he throws himself into the most violent posture, shaking his arms, and striking the ground with great force, which gives him the appearance of madness. It is very probable that this part of the dance is used as a sort of defiance, as all the natives ... when we first arrived at Port Jackson, always joined this sort of dance to their vociferations of 'woro, woroo', go away.²³

This 'woro' dance first entered the musicological record in 1866, when Carl Engel, in *An Introduction to the Study of National Music*, cited it as exemplary of other defiant dances 'especially in uncivilized nations'.²⁴ Hunter also reported on another use of song as conciliatory gesture, in the performance and perhaps even 'composition' of a song-and-dance especially for the British:

they often had a dance amongst themselves at night, on the lower part of Sydney-cove ... It had been signified to some of the principal amongst them, that we should be glad to have an opportunity of seeing them dance, which they readily agreed to, and the following night was appointed ... On the whole, this exhibition was well worth seeing; and this was the first opportunity that had been offered for us to see any thing of the kind ... They very frequently, at the conclusion of the dance, would apply to us for our opinions, or rather for marks of our approbation of their performance; which we never failed to give by often repeating the word *boojery*, which signifies good; or *boojery caribberie*, a good dance. These signs of pleasure in us seemed to give them great satisfaction, and generally produced more than ordinary exertions from the whole company of performers in the next dance.²⁵

The very earliest account of a possible corroboree specially put on for whites is in the record of the Dutch landing on Cape York in 1756.²⁶ In southern Queensland in 1944, Frederick Watson complained that 'corroborees organised and acted of recent years for the delectation of tourists and other pleasure seekers, are but travesties of the genuine *yauar-warrai* [song-and-dance]'.²⁷ But perhaps, if we read Hunter's accounts together, 'tourist corroborees' could be both authentic, creative responses to the whites, while also being, intentionally, a travesty of Indigenous tradition, a sort of cultural sleight-of-hand, whereby the performers gave the whites what was asked for, without necessarily giving them what they wanted.²⁸

3. A New-South-Wales Song (c.1802)

In the first half-century of the colonial venture, musical transcriptions of well over half-a-dozen examples of Indigenous Australian songs were published. In Sydney in 1823, NSW judge, naturalist, and poet Barron Field sent home to London for journal publication a music-and-words transcription of what he called an 'Australian National Melody' the first known instance, in fact, of the new national epithet being applied to music of any sort. Field explained that he 'took it down ... from Harry, who married Carangarang, the sister of the

23 Hunter, *Historical Journal of the Transactions*, 406.

24 Carl Engel, *An Introduction to the Study of National Music* (London: Longmans, 1866), 246.

25 Hunter, *Historical Journal of the Transactions*, 210–13.

26 J.E. Heeres, *The Part Borne by the Dutch in the Discovery of Australia, 1606–1756* (London: Luzac, 1899), 94–5.

27 Watson, *Vocabularies*, 94.

28 Michael Parsons, 'The Tourist Corroboree in South Australia to 1911', *Aboriginal History* 21 (1997), 46–69.

celebrated Bennilong' and believed it to be the first such melody 'ever reduced to writing'.²⁹ In 1824, in Paris, colleagues of François Péron and Louis Freycinet belatedly published three more examples of *Musique des sauvages de la Nouvelle-Galles du Sud*, taken down during the Baudin expedition in NSW in 1802.³⁰ In 1834, explorer and musical amateur John Lhotsky (a Pole and therefore a 'foreigner', who nevertheless described himself as 'Colonist, N. S. Wales') also claimed that his transcription, 'A Song of the Women of the Menero Tribe', was the 'first specimen of AUSTRALIAN MUSIC'; although, to give Lhotsky due credit, it remains the earliest-known piece of music, of any sort, printed in Australia.³¹ In Paris in 1836, a recent French visitor to the continent's top end, Grégoire Louis Domeny de Rienzi, published words and music of an *Air australien des sauvages de la terre d'Arnheim*.³² Again in Paris in 1839, Freycinet printed four words-and-music examples of east-coast Indigenous music, from the 1802 and 1819 French expeditions. Freycinet displayed his impressive grasp of 'Australian studies' by also reprinting Field's transcription of Harry's song, and noting that Lhotsky was therefore wrong to advertise his 1834 print as the 'premier specimen de musique australienne'.³³

Then in the 1860s Carl Engel rediscovered and reprinted what was, probably genuinely, the very first words-and-music example, 'A Song of the Natives of New South Wales', taken down from the singing of Bennelong and Yemmerrawanne in London in 1793.³⁴ The recorder was another former Burney protégé, Edward Jones, Welsh harpist to the future George IV, and a habitual 'gleaner of national music'.³⁵ Jones had printed it in 1811 in his *Musical Curiosities: or a Selection of the most Characteristic National Songs and Airs, many of which were never published; consisting of Spanish, Portuguese, Russian, Danish, Lapland, Malabar, New South Wales, French, Italian, Swiss, and particularly some English and Scotch National Melodies*.³⁶

