

**School of Media, Creative Arts and Social Inquiry**

**A Study of the Relationship  
between Mining and the Performing Arts  
in Australia 1850 – 1914:  
case studies of the Ballarat and Kalgoorlie-Boulder  
goldfields.**

**by**

**Norma Latchford**

**This thesis is presented for the degree of**

**Doctor of Philosophy – Social Sciences**

**of**

**Curtin University**

**March 2020**

To the best of my knowledge and belief this thesis contains no material previously published by any other person except where due acknowledgement has been made.

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university.

Date : 13<sup>th</sup> March 2020

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Many thanks and appreciation for the tolerance and support that has been given by my supervisors to this non- academic student. To Emeritus Professor Roy Jones for his gentle guidance and scrupulous editing of my work: to Doctor Patrick Bertola who gave me the confidence to embark on the project and has been an invaluable support and source of information on mining.

To Teresa Bennett and her staff at the Curtin School of Mines library in Kalgoorlie, for ensuring that living in a regional community was not a disadvantage to research.

For inspiration, my fellow thespians at the Goldfields Repertory Club, and finally the unstinting encouragement and support of Stan and Jane Latchford.

# **A Study of the Relationship between Mining and the Performing Arts in Australia 1850-1914: case studies of the Ballarat and Kalgoorlie-Boulder goldfields.**

## **ABSTRACT**

This study into the relationship between mining and the performing arts during the second half of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century, a transformative period in the economic, social, and cultural history of Australia, investigates the interconnectedness and interdependence of the two components, mining and the performing arts, and demonstrates how each contributed to the support and development of the other.

The early periods of European settlement in two regional mining centres, Ballarat and Kalgoorlie, that were established forty years apart on opposite sides of the continent, were examined during their formative 'gold-rush' years to provide insights into the local nature and function of the performing arts and their relationships with the populations of those centres.

In both locations it was apparent that the migrant populations both transferred their cultures to and maintained them in these new settlements, using the performing arts as a means by which to identify and display difference as well as to provide the comfort of familiarity and to maintain memories. Further, as mining methods changed and the settlements transitioned into more permanent townships, the performing arts, and music in particular, were used to assist in asserting the values of respectability, a required quality at that time for what were deemed normal civic societies. Participation in the performing arts was found to be a significant factor in the recreational activities of both centres.

The demand by the miners in the Victorian goldfields for more sophisticated forms of entertainment led to an expansion of the professional arts industry in Australia and the building of infrastructure to support them. The thesis also outlines the ways in which the local professional industry became linked to a developing international

performance arts industry. The goldfields of Western Australia continued that trend and, were able to maintain the industry during a period of economic depression in the Eastern Colonies. The mid and late nineteenth century was also a period when songs, music and theatrical scripts composed in Australia and reflecting Australian life, especially mining, began to be commonly written and performed.

In describing the historical development of these two settlements based on mining, this thesis outlines the ways in which the performing arts played a significant role in the evolution of both centres and that mining, especially in the form of these two gold rushes, was highly influential in the distinctive development of the performing arts in Australia in the second half of the nineteenth century and beyond.

# CONTENTS

<b>Acknowledgements</b>	iii
<b>Abstract</b>	iv
<b>Contents</b>	vi
<b>List of Illustrations</b>	ix
<b>List of Tables</b>	x
<b>Chapter 1: Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
Objectives and Research Questions	2
Selection of special and temporal contexts	2
Selection of the Performing Arts	3
Selection of two mining communities and timeframe	5
Literature Review	6
General Histories	9
Cultural Histories	17
Mining Histories	20
Performing Arts Histories	23
Overview	27
Sources	29
Structure	31
<b>Chapter 2: Ballarat</b>	<b>32</b>
Part 1: Before the Discovery of Gold	34
The Port Philip District 1830-1850	34
The Performing Arts in Australia 1788-1850	37
The Discovery of Gold and old and new Chums	43

Part 2:	After the Discovery of Gold	48
	Songs for comfort and memory	48
	Songs for history and protest	52
	Theatres and professional entertainers	61
	Opera from two worlds	72
	Aboriginal corroborees	77
	The travelling circus	79
	An Australian repertoire	82
	The supporting cast	90
	An artistic legacy	94
Part 3:	Building a Community	95
	New ways of mining in a new town	95
	The transfer of cultures and institutions	97
	Recreation and socialisation	101
	Establishing an identity	107
	To build a town	116
<b>Chapter 3:</b>	<b>Kalgoorlie and the Eastern Goldfields</b>	<b>118</b>
Part 1:	The Early History and the Discovery of Gold	120
	The Colony of Western Australia 1829-1890	120
	The Performing Arts in Western Australia before 1892	124
	Gold in the West and a League of Nations	132
Part 2:	Songs and Ballads, Theatres and Entertainers	136
	Campfire songs and local ballads	137
	Makeshift theatres and travelling entertainers	147
	The travelling circus in the West	163

	Advertising and the critics	164
	Mining in performance	167
	The start of the new	175
	Maintaining the performing arts	177
Part 3:	Establishing towns and building communities	178
	Three townships, Coolgardie, Kalgoorlie and Boulder	179
	Concerts with a cause	180
	Transporting and maintaining culture	184
	The Scots	186
	The Afghans	188
	The Aboriginal people	193
	A variety of talent	197
	Towns in the bush	206
<b>Chapter 4:</b>	<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>209</b>
	Objectives and Research Questions	209
	New insights	217
	Avenues for further research	220
	<b>Bibliography</b>	<b>223</b>



## Illustrations

### Figures

1. I'm off to the diggings, song sheet.	32
2. Victorian Gold Towns map.	36
3. The Melbourne Athenaeum, the first Mechanics Institute.	40
4. Parker and Macord, Potato Salesman and Fruiters.	47
5. Gold diggings, Ararat.	48
6. View of Ballaraat, (Ballarat) from Golden Point.	49
7. Night scene in the diggings.	51
8. Concert Room – Charlie Napier Hotel, Ballarat.	54
9. Alarming prospect: The single ladies off to the diggings.	56
10. Dress circle boxes, Queen's Theatre.	60
11. Ballarat in the early times.	62
12. Chinese quarter Ballarat with Circus Tent.	63
13. Theatre Royal, Sturt Street.	64
14. Old Theatre Royal Melbourne.	65
15. Astleys Amphitheatre, Melbourne.	65
16. Coppins Olympic Theatre.	66
17. Gustavus Vaughn Brooke.	67
18. Lola Montez.	68
19. Chinese Theatricals in Melbourne.	75
20. Theatre Royal Playbill.	82
21. Under the Verandah, wood engraving.	86
22. Theatre Royal, poster, IT IS NEVER TOO LATE TO MEND.	88
23. Poster from Gold Museum.	92
24. Main Road, Map Sketch.	97
25. 'St Alipius' Roman Catholic Church at Gravel Pit, Ballarat.	99
26. Subscription Ball, Main Road Ballarat.	103
27. "Dancing Saloon, Welshmen."	109
28. 'Interior of Chinese Gambling House.'	114
29. Capel Cymreig, Ballarat, 1860.	117

30. Off to the New Rush, 1890's.	118
31. Map of colony of Western Australia, 1837.	120
32. Captain Stirling's Exploring Party.	121
33. Playbill for <i>Love a la Militaire</i> .	129
34. Coolgardie 1894.	138
35. Advertising with camels. Carl Hertz.	148
36. Audience at Maggie Moore's performance.	152
37. Interior of Tivoli Theatre.	154
38. Theatre Royal, Perth.	156
39. His Majesty's Theatre, Perth.	157
40. Orpheus McAdoo's Georgian Minstrels.	160
41. Fitzgerald Brothers Circus Poster, 1901.	163
42. Cremorne Gardens' Theatre advertising billboard.	165
43. Poster 1896, The Duchess of Coolgardie.	174
44. Advertisement, Kalgoorlie Miner 19 September 1897.	176
45. Afghan Cameleers.	189
46. W.A. Aboriginals Xmas Dinner.	196
47. Hannans Orchestral Society, 1905.	198
48. Coolgardie Town Band, 1905.	198
49. Procession Piesse St. Boulder, 1908.	201
50. Exhibition Coolgardie W.A. opening day, 1899.	206
51. Opening of Boulder Town Hall, 1908.	208

## Tables

1. Birthplaces of population in and around the Ballarat goldfields.	47
2. Population of Western Australia 1829 – 1893.	123
3. Birthplace of population of Western Australia, census 1901.	135
4. Resident population Kalgoorlie-Boulder and Suburbs 1903.	179

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

Mining has had, and continues to play, an important role in the economic, political, and social life of Australia, and, as such has been the topic of a number of historical studies.<sup>1</sup> However, mining historians, in both academic<sup>2</sup> and popular literature<sup>3</sup>, have generally tended to focus on the technology of mining and metallurgy, on “cataloguing stamper batteries, boilers, steam engines and water races,”<sup>4</sup> or on economic and labour history.<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, over the past two decades the scope of mining histories has widened slightly with an influx of contributions from social historians<sup>6</sup> who have included gender, and extended examinations of class and social structures as topics within the broad field of mining history. By comparison, the role of the arts, and of the performing arts in particular, in mining communities has received considerably less attention, with relatively little scholarly debate about the relationships between these two activities;<sup>7</sup> this mirrors the likewise limited nature of any historical research into the arts in rural and regional settings.<sup>8</sup> The

---

<sup>1</sup> Mel Davies, *Biography of Australian Mining History* (Perth: AMHA, 2002, 2010).

<sup>2</sup> Peter Bell, Justin McCarthy, “The evolution of Early Copper Smelting Technology in Australia”, *Journal of Australian Mining History*, Vol 9, (September 2011): 20-35. Geoffrey Blainey, *The Rush That Never Ended, A History of Australian Mining*, (NSW: Angus and Robertson, 1963). C. H. Martin et al., *History of Coal Mining in Australia*, (Parkville, Victoria: The Australasian Institute of Mining and Metallurgy, 1993).

<sup>3</sup> David Hill, *The Fever That Forever Changed Australia, Gold!* (Sydney: William Heinemann, 2010).

<sup>4</sup> Susan Lawrence, “Poor Man’s Diggings: Subsistence Mining in the Nineteenth Century,” *Australasian Historical Archaeology* 13 (1995): 59-68.

<sup>5</sup> Patrick Bertola, “Kalgoorlie, Gold and the World Economy 1893-1972” (PhD thesis, Curtin University of Technology, School of Social Sciences, 1993). D. Dingsdag, “Technological Change in the Coalmining Industry of New South Wales, Australia 1903-1982: The Economic, Social and Political Implications of Restructuring”. In *Towards a Social History of Mining in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Century*, ed. Klaus Tenfelde (Germany: Verlag C. H. Beck Munchen 1992).

<sup>6</sup> Richard Hogan, *Class and Community in Frontier Colorado*. (USA: University Press of Kansas, 1990). Susan Lawrence, “Gender and community structure on Australian colonial goldfields.” in *Social Approaches to an Industrial Past. The Archaeology and Anthropology of Mining*, ed. A. Knapp et.al (London: Routledge, 1998). Robyn Mayes, *Women and Mining in Contemporary Australia: An Exploratory Study*. (Perth: John Curtin Institute of Public Policy, Curtin University, 2010).

<sup>7</sup> Anne Doggett, “Musical Life in Ballarat, 1851-1871” (PhD thesis, University of Ballarat, 2006). Jean Farrant. “A Social History of Music in Coolgardie, Kalgoorlie and Boulder 1892 to 1908” (Masters’ thesis, Perth, University of Western Australia, 1992). Helen English, “Music as a Resource for World-Building in Newcastle, NSW and its Townships, 1869-1879” (PhD thesis, University of Newcastle, 2016).

<sup>8</sup> Julia Anwar McHenry, “A Place for the Arts in Rural Revitalisation and the Social Wellbeing of Australian Rural Communities,” *Rural Society* 19, no. 1 (2009): 60-70.

performing arts in this context are defined in the broadest terms and include; dance, music, opera, theatre, circus, and magic skills.

### **Objectives and Research Questions**

The primary objective of this thesis is to increase the scholarly understanding of the relationships between mining as an activity in Australia, having social, economic and political dimensions and the 'Performing Arts', as a component of Australia's cultural practice in the second half of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century. To do so, this research will seek to provide an historical analysis of the two components and of the relationships between them by considering the nature and function of the performing arts in two regional mining centres in Australia that were established forty years apart and on opposite sides of the continent.

Both case studies will be examined to provide new insights on three interrelated questions.

Firstly, whether it is possible, through an examination of the changing nature and status of the performing arts in Australia over this period, to determine if they were influenced by the development of mining in general and the gold rushes in particular, and, if so, how.

Secondly, to consider how the performing arts were used by the inhabitants of the two mining settlements in their daily lives and whether this use contributed to the broader economic and social development of the mining towns and their people.

Thirdly, through this process, the research will seek to consider the similarities and differences in the relationship between mining and the performing arts in the two mining settlements established at distinct times and in very different locations.

### **Selection of spatial and temporal contexts**

Within this thesis there will be two distinct case studies; the first will be based primarily in and around the district of Ballarat, Victoria, but will also include this district's links to other localities, such as Melbourne, where it is perceived that the performing arts in that community was directly influenced by the prospectors and miners of Ballarat and other gold rush towns. This study will commence in 1851,

when payable gold was first discovered, and extend to the mid-1870s when the deep leads were exhausted in Ballarat and there was a decline in the number of alluvial miners to less than 1,400.<sup>9</sup>

The second study will focus on the Eastern Goldfields of Western Australia, concentrating on the communities of Coolgardie, Kalgoorlie and Boulder but again noting other centres in Western Australia where the performing arts benefitted directly from the increased population and disposable income that resulted from the gold rush. This study commences in 1892, when gold was first discovered in Coolgardie, and ends with the outbreak of World War 1 in 1914 when both the mining communities of the Eastern Goldfields and Australia's performing arts industry changed focus.

While mining continued in the region during the war, the cost of production increased as supplies became scarcer and more costly. Mines cut back and many stopped exploring, relying on the already blocked ore. The mines also employed foreign workers, many of whom were now regarded as aliens and were withdrawn from the fields to be replaced by unskilled workers of British descent, reducing gold production even more.<sup>10</sup> There were too, those residents, who felt it was their duty to volunteer for service, increasing the decline in population. The war had a major impact on the performing arts in Western Australia, as it did throughout Australia generally. International artists were reluctant to travel, and those who did were more likely to come from North America than Europe. Raising money for the war effort became the focus of charitable concerts and film replaced live melodrama in the theatre as the entertainment of choice for the majority of the people.<sup>11</sup>

### **Selection of the Performing Arts**

The selection of the broad spectrum of the performing arts for this study, rather than a single arts genre was influenced by the objective, which was to focus on the daily lives of the prospectors, miners, their families, and the mining communities in

---

<sup>9</sup> Charles Fahey, "Peopling the Victorian Goldfields: From Boom to Bust, 1851-1901," *Australian Economic History Review* Vol. 50, no. 2. (July 2010): 158.

<sup>10</sup> Geoffrey Blainey, *The Golden Mile* (St. Leonards: Allen & Unwin Pty Ltd. 1993), 106.

<sup>11</sup> Richard Waterhouse, *The Vision Splendid, A Social and Cultural History of Australia* (Fremantle: Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 2005), 150.

which they lived. As this research will seek to demonstrate, the range of performing arts activities that the inhabitants of these mining communities incorporated into their lives was diverse and not confined to a single genre.

There are also problems in separating the genres, for, as noted by Waterhouse,<sup>12</sup> in the second half of the nineteenth century the boundaries between high and popular culture in Australia were blurred and, when the opulent theatres of the Victorian goldfields were built and the makeshift theatres of the Eastern Goldfields were constructed, they provided for a variety of forms of entertainment and were patronised by all classes. Moreover, as he also notes:

the audiences at these venues were treated to entertainments that covered the whole cultural spectrum: minstrel entertainments at one end, melodrama in the middle and Shakespeare performances at the other. Indeed, Shakespeare proved particularly popular with miners and their wives: Both Clarence Holt and the Keanes noted that *Hamlet* and *Macbeth* drew better at the box office on the goldfields than any of the other plays in their repertoires.<sup>13</sup>

It was a similar story in the goldfields of Western Australia when the travelling shows arrived. So starved of entertainment were the prospectors, miners and their families, that patronage at concerts, drama, minstrel shows, circus, and all manner of variety shows was high, with a mixed bag of spectators at each event.

Participation in the performing arts by the settlers themselves was also far reaching and diverse: a prospector singing by the camp fire would recite a poem and play the fiddle; the casts of visiting drama groups were bolstered by local amateurs; and the fundraising concerts would include local dancers and jugglers as well as singers and musicians. Advertisements and reviews of performances in the newspapers of the period, in both locations, give an impression of a rich cultural life that was experienced in many forms by the majority of the population. Therefore, rather than narrowing the range and excluding some activities, this study will attempt to

---

<sup>12</sup> Waterhouse, *From Minstrel Show to Vaudeville: The Australian Popular Stage, 1788-1914* (Sydney: N.S.W. University Press, 1990) 142. Waterhouse suggests that the reason why the gap between high and low culture never became as wide in Australia as it did in Europe and the United States was because of a lack of an entrenched aristocracy and an insufficiency of wealthy families to provide cultural patronage.

<sup>13</sup> Waterhouse, *The Vision Splendid*, 144.

examine the performing arts as a whole and to reflect on how they both related and contributed to the distinctive natures of these mining towns.

### **Selection of two mining communities and the timeframe**

Historian of mining, Peter Bell,<sup>14</sup> made an observation that is frequently overlooked by those studying mining towns.

