

WOMEN'S CONTRIBUTION TO MUSIC IN AUSTRALIA

Women have contributed to music in Australia in a wide field of endeavour. The singers, composers, instrumentalists, teachers, administrators and musicologists have all played their part in Australian history and can lay claim to a place on the honours board of their country.

As brevity is the keynote of this report it must of necessity be selective. I have therefore endeavoured to catalogue only some of the outstanding women who have helped to make Australia known internationally or who have been responsible for some historic landmark within Australia. The list has been arranged chronologically to create a sense of historical development.

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EMMELINE M. WOOLLEY

On 29 June, 1895 it was reported in the Sydney Mail 'for the first time in the history of N.S.W. we have the pleasure to record an event which is by no means common in the old world - namely, the production of an original cantata by two ladies. The composer, Emmeline Woolley and the author of the verses, Miss Ethel Pedley, are professors of music resident in Sydney.'

Emmeline Woolley who gained this notoriety was a person of diverse musical attributes. She was born in Hereford in 1843 and came to Australia as a very young girl upon the appointment of her father, Dr. John Woolley, as the first principal of the University of Sydney. Her earliest recollections were of Norwich, where Dr. Woolley was for some years headmaster of King Edward VI Grammar School. The daily services in the Cathedral were among her first impressions and helped to develop her love for choral music. When only fifteen, after some years in Sydney, she travelled to Europe, partly on account of her health and partly to gratify her wish for a thorough musical education. She stayed in Florence for two years studying pianoforte, theory and composition under Kraus and later Duccé. She also haunted the churches where she familiarised herself with the masses of Palestrina, Pergolesi and Cherubini. She then went to Munich where she studied with Julius von Kolb a pupil of Liszt, for a period of three years.

On returning to Sydney her life changed suddenly owing to the untimely death of her father who was drowned returning from a holiday in England with the ship London when she was lost on 11 January, 1866. £2000 was raised amongst his friends and given to his widow who was left with six children to care for. Disliking public appearances Emmeline took up teaching as a profession. Cultured, sympathetic and extremely talented she devoted her life not only to teaching but to the advancement of music generally, earning the gratitude of numerous students who benefitted from her generosity. She was appointed organist of St. John's Darlinghurst, a post she held for ten years, and it was during that time that she founded a female voice choir in the parish known as the Cecilia Choir for whom she composed some of her part-songs. She gave many first performances while at St. John's, including Psalms, Oratorios and Cantatas as well as inaugurating chamber music concerts where, in conjunction with her friend the violinist Ethel Pedley, many trios and quartets were played for the first time. These performances were all given at her own expense or performed at concerts for Sydney charities. Emmeline Woolley was also one of the founders of the Sydney Amateur Orchestral Society, a society she helped on one occasion with a gift of the score and parts of Tchaikowsky's Symphony No 6.

In 1885 Miss Woolley returned to Europe inspecting the Conservatories of Leipzig, Berlin and Brussels and met many famous musicians including Liszt and Clara Schumann. In Sydney again, she became closely associated with the Women's College of Sydney University. According to Louisa Macdonald, principal of the College at that time, Emmeline Woolley was 'one of the most gifted and remarkable women of Sydney; one of those who helped to bring about the beginning of the College to a reality.' She was a member of the original Council, remaining in that position from her appointment in 1891 until her death in 1908.

Miss Woolley's close friend and associate Ethel Pedley, was born at Acton. Her father Richard Pedley, a dental practitioner in London, married Eliza Dolby, sister of the well-known contralto Madame Sainton-Dolby. Ethel started learning the pianoforte at the age of five. The year she was to have



*journeyed*

entered the Royal Academy of Music the family journeyed to Australia owing to her father's ill-health. In Sydney, Ethel decided to study ~~the~~ violin with W. H. Faling. Her first public appearance was at a concert with Miss Woolley. Except for a short return visit to London of only one year, where she studied singing in the famous vocal school of her aunt, and violin at the Royal Academy, Ethel Pedley spent the rest of her life as a professional musician in Sydney.

*Studied*

*Emmeline Woolley's*  
her cantata The Captive Soul was dedicated to and sung by the St. Cecilia Choir on the 13 June, 1895 at the Oddfellows Temple in Sydney at an At Home given by Ethel Pedley. It is a tale of fairyland. The work is scored for Strings, Flute, Oboe, Clarinet, Bassoon, Organ, two pianofortes, female voice choir and soloists consisting of two sopranos, a mezzo and one male singer. Ethel Pedley trained the choir and orchestra and conducted the performance, while Emmeline Woolley and Grace Hall were the pianists. The organist was Joseph Massey. A full account of the work was given in the Sydney Mail. To composers of today it would appear too slight and over-sentimental to have any appeal, but as the concerted effort of two highly qualified public-spirited musicians it must have caused no small sensation in the musical circles of those days.