The singers had told Jones that the song was 'in praise of their lovers'. But Keith Vincent Smith has observed that its text is essentially identical to two words-only transcriptions taken down from other singers. One, a 'Song of New South Wales', was given to marine officer William Dawes, c.1790, by his regular informant, the young woman Patyegarang.³⁷ The other was written up in 1796 by David Collins, who was given to believe that 'the words are the names of deceased persons'.³⁸ This shows how important it is not to treat the

29 Barron Field, 'Journal of an Excursion across the Blue Mountains of New South Wales (October 1822)', *The London Magazine* (November 1823), 465, <http://books.google.com.au/books?id=o9gYAAAAMAAJ&pg=pa465>; reprinted, with slightly altered text, in Barron Field, *Geographical Memoirs* (London: John Murray, 1825), 433–4, <http://books.google.com.au/books?id=P7kBAAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA433>

30 *Voyage de Découvertes aux Terres Australes ... Atlas par Mm. Lesueur et Petit*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Arthus Bertrand, 1824), plate 32, <http://www.nla.gov.au/apps/cdview/?pi=nla.aus-f979-s47>

31 John Lhotsky, *A Song of the Women of the Menero Tribe* (Sydney: Sold by John Innes, [1834]), <http://acms.sl.nsw.gov.au/album/albumView.aspx?itemID=846215&acmsid=0>

32 G.L. Domeny de Rienzi, *Oceanie; ou cinquième partie du monde ... Tome premier* (Paris: Firmin Didot, 1836), 81, <https://archive.org/stream/ocanieoucinqui01dome#page/80/mode/2up>

33 Louis de Freycinet, *Voyage autour du monde ... pendant les années 1817, 1818, 1819 et 1820, historique, tome deuxième—deuxième partie* (Paris: Pilet Ainé, 1839), 774–5, <https://books.google.com.au/books?id=YGBdAAAA-cAAJ&pg=pa774>; see also 830.

34 Engel, *Introduction*, 26–7.

35 'Review of New Musical Publications', *The Monthly Magazine* 34 (1 August 1812), 54.

36 Edward Jones, *Musical Curiosities: or a Selection of the most Characteristic National Songs and Airs, many of which were never published; consisting of Spanish, Portuguese, Russian, Danish, Lapland, Malabar, New South Wales, French, Italian, Swiss, and particularly some English and Scotch National Melodies* (London: for the author, 1811), 15. A facsimile of the song is in Smith, '1793', 1; and page 7 of the pdf has an embedded sound file with performances of this song and Harry's song (after Field).

37 University of London, School of Oriental and African Studies, MS. 41645, B, 31, <http://www.williamdawes.org/ms/msview.php?image-id=book-b-page-31>

38 David Collins, *An Account of the English Colony in New South Wales ... second edition* (London: Strahan, Cadell, and Davis, 1804), 394, <https://archive.org/stream/AccountEnglishC00Coll#page/n465/mode/2up>

36 A NEW-SOUTH-WALES SONG †

Wa ha bin deh bang ha nel ha Wa ha bindeh bangha nelha Wa ha bindeh

Chorus

bangha nelha Wa ha bindeh bangha nel ha Hoh hoh hoh hoh hoh. D. C. ad lib.

† The Air & words brought over by an Officer from N. S. Wales.

Figure 1. From an unidentified collection of ‘National Music’. National Library of Scotland, Inglis Collection of Printed Music, Ing.72(3), No. 36, p. [43].

relatively small number of colonial era musical transcriptions in isolation from the larger number of words-only records. Yet again it raises the question of whether Bennelong was deploying song as a form of strategic deception, telling his white listeners in London what he thought they wanted to hear.

Applying music in persuasion or coercion more usually worked the other way around. In Parramatta, NSW from 1814 onwards, Indigenous children at the government’s Native Institution were taught to sing hymns, while ‘friendly tribes’ were convened for the ‘government corroborories’ at Macquarie’s annual native gatherings in Parramatta marketplace.³⁹ A marginally more benign example of a colonist ‘composer’ devising a song that he and his Indigenous farm workers could sing together is Robert Dawson’s ‘We all Sit Down Together’, dating from the late 1820s.⁴⁰ Dawson said that ‘the natives would frequently change on a sudden [the] words’, replacing them with their own (at least, as he gave them) ‘Massa him like black pellow [etc.]’, and thus, it could be argued, truly appropriating a song, anyway freely given to them, as theirs.

Although the 1793 example is the first surviving music-and-words song ‘reduced to writing’, it was almost certainly beaten into print by ‘The New-South-Wales Song’ pictured (see Figure 1).⁴¹ Not described previously, it is number 36 of 79 items in an unidentified 98-page British print, a mixed collection of national airs, duets, dances, glees, and rounds, lacking a title page or any indication of origin. As well as British and Irish tunes, the volume includes Russian, French, and German pieces, the famous ‘Death Song of the Cherokees’, and the ‘Hindoostan’ dance tune ‘Dandee Kala. A Runa of the Finlanders’, in 5/4 time—excerpted from Joseph Acerbi’s *Travels through Sweden, Finland and Lapland* (London, 1802), and there

39 ‘after Macquarie established a Christmas feast and a conference with the blacks, of proximate and distant tribes, at Parramatta [1814], and the parents had witnessed the progress of certain of their children in reading, writing, and singing hymns to the God of the Christians, they began voluntarily to place their children in the school’. [Editorial] ‘To Sir George Murray’, *The Sydney Monitor* (29 November 1828), 5.