Mines are located where the minerals are: they cannot be anywhere else. And frequently the location of those minerals takes settlement into regions where farmers and pastoralists do not go: across Australia there have been mines and mining settlements in utterly waterless deserts, in tropical rainforests and on frozen mountain tops.<sup>15</sup>

In the nineteenth century in Australia, this generally meant that the settlements and towns constructed to house the prospectors and mine workers were built in districts that had not previously been occupied by European migrants, or, were only sparsely inhabited by the Indigenous people and perhaps a few pastoralists. Of the regions selected for this comparative study, Ballarat, established in the early 1850s, was 79 kilometres from the nearest large settlement of Geelong with a population of 8,000, and 102 kilometres from Melbourne with a population of 23,000 at the 1851 census. Coolgardie, the first of the Eastern Goldfields' settlements, established in 1892, was 515 kilometres from the small coastal capital of Perth, with a population at that time of 16,894, and 393 kilometres from the Port of Esperance on the south coast. These two regions were selected for this particular research because of their similarities and their differences, both of which will be explored throughout this study.

The two sites selected will enable a comparative study to be made in the thesis in order that the relationships between mining and the performing arts could be traced over time as well as space.

Mining communities, even if they were isolated when originally settled, did and do not exist in a vacuum: they are always linked to the wider world and are influenced by the political, economic, social and cultural forces of their times. In these two

---

<sup>14</sup> Peter Bell, "The fabric and structure of Australian mining settlements," in *Social Approaches to an Industrial Past. The Archaeology and Anthropology of Mining*, eds. Bernard Knapp, Vincent C. Piggott, and Eugenia W. Herbert (London: Routledge, 1998), 27-38.

<sup>15</sup> Bell, "The fabric and structure of Australian mining settlements," 27.

instances, however, the reverse is also true, the discovery of gold in the two selected regions, leading to the gold rushes of the 1850s and 1890s, had a great influence on the economy and demographic structures of Australia<sup>16</sup>. Immigration during the first decade of the gold rush in Victoria led to a tripling of the population of Australia, with Melbourne overtaking Sydney as the continent's largest city. Gold became the main export with the whole of the economy stimulated by the need for goods and services to supply the increased demands of industry and commerce. The discovery of gold in the West tripled the population of that colony but also lifted the whole of the Australian economy and stimulated transcontinental migration at a time when the Eastern colonies were experiencing a major depression.

The selection of the mining towns of Ballarat and Kalgoorlie from the points at which they were first established, forty years apart, and on opposite sides of the continent, through their boom periods, until there was an economic and social change in their circumstances, provides a broad perspective to this thesis. The significance of this period and its scope is further reinforced by its centrality to the economic, political, and social history of Australia generally which provides the backdrop to the study.

### **Literature Review**

To reveal the current level and extent of knowledge in and to identify gaps in historical academic research into the arts, including the performing arts, with a focus on the performing arts in regional and rural Australia, a representative selection of Australian general histories, cultural histories, mining histories and, performing arts histories are reviewed below.

In her thesis into musical life in Ballarat between 1851 and 1871 Anne Doggett concluded that "general histories, with a few notable exceptions, underplay the significance of music in colonial Australia". Doggett also commented on the "lack of

---

<sup>16</sup> R.T. Appleyard. Western Australia: "Economic and Demographic Growth, 1850-1914," in *A New History of Western Australia*, ed. C. T. Stannage (Perth: University of Western Australian Press, 1981), 211-236.  
Geoffrey Blainey, "The Momentous Gold Rushes," *Australian Economic History Review*, vol. 50, no 2 (July 2010): 209-216.



a recent comprehensive music history,” but noted that there is now a selection of literature on various musical topics.<sup>17</sup> Doggett highlights studies that were of relevance to her thesis; some examples are Russell Ward’s *The Australian Legend*,<sup>18</sup> Peter Goodall’s *High Culture, and Popular Culture: the long debate*,<sup>19</sup> Richard Waterhouse, *Private Pleasures, Public Leisure*,<sup>20</sup> John Cargher, *Opera and Ballet in Australia*,<sup>21</sup> and Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society*.<sup>22</sup> All of these studies and others that she references relate to the debate about high and low culture and to the role of music in social and religious life.

A review of the broader category of the history of the performing arts and of the arts generally, reveals that, although they are mentioned more frequently than is the single music genre, an impression remains that the arts were on the periphery of Australian colonial life. What does emerge when the arts are mentioned is that there is a hierarchy of value, with writers and painters given the most prominence and the performing arts less attention. This is noted by John Rickard in his article “Writing Music into Australian History,”<sup>23</sup> in which a number of short histories were scrutinised for their references to music. Rickard’s explanation of this phenomenon is that historians, as writers themselves, are more comfortable with literature and that we are all familiar with paintings in galleries but that music as history is one step removed from most of us since only a minority can read the scores.<sup>24</sup>

I would argue that the reasons for these differentials are more complex, and, are related both to the cultural interests of historians of the period and to the nature of

---

<sup>17</sup> Anne Doggett, “Musical Life in Ballarat, 1851-1871” (PhD thesis, University of Ballarat, 2006), 32, 36.

Examples of recent publications would include: Graeme Smith, *Singing Australia – A History of Folk and Country Music* (North Melbourne: Pluto Press, 2005). Bob Blunt, *Blunt a biased history of Australian rock* (Northcote, Victoria: Prowling Tiger Press, 2001). Elizabeth Mackinlay, Denis Collins and Samantha Owens, eds. *Aesthetics and Experience in Music Performance* (Newcastle, UK: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2005). Gillian Harrison, “Community Music in Australia,” *International Journal of Community Music* Vol. 3, (1 November 2010): 337-342.

<sup>18</sup> Russell Ward, *The Australian Legend* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1966).

<sup>19</sup> Peter Goodall, *High Culture, Popular Culture: the long debate* (St. Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1995).

<sup>20</sup> Richard Waterhouse, *Private Pleasures, Public Leisure: a history of Australian popular culture since 1788* (South Melbourne: Longman, 1995).

<sup>21</sup> John Cargher, *Opera and Ballet in Australia* (North Melbourne: Cassell Australia Ltd, 1977).

<sup>22</sup> Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society 1780-1950* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1961).

<sup>23</sup> John Rickard, “Writing Music into Australian History,” *Musicology Australia*, 37:2, (2015): 271-279. DOI:10.1080/08145857.2015.1064556.

<sup>24</sup> Rickard, “Writing Music into Australian History,” 278.

the performing arts themselves. Before the onset of sound and visual recording technologies all performing arts were transitory in nature and could not be divorced from the locational and social conditions of each performance. Unlike books or paintings, which remain in a single physical state, although they are open to interpretation by different readers at different times and in different places, plays, and music possess at least one or more additional layers of interpretation. Performance works and compositions may look the same on the printed page, but each performance is unique depending on the performer, the reception of the audience, and the physical and social setting.

This phenomenon has been noted in the academic literature on performance and theatrical history, where many studies have focused on the relationship between space and performance. For example Peter Brook in *The Empty Space*<sup>25</sup> considers how the actions of performers and the reactions of audiences bring spaces to life, Gay McCauley, in her publication *Space in Performance: Making Meaning in the Theatre*,<sup>26</sup> examines the relationship between the performer, the audience and the space in which they come together, which may be a theatre or a town square; each having an effect on the other.

One of the most interesting studies, however, was completed by Jonathan Bollen and Julie Holledge, "Hidden Dramas: Cartographic Revelations in the World of Theatre Studies,"<sup>27</sup> in which productions of the play *A Doll's House* by Henrik Ibsen were charted over time and space.

"It allows us to consider the significance of time and space to the transmission of canonical works in the theatre by mapping the connections between all the productions of the play, rather than limiting our gaze to the work of significant artists and their critically acclaimed performances."<sup>28</sup>

By using this method, the authors were able to trace the influences of international, political, social and cultural events on historical and contemporary productions of a single play as well as those of the performers and the performance spaces.

---

<sup>25</sup> Peter Brook, *The Empty Space* (London: MacGibbon & Kee, 1968).

<sup>26</sup> Gay McAuley, *Space in Performance: Making Meaning in Theatre* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000).

<sup>27</sup> Jonathan Bollen and Julie Holledge, "Hidden Dramas: Cartographic revelations in the World of Theatre Studies," *The Cartographic Journal* Vol. 48, Issue no. 4 (2011): 226-236.

<sup>28</sup> Bollen, "Hidden Dramas: Cartographic revelations in the World of Theatre," 227.

The influence of performers in a production can be observed when studying the critical reviews of actors. Even allowing for personal bias, it is apparent that each actor brings to the text and the character, a different interpretation and therefore a different performance.

Dominic Cavendish, theatre critic for *The Telegraph*, listed “The 10 Great Hamlets of our Time”,<sup>29</sup> and, for each one, gave, a short review of their performance, all very different interpretations by the actors, of the same character in the same play.

Susannah Clapp, from the *Guardian*<sup>30</sup> also wrote about her 10 best Hamlet portrayals, citing performances ranging from that of Henry Irving in 1870 to those of the Russian actor Innokenti Smoktunovsky, and the German actor, Angela Winkler. Different interpretations of the same character and text by the actors, but also from the critics, as audience, elicited two very differing responses.

In the nineteenth century when travelling actors, such as the Irish tragedian, Gustavus Vaughan Brooke, performed Shakespearean tragedy, domestic drama, comedy, and farce, in the large theatres of London, Sydney, and Melbourne, and the makeshift stages of the Victorian Goldfields, each performance responded to the aesthetics of the time, and place, and the composition of the audience.<sup>31</sup> These performances would then be received and read by audiences, who, in the nineteenth century and particularly in the goldfields of Australia, would be composed of an eclectic mix of nationalities, classes and ages.

I would suggest that, for many historians, and especially for those selecting subjects for short histories, it was easier to sideline such a complex, multifaceted topic.

## **General Histories**

---

<sup>29</sup> Dominic Cavendish, “The 10 Great Hamlets of our Time,” *The Telegraph*, February 28, 2017. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/theatre/what-to-see/ten-great-hamlets-of-our-time/>

<sup>30</sup> Susannah Clapp, “The 10 best Hamlets,” *The Guardian*, August 22, 2010.

<https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2010/aug/22/10-best-hamlets-david-tennant>

<sup>31</sup> Gustavus Vaughan Brooke 1818-1866. During 1855 and 1856 Brooke toured Australia and New Zealand playing to enthusiastic audiences. Returning to Australia from England in 1866 he was on board a ship that sank in a storm. Declining a place on the last remaining lifeboat with the crew and passengers, his words to the captain were “Goodbye. Should you survive, give my last farewell to the people of Melbourne” From the State Library of Victoria’s virtual exhibition Life on the Goldfields.

Geoffrey Blainey is widely regarded as one of Australia's pre-eminent historians with a focus on the economic and social history of Australia. The themes of his publications range through Aboriginal history,<sup>32</sup> immigration,<sup>33</sup> politics,<sup>34</sup> transport,<sup>35</sup> sport,<sup>36</sup> and mining,<sup>37</sup> to broad ranging histories of Australia,<sup>38</sup> and the World.<sup>39</sup> In Blainey's numerous articles and publications, I can find very few that relate specifically to the arts, despite his having been on the committee that drafted the report *Museums in Australia*<sup>40</sup> in 1975. The articles that he has published on the arts are mainly concerned with arts funding and patronage.<sup>41</sup>

This review will consider three of Blainey's social histories of Australia to gauge the level of inclusion of the arts and, the performing arts in particular, in this specific historian's works.

In *A Shorter History of Australia*, Blainey peppers his narrative with sightings of the arts, mentioning Aboriginal people singing, rock art, people attending live theatre, opera in Melbourne during the gold rush, and Nellie Melba singing "Bless this House". However his comment, "The writers and painters who in the 1890s were giving people a new sense of identity", are included in a chapter on transport, with the provision that they "could not have preached their message but for the advance of the railways". Similarly, the growth of a "serious audience for the arts", in the 1930s is attributed to the advancement of radio. Both of these statements may be true, but the lack of scrutiny and space given to the artistic movements themselves

---

<sup>32</sup> Geoffrey Blainey, *Triumph of the Nomads: A History of Ancient Australia* (South Melbourne: Macmillan Press, 1975).

<sup>33</sup> Blainey, *All for Australia*, (North Ryde, N.S.W: Methuen Haynes, 1984).

<sup>34</sup> Blainey, "Essence of Democracy Lies with the Voters," *The Australian*, May 1, 1987.

<sup>35</sup> Blainey, "The Long Distance Blues-Australia needs a better long distance transport system," *Australian Business Monthly*, December 1992, p154-156.

<sup>36</sup> Blainey, "The Origins of Our Game," in *100 years of Australian Football*, (Ringwood, Victoria: Viking, 1996) 10-12.

<sup>37</sup> Blainey, *The Rush that never ended: A History of Australian Mining* (Carlton, Victoria: Melbourne University Press, 1963).

<sup>38</sup> Blainey, *Tyranny of Distance: How Distance Shaped Australia's History* (Melbourne: Sun Books, 1966). *Our Side of the Country: The Story of Victoria* (North Ryde, N.S.W: Methuen Haynes, 1984).

<sup>39</sup> Blainey, *The Great Seesaw: A New View of the Western World, 1750-2000* (South Melbourne: Macmillan, 1988).

<sup>40</sup> *Museums in Australia 1975, Report of the Committee of Inquiry on Museums and National Collections including the Report of the Planning Committee on the Gallery of Aboriginal Australia* (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1975).

<sup>41</sup> Blainey, "Readers, Writers and Values" in *International Booksellers Federation 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Congress, Papers and Proceedings*, Melbourne, March 23-27, 1981.

stands in direct contrast to a whole chapter devoted to “The Rise of the Sporting Hero”.<sup>42</sup>

In *Black Kettle and Full Moon*, Blainey’s account of daily life in Australia from the first gold rush to World War 1, there is scant mention of the arts except for a description of lighting in the theatre in a section on gas lighting, and of brass bands when discussing “voices”.<sup>43</sup> While acknowledging that the selection of topics on which to focus, from a wide range of day to day activities is always difficult, his lack of any reference to music in nineteenth century homes and daily life is curious, when, as claimed by the French critic Oscar Comettant, Australia had “more grand pianos per head of population”<sup>44</sup> than any other country. Even Anthony Trollope, describing a room in a hotel in the small, isolated, Victorian mining town of Walhalla,<sup>45</sup> was impressed with the presence of the pianoforte and the effort it must have taken to get it there. He notes that:

(t)here was a pianoforte in the hotel sitting room, and framed pictures on the wall-just as there might be in Birmingham. And there was a billiard table. At what cost must the pianoforte and the billiard table have been brought down the mountain track! Nevertheless the charge for billiards was sixpence a game; and no charge for the piano!<sup>46</sup>

Singing around the piano was the main source of entertainment for the majority of working and middle-class families during the nineteenth century, so its omission from this history is significant.

Geoffrey Blainey’s latest general history, *The Story of Australia’s People: The Rise and Rise of New Australia*, covers the period from the 1850s, the time of the first gold rush, to the twenty first century.<sup>47</sup> It does, as promised in the Preface, “give less space to political history than is normal, and more attention to how to how people worked and lived, played and prayed, travelled or were unable to travel.”

---

<sup>42</sup> Geoffrey Blainey, *A Shorter History of Australia* (Sydney: Random House, 1994), 13, 7, 201, 187, 95, 201, 122.

<sup>43</sup> Geoffrey Blainey, *Black Kettle and Full Moon*. (Camberwell: Penguin Books, 2003), 57, 147.

<sup>44</sup> Oscar Comettant, *In the land of kangaroos and gold mines*. First published as *Au pays des kangourous et des mines d’or*: Paris; Librairie Fischbacher; 1890. First English edition trans. Judith Armstrong (Adelaide; Rigby: 1980), 13

<sup>45</sup> An isolated mining town in Gippsland, Victoria situated in a deep mountain valley.

<sup>46</sup> Anthony Trollope, *Australia and New Zealand*: authorised Australian edition, (Melbourne: G. Robertson, 1873), 417-419.

<sup>47</sup> Geoffrey Blainey, *The Story of Australia’s People: The Rise and Rise of a New Australia* (Melbourne: Penguin Random House Australia, 2016).

Writers and painters are attributed with influencing attitudes and emotions about landscape, Aboriginal art is included, there is a small section on sport, and a whole chapter on women and their evolving roles over the decades. There is still no mention of the performing arts in the lives of ordinary Australians apart from a comment on Nellie Melba.<sup>48</sup>

Manning Clark's *A Short History of Australia* quotes a Thatcher song to illustrate the rising sense of power of the bourgeoisie in the 1850s but says little else about the arts in the colonial era.<sup>49</sup> The arts in the twentieth century fare a little better, with a page devoted to mass entertainment at a time when it was becoming industrialised and commercialised. Considering the decade of the 1960's Clarke comments:

It had been a decade of strange paradoxes. There had been at long last some great achievements of the human spirit in Australia. Patrick White wrote his novels; Alex Hope wrote his *Ode on the Death of Pius the Twelfth*; Douglas Stewart and Judith Wright sang in their poems a great hymn of praise to life: Sydney Nolan painted his *Riverbend* in celebration of the golden tree of life.<sup>50</sup>

This strangely ambiguous statement does not explain whether the achievements in the arts, are a reflection of the rise in human spirits or its cause. What the text does emphasise is the narrow conceptualisation of the arts as literature and the visual arts. Recent research into the history of emotions does point to a link between the arts, particularly the performing arts, and emotions;<sup>51</sup> however Clarke, in this specific history has not included this vital element.

As noted by Doggett,<sup>52</sup> the two volumes of *The Oxford History of Australia* that cover the period of this thesis<sup>53</sup> include specific chapters entitled "Culture"<sup>54</sup> which contain many references to the place of music in Australian society. The

---

<sup>48</sup> Blainey, *The Story of Australia's People*, 1, 46, 403-404, 375, 94-116, 387-393, 97.

<sup>49</sup> Manning Clark, *A Short History of Australia* (Sydney: Mead & Beckett Publishing, 1981). Charles Robert Thatcher (1831-1878), a goldfields balladeer, who travelled from town to town singing topical verses; many of which gave a shrewd insight into political and social issues of the day.