*MAIN*

The ~~main~~ criticism seems to have been that the work suffered by being limited to female voices. The critic remarked 'the honours of the evening belonged to the contralto and the choir. The composer has suffered much by limiting her work to female voices. Leads taken up by different soprani have not the variety which tenor and bass give, and parts which on paper show contrapuntal skill, suffer greatly by the interpreters being too much alike.' The writer continued, 'but with these drawbacks the performance evidenced how much talent and knowledge had been employed by composer and librettist and the cantata was received with so much pleasure that a speedy repetition was requested.'

Many of Miss Woolley's songs were published by Novello, one of which, The King's Highway is in the possession of the Mitchell Library.

On 25 March, 1908 the Town and Country printed Emmeline Woolley's obituary notice, saying - 'At No 27 Upper William Street North, the death of Emmeline Woolley aged sixty-five removes from our midst a personality whose power has been felt in the sociable and charitable, as well as in the musical life of the State.'

A memorial concert was held in the Sydney Town Hall on 14 October to launch a scholarship fund. The performers consisted of the Sydney Amateur Orchestra, Mr Laurence Godfrey Smith pianist, a choir of students from the Garcia School, the conductor Herr Slapoffski, vocalists Madame Slapoffski and Miss Florence Quinn, Henri Staell violinist and the accompanist J. Edward Sykes. The memorial, instigated by leading citizens, was a pianoforte scholarship for female students tenable alternately at the Royal College and Royal Academy of Music.

Eventually this was amalgamated with the Pedley scholarship in order to increase its monetary value. Dorothy White, the well-known Sydney musician, was one of the recipients. It is fitting to know that the two friends Emmeline Woolley and Ethel Pedley who worked together so closely in life are still united in perpetuity.

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## SINGERS

MELBA 1861-1931. Debut at La Scala 1893. First Australian tour 1902. First opera tour in conjunction with J.C. Williamson 1911. Final night at Covent Garden 1926. Unveiling of her memorial window at the Church of St. Sepulchre's, London 1962.

ADA CROSSLEY 1874-1929. First renowned Australian contralto. London debut 1895.

AMY CASTLES 1882-1951. Youngest singer ever appointed to the Imperial Court of Vienna. Carnegie Hall debut 1917.

ELLA CASPERS Soloist at inaugural concert Sydney Conservatorium replacing Amy Castles at short notice. Won a scholarship to the Royal Academy of Music, London.

FLORENCE AUSTRAL 1894-1968. First professional operatic appearance as Brunnhilde in Die Walkure Covent Garden 1922. Returned to Australia for a concert tour 1930, and again for the 1934-5 Benjamin Fuller Opera season when her repertoire included Aida, Brunnhilde, Isolde and Tosca. She died in Australia.

MARJORIE LAWRENCE Winner of Sun Aria in Geelong. Debut Monte Carlo 1933. Paris Opera House 1933. Metropolitan Opera House, New York 1935. Known especially as an interpreter of Wagner. Appeared in concert versions of Elektra and Salome under the direction of Eugene Goossens while on tour for the A.B.C. in 1951.

JOAN HAMMOND First British soprano to sing in Vienna after World War II. First soprano to sing in Russian on the Russian stage. 1953 awarded the O.B.E. and C.B.E. in 1963.

MARIE COLLIER First known through her performance in Menotti's opera The Consul. Left for Milan 1955. First appearance at Covent Garden 1956. First performance of Tosca 1963. ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ Most spectacular success in Shostakovich's Katerina Ismailova at Covent Garden in the presence of the composer 1963. 1965 replaced Maria Callas in Tosca and was immediately offered a contract to La Scala.

ELSIE MORISON Winner of the Melba Scholarship. Three years later left for the Royal College of Music, London. First public appearance in Handel's Acis and Galatea in London. First ~~xxxxxxx~~ appeared at both Coven Garden and Glyndebourne 1953.

JOAN SUTHERLAND Winner of Sun Aria 1949 and Mobil Quest 1950. Left for London 1951. North American debut 1958. Reached the status of international stardom overnight at Covent Garden with her performance of Lucia in 1959. Triumphant return to Australia for a season of opera in conjunction with J.C. Williamson 1965. Awarded the C.B.E. 1961.

## LIGHT OPERA

NELLIE STEWART 1858-1931. Born in Woolloomooloo, Sydney. Appeared in J.C. Williamson's first production of the Mikado in 1885. Star of musical comedy in Australia.