40 Robert Dawson, *The Present State of Australia* (London: Smith, Elder, 1830), 134, <http://books.google.com.au/books?id=5ngIAAAAQAAJ&pg=PA134>

41 National Library of Scotland, Inglis Collection of printed music, Ing.72(3), No. 36, p. [43], <http://digital.nls.uk/special-collections-of-printed-music/pageturner.cfm?id=94737053>

part of an extensive music supplement ‘Engrav’d by E. RILEY, No 8, Strand’—helps fix the collection a little more closely in place and time. As it appears in the unidentified print, the Runa is similar enough in format and detail also to be the work of the well-attested Edward Riley, and since he sold up and left London for New York by 1805 we can date the unidentified collection certainly to after 1802, and probably to before 1805. A retired member of the NSW Corps or a returning naval officer is the possible informant. Despite appearing to have been imperfectly observed and much remodelled, the song’s melodic contour and short, repeated text—‘*Wa ha bin deh band ha nel [no] ha ... Hoh hob hob hob hob*’—appear to be at least vestigially authentic.

4. Miming a reel at Moreton Bay (1799)

Bong-ree went up to [the local people] in his usual undaunted manner; but they would not suffer Mr. Flinders or any of his party to approach them, without first laying down their muskets ... So long as their visitors consisted only of two, the natives were lively, dancing and singing in concert in a very pleasing manner; but the number of white men having imperceptibly increased to eight, they became alarmed and suspicious ... Three of the sailors, who were Scotchmen, were desired to dance a reel; but, *for want of music*, they made a very bad performance, which was contemplated by the natives without much amusement or curiosity.

Whatever the intentions or results, music was a quantifiable currency in early cultural exchanges.⁴² First Fleet diarist George Boucher Worgan (son of the eminent English musician Dr John Worgan) judged Cadigal people generally un-musical because of their lack of sustained interest in the strangers’ music.⁴³ But Worgan’s colleagues recorded two different instances of positive responses to the French tune ‘Malbrouk’ (‘For He’s a Jolly Good Fellow’). Watkin Tench mentioned a transaction even before the first fleet relocated from Botany Bay to Port Jackson, when an officer approached some Gweagal men and ‘to dissipate their fears ... whistled the air of *Malbrooke*, which they appeared highly charmed with, and imitated him with equal pleasure and readiness’.⁴⁴ Within a few years, gunner George Thompson observed that ‘[the Sydney natives] have the French tune of *Malbrook* very perfect: I have heard a dozen or twenty of them singing it together’.⁴⁵

The extract cited at the top of this section comes from a much longer account of musical exchanges at Moreton Bay in August 1799, to which the local people contributed a ‘general song and dance’ in which ‘their singing was not confined to one air; they gave three’.⁴⁶ The reporter, George Bass put down native lack of curiosity in the whites’ offerings to ‘a very bad performance’ of a reel by the three sailors, who ‘for want of music’ danced in silence, unable

42 For another instance of an Australian Indigenous singer in London, c.1810–1811, see ‘MOO-WAT-TIN’, *Chambers Edinburgh Journal* 2/77 (20 July 1833), 199–200.

43 ‘The Drum was beat before them, which terrified them exceedingly, they liked the Fife, which pleased them for 2 or 3 Minutes. Indeed Music of any kind does not attract their attention, long together, they will sometimes jump to it, and make a grunting Noise by way of keeping Time to the Tune’. George Worgan, letter to his brother Richard Worgan, 12–18 June 1788, 12, State Library of NSW, MS, Safe 1 / 114.

44 Watkin Tench, *A Narrative of the Expedition to Botany Bay* (London: Debrett, 1789), 58.

45 George Thompson, *Slavery and Famine ... Or, An Account of the Miseries and Starvation at Botany Bay* (London: Ridgway, 1794), [appendix] 16. In Tasmania in January 1802, François Péron also sang ‘cet hymne si malheureusement substitué dans la révolution’ (i.e. *La Marseillaise*) for an Indigenous family, but did not stay around long enough to record whether they ever sang it themselves. See Péron, *Voyage de découvertes aux terres australes ... pendant les années 1800, 1801, 1802, 1803 et 1804 ... tome premier* (Paris: L’imprimerie Impériale, 1807), 226–7.