<sup>50</sup> Clark, *A Short History*, 203, 230.

<sup>51</sup> See studies done by the Australian Research Council centre of Excellence for the History of Emotions, UWA, Perth.

<sup>52</sup> Doggett, "Musical Life in Ballarat" 31.

<sup>53</sup> Jan Kociumbas, *The Oxford History of Australia. Volume 2, 1770-1860: Possessions* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1992). Beverley Kingston, *The Oxford History of Australia. Volume 3, 1860-1900: Glad confident morning* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1988).

<sup>54</sup> Kociumbas, *Possessions*, 238. Kingston, *Glad, confident morning*.174.

observations of Kociumbas and Kingston on the performing arts, both generally, and on the role they played in contemporary society, are complex and elevate the subject to one worthy of examination. In Volume 2, 1770 to 1860, Kociumbas attributes the rise of the theatre in urban areas to the need for entertainment as the working week shortened, but also acknowledges other motives:

(A) theatre would effect in the Colony much moral advantage – the hours and nights that are spent by many in debauchery and revelling; or at that universal scourge of all society, the gaming table; would be exchanged to the theatre where they would become refined, .... And the mind impressed by the presented scene<sup>55</sup>

In so doing, she contends that culture, and not just the theatre, could be made to control and define what constitutes cultural excellence and the production and sale of cultural commodities.<sup>56</sup> The participation of working class people in all aspects of theatre from acting to promoting, the ability to add local and subversive material, and the presence of unruly patrons who responded to and disrupted performances, are not taken as signs of a deviation from this ideal. Kociumbas concludes that:

However, in no sense did the participation of some working people, or the inclusion of some sexually suspect plays, alter the fact that modern theatre was a commercial rather than a community venture and, like many other forms of entertainment available to the working class was ‘popularized’ rather than “-popular”.<sup>57</sup>

The chapter on culture in volume 3, which covers the period 1860-1900,<sup>58</sup> is double in size as compared to that in the previous edition and includes such distinct topics as Australian speech, holidays, hunting, newspapers and Indigenous culture. In it, Kingston highlights two themes concerning Australian culture during this period:

One is the way in which ordinary people, given time and means, adapted the classical forms of British and European culture for their own purposes. The other is the gradual acceptance of environment and ordinary experience as legitimate expressions of national culture<sup>59</sup>

Two factors that could have contributed to these changing attitudes, are the rapid increase in immigrants from all corners of the globe due to the gold rushes and, as noted by Serle, that a large portion of these immigrants were well educated and

---

<sup>55</sup> *The Blossom* cited in I. Brodsky, *Sydney Takes the Stage* (Sydney: Old Sydney Free Press, 1963). 6

<sup>56</sup> Kociumba, *Possessions*, 239

<sup>57</sup> Kociumba, *Possessions* 240.

<sup>58</sup> Kingston, *Glad confident morning*

<sup>59</sup> Kingston, *Glad confident morning*, 175.

skilled.<sup>60</sup> Kingston does not consider either of these changing social conditions. However, she does note that the range of professional entertainment offered in capital cities and regional centres increased as the population and the amount of disposable income grew, and she also noted the extensive participation by amateurs in the performing arts.

For every appearance by a visiting artist there were a dozen concerts of the semi-or non- professional kind, in which people displayed their talents and amused each other, not only singing and playing instruments, but with recitations, dance routines and comic turns.<sup>61</sup>

Overall, this volume does give an impression of a vibrant artistic culture in Australia in the second half of the nineteenth century, with references to the performing arts culture in regional centres and country towns as well as in the capital cities. However, no author makes specific links to the mining activity that as this thesis contends was an important contributor to this blossoming of the arts.

*The Penguin Bicentennial History of Australia*<sup>62</sup> is one amongst many of the general histories of Australia written to celebrate two hundred years of European settlement. As noted by Wilson, it contains, “a bit of something for everyone”.<sup>63</sup> In proportion, references to the arts are included more frequently than in the previous histories, with mentions and descriptions of the most famous works of some iconic colonial figures such as Henry Lawson, Banjo Paterson, Ethel Turner, Joseph Furphy and the painters of the ‘Heidelberg School’.<sup>64</sup> What is significant however, in terms of this study, is the volume’s recognition of the importance of the gold rushes in the development of the performing arts in Australia. For example, it concludes that “prior to the 1850’s Australian music was practically non-existent, but the gold discoveries provided a market for the theatrical impresario, the piano importer and a flourishing sheet music.”<sup>65</sup>

---

<sup>60</sup> Geoffrey Serle, *The Golden Age: A History of the colony of Victoria 1851-1861* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1963), 47-48.

<sup>61</sup> Kingston, *Glad confident morning*, 229.

<sup>62</sup> John Molony, *The Penguin Bicentennial History of Australia* (Ringwood: Viking, 1987).

<sup>63</sup> Charles Wilson, “A Tale of Two Histories,” *Quadrant* 32, no 9 (1988): 53-54.

<sup>64</sup> Heidelberg School: an Australian art movement of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century; that includes such artists as Tom Roberts, Charles Condeer, Frederick McCubbin, Arthur Streeton and Walter Withers. Influenced by the international art movement they frequently painted ‘plein air’, depicting realistic Australian scenes of the bush and city.

<sup>65</sup> Molony, *The Penguin Bicentennial*, 177.



This history also mentions the theatrical entrepreneurs, Coppin, Lyster, and, J. C. Williamson, and acknowledges that their careers were founded and dependent on the discretionary income and need for entertainment of the miners.<sup>66</sup> Noted too, in this volume, are the European migrants who came to find gold, and brought with them the cultural traditions of their homelands; bands, choirs, orchestras and philharmonic societies, which were crucial in the establishment of an Australian musical culture.

Brief as these comments are, the recognition of a link between mining and the development of the performing arts in colonial Australia is an important inclusion that had been largely overlooked in most earlier general histories.

There are other references to the arts as this book's focus shifts to the twentieth century but it is the following comment that "(t)he official public life of a nation is never as indicative of its vitality as in its growth in communal awareness that is seen in its culture, both high and popular,"<sup>67</sup> which is relevant to this thesis. This comment is significant and, if true, it can also be applied to periods in the nineteenth century, such as the 1850s in Victoria, and the 1890s in Western Australia when an outburst of arts activity coincided with rapid and vigorous social and political developments, and with population growth, due to gold discoveries.

---

<sup>66</sup>George Seth Coppin (1819-1906), born Sussex, England: arrived in Australia in 1842. With a chequered career as an actor, goldminer, and hotelier, Coppin is noted for his entrepreneurial theatrical ventures during the early gold rushes. He built six theatres and brought some great theatrical talent to Australia, eventually becoming a politician in the Victorian parliament. Sally O'Neill. 'Coppin, George Seth (1819-1906)'. Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/coppin-george-selth-3260/text4935>, published first in hardcopy 1969, accessed on line 25 March 2016.

William Saurin Lyster (1828-1880) born Dublin, Ireland. After a short career in the army, Lyster formed an opera troupe in 1857 with himself as the musical director. Touring first in America he arrived in Melbourne with his company in 1861. Over several years he toured the main cities of Australia and New Zealand bringing many renowned singers to Australia. Sally O'Neil and Therese Radic. 'Lyster, William Saurin (1828-1880). Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/lyster-william-saurin-4053/text6451>, published in hardcopy 1974, accessed on line 25 March 2016.

James Cassius Williamson (1845-1913). Actor and theatrical manager: born Pennsylvania, United States of America. First visiting Australia under contract to George Coppin in 1874, he became Australia's most successful theatrical entrepreneur. Helen M. Van Der Poorten, 'Williamson, James Cassius (1845 -1913),' Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/williamson-james-cassius-4859/text8117>, published first in hardcopy 1976, accessed online 25 March 2016

<sup>65</sup> Molony, *The Penguin Bicentennial*, 177.

In 1977, a group of Canberra historians embarked on a project to mark the bicentenary of European settlement in Australia, the objective being to produce a series of volumes on the history of Australia from a unique perspective.

Instead of inviting historians to pass the baton along a familiar track, we proposed a series of survey camps: instead of stringing events on a thread of narrative, we imagined cutting slices.<sup>68</sup>

Five of the resulting eleven volumes that were published, focus largely around a single year in Australian history. Two of those, 1838 and 1888, were reviewed for references to the performing arts in the nineteenth century.<sup>69</sup>

In the 1838 volume, music is discovered at dinner parties, in church, and at school, but it is the theatre that receives most attention. For example there is a description of a benefit concert at the Royal Victoria Theatre in Sydney in September 1838, with comment on some theatrical productions of the time.<sup>70</sup> Noting that “theatrical performances had served as meeting places for people of diverse morals, manners and interests,”<sup>71</sup> the question of seating arrangements is explored within the moral norms of the time, as is the role of theatres in viceregal tours.

Theatres were places where all ranks assembled each in its appropriate place. Even more than churches, theatres encompassed the whole community, and appearances by the governor were in a sense viceregal visits to the people in the people’s own house.<sup>72</sup>

Although mention of the performing arts in the 1888 volume is still infrequent, piano playing is recognised as part of a normal family life, as is the theatre as a regular meeting place for working men.<sup>73</sup> In this volume too there is, for the first time in a section headed “Travellers,” reference to the people who travelled throughout regional Australia to provide services and commercial entertainment to small, isolated communities, including mining towns.<sup>74</sup> The entertainers ranged from the large troupes of circus performers, to dramatic societies and international

---

<sup>68</sup> Frank Crowley et al. eds. *Australians: A Historical Library* (Broadway, NSW: Fairfax, Syme & Weldon Associates 1987) xiii

<sup>69</sup> Alan Atkinson and Marian Aveling, eds. *Australians 1838* (Broadway, NSW: Fairfax, Syme & Weldon, 1987). Graeme Davison, J. W. McCarty, and Ailsa McLeary, eds. *Australians 1888* (Broadway, NSW: Fairfax, Syme and Weldon, 1987).

<sup>70</sup> Crowley, *Australians 1838*, 80, 233, 420, 260.

<sup>71</sup> Crowley, *Australians 1838*, 261.

<sup>72</sup> Crowley, *Australians 1838*, 327.

<sup>73</sup> Graeme Davison, “Capital Cities,” in Davison et al, eds. *Australians 1888*, 213.

<sup>74</sup> Graeme Davison, “People Moving.” In Davison et al, *Australians 1888*, 241.

stars.<sup>75</sup> Bands and choirs were also noted as leisure activities in country towns, as were the fundraising activities of local drama and musical societies.<sup>76</sup>

What is evident in these two histories is not only a recognition of the performing arts and those involved in them. But also, a more encompassing view of the range of audiences that participated in performances. Thus, the authors seek:

(t)To draw the eye of history away from the governors and politicians who dominated the centennial celebrations, focusing instead on the anonymous men and women who made up the crowds<sup>77</sup>

In so doing, they have, albeit on a small scale, revealed the roles, that the performing arts played in the lives of ordinary people in Australian regional centres in the nineteenth century.

### **Cultural Histories**

One of the most important tasks when reviewing cultural histories is to recognise each author's or editor's definition of 'culture' since this will be the vantage point from which they speak. However, this review while acknowledging a variety of interpretations and selection of themes will focus on whether the arts, and specifically the performing arts, have been included in the cultural discussion and what form this inclusion takes.

In *The Present and the Past: Australians a Cultural History*, John Rickard proposes a "broad anthropological understanding of culture," acknowledging in his preface that the book is weighted towards the twentieth century, with only two chapters written about pre-1900s cultural history.<sup>78</sup> He argues that the period 1901-1939 is the centre of gravity for his analysis and that this period gives meaning to what precedes and follows it.<sup>79</sup>

In the early chapter "*Society*", on the nineteenth century, Rickard acknowledges the impact of the gold rushes on the institutions and daily life of the colonies, contending that "the gold rush was a uniting experience, and produced a new

---

<sup>75</sup> Davison, "People Moving," 242.

<sup>76</sup> Ellen McEwan, "Community" in *Australians 1888*, eds Davison et al, 347, 356.

<sup>77</sup> Preface in *Australians 1888*, xv.

<sup>78</sup> John Rickard, *The Present and the Past, Australia a cultural history* (Harlow: Longman Group UK Limited, 1988), x1, x11.

<sup>79</sup> Rickard, *The Present and the Past*, X11.

population amalgam”.<sup>80</sup> It is interesting therefore, to consider, why, in this volume, the performing arts in the nineteenth century are covered in a few paragraphs and are only marginally linked to the migrants who comprised much of the rush.

Nonetheless, he makes important points when he argues that:

Whilst in music there was a certain deference to German culture-*liedertafels* were formed and German bands were popular,-taste tended to follow British example. The Romantic appetite was well catered for by the swelling sounds of choral and organ music, and it has been suggested that the secular choir, an organisation of democratic character which usually appointed its own conductor, was well suited to the colonial temperament<sup>81</sup>.

Rickard has written in detail about music and performance in colonial Victoria in other publications.<sup>82</sup> In one article he notes the importance of the piano in colonial homes, the Australian love of singing in the colonial era, how theatre flourished in Victoria from the time of the gold rushes, and how Melbourne became the theatre capital of Australia.<sup>83</sup> Conceding that standards in the performing arts at that time were variable, Rickard suggests that this is offset against the “quality of spontaneity” and an appreciation of the variety of entertainment on offer.<sup>84</sup> Yet, in a “*A Cultural History*,” Rickard has made no mention of this cultural richness in the nineteenth century despite the topic obviously being of interest to him.

In *Constructing a Culture*,<sup>85</sup> editors, Burgman and Lee have sought to approach the history of the performing arts from a different perspective, declaring it to be a peoples’ and not a general history. From the chapters that follow, this appears to mean that there will be a greater examination of the relationship between people and culture, rather than a general overview. Chapters are based on a number of themes, including “The Sound of ‘Australian Music’ “,<sup>86</sup> “Art in its Social Setting”,<sup>87</sup>

---

<sup>80</sup> Rickard, *The Present and the Past*, 74, 83.

<sup>81</sup> Rickard, *The Present and the Past*, 97.

<sup>82</sup> John Rickard, “From pianos to panto: aspects of music and theatre in colonial Victoria,” *Victorian Historical Journal* 49, no. 191, (1978): 66-75.

<sup>83</sup> Rickard, “From pianos to panto” 66, 68, 71.

<sup>84</sup> Rickard, “From pianos to panto” 71

<sup>85</sup> Verity Burgmann and Jenny Lee, eds. *Constructing a Culture: A Peoples History of Australia since 1788* (Ringwood, Victoria: McPhee Gribble Penguin Books Australia Ltd, 1990).

<sup>86</sup> Lawrence Zion, “The Sound of ‘Australian Music,” in *Constructing a Culture*, eds. Burgmann and Lee, 209.

<sup>87</sup> Bernard Smith, “Art in its Social Setting,” in *Constructing a Culture*, eds. Burgmann and Lee, 223.

and, “Popular Culture and Bourgeois Values”,<sup>88</sup> with a focus on the twentieth century. However, the discussions on the relationship between high culture and popular culture,<sup>89</sup> and on the influence of music on class in the nineteenth century, when the barriers between the cultures and class were blurring due to economic and social upheaval, are illuminating.<sup>90</sup> References to nineteenth century immigrants, who brought with them musical traditions, including the Welsh miners of Ballarat who started the first eisteddfods and to the popularity of choirs when trained musicians were not available in the bush,<sup>91</sup> give small glimpses of an evolving performing arts culture in regional centres.

In his chapter on “The Sound of Australian Music,” Zion does not explore music in the bush in the nineteenth century in any depth, but he does comment on some of its aspects. He suggests that:

if it is difficult to verify the precise roles of music within everyday life in the goldfields or in the bush, it is still reasonable to assume that such songs as ‘The Dying Stockman’ and ‘The Sheepwasher’ evolved partly as a response to the harshness of life in Australia’s outback.<sup>92</sup>

Zion queries why questions such as “Who plays and listens to what sort of music and why?” are not being asked or answered in Australian historical discourse.<sup>93</sup> In the 21st century, some of these questions are beginning to be asked, as a number of historians transfer their gaze away from economic, and political histories to the day to day activities of the general population. However, such enquiry is still limited especially with regards to regional and remote Australia.

Hsu-Ming Teo and Richard White, in *Cultural History in Australia*<sup>94</sup> discuss this shift in historical discourse in their comprehensive account of the theoretical approaches of historians in the previous two centuries, concluding with a perspective on historical studies in Australia at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Two of their

---

<sup>88</sup> John Docker, “Popular Culture and Bourgeois Values.” in *Constructing a Culture*, eds. Burgmann and Lee, 241.

<sup>89</sup> John Docker, “Popular Culture and Bourgeois Values,” in *Constructing a Culture*, 241-2.

<sup>90</sup> Zion, “The Sound of Australian Music,” 216.

<sup>91</sup> Zion, 219.

<sup>92</sup> Zion, 218.

<sup>93</sup> Zion, 211.

<sup>94</sup> Hsu-Ming Teo and Richard White. eds. *Cultural History in Australia* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2003), 1-19.

conclusions are pertinent for this research: - the “shift from concepts and structures back to human subjects as agents,” and the contention that “a democratisation of history has taken place with attention widening to include the daily life of ordinary people.”<sup>95</sup>

An example of this democratisation can be seen in the chapter in this volume, “Cultural Transmissions”<sup>96</sup> by Waterhouse. Therein, Waterhouse argues that Australian culture was and is a product of cultural imports reworked to meet local circumstances. He exemplifies this by citing the presence of American theatrical entrepreneurs who moved into Australia for the first time during the Victorian gold rush era.<sup>97</sup> Waterhouse reinforces this argument in other publications such as “Travelling shows in rural Australia”<sup>98</sup> and “Minstrel show and vaudeville house: The Australian popular stage, 1838-1914.”<sup>99</sup>

### **Mining Histories**

In the centenary year of 2001 when the states of Australia became a Federation, is when gold and the gold rushes, used as a background link, were a common theme in museum and gallery exhibitions, displays were created, using paintings and artefacts, to demonstrate the evolution of a visual artistic culture that was predicated on the arrival of a great number of immigrants who participated in the gold rushes and, the great wealth that was generated at that time.<sup>100</sup> However, while the development of the performing arts in Australia could be said to have had a similar genesis, as has been argued above, their evolution has received comparatively little attention, not only in this centenary material but also in historical study more generally.