GLADYS MONCRIEFF Born in Bundaberg, Queensland. Followed Nellie Stewart. Started singing in small town vaudeville. Remembered for her parts in The Maid of the Mountains, The Merry Widow and in Gilbert and Sullivan operas.

JUNE BRONHILL Winner of Sun Aria 1950. Left for England same year. Covent Garden debut 1959 in Lucia. 1958 The Merry Widow at Sadler's Wells. Toured Australia in The Sound of Music 1962-4.



COMPOSERS

EMMELINE M WOOLLEY 1850-1908.

The Captive Soul was the first cantata to be produced in N.S.W. It was first performed on 13 June, 1895 at the Oddfellows Temple, Sydney. The work was for female voice choir, soloists, strings, flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon and organ to the words of Ethel Pedley. It was dedicated to the Cecilia Choir founded by Miss Woolley in the parish of St. John's, Darlinghurst where she was organist for twelve years. The performance was conducted by Ethel Pedley. The Captive Soul, The King's Highway and other songs were published in England by Novello.

MAY BRAHE Born in Melbourne. Travelled to London 1912. Australia's most prolific and commercially successful writer of ballads. I Passed by your Window and Bless This House were two of her approximately four hundred published songs.

EDITH HARRY Composer of over 2,000 songs. Winner of a scholarship to the Guildhall School of Music, London. Writer of two operas for children, Happy Holland and Gipsy Gay. First musical director of the National Theatre, Melbourne, 1935.

VARNEY MONK 1882-1967. Collitt's Inn, a musical play from the book by T. Stuart Gurr first produced in 1932 at The Princess Theatre, Melbourne and later at The Tivoli, Sydney by Frank Thring. The leading parts were sung by Gladys Moncrieff and George Wallace. In 1933 a second operetta, The Cedar Tree was also produced at The Princess Theatre, Melbourne and the Criterion Theatre, Sydney. Again the producer was Frank Thring and the leading singers Gladys Moncrieff and Claude Fleming. The story, by Edmund Barclay, was centred round the Cedar Tree Shipyard situated on the Hawksbury river at Windsor. Winner of song award for the Henry Lawson Festival, 1966.

MARGARET SUTHERLAND Winner of Scholarship to Melbourne Conservatorium. Left for London 1924. Studied with Arnold Bax. In 1927 her Sonata for Violin and Piano was published in Paris by the Lyrebird Press. Noted chiefly as a writer of chamber music. Her Australian opera The Young Kabbarli, written in collaboration with Lady Casey on the life of Daisy Bates, was premiered in Hobart at the Adult Education seminar in 1965.

MIRRIE HILL Symphony in A Minor (Arnhem Land) recorded by the A.B.C. in Sydney, 1968. Other compositions include a Piano Quartet and Trio, Piano pieces and a set of Aboriginal Dances written for the dancer Beth Dean.

MIRIAM HYDE Winner of the Elder Scholarship to the Royal College of Music, London. Her Australian Overture specially written for the Adelaide Centenary in 1936 was first performed by Sir Malcolm Sargent during his initial visit to Australia. Other works include symphonies, piano concerti, chamber music, songs and piano pieces.

DULCIE HOLLAND Winner of the A.B.C. composers' competition in 1933 with her song At The Edge Of The Sea. Winner of the Blumenthal Scholarship at the Royal College of Music, London in 1938 and the Cobbett prize for chamber music.

INSTRUMENTALISTS  
VIOLINISTS

ALMA MOODIE Born Mount Morgan, Queensland. Discovered by Louis d'Hage at the age of five. Left for study in Brussels when only seven. At the age of sixteen toured Europe with Max Reger. Gave first performance of the Hans Pfitzner Violin Concerto written especially for her at the opening of the New Festival Hall, Cologne.

DAISY KENNEDY Born 1893, South Australia. First heard by Jan Kubelik when he toured Australia. Studied in Europe with Sevcik. Debut at Queen's Hall 1910.

BERTHA JORGENSEN Member of the original Melbourne A.B.C. studio orchestra in 1932. First violin lessons at the age of four. Australia's only woman orchestral leader. Retired 1969.

BERYL KIMBER Winner of A.B.C. concerto contest. Left for study in Europe. First concert at Albert Hall 1951. Pupil of Oistrach. 1958 gained first class diploma in Moscow. First recital Moscow 1960. Returned to Australia. Member of staff Elder Conservatorium, Adelaide.

VIOLA

BLODWEN HILL Violist in Sydney Symphony Orchestra. Gave first Sydney performance of the Alfred Hill Viola Concerto in 1946 at a concert devoted to his works conducted by Henry Krips. d. 1968.