46 Collins, *Account of the English Colony ... second edition*, 511.

to coordinate their movements because, one imagines, of the three conflicting inaudible musical performances inside their heads.⁴⁷ This curious anecdote is testimony to a reality for many early arrivals, whose musical ‘baggage’ consisted of dozens of tunes they were perfectly capable of recalling silently (an authentic form of performance nevertheless), but which they had little or no capacity of realizing audibly in vocal or instrumental performance. Contrast their incapacity with another exchange the same day, a sharing of songs between the Indigenous visitor Bungaree—who could sing, even if indifferently—and the Moreton Bay people, whose singing appeared to the diarist, Bass, to be more musical than that at Sydney and who, moreover, went on to offer to ‘teach’ their song to one of the whites, in effect, actively inviting him to appropriate it as his own:

... on being encouraged and requested by signs to sing, they began a song in concert, which actually was musical and pleasing, and not merely in the diatonic scale, descending by thirds, as at Port Jackson: the descent of this was waving, in rather a melancholy soothing strain. The song of Bong-ree, which he gave them at the conclusion of theirs, sounded barbarous and grating to the ear; but Bong-ree was an indifferent songster, even among his own countrymen ... Observing that they were attentively listened to, they each selected one of our people, and placed his mouth close to his ear, as if to produce a greater effect, or, it might be, to teach them the song, which their silent attention might seem to express a desire to learn.⁴⁸

5. Nuptial serenade at The Rocks (May 1803)

On the evening of Saturday the 7th instant a Celebration of Nuptials took place on the Rocks, at which a numerous group of congratulants assembled to greet the enamoured TOUCHSTONE and his beloved AUDREY ... a fiddler with his merry crowd, received a universal welcome: the merry dance commenced, and the fair bride led down the Country Bumpkin, which was performed in character. The Cheshire rounds and Irish trot were also gone through with equal success ... On Monday evening a grand serenade of CULINARY instruments waited on the new-married pair, which in harmony came little short of marrow-bones and cleavers. The musicians demanded a fee, imposed by custom, and which being complied with, the YOUNG couple were left to their domestic QUIET.

Until the 1830s, most settler musical professionals in the two colonies were of working-class origin. Among them, regimental bandsmen and a few civilians paid to lead the singing in establishment (Anglican) church services enjoyed some stability of employment. Singers and instrumentalists sporadically engaged in early theatres also belonged, by class exclusion, to lower orders. Other para-musical occupations, such as town-crier and bell-ringer (church, civic, and commercial) and, by the mid-1820s, also organ-blower, were typically occupied by convicts or elderly emancipists on what amounted to a salaried pension. There were also many mostly undocumented musical freelancers: convicts like the flute-player John Christopher Croft (1798–1829), known only from his Old Bailey trial record and the inquest into his grisly death;⁴⁹ or first-generation native-born free settlers like ‘the celebrated blind fiddler’ Joe Love (1793–1836), ‘the first Australian Musician who ever learned to play on the violin’.⁵⁰

The above 1803 press report of a wedding on Sydney’s The Rocks is rare evidence of a class of semi-professional fiddler on call to play in taverns or busk in the streets, and of

47 *Ibid.*, 508.

48 *Ibid.*, 510.

49 ‘Coroner’s Inquests’, *The Australian* (28 April 1829), 3.

50 ‘Music’, *The Australian* (19 July 1833), 3.

the continuing use of traditional dance tunes like the ‘Country Bumpkin’, the ‘Irish Trot’, and the ‘Cheshire Rounds’.⁵¹ But for much of the rest of the century, the most consistent sources of documentation on such itinerant musicians are notices of drunkenness, vagrancy, or licensing breaches. No doubt they also composed and improvised, although records seldom mention ‘works’, let alone describe them. Rarer still are records of non-musicians’ music—performances by those with no or negligible musical skill, but which nonetheless count as music of sorts. Occasionally, semi-official accounts do admit descriptions like this one, in the guise of a satire on the fecklessness of the lower orders (with apologies to Shakespeare’s *As You Like It*)—of a community ‘improvisation’, a traditional wedding *shallal*, in which the couple traditionally pays the musicians to go leave them be (just as the street musicians’ middle-class patrons usually gave them coins to get them to move on).⁵² The couple were Catholics (the priest, John Dixon, a convict), the widow Rourke Irish and a transportee:

Yesterday se’night, by the Rev. Mr Dixon, of the Church of Rome, Henry Simpson,
shipwright, to Catharine Rourke, of the Rocks, Widow.⁵³

6. A Hawkesbury Irishman in Sydney (1810)

MURTOCH DELANY’S DESCRIPTION OF THE RACES.

Tune—‘Ballanamony-ora.’

Don’t you know I from Hawkesbury came to behold
Your Races, that seem’d to delight young and old,
Where each rode a-foot, if not blest with a horse
And cantered away to the place called the Course
Sing Ballynamony-ora, Ballynamony-ora, Ballynamony-ora,
A tight little horse-race for me.

Some former Londoners among the colonists might well have seen the original stage character, Murtoch Delany, in William Macready’s popular farce *The Irishman in London*, in 1793. In Australia, however, they found themselves actually coexisting with a larger minority population of Irish (and later Scots) than most of them had known in England, not all of them cod bumpkins like the fictional Delany. For instance, a new song written after the *coup d’état* in Sydney in January 1808 was probably the work of a convict, forger, and lawyer from Dublin, Lawrence Davoren, surprisingly a supporter of the deposed governor, Bligh:⁵⁴

The voice of rebellion resounds o’er the Plain
The Anarchist Junto have pulled down the banner
Which Monarchical Government sought but in vain
To hold as the rallying Standard of honor.
The Diadem’s here fled
From off the King’s head,
His Royal appointment by force they depose,
But the time it draws nigh
When magnanimous Bligh

51 Heather Clarke, ‘Cheshire Rounds’, Australian colonial dance, posted 26 January 2012 (Accessed 15 May 2015), <http://www.colonialdance.com.au/cheshire-rounds-634.html>

52 ‘Sydney’, *The Sydney Gazette* (15 May 1803), 2.