---

<sup>95</sup> Hsu-Ming Teo and Richard White, *Cultural History*, 13.

<sup>96</sup> Richard Waterhouse, “Cultural Transmissions”, in *Cultural History in Australia*, eds. Hsu-Ming Teo, and Richard White, (Sydney, UNSW Press, 2003) 113-126.

<sup>97</sup> Waterhouse, “Cultural Transmissions”, 117, 120.

<sup>98</sup> Richard Waterhouse, “Travelling shows in rural Australia,” *Australasian Drama Studies* 35, October (1999): 19-30.

<sup>99</sup> Richard Waterhouse, “Minstrel Shows and vaudeville house: The Australian popular stage, 1838-1914,” *Australian Historical Studies*: 23:93, 366-385, DOI: 10.1080/103146189085595819 .

<sup>100</sup> *Auriferous: The Gold Project.2001*. Bathurst Regional Gallery, 12 April-11 June 2001. *Gold and Civilisation*, National Museum of Australia, 11 March-24<sup>th</sup> June 2001. *Victorian Gold: The Gold Rush and its Impact on Cultural Life*. 2001, The University of Melbourne: The Ian Potter Museum of Art, 28<sup>th</sup> April-24<sup>th</sup> June 2001.

Three separate studies examining the role of music in the gold rush towns of Ballarat and Kalgoorlie and the coal mining townships of Newcastle are the exception. Doggett's<sup>101</sup> comprehensive thesis considers the role of music in the everyday lives of the population of Ballarat, with a focus on the music that the people themselves produced, in their homes, in schools, in churches and at concerts, and on how music was used to embody experience, to connect, to situate and transcend, and to shape their lives.<sup>102</sup> In this work, Doggett seeks to augment our understanding of the significance of music in the lives of these colonial Australians by arguing from an ethnomusicology perspective rather than from the traditional musical view. Ethnomusicology in her thesis is taken as the study of music, its sounds, structures and functions in the context of the people who perform and listen to it.

The significance of music cannot be found in the music sound alone, but in the relationships people form with and through that music. Because this depends on particular social and cultural environments, there are multiple meanings encoded within any musical act.<sup>103</sup>

By using this approach, Doggett is able to demonstrate the distinctiveness of Ballarat's musical culture, the multicultural nature of the music, and how the wealth generated from gold attracted professional entertainers to the region. She also argues that the evolution of this culture can be seen as a reflection of Ballarat's development from a mining camp to an established city. Her observation on the lack of importance of music in colonial life, as recorded in general histories, reinforces the observations made in this thesis, with regard to the performing arts more generally.<sup>104</sup>

In her final comments Doggett calls for further research into musical activity in other newly established communities.<sup>105</sup> Although this study does not follow the same pattern as Doggett's thesis, its aim is comparable, in that it seeks to broaden awareness of the performing arts in the lives of two mining communities established in the gold rushes in the nineteenth century.

---

<sup>101</sup> Anne Doggett, "And for harmony most ardently we long"

<sup>102</sup> Doggett, "And for harmony", 71, 82, 126, 181, 246.

<sup>103</sup> Doggett, 66.

<sup>104</sup> Doggett, 302-305.

<sup>105</sup> Doggett, 305.

In her Masters' thesis, *A Social History of Music in Coolgardie, Kalgoorlie and Boulder 1892-1908*, Jean Farrant<sup>106</sup> sets out to document the development of musical activity in the mining population from the first gold discovery in Coolgardie to the opening of the town halls in Kalgoorlie and Boulder. Farrant does not offer an explanation for this development or link it directly to mining. However, she does demonstrate that music was part of almost every social activity in the townships and that some forms were more popular than others. This is a remarkable achievement in a research field that has very limited sources. Farrant's work is an exception, since less has been researched and documented about the arts in the Eastern Goldfields of Western Australia than in the mining towns of the Eastern States. Such an absence may have a number of local causes, but it is certainly an outcome of the nature and foci of Western Australian historiography to date.

The third study, *Music as a Resource for World-Building in Newcastle, NSW and its Townships, 1869-1879*, a thesis by Helen English,<sup>107</sup> examines the role of music in the creation of a coal mining community. Noting that music played many roles in this mining community, and, by using a theoretical framework based on the works of William Weber,<sup>108</sup> Pierre Bourdieu,<sup>109</sup> and Tia DeNora,<sup>110</sup> and the concept of affordance framed by Gibson,<sup>111</sup> English is able to successfully argue for the importance of music in the process of world-building in the Newcastle mining townships.

In addition to these three theses there has been some limited interest in individual topics, such as the visit of Lola Montez to the goldfields of Victoria in the 1850s, scholarly studies about Chinese music and opera in the same fields, and studies on

---

<sup>106</sup> Jean Farrant, "A Social History of Music in Coolgardie, Kalgoorlie and Boulder 1892 to 1908" (Masters' thesis, Perth, University of Western Australia, 1992).

<sup>107</sup> Helen English, "Music as a Resource for World-Building in Newcastle, NSW and its Townships, 1869-1879" (PhD thesis, Newcastle, University of Newcastle, 2016).

<sup>108</sup> William Weber, *Music and the Middle Classes: The Social Structure of Concert Life in London, Paris and Vienna between 1830 and 1848* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004).

<sup>109</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field*, trans. Susan Emanuel (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996); *Distinction: a Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1984); *The Logic of Practice* trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990).

<sup>110</sup> Tia DeNora, *Music in Everyday Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

<sup>111</sup> James Jerome Gibson, *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception* (Hobokyn: Taylor and Francis, 1979).



the songs of the goldfields.<sup>112</sup> However, in mining histories, comprehensive links between mining and the performing arts do not seem to have been explored as fully as has been the case for the visual and literary arts.

### **Performing Arts Histories**

All of the performing arts genres have their own body of literature, and, within these genres, additional subsections relate to specified activities. For example, in music, the histories range from folk song and music, to popular indigenous music, and to opera.<sup>113</sup> As noted by Doggett<sup>114</sup> however, there does not appear to be a modern comprehensive history of the whole genre of Australian music.

What is notable, is how frequently mining and the gold rushes are referred to in studies of musical and theatrical genres that cover the nineteenth century, either as background or as a contributing cause of the development of these genres in Australia. Some, like *Chinese Music in Australia- Victoria: 1850's to mid-1990s*,<sup>115</sup> relate directly to the Cantonese Opera that was imported into the country to entertain and comfort the immigrant Chinese miners: others, such as "*Show Business*" *A History of Theatre in Victoria 1835-1948*,<sup>116</sup> note how theatre benefited directly and indirectly from mining and the gold miners who needed entertainment and had money to spend.

---

<sup>112</sup> See Anne Both, "A Goldfields Entertainer," paper presented at the Australian Mining History Conference, Bendigo, 2005. Raymond Bradfield, *Lola Montez and Castlemaine: some early theatrical history*, (Castlemaine:

Bradfield, 1980) 46-86. Zheng-Ting Wang, *Chinese Music in Australia – Victoria 1850s to mid-1890s*, (Melbourne: distributed by Lento: Australian Asia Foundation, 1997.) Ross A. Both and Warren Fahey, "Songs from the Australian Goldfields. Part 1: Gold Mania," *Journal of Australasian Mining History*, vol. 13, (Oct. 2015): 144 – 159.

<sup>113</sup> For example - Graeme Smith, *Singing Australia: a history of folk and song music* (North Melbourne: Pluto Press, 2005). Andrew S. King, "A History of Popular Indigenous Music," in *A Companion Guide to Australian Aboriginal Literature*, ed. Belinda Wheeler (New York: Camden House, 2013) 187-201. John Cargher, *Bravo! Two hundred years of opera in Australia* (South Melbourne: Macmillan Australia in association with the ABC, 1988).

<sup>114</sup> Doggett, "And for Harmony," 36.

<sup>115</sup> Zheng-Ting Wang, *Chinese Music in Australia-Victoria: 1850's to mid-1990's*, (Springvale: Australian Asia Foundation, Lento, 1997).

<sup>116</sup> L.E.Lesser, *A History of Theatre in Victoria 1835-1948*, (Melbourne: University of Melbourne, 1949).

One of the most interesting of the genre histories is *Circus: The Australian Story*, written by Mark St Leon.<sup>117</sup> This is especially so for the references that he makes to the links between mining and the development of circus performance. More generally, he records the one hundred and seventy-five year history of circus in Australia, tracing its origins from medieval Europe to the present day. The first recorded circus in Australia was that of Signor Luigi Dalle Case, who arrived in Sydney in 1841.<sup>118</sup> This circus had limited success and Dalle Case returned to Cape Town in 1847. The Royal Circus, with locally recruited artists, opened in Launceston in December 1847 and was successful; other circuses followed, performing in and touring the main coastal centres.

More specifically, in a chapter devoted to the gold rush in the eastern colonies, St Leon looks closely at the impact of mining activity in those colonies on the historical development of circus performance. He concludes that:

without the discovery of gold the Australian circus activity might have been confined to the amphitheatres of a few coastal settlements, rigidly repeating the repertoires of Astley and Ducrow *ad nauseum*. With gold, Australia's growing band of circus people began to move beyond the relative comfort and security of the colonial settlements to explore and grapple with the challenges posed by the emerging frontier:<sup>119</sup>

St Leon describes how companies established themselves by touring the goldfields in the eastern colonies and, when travel became easier with the construction of road and rail, and the availability of fast steam ships, moved further afield and became profitable, despite the hardships of travel. He notes how local artists were joined by circus performers from overseas and, eventually by whole circus companies from America and Europe.

In these ways St Leon is one of the few historians who make explicit the links between the development of the performing arts and mining in Australia.

In *Entertaining Australia an illustrated history*: a comprehensive volume on the performing arts in Australia from 1788 to the 1990's, the editor, Katherine Brisbane, is concerned 'to open up a huge, highly significant and much neglected area of

---

<sup>117</sup> Mark St Leon, *Circus: The Australian Story* (Melbourne: Melbourne Books, 2011).

<sup>118</sup> St Leon, *Circus*, 21.

<sup>119</sup> St Leon, *Circus*, 53.

Australian history'.<sup>120</sup> This she succeeds in doing by chronologically recording and analysing the development of the performing arts from the early colonial era to the end of the twentieth century.

Specifically, she argues against the 'myth of isolationism'<sup>121</sup> in the nineteenth century by recording how quickly the performing arts in Australia became part of a world industry. The descriptions and analyses of the performing arts in this era are thorough - ranging from the opening of new theatres, to the influx of entertainers from overseas, and to new dancing styles. There are many references to the influence of the gold rush in Victoria on the expansion of the entertainment industry with a special section entitled 'Entertainers attracted by goldfields wealth'.<sup>122</sup> Brisbane attributes the size of Melbourne's and the goldfields' theatres and hippodromes to the wealth and demands of the miners, and notes that the audience was cosmopolitan, and discriminating, with favoured performers showered with gold nuggets.<sup>123</sup> She briefly mentions the performing arts of the indigenous peoples before colonisation, and the Aboriginal circus performers of the nineteenth century.<sup>124</sup>

Of particular relevance to this historical investigation is the argument from Brisbane's work that:

(t)he way a society chooses to entertain itself- taste as it once was called: lifestyle, as it is called today- sheds light upon its own character, and defines national and regional differences, origins, preoccupations and prejudices. The performing arts define those tastes and prejudices with particular clarity, showing not only what a society creates uniquely for itself but what it chooses to adopt from other cultures and what it rejects.<sup>125</sup>

This proposition is given support by the number of contemporary plays and songs with mining or miners as the theme, and with characters or background located in Australia in the nineteenth century. These range from T. A. Hetherington's *The Stage Struck Digger*, performed at the Theatre Royal, Ballarat in 1854, the song "As

---

<sup>120</sup> Katherine Brisbane, ed. *Entertaining Australia an illustrated history* (Sydney: Currency Press, 1991).

<sup>121</sup> Brisbane, *Entertaining Australia*, 12.

<sup>122</sup> Brisbane, *Entertaining Australia* 46.

<sup>123</sup> Brisbane, *Entertaining Australia* 12.

<sup>124</sup> Brisbane, *Entertaining Australia*, 23, 47.

<sup>125</sup> Brisbane, *Entertaining Australia*, 18.

it is in Australia”, published in the *Ballarat Times* in 1854, *The Miners’ Right*, a play by Alfred Dampier and Garnet Welch, that premiered in Melbourne in 1891, and the *Duchess of Coolgardie*, performed in the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane in 1896.

A recurring theme in the majority of these plays and songs is that of the noble hero who battles the landscape, the environment or figures of authority. In discussing nineteenth century melodrama and pantomime, Veronika Kelly examines the role of these genres in constructing an Australian colonial identity, arguing that these texts contain “mythic narratives and volatile signifying capacities”, and that they should be investigated with care as a primary site for discursive contests in an emerging nation.<sup>126</sup> As one example, Kelly analyses the play *It is Never Too Late to Mend* by Charles Reade,<sup>127</sup> a play that is included in the list of gold rush productions in the Ballarat chapter of this thesis. According to Kelly, this melodrama demonstrates the “competing definitions of Australianness” with the sportsground as:

The symbolic area for irreconcilable class conflicts and political interests that are too painful and complex to confront openly.<sup>128</sup>

On a similar theme, Wolf,<sup>129</sup> when describing historical melodramas, a large portion of which included references to the gold rush, were staged in Melbourne between 1890 and 1914, commented:

Romanticised images of Australians who resisted authority – often colonial authority – played a significant role in establishing an independent national character

This, Wolf asserts, was significant at a time when Australia was moving towards federation. As an example, she quotes the play *The Miner’s Right* in which Dampier when promoting the play, drew links between successes in the gold rush of the 1850’s and present and future Australia.

At a time when men’s minds are filled with the subject of Federation, it is well to recall the scenes of a past from which the Great Australia of the Future takes its rise. The National Spirit now being so freely

---

<sup>126</sup> Veronika Kelly, “Melodrama, an Australian pantomime, and the theatrical constructions of colonial history,” *Journal of Australian Studies*, 17:38, (1993): 51-61.

<sup>127</sup> Charles Reade, *It is Never Too Late to Mend*, based on the novel of the same name written by Charles Reade, published Leipzig, Bernhard Tauchnitz, 1856.

<sup>128</sup> Veronika Kelly, “Melodrama, an Australian pantomime,” 59.

<sup>129</sup> Gabrielle Wolf, “Innocent Convicts and Respectable Bushrangers: History and the Nation in Melbourne Melodrama 1890-1914,” *Journal of Australian Studies*, no. 81 (2004): 73-81.

evoked had its inception in the days of the 'roaring fifties' when the men were thrown together by circumstance were bound to one another by the growth of a common interest.<sup>130</sup>

A view that was applauded by critics and audience alike.<sup>131</sup>

## Overview

From the limited number of histories that have been examined in this review, it is apparent that there are a number of accounts of the performing arts ranging from brief asides to a range of theories about their place in Australia's historical narrative. Historians such as Blainey<sup>132</sup> and Manning Clark<sup>133</sup> provide glimpses only; the view is widened in the two volumes of *The Oxford History of Australia*<sup>134</sup> where the arts are viewed against the social and political climates of the times. A limited space for the performing arts is found in the two bicentennial histories, with the Penguin<sup>135</sup> edition making a specific link between gold mining, and the development of Australian theatre and music, and both volumes of the "Historical Library"<sup>136</sup> recognising the importance of music and theatre in the daily lives of ordinary people.

Rickard's cultural history<sup>137</sup> is a work of an author who has made a considerable contribution to the study of the performing arts. This work follows a traditional linear format. However, in this volume, its' contribution to an historical understanding of nineteenth century performing arts is slight. Both *Constructing a Culture*<sup>138</sup> and *Cultural History in Australia*<sup>139</sup> are edited collections of essays on individual topics. While there are references to the performing arts scattered throughout, these volumes, Waterhouse<sup>140</sup> is the only author who specifically considers the role and development of the performing arts in regional Australia.

---

<sup>130</sup> *Argus*, February 28, 1891, 16.

<sup>131</sup> *Argus*, February 14, 1891, 7.

<sup>132</sup> Blainey, *A Shorter History. Black Kettle and Full Moon, The Story of Australia's People*.

<sup>133</sup> Manning Clark, *A Short History*.

<sup>134</sup> Kociumbas, Kingston, *The Oxford History, vols. 2 and 3*.

<sup>135</sup> Molony, *Penguin Bicentennial*.

<sup>136</sup> Crowley, *Australians, A Historical Library*.

<sup>137</sup> Rickard, *The Present and the Past*.

<sup>138</sup> Burgmann and Lee, *Constructing a Culture*.

<sup>139</sup> Teo and White, *Cultural History*.

<sup>140</sup> Waterhouse, "Cultural Transmissions."

