

## Music Publishing and Selling in Australia

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*This is an edited version of the introduction given by the convenor, Georgina Binns, to the opening session of the symposium, 'Music Publishing and Selling in Australia', held at Monash University, Melbourne, on 17 November 2000. This symposium was conducted to assist the History of the Book in Australia project by encouraging research into the history of music publishing and selling in Australia.*

Within the history of the book in Australia, and especially the fields of publishing and selling, music holds a specialised position. It is both diverse and complex in its development.

Just as those with an interest in the history of music publishing and selling in Australia represent diverse professions and interests—musicologists, historians, performers, librarians, bibliographers and collectors—so do the many facets of music publishing and selling. There are many people, commercial interests, institutions and traditions that make up this history.<sup>1</sup>

The history of this field began with use of handwritten manuscripts disseminated amongst the early settlers. Words to songs were often printed in newspapers, utilising well known tunes, so there was no need for notation. Early publishers such as Ellard and Nathan in Sydney in the 1830s and 1840s soon started to use typesetting to print musical notation.

Later as the colonies expanded so did the number of music publishers. More often than not these publishers were also the sellers, responding to an obvious need in the musical life of the colonies—selling sheet music, instruments and other accessories. The Walches of Hobart were an example of this type of operation. Their advertisements, including those printed on the back of sheet music, are an essential source for researchers, helping to identify works, indicating the volume of work published and reflecting the tastes and musical needs of society. The Marshes, Woolcott & Clark and Palings (Sydney); Nicholson & Ascherberg and Allans<sup>2</sup> (Melbourne); and Cawthornes<sup>3</sup> (Adelaide) all contributed to the growing music publishing industry.

Institutions such as schools and churches also helped to shape the music that was published. The monthly *School Paper*, commenced in Victoria in 1896, included music from its first edition. Hymn books and music liturgy were published for the various religious denominations, some music by local composers

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1. See Suzanne Robinson, 'Case Study: Music Publishing' in Martin Lyons & John Arnold, eds., *A History of the Book in Australia, vol.2: A National Culture in a Colonised Market*, St Lucia, Qld.: University of Queensland Press, 2001, pp.54–56; and Suzanne Robinson, 'Publishers of Music' in Warren Bëbbington, ed., *Oxford Companion to Australian Music*, Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1997, pp.475–76.

2. See Peter Game, *The Music Sellers*, Melbourne: Hawthorn Press, 1976.

3. See Cawthornes Ltd, *Music in the 'Nineties'*, Adelaide: Cawthornes, 1925.

and others adopted and printed from European sources. Other organisations such as the liedertafel and philharmonic societies undertook pivotal roles in the musical life of larger cities and helped to influence the types of music that were composed and published.

Moments in history have also shaped the content and the prolificity of music—wars, federation, and royal visits have all assisted in increased music publishing. Research on patriotic song has indicated a particularly significant rise in the number of songs (and increase in production runs of each song) during periods of war.<sup>4</sup>

The twentieth century saw many publishers die out or be taken over, but many continued to thrive—Dinsdales, Allans, Palings, and Alberts are some of the names that carried on for many years and some are still operating today. The advent of both radio and then television had an influence on the decline of music publishing as the demand for 'do it yourself' entertainments such as music lessened.

From this period there is also the work of Louise Hanson-Dyer, a Melbourne-born music publisher. Her Editions de l'Oiseau Lyre, although not based in Australia, has had enormous influence on music publishing through its pioneering work in the revival of early music, publishing of facsimiles and the promotion of Australian composers.<sup>5</sup>

Contemporary Australian music publishing now originates from a number of sources including educational and commercial based organisations. The Australian Music Centre plays a significant role in the dissemination of Australian contemporary music, both through sales, hire and extensive promotional activities in Australia and internationally; Currency Press in Sydney supports the performing arts and publishes both music and books on Australian music research; Red House Press in Melbourne publishes contemporary Australian music; Allans and the Australian Music Examinations Board produce extensive educational materials. Small 'boutique' publishers, including Keys Press, Wirripang and Broilga Press, are also contributing valuable publications. These publishing houses have contributed to increased performance opportunities for Australian music at all levels—from beginner musicians to the professional performer, both in Australia and internationally.

In the field of scholarship, the development of an Australian musicology is reliant on the wealth and productivity of the music publishing industry in this country, since engravings were first made in the early nineteenth century, and the survival of the printed music in institutional collections around the country. The survival of much of this music can also be attributed to collectors (both in-

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4. See Georgina Binns, 'Patriotic and Nationalistic Song in Australia to 1919: A Study of the Popular Sheet Music Genre', M.Mus. thesis, University of Melbourne, 1989.

5. See Jim Davidson, *Lyrebird Rising: Louise Hanson-Dyer of l'Oiseau-Lyre 1884-1962*, Carlton, Vic.: Melbourne University Press at the Miegunyah Press, 1994.

dividual and institutions) and scholars who have often worked together to ensure the preservation of these important materials.

There were and still are a number of active field scholars who have recognised the urgency of preserving the oral tradition. Much of the publishing activity in this area occurred in the 1950s. This urgency produced a large number of works which were researched, transcribed and printed, often in imaginatively illustrated and compiled limited editions.