53 ‘Married’, *The Sydney Gazette* (15 May 1803), 4.

54 George Mackaness (ed.), *A New Song Made in New South Wales on the Rebellion by Lawrence Davoren* (Sydney: Author, 1951).

Will triumph with honour and prostrate his foes.

Davoren, like many amateur songwriters, was probably incapable of composing a new tune. But London theatre tunes like the one he appropriated here, 'Health to the Duchess' (an air by Philidor, from Charles Dibdin's 1785 Drury Lane adaptation of Monsigny's *Le déserteur*) were anyway part of the common memory baggage of settlers.⁵⁵ Similarly, the tune known as 'Ballynamony-ora' served the anonymous author of the Delaney song, about a bushman who comes to town, an early example of a later popular genre.⁵⁶ It is a relic of Sydney's first official race week in October 1810 (in which the young W.C. Wentworth rode his father's winning five-year-old, Gig), and refers to captain Henry Glenholme's gelding Bryan-boroo, named by its Anglo-Irish owner after the legendary 'Paddy' prince.⁵⁷ On the opposite side of the continent, at Swan River Colony in 1831, George Moore, a protestant from Donemana, County Tyrone—pioneer, amateur flautist, and Indigenous culture recorder—also set new words to the same tune, 'a song about this colony', in 'Western Australia for me' ('Sung by me at the first ball given ... in Perth').⁵⁸ Moore later recalled: 'I dare not say that I christened the colony, but certainly after the above song the name of Western Australia was adopted'.⁵⁹ In this way, old tunes were not merely borrowed or transplanted, but owned and deployed by settler-colonist songwriters to create an Australian genre. Moreover, the manner in which they adapted their inherited cultural property to new circumstances was not entirely removed from the way some of the Indigenous songs described above were created. Moore and many an Indigenous singer might, I suspect, have agreed with Philip Bohlman who in 2009 in this journal proposed a theory of music's role in effecting a 'cultural translation' of national agendas, in which 'music does not simply represent the nation; music is mustered for the making of the nation'.⁶⁰

7. Reichenberg's *Australian Quadrilles revisited* (1825)

AUSTRALIAN QUADRILLES. MR. REICHENBERG, Music Master of the 40th Regiment, respectfully informs the ladies and Gentlemen of the Colony, that he has composed a first Set of Quadrilles for Australia, with proper figures adapted to it, for the Pianoforte, Flute, or Violin; also, for a full Band. The same may be had in Manuscript ... by giving one Day's Notice. Price 6s.

In Federation year 1901, John Percy McGuanne re-alerted historians to what later became, for music historians, the paradigmatic lost colonial musical works making up the 1826 collection of 'Original Australian Music' by Thomas Kavanagh, the Irish-born Master of the Band of the

55 Charles Dibdin, *The Songs in the Deserter* (London: Johnston, [1773?]), 7, <https://archive.org/stream/songscindeserter00dibd#page/6/mode/2up>

56 'Murtoch Delany's Description of the Races', *The Sydney Gazette* (20 October 1810), 3, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article628109>; and *The Irish volunteers* (London: Welker, [1780s?]), <http://jhir.library.jhu.edu/handle/1774.2/15511>

57 'Sydney Races', *The Sydney Gazette* (20 October 1810), 2.

58 George F. Moore, *Diary of Ten Years Eventful Life of an Early Settler in Western Australia* (London: Wallbrook, 1884), 58 and 65, <https://archive.org/details/diaryoftenyyears00mooriala>. Moore first mentioned the song in a letter on 22 August 1831, and was also composing 'a song ... suggested by that of a bird's notes; and if I can get my flute mended, [I] shall set it for you'.

59 *Ibid.*, 64; and 'St Patrick's Day', *The Perth Gazette* (21 March 1840), 30.

60 Philip V. Bohlman, 'Music Before the Nation, Music after Nationalism', *Musical Australia* 31 (2009), 83.

3rd Regiment ('Bufs').⁶¹ Echoing Field's recent description of Harry's song as an 'Australian national melody', Kavanagh's famous advertisement described his collection of marches, songs, and airs as a 'specimen of national music', specific to Australia.⁶² Then, in 1951, the jubilee of Federation, James Lincoln Hall likewise re-mustered for national attention the slightly earlier lost 1825 collection of *Australian Quadrilles ... A First Set of Quadrilles for Australia* by Joseph Reichenberg, the German-Italian Master of the Band of the 40th Regiment.⁶³ These first two lost collections of colonist music identified by title and composer were destined to be invoked continually in the small literature on Australian colonial music, usually without shedding much extra light on the circumstances in which they were actually composed, or on the fashion colonist musicians imagined they were answering by adding 'Australian' to their titles.