The widening of the scope of Australian mining histories to include social history has, as noted by Klaus Tenfelde,<sup>141</sup> become part of a world-wide trend. However, in the case of the social histories examined in this study, this rarely encompasses entertainment in the form of the full range of the performing arts or an examination of its role in mining communities. The studies of Doggett,<sup>142</sup> Farrant,<sup>143</sup> and English,<sup>144</sup> as previously noted have taken music rather than mining as their point of departure whereas it is from this latter activity that this study emerges. It is only in the last group of histories reviewed, those of music, theatre and dance, where a consistent link is made between mining and the arts in the nineteenth century. Some historians, like St Leon<sup>145</sup> and Brisbane,<sup>146</sup> openly acknowledge the significance of the gold rushes in the development of the performing arts, while others focus on the specific advances that mining facilitated, such as the construction of new theatres and the introduction of new art forms by migrants. It is apparent from this literature review that there has been only a limited amount of interest and of detailed regional research into the performing arts in the nineteenth century in Australia and that very little of this relates to the mining industry. In conclusion, I contend that this literature review demonstrates the patchy nature of the coverage of the performing arts in Australian history. This is unlikely to have been a deliberate omission but rather it occurred because this subject was not considered to be a topic of relevance until recently. In earlier decades, industrial histories, such as those on mining, were only concerned with the 'hard issues' of politics, capital and machinery, and the daily lives of the mine workers outside the context of their employment were hardly mentioned. Most histories, moreover, were about the capital cities, rather than the regional centres. Even the histories of the performing arts share this bias with a great deal of

---

<sup>141</sup>Klaus Tenfelde, "The Miners' Community and the Community of Mining Historians," in *Social Approaches to an Industrial Past, The Archaeology and Anthropology of Mining*, eds. A. Knapp et al, (London: Routledge, 1998), 1201-1215.

<sup>142</sup> Doggett, "And for Harmony."

<sup>143</sup> Farrant, "A Social History."

<sup>144</sup> English, "Music as a Resource"

<sup>145</sup> St Leon, *Circus: The Australian Story*.

<sup>146</sup> Brisbane, *Entertaining Australia*.

research into theatre in Sydney and Melbourne in the nineteenth century, and very little about theatre in regional towns.<sup>147</sup>

The twenty-first century has seen a shift in emphasis in academic historical research with topics such as music, which were not previously considered to be a high priority but are now acknowledged to have had a significant influence on people's lives,<sup>148</sup> a fact that may well have been instinctively felt in the nineteenth century, even if it has only been academically acknowledged recently.

This study will assist in rectifying this omission by focusing on the relationships between mining and the performing arts in two very distinctive mining communities that were established at the extremities of Australia in the second half of the nineteenth century. It will expand on the studies conducted by Doggett,<sup>149</sup> Farrant,<sup>150</sup> and English<sup>151</sup> by broadening the scope to include all the performing arts, by giving more emphasis to the professional entertainers and the developing arts industry and by including spatial and temporal comparisons. This thesis will thereby make an original contribution to academic knowledge in the fields of both mining and the performing arts.

## Sources

When considering the data sources for this study, recognition was given to the wide scope of the subject and to an evaluation of whether the topic could be researched and presented in sufficient detail for coherent and comparable historical narratives to be presented. A decision was made therefore, to consider the overall picture rather than the minutiae and to study trends rather than exceptions. A visual arts comparison would be that of a landscape rather than a portrait. However, even

---

<sup>147</sup> John West, *Theatre in Australia*, (Stanmore: Cassell Australia Limited, 1978). Paul McGuire, Betty Arnott, and Frances Margaret McGuire, *The Australian Theatre* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1948). L.E. Lesser, *Show Business: A History of Theatre in Victoria* (Melbourne, University of Melbourne, 1949).

<sup>148</sup> Research in this field has blossomed in the last decade. Examples include the *Australian Journal of Music Therapy*, which publishes papers related to the practice of music therapy, music psychology, ethnomusicology and music education. ABC, RN, Music and Memory, Sunday, 8/11/15. Patrik N. Justin and John Sloboda eds. *Handbook of Music and Emotions, Theory, Research, Applications* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011). Helen English, "Music as a Resource for World-Building in Newcastle, NSW and its Townships, 1869-1879" (PhD thesis, University of Newcastle, NSW, 2016).

<sup>149</sup> Doggett, "And for Harmony."

<sup>150</sup> Farrant, "A Social History."

<sup>151</sup> English, "Music as a Resource"

with this consideration borne in mind, the data sources available on the two study sites proved to be very different.

Multiple sources of material, both primary and secondary, record the performing arts in the mining towns of the Victorian goldfields in the 1850s. Much of the material selected for inclusion in the chapter on Ballarat, is already in the public domain and some of it has been examined by other researchers.<sup>152</sup> The subject has been researched extensively by historians from a social and an arts perspective with various activities and artefacts now incorporated into the tourist attractions of the region.<sup>153</sup> However, for the purpose of this study, the various elements of primary and secondary research material have been brought together with a specific purpose in mind, namely, to determine their relationship to mining within the framework of a developing mining community, and to determine whether this relationship had any effect on an emerging performing arts industry.

Except for one study,<sup>154</sup> the history of the performing arts in the goldfields of Western Australia has been largely ignored by researchers and historians. Very few original records such as programmes and ephemera have been preserved; therefore, most of the information for this case study has been obtained from the newspapers of the period, and from autobiographies and miners' diaries. The question of whether this material would give an adequate representation of the performing arts in the goldfields during this period was of concern. However, the method suggested by Carr, in his discussion on historical research practices where the source data is incomplete: "to sample the relevant sources rather than seeking full coverage, while keeping the broader focus,"<sup>155</sup> appears appropriate in the circumstances. The need to make use of newspaper accounts that were unable to be backed up by other sources was also noted. However, in their favour, the

---

<sup>152</sup> For examples see, Rosylyn Brereton, "Entertainment and recreation on the Victorian goldfields in the 1850's" (B.A. hons. thesis, University of Melbourne, 1967), Wendy J. Morrison, "Some aspects of the English influence on music in Ballarat during the establishment years" (B.A. hons. thesis, University of Melbourne, 1984), Pauline Veronika Righetti, "The first fifty years of music in Ballarat" (Special studies thesis, University of Melbourne, n.d).

<sup>153</sup> The Victoria Theatre included in the attractions at Sovereign Hill, Ballarat, and the Chinese dances at the Golden Dragon Museum, Bendigo.

<sup>154</sup> Jean Farrant, "A Social History".

<sup>155</sup> E. H. Carr, *What is History?* (London: Penguin, 2008). 14.



narrative and style of the reporting did give an insight into what the reporters and readers of the period considered an acceptable account.

The lack of academic study of the performing arts in the Eastern Goldfields of Western Australia reflects the limited nature of published goldfields history and that which is extant has largely concentrated on the political and economic aspects. The chapter on the performing arts in the Eastern Goldfields during the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century in this study will therefore expand this body of knowledge and provide a basis for further research.

### **The structure**

The initial sections of both studies will place them in their respective geographic contexts and describe their political, social, and economic environments before the respective gold discoveries occurred. Parallel studies of the evolving nature and status of the performing arts in the two locations in this period will follow.

Subsequent sections in both case study contexts will examine the use and form of the performing arts in the settlements after the initial discoveries of gold. These will be placed in a narrative linked to the social life, settlement and establishment of both communities and, in some instances, within their national and global contexts. The conclusion will include a comparative study to examine the commonalities and differences between the two sites, with regard to local developments in the performing arts field.

## CHAPTER 2

### BALLARAT

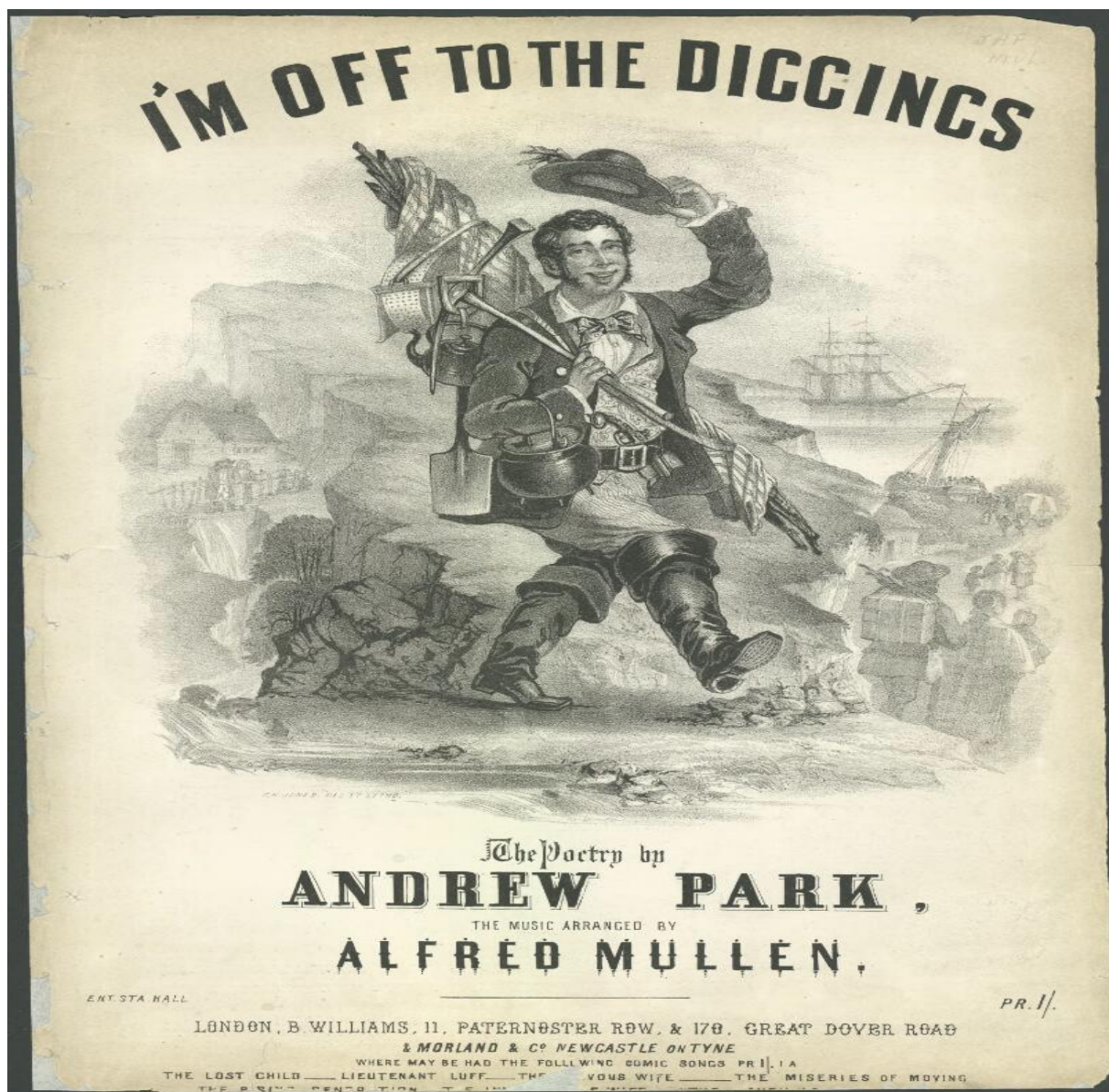


Fig. 1. I'm off to the diggings [music]/the poetry by Andrew Park; the music arranged by Alfred Mullen. Published London: B. Williams, [between 1846 and 1860].

National Library of Australia, Mus N JAF mb 783.2421599 M95

This, the first of two studies exploring the relationships between the performing arts and mining in the nineteenth century, will concentrate on the district of Ballarat, Victoria from 1850 to 1870. The study will explore how and why the performing arts were used by the early prospectors, miners and their families as they struggled to work and live in difficult conditions; how and why the discovery of

gold impacted on the development of the performing arts at this juncture in Australia's history, and, conjointly how the performing arts supported the miners and their families as they endeavoured to build a community in an alien landscape.

There is a claim amongst some cultural historians such as Brisbane,<sup>1</sup> Cardell and Cumming,<sup>2</sup> and Williams<sup>3</sup> that the impact of the discovery of gold in Australia on the performing arts was significant and lasting. In this chapter, this proposition will be tested in the context of the discovery of gold in Ballarat within the historical, social, and economic contexts of the period. Probable contributing factors will be evaluated for the strength of their influence, and their applicability and relevance over time.

The chapter comprises three separate parts. The first part includes a description of the Port Philip District before the discovery of gold in Victoria, followed by a history of the performing arts in Australia, from the time of European settlement to 1850. A description of the discovery of gold and the impact that this had on migration and the population of Victoria are included. Details in this first part provide the foundation against which future developments can be measured.

The second part details the various forms of the performing arts that comforted and entertained the early prospectors, miners and their families during the gold rush years. They range from camp-fire songs to professional entertainers to opera and circus. The section also describes how the demand for the performing arts had consequences for the neighbouring municipality of Melbourne, on its theatrical infrastructure, on the content of plays, and on the establishment and ongoing development of the entertainment industry in Australia more broadly. Assembling all of these elements together gives a clear indication of the effect of the discovery of gold on the performing arts at this period of Australia's history.

Part three of the chapter focuses on the various ways which the performing arts were used by the inhabitants as they sought to build a community in a difficult

---

<sup>1</sup> Katherine Brisbane, ed. *Entertaining Australia: an illustrated history* (Sydney: Currency Press, 1991), 46.

<sup>2</sup> Kerry Cardell and Cliff Cumming, eds. *A World Turned Upside Down-Cultural Change on Australia's Goldfields 1851-2001* (Canberra: Australian National University, 2001), 5.

<sup>3</sup> Margaret Williams, "Australia," in *The Cambridge Guide to World Theatre*, ed. Martin Banham (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 52.

physical and socioeconomic environment. It describes how, with the changes in mining methods, the demographic characteristics of the population changed and with them the role of the performing arts. The role expanded from entertainment only, to become a vital component in the establishment of institutions, in transferring culture, in maintaining and displaying identity and in the participation of the residents in the arts for recreation.

## **PART 1: BEFORE THE DISCOVERY OF GOLD**

In this section of the chapter on Ballarat, the focus is on the Port Philip District prior to the discovery of gold in 1850, with the aim of providing a background for the immense changes that followed this discovery. Details of the population, economic and political status of the district are noted, followed by a history and description of the performing arts from when the European settlers first landed in New South Wales to the arrival of the prospectors on the Victorian goldfields. The final section will outline the discovery of gold and the rapid increase in population due to that discovery.

### **The Port Philip District 1830 - 1850**

In the early 1830's, the south eastern area of Australia was, according to Withers,<sup>4</sup> "pleasantly picturesque pastoral country." The Port Phillip District of New South Wales was inhabited by approximately seven thousand Aborigines<sup>5</sup> and a few Europeans- mostly sealers, whalers and castaway convicts. This "pleasant" land attracted the attention of pastoralists from Van Diemen's Land, who had plenty of sheep and cattle but lacked land on which to graze them. In 1834, the Henty brothers crossed Bass Strait with their flocks and herds and established themselves on the mainland of Australia near Portland. Others followed: from Van Diemen's Land; from across the Murray, and from overseas. Port Philip Bay became the gateway to the rich grazing lands of the hinterland as the squatters moved inland establishing themselves in this corner of Australia. By the late 1840s, sheep in the

---

<sup>4</sup> William Bramwell Withers, *The history of Ballarat from the First Pastoral Settlement to the present time* (Ballarat: F.W. Niven and Co.1887), 8.

<sup>5</sup> Geoffrey Serle, *The Golden Age: A history of the colony of Victoria 1851-1861* (London: Melbourne University Press 1963), 2.

Port Philip District numbered over 6,600,000<sup>6</sup>. The squatters held no title to the land, and it was not until 1847 that they were allowed to buy one square mile (2.59 square kilometres) of land on which to build their homesteads.

Wool growing was the mainstay of the economy with some agricultural activity around the small coastal towns.<sup>7</sup> Melbourne and Geelong became the principal ports, exporting wool and wool products worth over 5 million pounds in the mid 1840's. Inland, the only settlements were small farming communities and stopping places on the pastoral tracks -

For the squatters, the conflict with Aboriginals reduced as the latter's numbers gradually declined. Decimated by disease, dispossession, and in some cases shot, they numbered only 2,700 in 1851 according to the census of that year. Whilst these figures might not be totally accurate, they do reflect the drastic decline in the Indigenous population. The same census numbered the total population of the district at 97,000.

The Port Philip district of New South Wales began life as a free settlement populated by farmers under the governance of Sir George Gipps with Charles La Trobe as the supervisor. The movement to establish the Port Philip District as a distinct colony began as early as 1840 with the formation of a Separation Association<sup>8</sup> to lobby the Imperial Government. Blainey<sup>9</sup> cites the region's isolation from Sydney as a reason for the campaign but also concedes that it was one of the fastest growing regions in Australia, which would have given the inhabitants confidence in their strong economic future. Political agitation continued throughout the decade until the Port Philip District was established as a separate colony, to be called Victoria- after the reigning monarch on 1<sup>st</sup> July 1851. Charles Joseph La Trobe was appointed as Lieutenant-Governor to administer the colony with an Executive Council of no more than four members nominated by the Crown.<sup>10</sup> A Legislative

---

<sup>6</sup> Geoffrey Blainey, *Our side of the Country: The Story of Victoria* (North Ryde: Methuen Press, 1984), 32.

<sup>7</sup> Geoffrey Serle, *The Golden Age*, 2.

<sup>8</sup> Geoffrey Serle, *The Golden Age*, 5.

<sup>9</sup> Geoffrey Blainey, *Our side of the Country*, 35.

<sup>10</sup> Geoffrey Serle, *The Golden Age*, 5.



## The Performing Arts in Australia 1788-1850

The colony of Victoria was a region of New South Wales until 1851 when gold was discovered there, so it seems appropriate to chart the history of the performing arts of the original colony, from European settlement to the discovery of gold. This then will form the backdrop, from which the subsequent developments that occurred in the performing arts after gold was discovered can be evaluated. What will become evident is that this mineral discovery radically altered and influenced the performing arts not only in Victoria but in Australia as a whole.