Other work, including Andrew McCredie's landmark survey of musical composition in Australia, Therese Radic's work in the 1970s on organised music associations in Melbourne and the music they played, and Elizabeth Woods' work on opera in Australia also in the 1970s, led to an upsurge in research and discovery of Australian music resources.<sup>6</sup> The development of Australian music subjects in many universities has inspired undergraduate students to pursue graduate research in Australian music, creating greater need for access to music of the past. The Centre for Studies in Australian Music at the University of Melbourne is an example of an institution currently initiating research activity and it has an active publishing program including new editions of previously unpublished manuscripts from past and contemporary sources.<sup>7</sup>

The national and state libraries, with their early legal deposit arrangements, provide a rich source of music and these collections reflect the level of publishing output. The state library collections are especially indicative of production at a local level, as these libraries were operating within the community in the late nineteenth century, many years before the beginning of the national collection in 1901. Some of these collections also have other provenances and characteristics: for example the Crowther Collection at the State Library of Tasmania is a superb collection of music collected for its pictorial depictions of Tasmania. These state and national collections form an extraordinary legacy.

The National Library of Australia collection, developed over many years under the care of its inaugural music librarian Prue Neidorf, also provides an extraordinary wealth of music, both print and manuscript, offering the researcher and performer a wealth of music which covers the complete history of music publishing in this country.<sup>8</sup> The National Library of New Zealand has also undertaken this role and has an extensive collection of music reflecting the history of local music publishing and selling.

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6. See Andrew McCredie, *Musical Composition in Australia*, Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1969; Therese Radic, 'Some Historical Aspects of Musical Associations in Melbourne, 1888-1915', Ph.D thesis, University of Melbourne, 1977; Elizabeth Wood, 'Australian Opera 1842-1970: A History of Australian Opera with Descriptive Catalogues', Ph.D. thesis, University of Adelaide, 1979.

7. See <<http://www.music.unimelb.edu.au/about/CSAM/CSAM.html>> for further details of activities and publications. [As at 10.2.2002]

8. See Robyn Holmes 'Music Dialogues' in Peter Cochrane, ed., *Remarkable Occurrences: The National Library of Australia's first 100 years 1901-2001*, Canberra: NLA, 2001, pp.213-234.

We can also thank the many private collectors of Australian music for the legacy housed in our libraries and museums. Those collectors include Hugh Anderson (collector of folk music), Kenneth Hince (his interest in nineteenth century music evident in his collection at the National Library of Australia) and Ken Snell (his interest in pictorial content on sheet music reflected in library collections including the National Library of Australia, State Library of Queensland and Monash University).

Physical changes in the printing of music have undoubtedly altered the way music is created, presented, disseminated and even performed. Today, a composer sitting in front of a computer using the latest music publishing software (such as Sibelius® or Finale®) can efficiently create a document that can be played, sold and duplicated with little effort. The large volume runs which had to be made to justify the cost of engraving, which perhaps inhibited the number of works which were published, is now obviated with the ability for small volume publishing through enhanced technology. This has seen the healthy rise of small 'boutique' publishers who are catering to the many needs of performers and also to revive music that perhaps may never have been published in the competitive commercial market. The ramifications of desktop publishing and implications of 'vanity publishing' provide another dimension for current and future performers and scholars, as the assessment and value of music to the repertoire needs to be carefully assessed.

The introduction of the Internet in the late twentieth century, has provided a new means of disseminating music and is providing a new challenge for the industry and a pivotal moment for both performers and researchers who will have to move quickly to stay in touch with the fast moving and anarchical web environment. With free domain music already available on many sites, ready to download and place on your music stand, and CD-ROMS available that hold the complete works of the 'masters', access to music and music publishing is undergoing rapid change. The roles of the librarians are changing with this and involve presenting as much material online on the Internet as possible—books, journals, sound and music. It is certainly an issue that is uppermost in our minds. As a librarian who also works closely with student choirs and orchestras, where thousands of parts are dealt with regularly to ensure rehearsals run smoothly, the image of 100 PCs on a stage for an orchestral performance or the cost of providing dozens of e-books to choir members is sufficiently powerful to put off even the most enthusiastic e-librarian at this stage.

In academic institutions the move to digitising high use or reserve material—often set works—is well underway. The technology is there and waiting to be utilised. Copyright issues are holding this up but licences are currently being developed to assist with this on a group level. The same is occurring for the sound recordings so that soon the students will view the score online and study it while simultaneously listening to a digitised sound file.

There are projects where archives have been digitised and made available online, such as Duke University and the Library of Congress in the United

States.<sup>9</sup> Pictorially some of these collections are magnificent and an incentive to realise similar projects in Australia. Not only would it make these collections more accessible but it would provide a form of archival preservation which would prevent overhandling of paper documents.

The history of music publishing and selling in Australia may only seem a small subset of the history of the book in Australia, but it is also intrinsically linked with the development of music performance traditions in Australia—amateur and professional, individual and organisations; the commercial world of music selling; and the links with the overseas publishing houses for publishing imprints, reflecting the trends and popularity of theatre and cinema of the time. Despite many of the archives of the publishing houses not surviving, the collections of music which have been preserved in our libraries and museums provide a ready source of material for scholars and performers in the twenty-first century to interpret the significance of this area of publishing. The papers published in these proceedings indicate the variety of activity which has occurred in music publishing and selling in Australasia in the past two centuries and provides grounding and stimulus for increasing scholarship in this significant part of the Australian musical landscape.

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9. See 'Music for the Nation: American Sheet Music 1870–1885', Library of Congress 'American Memory' <<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/smhtml/smhome.html>>, and 'Historic American Sheet Music at Duke University Library', <<http://scriptorium.lib.duke.edu/sheetmusic/>> [As at 10.2.2002]