After the handful of documented instances of 'New South Wales' music, Field's 'Australian national melody' was the first published instance of the cross-over into music of a growing trend, whereby in the early to mid-1820s colonists began applying the new proto-national epithet to poetry, literature, individuals (native-born settlers like W.C. Wentworth, in some senses the paradigmatic 'Australian', and, as mentioned above, Joe Love), publications (Wentworth's newspaper *The Australian*, founded in 1824, or indeed his 1823 Cambridge commencement poem *Australasia*), commercial entities (the Australian Shipping Company, 1823), sporting clubs (Australian Turf Club, 1825), and cultural and scientific organizations (Philosophical Society of Australasia, 1822; Field, one of its founders, first presented Harry's song in a paper read to the new society). And from 1825, *The Sydney Gazette* adopted 'Advance Australia' as motto heading for its editorials.

Clustered around Reichenberg's and Kavanagh's advertised collections, other musical titles aimed at effecting similar 'cultural translation'. An unattributed air, 'Welcome to Australia', was reportedly given by Kavanagh's band on 19 December 1825 at the Sydney inauguration of governor Ralph Darling.⁶⁴ When Reichenberg and his band relocated to Hobart in 1826, they took with them from Sydney a 'new and beautiful *Australian Air*', and introduced it to Tasmanians as a toast air ('the prosperity of the sister Colony [NSW]') at a King's Birthday dinner on 24 April.⁶⁵ In Sydney at an Australian Turf Club dinner on 9 November 1827, *Australian Troop*, an 'air ... by Mr Sippy'—George Sippe, Master of the Band of the 57th Regiment—was played by the composer and his cohorts answering the toast to 'the health of the chairman [W.C. Wentworth]'.⁶⁶ In Hobart on 26 January 1828 (the fortieth anniversary of the sister colony), John Philip Deane followed Reichenberg's earlier example by advertising for sale copies, probably likewise in manuscript, of *The First Set of Tasmanian Quadrilles*.⁶⁷ Seven months later, Deane—as Hobart's principal music-seller—advertised manuscript copies for sale of two more new sets by Reichenberg. Interestingly, Reichenberg's *The Hobarton Quadrilles* offered not just a local title but also adopted a characteristically colonial programme for the five numbers ('The Safe Arrival', 'The Scotch Settler', 'The English Settler', 'The Irish Settler', 'The Union') that effectively encouraged the three main settler ethnic groups to celebrate their new shared circumstances along with their original

61 J.P. McGuanne, 'The Humours and Pastimes of Early Sydney', *The Australian Historical Society Journal and Proceedings* 1/3 (1901), 40.

62 [Advertisement], *The Australian* (5 January 1826), 1.

63 [Advertisement], *The Australian* (28 April 1825), 1; and James Hall, 'A History of Music in Australia, No 3', *The Canon* 4/8 (March 1951), 372–6.

64 'His Excellency the Governor in Chief', *The Sydney Gazette* (22 December 1825), 2.

65 [News], *The Hobart Town Gazette* (29 April 1826), 2.

66 'Turf Club Dinner', *The Monitor* (12 November 1827), 6s.

67 [Advertisement], *The Hobart Town Courier* (26 January 1828), 2.

differences. Reichenberg's second new collection was *Another Set of Quadrilles for the 40th Regiment*, the numbers of which bore the names of the regiment's recent theatres of engagement, in all of which Reichenberg himself had served: 'La Peninsula', 'La Waterloo', 'La Paris', 'La Australia', and 'La Tasmania'.⁶⁸

Geographical projections like *L'Australia* and *La Tasmania* were—as Field hinted they might properly be—a type of national placeholder. Inventing Australian music in this way was an act of imaginative anticipation (Field), as well as a mustering (Bohlman) or re-mustering (Moore). But some had a more radical vision. In a poem written in 1824, a recent arrival, cleric John Dunmore Lang, advocated, in what amounts to a song without music, the application of *Colonial Nomenclature*:⁶⁹

I like the native names; as Parramatta,
And Illawarra, and Woolloomoolloo;
Nandowra, Woogarora, Bulkomatta:
Tomah, Toongabee, Mittagong, Murroo ...
I hate your Goulburn Downs, and Goulburn Plains,
And Goulburn River, and the Goulburn Range,
And Mount Goulburn, and Goulburn Vale. One's brains
Are turned with Goulburns! Pitiful—this mangle ...

Lang stops short of applying an Indigenous name to Australia itself. But his verses are an intriguing foretaste of that fruitful Australian genre, the place-name song, right up to its 'minerva-like' 1960s recrudescence in Geoff Mack's 'I've been everywhere, man'.

8. Cavendish's Australian quadrilles (1833)

Paramatta Notasia, April 20, '33. I wrote by the ship Sovereign which sailed from Port Jackson on the 2d of March last, but ... I send you this duplicate, to which I have added two waltzes. The 2d and 5th Quadrilles I obtained from a Manilla Guittarist also the waltzes. No 1 is Bourbonnaise, No 3 is original and the second part was added by a creole of the Cape de Verde Islands. I have given them names characteristic of their origin. You may call them Australian, Notasian, Arabian or Mad[a]gascke quadrilles.