In 1788, the first fleet arrived in a land where the inhabitants used music, song, and dance as part of their ritual 'ceremony'. Stubington, defines 'ceremony' (which includes corroborees), as a ritual which 'includes singing and dancing, and often mimetic and ritual acts.' The ceremonies may have lasted for days and fell into distinct categories according to their required purpose, including to express grief, to be part of initiation rites or to act as 'diplomacy ceremonies.'<sup>12</sup>

In his chronology of Australian theatre from 1788 to 1899, Fotherington records performances of dance-dramas for colonists by Dharuk groups in 1790 in an area near Sydney's present day Hyde Park.<sup>13</sup> Details about these early encounters are sparse but Katherine Kirkland writing in 1845 describes how, in 1839, a party of squatters near Geelong made it their intention to see a meeting of natives or *corobery*. About a hundred Aboriginals were gathered and, having completed their dance, they were anxious to see how the white people *coroberied*. A local landowner obliged with a dance and a poem reportedly much to the delight of the audience. Kirkland also observed the payment of gold coins to the Victorian Aboriginal performers, as Cahir notes, perhaps the first recorded instance of this kind of payment in Australia.<sup>14</sup> Reporting on the arrival of the ship 'David Clark' in

---

<sup>12</sup> Jill Stubington, *Singing the land: The power of performances in aboriginal life* (Sydney: Currency House Inc. 2007), 87.

<sup>13</sup> Richard Fotherington, ed. *Australian Plays for the Colonial Stage 1834-1899* (St. Lucia, Queensland: University of Queensland Press, 2006), xiii.

<sup>14</sup> K. Kirkland, *Life in the Bush by a Lady* (Edinburgh: Chambers, 1845) 5, as quoted by David Cahir and Ian D. Clark, " 'An edifying spectacle': A History of 'tourist corroborees' in Victoria, Australia, 1835-1870," *Tourism Management* 31, (2010): 412-420.

Melbourne in 1839, the Port Philip Gazette noted that the passengers walked overland to camp in tents and:

(I)n the evening the piper struck off with some of their wild national airs, and the greater part of the immigrants danced by moonlight on the grass; after some time passed in this way the whole party, headed by the band of wind and pipes, went off through the bush for about a mile to see a grand corroboree of the blacks; it was a singular [event] to hear the blending of their highland music with the deep monotonous chant and beat of the Austral aborigine. <sup>15</sup>

The journal of W. Thomas also provides evidence that, in Melbourne in the 1840s, residents actively encouraged Aboriginal people to perform corroborees and in return supplied firework displays and a banquet for all.<sup>16</sup>

There is no doubt that a corroboree provided a form of entertainment for the new settlers when there was a conspicuous lack of other forms available to them. However, as Cahill points out, they were also used 'as a powerful conciliatory tool' by Government officials who wished to keep the peace.<sup>17</sup>

Western performing art traditions were brought to the penal colony of New South Wales with the first fleet in 1788. The early settlers, both convict, government, and free, transported the social and artistic cultures of eighteenth and nineteenth century Europe with them, as they set foot in the new land. For instance, European music arrived when the band of the Royal Marines played Captain Arthur Philip ashore. The band, consisting of drums and fifes, small instruments, similar to a flute, played British military music for the audience of convicts and soldiers. Regimental bands such as these, comprised the first Western educated musicians to play in the colonies. We know too that there was a pianoforte belonging to George Organ, the surgeon and a member of a prominent musical family aboard the ship HMS Sirius.<sup>18</sup> This instrument was left with Mrs Elizabeth Macarthur, the wife of Captain John Macarthur, when Organ sailed back to Britain in 1790.

In 1835, Melbourne's first settlers were not without their music. However, before the gold rush, this was mostly centred in the home in informal gatherings where

---

<sup>15</sup> *Port Philip Gazette*, 20 May 1839, 4.

<sup>16</sup> W. Thomas, *Journal in Papers*, Unpublished MS 214/24, Mitchell Library, 1840.

<sup>17</sup> David Cahill and Ian D. Clark, "'An edifying spectacle,'" 413.

<sup>18</sup> Geoffrey Lancaster, *First Fleet Piano: a musicians view: Volume 1* (Acton ACT: ANU Press, 2015), 361.



friends and family came together for an evening of music, singing, dancing and cards.<sup>19</sup> Concerts and recitals were held throughout the next decade, usually given by gifted amateurs, with occasional visits of professional artists from Sydney. There was even a place for the critics, as demonstrated in a review in a Port Philip newspaper of a concert, given by Madame Cardura Allen in March 1839. Her performance was described as “soothing and a delight”, in contrast to Mrs Wood whose performance “astonished and electrified.”<sup>20</sup>

To support these informal and formal performances a local music industry developed slowly, with the Port Philip Gazette advertising the first pianoforte for sale by a Mr John Hodgson on 1<sup>st</sup> December 1838, followed, in later editions, by advertisements for pianos, a selection of instruments and sheet music. By 1850, a number of music vendors were established in Melbourne and a wide range of music and musical instruments were offered for sale.<sup>21</sup> Teachers arrived, and tuition, both vocal and instrumental, was given at the Melbourne Mechanics Institute<sup>22</sup> along with a series of concerts.<sup>23</sup>

A Philharmonic Society, founded in 1840, was short lived however,<sup>24</sup> and similar attempts throughout the 1840s suffered the same fate. Dance was a popular form of entertainment, with balls held at every opportunity. As Clarke notes, it was one way of preserving civilisation and culture and maintaining a sense of community

---

<sup>19</sup> Hugh McCrea, ed. *Georgina's Journal; Melbourne a Hundred Years Ago* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1934), 65-71.

<sup>20</sup> *Port Philip Patriot*, 27 March 1839, 4.

<sup>21</sup> *Argus*, 7 February 1850, 23 September 1850, 30 March 1852.

<sup>22</sup> Mechanics Institutes had their origins in the British Isles. They came from a variety of antecedents, with multiple streams and motivations, including self-help and cultural improvement. The first Mechanics' Institute in Australia was established in Hobart in 1827, then gradually spread to the other colonies, until at the end of the nineteenth century there was probably in excess of 2000 Australia wide. The Melbourne Mechanics Institute was established in 1839 with a range of motivations including the promotion of science, to establish a library and give lectures, and to raise the moral tone of the working classes by providing mental activities that would steer them away from drinking and crime. See Philip C. Candy, and John Laurent, eds. *Pioneering Culture: Mechanics Institutes and Schools of Arts in Australia* (Adelaide: Auslib Press, 1994) and Pam and Ken James Baragwanath, *These Walls speak Volumes: A History of Mechanics' Institutes in Victoria* (Ringwood North, Vic: Baragwanath, Pam and Ken James, 2015)

<sup>23</sup> *Port Philip Patriot*, 18 December 1839.

<sup>24</sup> *Port Philip Herald*, 17 November 1840.

“For the better classes, dance was an expression of education and gentility; for the lower classes, an opportunity to gather and carouse.”<sup>25</sup>

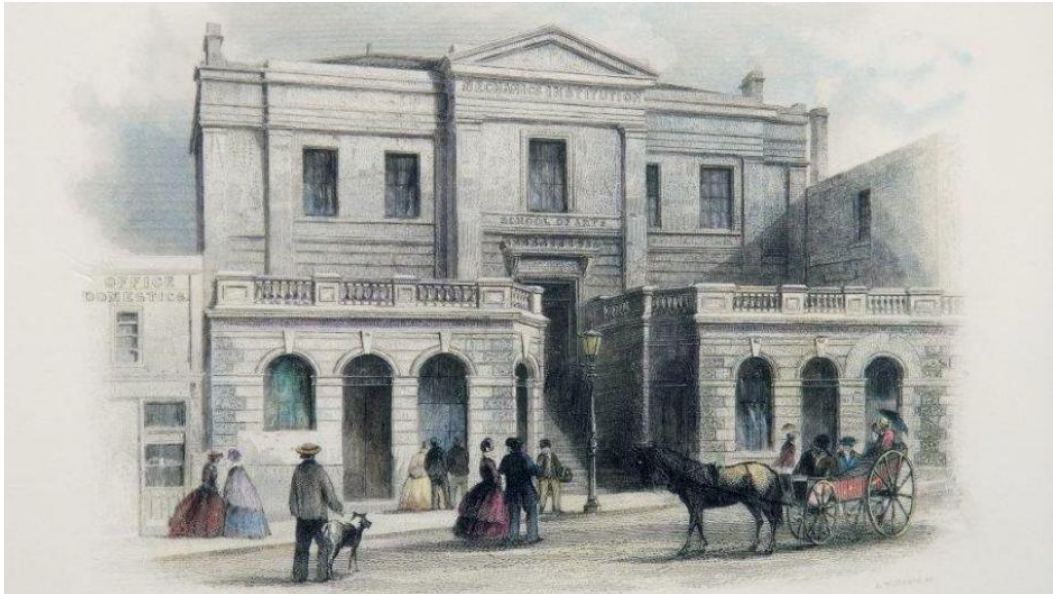


Fig. 3 The Melbourne Athenaeum, Melbourne’s first Mechanics Institute, in 1855.

State Library of NSW: S.T. Gill.

Western theatre and performance arrived in the new colony with the immigrants. The first theatre production in the colonies was performed in 1789 in Sydney by convicts. Held to celebrate the birthday of King George the Third, the play *The Recruiting Officer* by George Farquhar was attended by the Governor Philip and sixty other people.<sup>26</sup> A review of the production notes:

I am not ashamed to confess that the proper distribution of three or four yards of stained paper and a dozen farthing candles stuck around the walls of a convict hut, failed not to diffuse general complacency on the countenances of sixty persons, of various descriptions, who were assembled to applaud the presentation. Some of the actors acquitted themselves with great spirit and received the praises of the audiences.<sup>27</sup>

For the next decade, theatre was largely a convict activity. Sydney’s first theatre was opened in January 1796. It was built by convicts and, in the opening plays, *The Revenge*, a tragedy by Edward Young, and a farce, *The Hotel*, by T. Vaughan, all the roles were performed by convicts. The proprietor, Robert Sidaway, also a former

<sup>25</sup> Heather Clarke, *The History of Music and Dance in Australia 1788-1840*, <http://www.colonialdance.com.au>

<sup>26</sup> Katherine Brisbane, ed. *Entertaining Australia: an illustrated history*, 24.

<sup>27</sup> Jerry L. Crawford et al., *Acting in person and in style: in Australia* (Roseville, N.S.W: McGraw-Hill Australia, 2003), 255-262.

convict, went on to produce other 18<sup>th</sup> century plays at the venue and, in 1796, gave Australia its first performance of an opera.

The authorities had mixed feelings about participation in, and even observance of, theatre as an activity for convicts. Originally conceived as a distraction from other occupations such as drinking and gambling, it was later perceived as a corrupting influence with unruly theatre audiences, and as providing an opportunity for pickpockets to steal from theatre patrons. In 1798, the Governor John Hunter closed the theatre. He later recanted and the theatre was reopened but it does not seem to have operated after 1800. Sydney was to wait for another thirty years before regular theatrical activity recommenced.<sup>28</sup>

Melbourne had its first experience of theatre in 1841, six years after it was settled. Built by a publican Jamieson and his wife, the theatre was a rickety wooden affair called The Pavilion where patrons supplied their own umbrellas for fear of getting wet. Hodges, the Jamieson's barman, applied for a licence for it to operate as a theatre and when this was refused, gained permission to hold concerts and balls in the building. Hodges presented several concerts that were not considered suitable by the authorities, and, after ignoring a warning, Hodges was gaoled. The theatre opened under new management in 1842 but failed due to lack of patronage, and was closed in 1843.<sup>29</sup> This did not signal the complete absence of a theatrical venue for, in that same year, the Queen's Theatre was built on the corner of Queen Street and Little Bourke St.

While the repertoire in early colonial theatre was that of the British stage, with Shakespeare, melodrama and farce the standard fare, this period did see the emergence of a small repertoire of indigenous drama, mostly following the British model, but with some local content.<sup>30</sup> Most of the early Australian plays however had very few performances. *The Bushrangers or Norwood Vale*, written by Henry

---

<sup>28</sup> Katherine Brisbane, ed. *Entertaining Australia*, 24.

<sup>29</sup> L.E. Lesser, *Show Business-A History of Theatre in Victoria 1835-1943* (master's thesis, Melbourne University, 1949), 17-19.

<sup>30</sup> Richard Fotheringham, ed. *Australian Plays for the Colonial Stage* (St. Lucia, Queensland: University of Queensland Press 2006).

Melville in 1834,<sup>31</sup> the first significant Australian play, was only performed three times in Hobart and *Life in Sydney or, The Ran Dan Club*,<sup>32</sup> was banned by the Colonial Secretary for containing material of a libellous character. Other plays did not fare much better. It wasn't until the 1850s and 60s, when the miners arrived, that productions written by local authors, won favour with audiences in the colonies.

McGowan, in her thesis, suggests that the theatre catered for all and sundry and a description of Victorian theatre behaviour in the 1840s appears to reinforce this view.<sup>33</sup> However, in her postscript to Melbourne's social life in the years between 1836 and 1851, McGowan comments:

The community life of Melbourne is organised by, and for the middle classes – mercantile and professional – the squatters, when in town being eagerly enlisted. Prohibitive entertainment prices and long working hours combine to preclude the lower orders from participating in a social, cultural and civic life organised for a leisured class<sup>34</sup>

a statement that appears to contradict her earlier view. An amateur theatre group, the Garrick Club, whose members were carpenters and tradesmen,<sup>35</sup> is noted by McGowan, however there is no mention in her thesis of the entertainment provided by both professional and amateur performers for the working classes in the hotels and taverns every night, or that the professional theatre would not be able to operate without the income derived from the patrons of the 'pit'. Arguably, the parameters here are too narrow, with a focus on one strata of society, without taking into account the social and cultural activities of the majority of the population.

---

<sup>31</sup> Henry Melville, *The Bushrangers; or, Norwood Vale*. This script exists only in the form it was published on pages 82-96, *Hobart Town Magazine*, 1834. First produced in an extended form at the Theatre Royal in the Argyle Rooms, Hobart, 29 May, 2 June 1834, also produced at Launceston Theatre 1835.

<sup>32</sup> *Life in Sydney*, written by an anonymous author calling themselves A.B.C. was banned by the Colonial Secretary in September 1843. The reason given was that it 'contained matter of a libellous character independent of other considerations.' Letters to the Colonial Secretary, 43/6965, AO NSW.

<sup>33</sup> Rose May McGowan, "A Study of Social Life and Conditions in Early Melbourne Prior to Separation 1836-1851" (master's thesis, Melbourne: University of Melbourne, 1951), 128.

<sup>34</sup> Rose McGowan, "A Study of Social Life", 164.

<sup>35</sup> Rose McGowan, "A Study of Social Life", 106.

## **The discovery of gold and old and new chums**

The impact of the discovery of gold in Victoria on the economic, political and social life of the colony has been well documented, and discussed by many historians.<sup>36</sup> For the purpose of this sub section however, the following elements have been selected for consideration with regards to the relationships between mining and the performing arts in Ballarat: the discovery of gold: and the subsequent migration of a large cosmopolitan population into Victoria over a short period of time due to this discovery. The economic and cultural impact of this influx of population, with their particular needs, will be examined fully in later sections. As will be demonstrated, the consequences and significance of the developments that occurred in the performing arts industry due to the discovery of gold and increase in population extended well beyond this period and were felt throughout Australia and the Pacific region.

In May 1851, Edward Hargraves and others discovered gold in a waterhole near Bathurst, New South Wales. A number of finds had occurred before this date, but it was this find that triggered the rush. The news spread quickly, resulting in gold seekers fanning out over the countryside of New South Wales and Victoria. The Victorian gold-rush began in July 1851 when a Melbourne publican found gold on the banks of the River Yarra at Warrandyte. By August, richer gold was discovered at Clunes and in the following spring and summer, the great rushes started at Ballarat, Mount Alexander (Castlemaine), and Bendigo.<sup>37</sup> The extent and nature of the gold deposits meant that it was not long before mining became a larger scale industrial process.

Shallow alluvial mining was the method first used in the Victorian goldfields in the early 1850s, it required little capital and few tools. The men worked in teams of

---

<sup>36</sup> For examples see Lloyd Carpenter and Lyndon Fraser, eds. *Rushing for Gold: Life and commerce on the goldfields of New Zealand and Australia* (Dunedin: Otago University Press, 2016), 396. Charles Fahey, Alan Mayne, "All that Glitters...., The Hidden History of Victoria's Central Goldfields Region," in *Gold Tailings Forgotten Histories of Family and Community on the Central Victorian Goldfields*, eds. Charles Fahey and Alan Mayne, (Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing Pty Ltd, 2010). Charles Fahey, "Peopling the Victorian Goldfields; from Boom to Bust, 1851-1901," *Australasian Economic History Review*, Vol.5, no.2, (2010): 148-161.

<sup>37</sup> For a detailed account of the chronology and history of early Victorian discoveries see Geoffrey Blainey, *The Rush That Never Ended: A History of Australian Mining* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1963).

two, three or four, from sunrise to sunset, with a rest day on Sunday. By 1855, however, Ballarat had moved to deep lead mining which required major capital investment and advanced mining skills. Leases originally operated by cooperatives were amalgamated, and public companies with waged employees were floated. Such developments were accompanied by the emergence of permanent settlements.

According to historians such as Fahey,<sup>38</sup> Serle,<sup>39</sup> and Bate,<sup>40</sup> the most significant impact of gold on the colony of Victoria was demographic. In 1851, the gold diggers<sup>41</sup> came first from Victoria, mostly Melbourne and Geelong, and then from New South Wales, Van Diemen's Land and South Australia; the majority travelled on foot on dusty tracks with their loads on their backs. For example, Charles Rule, a miner, travelled overland with four other men and a boy, from Burra in South Australia to Mount Alexander in Victoria. The journey of 600 miles with horse and dray took just over 5 weeks. He ends his logbook with the note that: "It was on the whole very comfortable and pleasant and gave us a fine view of the country throughout."<sup>42</sup>

News of the gold discoveries in New South Wales reached Britain in September 1851, with reports of the gold finds in Victoria arriving a few months later. Gold seekers booked passage on the swiftest clippers available, with the first arriving in Melbourne in the winter of 1852. The majority came from Britain, but they were soon joined by migrants from all over the globe. Germans came in their thousands as did Americans, many of whom had been miners in the Californian rush of '49. The Victorian census of 1854 gives a total colonial population of 236,798, as compared with 97,489 in 1851. The majority were young men, with very few

---

<sup>38</sup> Charles Fahey, "Peopling the Victorian Goldfields from Boom to Bust, 1851 – 1901," *Australian Economic History Review* 50, no. 2 (2010): 148-161.