PIANISTS

UNA BOURNE Child prodigy. Toured Australia as Melba's assisting artist in 1907 and 1909. Left for London 1912. Recorded for H.M.V. 1914 and later for Duo-Art in the United States.

EILEEN JOYCE Pupil at Loreto Convent School, Perth. First heard by Percy Grainger and Backhaus. 1928 Left for London. Pupil of Teichmuller in Leipzig. 1930 First appearance in London at a Promenade Concert. Played with most of the principal orchestras or the world. Noted for her recordings. Contributed to the sound tracks of films including The Seventh Veil, Frief Encounter, Man of Two Worlds, Quartet and many more including Wherever She Goes (autobiographical).

VALDA AVELING Left for London 1938. First London recital Wigmore Hall 1940. Returned to Australia for the A.B.C. 1947. Became interested in the Harpsichord and studied with Violet Gordon Woodhouse in London. Professor of Harpsichord at Trinity College, London.

MAUREEN JONES First appeared in Sydney with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra at the age of ten. First recital 1939 at the Sydney Conservatorium. First performed Eugene Goossens' Piano Concerto 1949. Youngest member of Musica Viva Chamber Music Group. Left for Europe 1951. Studied in Vienna and Zurich. 1961 performed the Benjamin Britten Pianoforte Concerto at Edinburgh Festival. Member of the Trio Di Trieste.

HARPSICHORD

MANCELL KIRBY Born Ballarat. Left for London 1936. Owner of the first harpsichord in Australia 1938. First performed in the St. Matthew Passion 1941 in Melbourne. Only player in Australia for twelve years. Gave three solo recitals at the Adelaide Festival, 1960.

DOROTHY WHITE Winner of the E.M. Woolley Scholarship to the Royal College of Music 1933. First Australian woman to gain the diploma of the Joint Graduate Course of the Royal Schools of Music (R.C.M. and R.A.M.) in 1937. Returned to Australia 1939. Acquired her own harpsichord in 1954. Formed Sydney Harpsichord Ensemble 1962. Teaching Fellow in the Department of Music, University of Sydney. Member of staff at Sydney Conservatorium.



INSTRUMENT MAKER

KITTY SMITH Daughter of A.E. Smith the noted stringed instrument maker of Sydney, Kitty Smith is the only woman in Australia to have made a quartet of stringed instruments. As a pupil of Gerald Walenn at the Sydney Conservatorium she had her first experience of a Stradivari (lent to her teacher for his lifetime by the R.A.M. London). Her first violin was made in 1933. Since then she has made a viola and violoncello. Both she and her father were created members of the International Society of Violin and Bow makers.

ORGANIST

LILIAN FROST 1871-1953. Born in Launceston, Tasmania. Became organist of Christ Church, Launceston when only fifteen, a position she held until her arrival in Sydney nine years later. 1895 Sydney debut at Y.M.C.A. Hall. Later the same year she was appointed organist of Pitt Street Congregational Church where she remained for fifty-three years. 1896 First recital in Sydney Town Hall. 1912 and 1927 Visited London where she studied with Sir Walter Alcock and Marcel Dupre. 1907 Instituted the mid-day recitals which became such a feature of Sydney musical life. By 1943 she had reached her eleven hundredth programme. Celebrated her Golden Jubilee at the Church in 1943. Retired in 1948 and returned to Launceston where she remained until her death.

ADMINISTRATORS

GERTRUDE JOHNSON Well-known opera singer. Founder of the National Opera Movement in Melbourne 1935. **First major** productions were The Flying Dutchman and Figaro. Appointed to the first opera board of the Elizabethan Trust 1955.

CLARICE LORENZ. Founder of the National Opera of Australia in Sydney. Operas performed during the first season in 1951 were Il Seraglio, Carmen and A Masked Ball. 1955 Appointed to first opera board of the Elizabethan Trust.

DOROTHY HELMRICH The well-known lieder singer. 1943 President and founder of the State body of the Arts Council of Australia, a unique body catering for the artistic conditions of this country. 1948 Establishment of the Council on a Federal basis. 1951 Inauguration of the first motorised touring show, a gift of the Joint Coal Board. 1968 The Arts Council celebrated its twenty-fifth anniversary.

REGINA RIDGE Secretary of the Arts Council 1945-50. **Manager** of the first season of John Antill's Corroboree. 1950 Appointed general manager of Music Viva which is reported to be the largest chamber music society in the world.

DULCIE MAGNUS First musician to develop a liaison between the Australian Music Examinations Board and the Royal Blind Society for transcribing music into braille as well as making enlarged copies of music for the partially sighted. Mrs Magnus trained under Gordon Lavers at the Royal Blind School. She is now the chief adviser on a Federal basis for the department.

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