In London on 2 June 1832, Susannah Cavendish-Castell wrote to her estranged husband in Mauritius, asking him to compose some music she could sell to an English publisher to supplement her family's parlous finances:

and which I think it is in your power to comply with. Can you supply us with *original* and *choice* national airs, and adapt them for quadrilles, Waltzes &c.—as the rage of *novelty* in that line is in such request, that the compositions of some of our finest authors are pulled to pieces bit by bit to furnish passages—endeavour to collect Indian, Russian or any other whether outlandish or otherways and endeavour to compose some yourself, adapted to the figures.⁷⁰

Ann Beedell rediscovered Susannah's letter in her husband's probate papers (he drowned in the 1839 Anniversary Regatta on Sydney Harbour) and published it in her study of his family in 1992.⁷¹ William Joseph Cavendish-de-Castell's reply, sent from Parramatta on 20

68 [Advertisement], *The Hobart Town Courier* (9 August 1828), 1.

69 John Dunmore Lang, *An Historical and Statistical Account of New South Wales ... volume 1* (London, 1837), 88–9, <http://books.google.com.au/books?id=HAE6AQAIAAJ&pg=RA1-PA88>

70 State Library, NSW, Castell family papers, MLMSS 7989, <http://acms.sl.nsw.gov.au/item/itemDetailPaged.aspx?itemID=909647>

71 Ann V. Beedell, *The Decline of the English Musician 1788–1888: A Family of English Musicians in Ireland, England, Mauritius, and Australia* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 236–7.

April 1833, but unknown to Beedell, was acquired by the State Library of NSW in 2010. With it, as Susannah requested, Cavendish sent an autograph copy of five quadrilles and two waltzes for piano.⁷² But, having arrived from Mauritius only five weeks previous to sending his (lost) first copy of the quadrilles alone, there is scant likelihood that much of their original content was composed in Sydney, let alone in response to local conditions. Nevertheless, Cavendish's more than favourable first impressions of 'this paradise of places' may have left some small mark upon them:

Oranges, grapes, figs, apples, pears, flowers & fruits all the year round, the pigs fed upon peaches, & dogs upon rumpsteaks, & the sheep's heads thrown into the ditches, wh[ic]h the household cur will scarcely condescend to smell. In this land of plenty none need to starve or beg.⁷³

Notwithstanding its second half added by a Cape Verde 'creole', Cavendish gave the third quadrille the local title 'Kurry Jong', and the fourth, whose origins he did not disclose, 'Woo-loo-moo-loo' [*sic*].

Cavendish also told his wife that 'the agent here to Ellard's music warehouse of Dublin [Francis Ellard] offered to purchase them. I have offered him a set when I can collect them'. Had the London edition ever eventuated, Ellard probably wanted to use it to make lithographic plates and reprint from them here.⁷⁴ But after two years vainly waiting for a copy, Cavendish's Currajong and Woolloomooloo quadrilles at least supplied the pattern Ellard copied when he attached local titles ('La Sydney', 'La Woolloomooloo', 'La Illawarra', 'La Bong-Bong', and 'La Engehurst' [*sic*]) to the set of Australian Quadrilles he ordered from his family in Dublin in 1835.⁷⁵ Ellard's set ('selected from the newest and most celebrated operas and arranged for the Piano Forte or Harp' by a relative, William Ellard, in Dublin, who himself never set foot in Australia) offers nothing obviously Australian except its titling. Yet the dedication to the eldest daughter of Frederick Hely, NSW Superintendent of Convicts, suggests that the Helys may have commissioned the quadrilles, perhaps for first use at a ball held at Engehurst, their Paddington residence, and perhaps even partly paid for the print, their money ensuring that in this case local naming and owning of the set spoke louder than the content's origins.

9. Mary Hely's *The Parting* (1835)

We have before us a beautiful ballad, (the music said to be by a lady), and 'The much admired Australian Quadrilles,' published in Dublin by our enterprising fellow-colonist, Mr. Ellard, of Hunter-street, Sydney. There is a simplicity and beauty in the former which we are sure will attract the attention of all young ladies studying the pianoforte, and will be a very good addition to their initiatory studies. (*The Sydney Gazette*)

AUSTRALIAN MUSIC. We have received from Mr. Ellard ... copies of some Colonial music, harmonised in Sydney, and printed by Mr. Ellard's father, Dublin. The music

⁷² Castell family papers.

⁷³ Castell family papers.

⁷⁴ Susannah was unimpressed—on 28 May 1834 she complained: 'the Quadrilles you sent is [*sic*] a total failure both in style and quality ... so that we have never been able to benefit by them'. Ann Beedell, 'William Joseph Castell, o. k. a. Cavendish (1789–1839), Musician: His Origins, Life and Career in Ireland, England, France, Mauritius and Australia', (M.A. thesis, University of New South Wales, 1990), 671.