<sup>39</sup>G. Serle, *The Golden Age: A History of the Colony of Victoria, 1851-1861* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1977), 381.

<sup>40</sup> W. Bate, *Victorian Gold Rushes* (Melbourne: McPhee Gribble/Penguin, 1988), 27, 29.

<sup>41</sup> The term gold digger, abbreviated to digger, is a term that was used extensively in the goldfields of Victoria and later in the West Australian gold rush to describe the early prospectors and miners. See the description of a gold digger in *The Geelong Advertiser*, 19 September 1851. The term 'digger' is now more commonly used to describe Australian Soldiers.

<sup>42</sup> Charles Spandry Rule, *From the Burra Mine to the Mount Alexander Diggings* (State Library of South Australia, D7486 (L)).

families or the elderly. Considering the migration to the Victorian Goldfields in the 1850s, Charles Fahey concludes:

Unlike migrants from the 1840's, most of these gold seekers paid their own way. For this reason, the typical digger was not from the poorest sections of British society. The gold rush generation came equipped with skills that enabled them to rapidly transform the Victorian economy<sup>43</sup>.

Serle comes to a similar conclusion using literacy as a test:

In 1861 only 11 per cent of the European men and 22 per cent of the women over twenty-one could neither read or write- less than half the proportions in the United Kingdom, and far better than any other colony or London<sup>44</sup>

Chinese migrants had arrived in Victoria in the 1840s to work on the pastoral stations. Imported by the pastoralists as indentured labourers,<sup>45</sup> it appears that they were mostly tolerated by the colonialists who needed a source of cheap labour. The discovery of gold however increased the numbers dramatically. What started as a trickle in 1852 and 1853 became an influx as ships filled with Chinese diggers arrived weekly. More than 2000 Chinese diggers left Hong Kong for Australia in the first three months of 1854 and later others departed from the ports of Cumsingmoon and Whampo as the numbers built up.<sup>46</sup> To curb this influx, in 1855 the Victorian government imposed a tax on certain immigrants, limiting the number of Asians who could be landed in Melbourne. Many Chinese circumvented the restrictions by disembarking in Adelaide and walking overland to the diggings.<sup>47</sup> According to the Commissioners' and Wardens' estimates<sup>48</sup> there were 19,244 Chinese diggers on the goldfields by December 1855, rising to a peak of 33,667 in December 1858. The majority came from Guangdong province and, while they were largely illiterate, they did include musicians able to play fiddles, flutes, drums and cymbals,<sup>49</sup> and in so doing added to the breadth of performance culture in the young colony.

---

<sup>43</sup> Charles Fahey, "Peopling the Victorian Goldfields," 160.

<sup>44</sup> Geoffrey Serle, *The Golden Age*, 371.

<sup>45</sup> J. Pickard, "Shepherding in Colonial Australia," *Rural History*, vol. 19, (2008): 55-80.

<sup>46</sup> Eric Rolls, *Sojourners: flowers and the wide sea* (St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1992), 114.

<sup>47</sup> Eric Rolls, *Sojourners: flowers and the wide sea*, 128.

<sup>48</sup> Geoffrey Serle, *The Golden Age*, 389.

<sup>49</sup> Eric Rolls, *Sojourners: flowers and the wide sea*, 116.

Cahir presents compelling evidence about the attraction of the goldfields for Aboriginal people,<sup>50</sup> identifying a number of reasons for their continued presence in the district. These included the need to maintain an association with their traditional lands, economic and commercial opportunities and the attraction of the novel and exotic, including music. Cahir refers in this discussion to Western music, rather than to the Indigenous music, that had always been present.

It was, I think, the first time music was heard on the diggings. An agreeable sensation for all and particularly novel for the natives. Coloured men, women and children were laughing, foaming, twisting in a general fit of epilepsy. [Only one man] kept his dignity, and neglecting the varied ensemble of the orchestra, all his attention was fixed on the trombone.....it was this mechanism [of the trombone] above all that aroused the lively interest of the observer<sup>51</sup>

The presence of the Aboriginals was also recorded by the visual artists of the day. Although the paintings were impressions, and in most cases, were imaginary compositions to reflect a particular point of view, they did depict the Aboriginal people as part of the contemporary cultural mix.

Cahir also gives a vivid picture of life on the Victorian goldfields, calling it a global village:

It has been noted by many goldfields historians that Victorian goldfields society was a tremendous crucible of eclectic communities, a global village, which transcended social and race barriers rarely seen before, and as such was a terrific potpourri of sensations that had to be experienced to be believed.<sup>52</sup>

Historians such as Wenzel<sup>53</sup> have argued that it was this cosmopolitan atmosphere that led to the rapid development of music in Australia in the decade after the discovery of gold. This would appear to be a major factor but there were other influencing factors as will be demonstrated in later sections.

---

<sup>50</sup> David Cahir, "The Attraction of Gold Mining in Victoria for Aboriginal people," *Journal of Australian Mining History*, Vol. 6, September 2008, 46-69. David Cahir, "Black Gold. A History of the Role of Aboriginal People on the Goldfields of Victoria, 1850-70" (PhD dissertation, University of Ballarat, 2006), 74-93.

<sup>51</sup> A. Fauchery, *Letters from a Miner in Australia*, trans. A. R. Chisholm, (Melbourne: Georgian House, 1965) 96.

<sup>52</sup> David Cahir, "The Attraction of Gold Mining in Victoria for Aboriginal people," 64.

<sup>53</sup> Ann Wentzel, "The Rapid Development of Music in Australia, 1851-1861." *Musicology Australia*, 3:1, 69-73, DOI: 10.1080/08145857.1969.10414987.



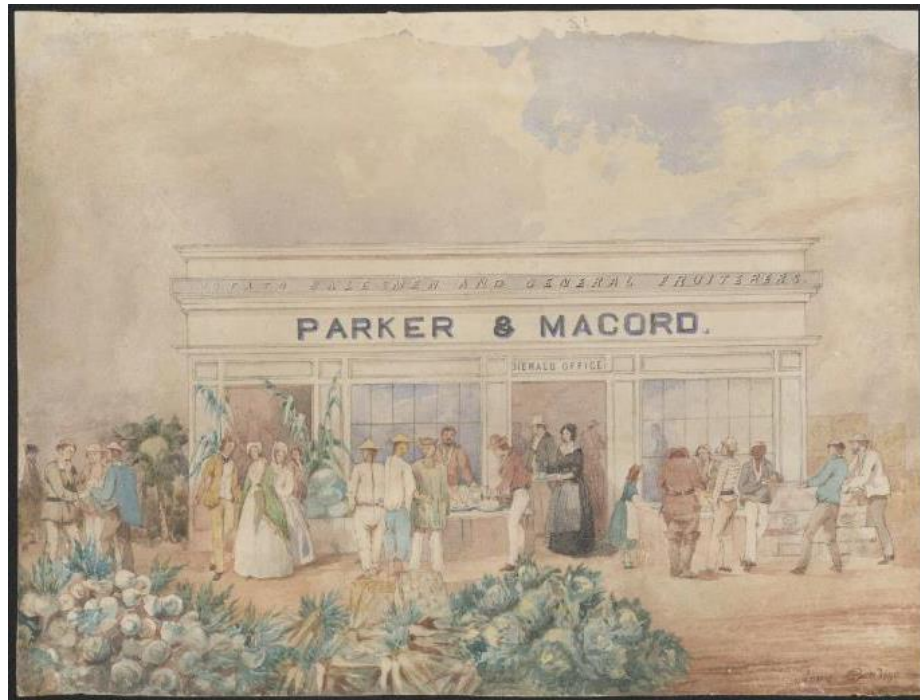


Fig. 4. Parker & Maccord, Potato Salesman and General Fruiters, Bendigo. George Rowe, 1857.

<http://nla.gov.au/nla.obj.136419880>

**Table 1 : Birthplaces of population in and around the Ballarat goldfields, census 1854**

Victoria	1,316
Other Australian Colonies	723
England	7,157
Wales	329
Scotland	2,790
Ireland	2,310
Other British Colonies	347
France	107
Germany	360
Other European Countries	257
USA	342
Other American countries	9
China	340
<u>Other</u>	<u>257</u>
<u>Total</u>	<u>16,684</u>

Census of Victoria, 1854, Part 6, p 8, Table V1.

## PART 2: AFTER THE DISCOVERY OF GOLD

This part of the study traces the history of the performing arts on the goldfields from the songs sung by the early prospectors, to the blossoming of a diverse entertainment industry with a range of local and overseas performers. It also demonstrates how the need for venues to accommodate the performers and the audience, led to the building of new theatrical infrastructure in the mining settlements and in towns nearby. Details of an emerging, contemporary repertoire of theatrical material directly linked to the discovery of gold are also investigated.

### **Songs for comfort and memory “And always there would be music”<sup>54</sup>**

On the goldfields between the years 1852-1853 the conditions were primitive, with the diggers living in cotton or canvas tents with saplings as ridgepoles. Furniture was fashioned out of packing cases and the stumps of trees, with many sleeping on the ground; food was cooked on open fires.<sup>55</sup> Mostly, the diggers lived and worked together in national groups.

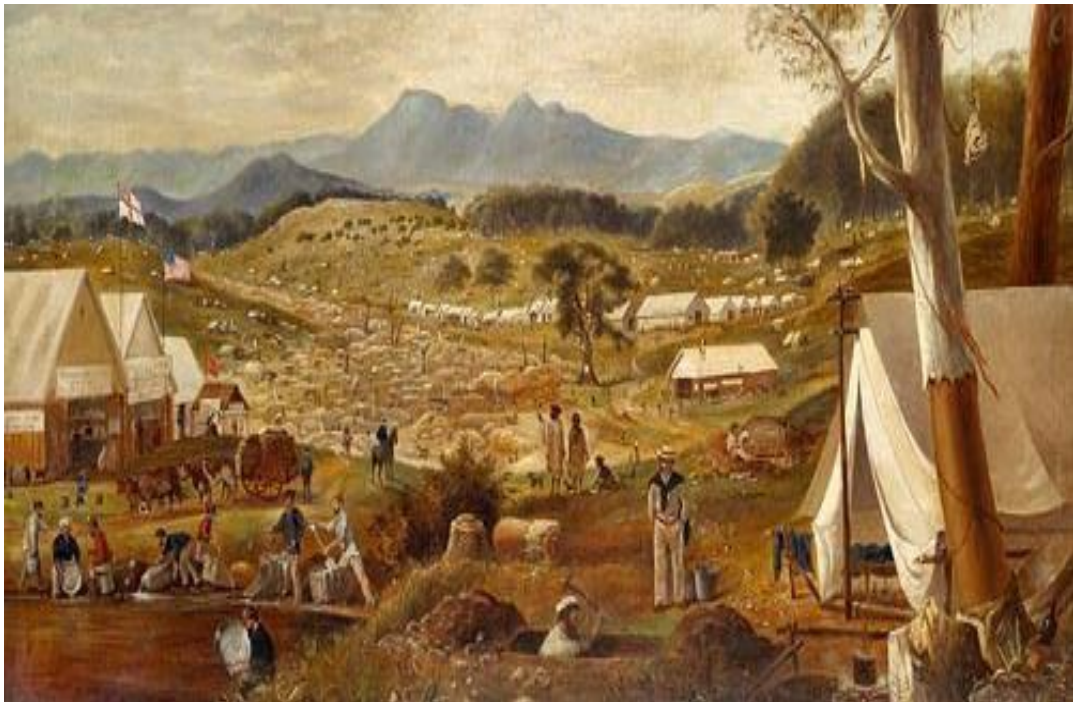


Fig. 5. Gold diggings, Ararat, Edward Roper, oil painting ca 1855. Note the national flags on the tents.

Dixson Galleries, State Library New South Wales, D G 15.

<sup>54</sup> Geoffrey Serle, *The Golden Age*, 78.

<sup>55</sup> Geoffrey Serle, *The Golden Age*, 78.

Whole gullies were occupied by Irish, Scots, Americans, Germans, or Cornishmen. Large groups came together of people of the same town- Liverpool, Bristol, Paisley or Cork. If it was an age of strong nationalism and xenophobia, it was also still an age when local loyalties had not been broken down by the simplicity of travel and the mass communications of the modern world<sup>56</sup>

The Chinese lived in camps away from the European diggers. They built small huts in lines with walkways in between. However, as noted by Rolls,<sup>57</sup> they were not a homogeneous group with the different language speakers keeping rigidly apart.

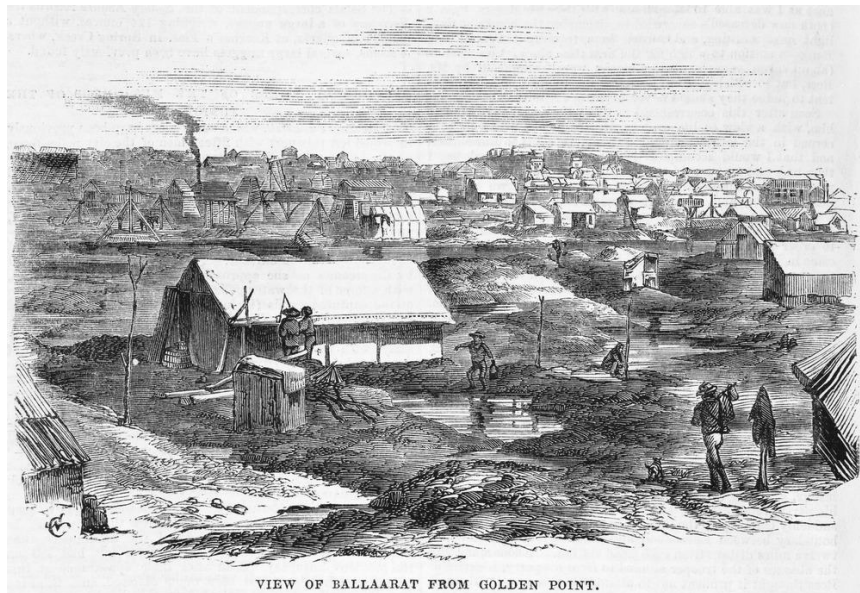


Fig. 6. View of Ballaraat [Ballarat] from Golden Point, N. Chevalier. Wood engraving published in the Illustrated Melbourne News 30 January 1858. State Library of Victoria, <http://handle.slv.vic.gov.au/10381/172778>

The sound of a gun firing from the Commissioners' tent signalled the end of the day when the men moved back to their tents to light their fires and prepare an evening meal. Although tired after the day's work many looked for other diversions. Consumption of alcohol was one such means, along with games of cards and storytelling. Music was another.

The musical instruments consisted chiefly of accordions and flutes; here and there a stray fiddle might be heard within the precincts of some Irish tent, or a cornet-a piston blowing mellowly from the lips of some German, who sent its notes swelling over the ranges or amongst the woods with a sweep that transported the ear far beyond the sounds of the cradle or the pick .A German in hymn-,

<sup>56</sup> Geoffrey Serle, *The Golden Age*, 75.

<sup>57</sup> Rolls noted that between the various clans of Chinese there was as much antagonism as that between the Chinese and Europeans, *Sojourners: flowers and the wide sea*, 118.

sung chorus, would occasionally relieve this, which again would be lost in the ruder throats of a party of our own Anglo-Saxon seamen, who, with “Yo, heave ho!” or some such capstan or windlass chorus, would rend the air as one would think they were endeavouring to do their lungs from the stentorian force with which, every now and then, they would commence the first note of the burden of their song. All this was to be heard more or less nightly;<sup>58</sup>

This first-hand account of the music of the diggers at night is noted and expanded on by other writers<sup>59</sup> who include the voices of the Scots, the Americans, the Africans, and a range of other musical instruments in the medley. Nostalgic songs such as ‘Erin go Bragh’ were sung by the Irish, the Germans enjoyed their hymns; all sang traditional songs and ballads of home. Even the Chinese diggers had their own songs from the ‘Wooden Fish Books’.<sup>60</sup>

It is Sherer who paints the most vivid picture of life on the diggings in the early days. Describing what he sees and hears during a stroll along the main street on a Saturday night, he notes:

the songs of home that emanate from an Irish tent with tears of sadness and shouts of joy from the spectators. The gold buyers are busy, and the stores are full with diggers exchanging their gold for paper money to purchase their supplies.<sup>61</sup>

**Seated in the grog-tent a song is called for and a new chum obliges:**

Another song or two, relieved by a few brief contradictions, rude disputes, rough jokes, and fierce oaths, blended with clouds of smoke and squirts of saliva, was about the amount of the intellectual portion of the entertainment<sup>62</sup>

The practice is not surprising, given that in the nineteenth century, before the advent of film and radio, singing and being able to play an instrument were common features in most cultures. As noted by Serle,<sup>63</sup> migrants brought their own traditions of music making to the goldfields.

---

<sup>58</sup> John Sherer, *The Gold-Finder of Australia* (Ringwood: Penguin, 1973), 75.

<sup>59</sup> Margaret Kiddle, *Men of Yesterday: a social history of the Western District of Victoria, 1834-1890* (Parkville, Victoria: Melbourne University Press, 1961), 196.

<sup>60</sup> Eric Rolls, *Sojourners: flowers and the wide sea*, 116. The song books are named after the Wooden Fish, a block of wood used by Buddhist monks to beat time as they chanted their prayers. The songs have a rhythmic sound, ideal for the Chinese diggers as they walked to and from the goldfields.

<sup>61</sup> John Sherer, *The Gold-Finder*, 77.

<sup>62</sup> John Sherer, *The Gold-Finder*, 79.

<sup>63</sup> Geoffrey Serle, *The Golden Age*, 78.