⁷⁵ *The Much Admired Australian Quadrilles* (Dublin: Ellard, [1835]); State Library, NSW, copy without cover, <http://acms.sl.nsw.gov.au/album/albumView.aspx?itemID=921288&acmsid=0>; and photocopy of University of Newcastle copy with cover, <http://trove.nla.gov.au/version/171071617>

consists of a Ballad entitled 'The Parting', composed by a young lady, the words are easily recognisable as those of a gentleman in the Colony, whose production, both music and poetry are said to be. The ballad is in an appropriate and pretty key (flats), and its melody and arrangement display a pleasing simplicity of style, without much originality. (*The Sydney Herald*)

There might have been less confusion about this lost ballad had *The Sydney Herald* not taken issue with what must have been the title page's attribution of the music to 'a young lady', and assuming both words and music were the work of F[rederick] A[ugustus] H[ely].⁷⁶ Of course, if Hely wrote the words he may also have come up with a tune, or bits of one, that the 'young lady'—the coded archness of the *Herald* review strongly suggesting a daughter—then turned into printable music. Her input was, anyway, probably enough for us safely to identify it as the first documented musical work by a settler Australian woman, most probably the eldest Hely daughter, Mary Joanna, the same 'Miss Hely' who was dedicatee of the *Australian Quadrilles* (younger daughters were conventionally identified with an initial). Her father died in 1836, only ten months after they first saw their collaboration in print. Mary married a cousin, Gother Mann, bore twelve children, and died in Sydney in 1901, having lived to witness anticipated Australia become a federated national reality.⁷⁷

Among early documentary accounts of Indigenous women, David Collins observed that while fishing they sing sitting 'in their canoe, exposed to the fervour of the mid-day sun, hour after hour, chaunting their little song, and inviting the fish beneath them to take their bait'.⁷⁸ The 'Song of the Women of the Menero Tribe' is—if Lhotsky's title is to be believed—the earliest printed word-and-music song by Indigenous women, probably originally a funeral lament.⁷⁹ Earlier, the explorer Thomas Mitchell heard a similar 'funeral dirge' sung by a young woman on the Liverpool Plains in 1832; its 'notes ... pleasing, and very different from the monotonous strains of the natives in general'. Later the bushranger George Clark, who spent some years living with an Indigenous band in the same area, identified the song and sang it back to Mitchell, who reported that Clark not only 'imitated the notes' but confirmed 'that they were sung by females when mourning for the dead'.⁸⁰

Another example of 'national music' by early settler women became the most widely disseminated bush song of the century, enduring long enough for Percy Jones and Burl Ives to revive it again in the 1950s. This was 'The Stockman's Last Bed', a parody of the words and tune of 'The Last Whistle', newly 'composed' by sisters Bessie and Maria Gray at Port Macquarie in 1846.⁸¹ Maria Logan, Francis Ellard's sister (and William Vincent Wallace's cousin), also composed music for at least one song, published in Hobart in April 1839. It was, according to the *Courier*, 'the first Van Diemen's Land melody it has been our fortune to encounter' and for that reason alone was 'worthy of being hailed by all the lovers of song and of Tasmania, with all the gladness and rejoicing of a new birth'.⁸² Sadly, no copy of her song 'The Vow that's Breathed in Solitude' has been identified. Having herself been a pupil of Logier in Dublin, she later became a leading Sydney piano teacher, among her pupils being

76 [News], *The Sydney Gazette* (12 December 1835, 2; 'Australian Music', *The Sydney Herald* (24 December 1835), 2; and 'Erratum', *The Sydney Herald* (28 December 1835), 3.

77 'The Late Mrs Gother Mann', *The Brisbane Courier* (17 September 1901), 6.

78 Collins, *Account ... second edition*, 316; and Collins, *Account*, 601.

79 Adding confusion, Isaac Nathan and Eliza Dunlop later rearranged and bowdlerized the same song as *The Aboriginal Father* (Sydney: Author, [1843]), <http://trove.nla.gov.au/work/16497064>

80 Thomas Mitchell, *Three Expeditions into the Interior of Eastern Australia ... second edition ... volume 1* (London: Boone, 1839), 117–18.

81 A.A.C.D. Boswell, *Some Recollections of my Early Days Written at Different Periods* ([no publication details], 107–8.

82 [News], *The Hobart Town Courier* (26 April 1839), 2.

Thomas Mitchell's diarist daughter Blanche. She and her husband Charles are also credited with making the earliest surviving musical transcription of a Tasmanian Indigenous song, 'Popeller', taken down in Hobart in 1836, two separate later copies of which survive.⁸³ Already in the 1830s considered a doomed relic of a lost culture, 'Popeller' survived in the memory of Fanny Cochrane Smith (1834–1905) long enough for Horace Watson to record her singing it and several others at the end of the century. Having probably heard them first as a child, sixty years later when Watson played the first wax cylinder back to her, she was reportedly terrified, wondering 'What have I done', and fearing 'the voice she heard was that of her mother'.⁸⁴

Author Biography

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83 At the State Library, Tasmania, and University of Tasmania, <http://trove.nla.gov.au/work/3882084>. There are also several words-only transcriptions; see Alice Moyle, 'Two Native Song-styles Recorded in Tasmania', *Papers and Proceedings of the Royal Society of Tasmania* 94 (1960), 73–8.

84 'Aboriginal Recordings', *The Mercury* (23 March 1949), 5. One of her recordings of Popeller has been restored and streamed by the National Film and Sound Archive, <http://aso.gov.au/titles/music/fanny-cochrane-smith-songs>