In Victorian Britain, music was played and sung in most middle- class homes. 'Parlour music' specifically composed to be performed in the home was distributed as sheet music. The songs were harmonically undemanding and usually sentimental and sad. In the industrial north of England, choral singing was popular as was brass band playing. Familiar songs would be played and heard in the bars or at the local music hall. Other Europeans brought their own musical traditions to the fields. In Ballarat, the sound of a German band playing could be heard on most evenings as could the Irish fiddle and the Italian violin.



Fig. 7. Night scene in the diggings (steel engraving) in Australia Illustrated by E. C. Booth, drawing by J.S. Prout. Published by Virtue and Company Limited, London, c1874.

The use of music to connect to memory and emotion is a phenomenon that has been noted in many migrant studies.<sup>64</sup> Transferring the music of their homelands into a new setting became a means of connecting the past and the present for

<sup>64</sup> See J. Baily, "The Role of Music in the creation of an Afghan national identity," In *Ethnicity, Identity and Music, The Musical Construction of Place*, ed. M. Stokes (Oxford: Berg 1994), 45. A. Lomax, "Folk Song Style," *American Anthropologist* 61, no. 6 (1959):927-54.

diggers. Displaying emotion through song was a permissible trait in the Victorian era, even for males; so nostalgia, homesickness and anxiety could be freely indulged in by means of music.<sup>65</sup> To sing in the company of or with, likeminded diggers added to their feelings of comfort, security and enjoyment.

When miners gathered together after their days' work to listen to the music of the 'bugle and the cornopean and the flute'<sup>66</sup> they were undoubtedly seeking human companionship and a distraction from the dirt, smells and discomforts of their immediate environment. Within the context of goldfields life music meant social contact and diversion, a relationship with the world and a way of distancing oneself from it.<sup>67</sup>

### **Songs for history and protest**

Songs from home were not the only ones performed around the camp- fire however, as Sherer observes:

As there were men who could make songs as well as sing them in that motley congregation of many-coloured life, we give two or three which may be taken as specimens of the higher class of lyric which was common amongst it<sup>68</sup>.

#### THE DIGGER'S INVITATION

Come, sons of labour, toiling hard,  
To earn a scanty livelihood,  
Whose best of luck has been ill-star'd,  
However ye have life pursued;  
Here Fortune waits with golden charms,  
To throw herself into your arms;  
The Diggings, hoh! the Diggings, hah!  
Shout for the Diggings, shout hurrah!<sup>69</sup>

There were songs about "new chums," - the bush, success or the lack of it and reminiscences of home. The songs made use of familiar melodies and were sung with gusto or listened to and debated if they contained any social or political commentary.

---

<sup>65</sup> Melissa J. Bellanta, "Australian Masculinities and Popular Song: The Songs of Sentimental Blokes 1900-1930's," *Australian Historical Studies*, 43: 3, (2012): 412-428.

<sup>66</sup> W.B. Withers. "Our past and present", *M & W Star*, 12 September 1856, 89.

<sup>67</sup> Anne Doggett, "And for harmony most ardently, we long:" 82.

<sup>68</sup> John Sherer, *The Gold-Finder*, 239.

<sup>69</sup> John Sherer, *The Gold Finder*, 239.

The world is now turned upside-down,  
And everything seems queer,  
For all the men are leaving town,  
And prog gets dreadful dear.

To talk of love now no one thinks,  
The men have got so cold  
Their heads are stuffed with nothing, but-  
This cursed, filthy gold.

A woman's voice sounds dull and tame,  
In her no charm now lives;  
But spades and picks are harmony,  
And gold the music gives.<sup>70</sup>

These Victorian diggers were not alone in composing songs about the gold rush in Australia; the London pamphleteers quickly wrote songs of their own. Published in broadsheet form, they were popular with migrants leaving the shores of 'old England'.<sup>71</sup>

#### I'm Off to The Diggings

I'm off to the diggings, pick cradle and spade  
For who but a bumpkin would stick to his trade?  
I'm off to the diggings to gather the gold,  
For the wealth of Australia has never been told!

Recent articles by Both and Fahey<sup>72</sup> comment on the songs by anonymous writers, and those of the professional balladeers, noting a description by Sherer that:

It is beyond my abilities to give you anything like an adequate conception of the force with which a song of this kind was usually sung. There was such a heartiness and zest thrown into it by the generality of these rough children of toil, that no half the effect which the rude and jovial ideas of melody could convey<sup>73</sup>

and concluding that:

---

<sup>70</sup> William Walker, *Poems Written in Youth* (Sydney: Turner and Henderson, 1884), 16. Prog in the poem is a slang word for food.

<sup>71</sup> See *I'm Off to The Diggings*, poetry by Andrew Park, music arranged by Alfred Mullen, B. Williams, London, cc 1852, p3. National Library of Australia, <http://trove.nla.gov.au/version/27294649>. accessed 15/11/15.

<sup>72</sup> Ross A. Both and Warren Fahey, "Songs from the Australian Goldfields, Part 1: Gold mania," *Journal of Australasian Mining History* vol. 13, (October 2015): 144-159. "Songs from the Australasian Goldfields, Part 2: Life on the Goldfields" *Journal of Australasian Mining History* vol. 14 (October 2016): 128-149.

<sup>73</sup> John Sherer, *The Gold-Finder*, 240.

[w]hat the songs lacked in literary quality was more than compensated for by way of enthusiasm and intensity of emotions expressed.<sup>74</sup>

Over time, the demand from the diggers for a more varied experience led to the building of theatres where they could be entertained by professional artists as they sat in companionship with their mates. Initially, the theatres were just large tents with benches at one end for the patrons and a stage at the other end for the entertainers.

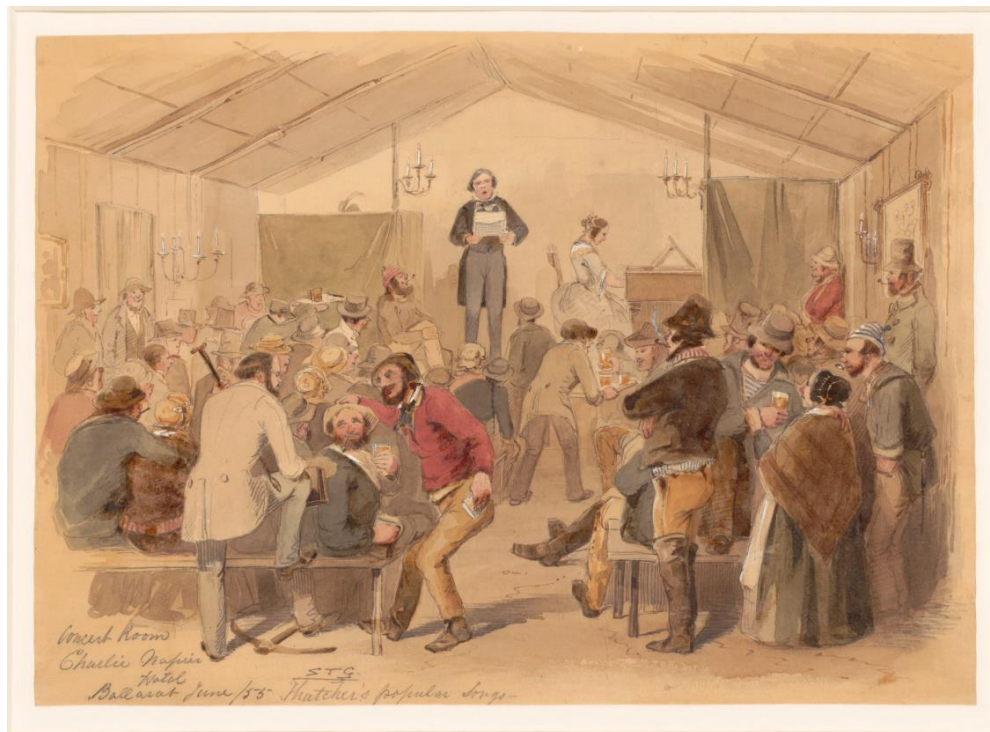


Fig. 8. Concert Room – Charlie Napier Hotel, Ballarat, June '55. S.T. Gill. National Library of Australia.

<http://nla.gov.au/tarkine/nla.obj-134369871>

The Saturday night concerts would typically consist of a few Victorian popular and operatic songs with contributions by local composers. It was into this space that balladeers such as Charles Thatcher, William Coxon, George Loyau, and Joe Small stepped.

These balladeers came from the Celtic and European traditions of singers and reciters of ballads, composing and performing their own songs that were frequently comic and topical. As with the music hall artists of the Victorian era, their delivery was theatrical, with dramatic pauses and exaggerated gestures. As Fitzsimons

<sup>74</sup> Both and Fahey, "Songs from the Australian Goldfields, Part 1," 158.



notes, these balladeers recognise there was profit to be made in singing songs that commented on local situations in a humorous way.<sup>75</sup> An article in a local newspaper reports on one of Thatcher's concerts:

'[His songs] are all humorous, abounding in local allusions....and if circulated in England would give a much better idea of life at the goldfields than most of the elaborately written works do'<sup>76</sup>

The compositions of such balladeers, painted a picture, in words, of life on the goldfields, as vivid as those of the painter S. T. Gill:

A waving forest all around  
This impromptu camping ground:  
Ten thousand tents or more  
Grog shops by many a score,  
Round holes without number,  
With piles of slabs and lumber  
Bullocks bellowing, dogs barking,  
Dancing, singing and skylarking;  
All is revelry by night  
Everyone mad with delight  
In the morning all is life-  
Like an army ere the strife-  
Men working with a will  
On each gully, flat and hill;  
Others off with madden'd speed  
To discover some new lead

Taken from the collection *First Impressions of the Goldfields* by Joe Small, this song is typical of the word pictures composed by the local performers.<sup>77</sup> Whether the goldfields ballads could be considered 'folk songs' in the original sense is debatable, as they do not fit into the oral tradition and are by known composers. However, they did form the basis of an Australian musical and literary tradition that was continued by 'Banjo Paterson' and others.

The songs also dealt with personal, social and cultural matters. Homesickness was addressed in the goldfields' songs, as was racial tension, particularly with the Chinese miners, and attitudes towards women. Thatcher's song *Scrumptious young*

---

<sup>75</sup> Terence Fitzsimons, *Songs of the Goldfields*, [www.education.Sovereighill.com.au](http://www.education.Sovereighill.com.au)

<sup>76</sup> *Argus*, 7 April 1854, 5.

<sup>77</sup> Joe Small, *The New Zealand and Australian Songster* (Christchurch: Tribe, Mosley, and Cargill, 1866.), 11-13.

*gals*,<sup>78</sup> in which he praises women and the role of Caroline Chisholm in assisting women to emigrate to Australia, is in direct contrast with *Colonial courtship or love on the diggings*,<sup>79</sup> where he mirrors the complex and ambivalent attitudes of the single men who have a desire for female companionship but at the same time are fearful of them.

What a rum lot the gals are out here  
 They jolly soon get colonised, sirs  
 But things are far different here,  
 The girls don't consult their relations,  
 What's father or mother to them,  
 They follow their own inclinations;  
 The best of the colony is,  
 The brides have no fine affectation,  
 In saying "I will" they're "all there",  
 And they don't faint upon the occasion.  
 Some brides on their wedding night,  
 In Colonial parlance get "tight", sirs,  
 And then in that state they evince  
 A strong inclination to fight, sirs,



Fig. 9. Alarming prospect: The single ladies off to the diggings, John Leach 1853

State Library of Victoria H81.35; H29787.

<sup>78</sup> Charles Thatcher, *Thatcher's Colonial Songs, forming a complete comic history of the early diggings/Melb: sold at Cole's Book Arcade (188-?, A)*, 76. (Adelaide: Library Board of South Australia 1964).

<sup>79</sup> Charles Thatcher, *Colonial Songs*, 8-9.

Some historians theorised that these songs were more than entertainment, and that they performed a vital social and political function in the early years of the gold rush. Butterss suggests that the songs were used to resolve conflict and contradictions:

For the miners who regularly filled the concert halls, the songs performed a complex range of social functions. One way to explain, at least partially, how the goldfields songs operated for their initial audience is to see them assisting new arrivals to assimilate into a particular colonial culture – and more importantly, to see them enacting and attempting to resolve the tensions, conflicts, fears and frustrations experienced by their audience.<sup>80</sup>

He quotes the ballads of Charles Thatcher, the most popular of the balladeers, to demonstrate how, by satirizing and parodying the authorities, the words enabled the diggers to celebrate their victories and come to terms with their daily life. Butterss does however reflect that implicit in the songs is also recognition of their own powerlessness and an acceptance of the unbalanced power relationships.<sup>81</sup>

In his thesis *Australian Working Songs and Poems – a rebel heritage*, Mark Gregory concurs on the importance of the early songs and poems, and notes that they portray the lives, and the political and social concerns of the diggers. However, his interpretation varies in that he believes the songs and verse demonstrate the relationship between this material and the development of the labour movement.<sup>82</sup> Describing the events that led to the Eureka uprising, Gregory selects songs that reflect the democratic nature of the diggings:

Hurrah! For the diggings! come hasten away,  
You'll find there, priests, doctors, and lawyers!  
Hutkeepers and shepherds in goodly array,  
And seamen, and splitters, and sawyers!  
Hurrah! For the diggings! you'll find in the dirt  
Some scions of high aristocracy,  
Who are digging away in the humble blue shirt  
In a mob of the lowest democracy.<sup>83</sup>

---

<sup>80</sup>Philip Butterss, "Longing for Harmony: The Resolution of Conflict and Contradiction in the Songs of the Victorian Goldfields," *Australian Folklore* no. 5, (1990): 7-35.

<sup>81</sup> Philip Butterss, "Longing for Harmony," 10.

<sup>82</sup> Mark Gregory. "Australian Working Songs and Poems – a rebel heritage." (PhD. thesis, University of Wollongong, 2014), <http://ro.uow.edu/theses/4293>.

<sup>83</sup> *Argus*, 9 June 1851, 4.

Such words are followed by others that trace the rising tide of discontent amongst the diggers, their growing agitation and their rebellion against the gold licence, the trial of rebels and, finally, the release of the rebellious prisoners.<sup>84</sup>

Hurrah! Hurrah! We shout Hurrah!  
Once more again to see them,  
Escaped the prison bolt and bar,  
To breathe the air of freedom.  
Hurrah! Hurrah! Both loud and long  
Shall be our joyous hailing.  
The Right have overcome the Wrong,<sup>85</sup>  
The Oppressor's cause is failing.  
God save the People! <sup>86</sup>

In this way Gregory advances the thesis that the ballads of the gold rush, and other working-class songs could be used by historians to provide evidence of a pertinent political world view and that there is a need to preserve and archive them in a national collection.<sup>87</sup>

When discussing language and the images that it evoked, in mid nineteenth century Victoria, Goodman<sup>88</sup> quotes the anthropologist Sally Falk Moore,<sup>89</sup> who argues that social life is essentially indeterminate, and that established rules and customs are an attempt to build a framework but that the fit is never exact and they operate in the presence of ambiguity and uncertainty.<sup>90</sup> Describing the Victorian gold rush as a 'novel event – never in a British society has there been a gold rush before,'<sup>91</sup> and, because it was novel, Goodman theorises that the meaning of the event is not fixed:

---

<sup>84</sup> Mark Gregory, "Australian Working Songs and Poems—a rebel heritage." 166-171.

<sup>86</sup> Mark Gregory, "Working Songs and Poems," 168.

<sup>87</sup> Mark Gregory, "Working Songs and Poems," 420-426.

<sup>88</sup> David Goodman, "Gold fields/golden fields: The language of agrarianism and the Victorian gold rush," *Australian Historical Studies*, 23:29, 19-41, DOI: 10.1080/10314618808595776, downloaded 11 May 2017.

<sup>89</sup> Sally Falk Moore, *Law as Process: An Anthropological Approach* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978) 32.

<sup>90</sup> Sally Falk Moore, *Law as Process* 39.

<sup>91</sup> David Goodman, "Gold fields/golden fields:" 38.

The meaning of the event is not fixed, the models of interpretation not sanctioned by custom. Attempts are made to subsume the new event under pre-existing languages, with some success, but there is always slippage

Arguably the meaning of the goldfields- ballads are also not fixed and can be interpreted in many ways, as noted in the works of the authors above. The ballads can be viewed as multi-faceted in that they provided a means of describing and reflecting on the environment in which the diggers found themselves. By means of satire, the ballads also allowed the diggers an outlet for their daily frustrations with work and the authorities, and they could also be used in a political context, as songs of protest and a rallying cry to stir the emotions and prompt to action.

Goldfields ballads found expression in various forms. Some were published in local newspapers and were included in collections such as *Thatcher's Colonial Songster* but most importantly they were also performed in front of live audiences where the performers were able to respond to the mood of the diggers and the diggers were able to respond to the performers, with encouragement, approval or derision. Performers would amend their programme accordingly, so that the events became negotiated productions, co-authored by the balladeers and the diggers. It is this element that gave the ballads their resilience and strength.

Rowdy and boisterous audiences were a common feature in nineteenth century theatre, as was audience interaction. Bellanta<sup>92</sup> gives examples of how the reactions of audiences influenced programmes and notes how productions were flexible and altered their content in line with audience responses. She concludes that this was never more visible than when the diggers were "out on the town".

With its close proximity to the goldfields, and in the early years of the diggings, Melbourne became "another San Francisco." Saloons and drinking dens were filled with diggers with money in their pockets and, in the evening, the theatres presented the latest acts and performers from Europe and America.

---

<sup>92</sup>Melissa Bellanta, "Voting for Pleasure, Or a View from a Victorian Theatre Gallery," *M/C Journal*, vol. 11, no 1 (2008):1-9.



Fig. 10. Dress Circle Boxes, Queen's Theatre: lucky diggers in Melbourne 1853.

In the reign of J. T. Smith /S.T.G. S.T. Gill. 1818-1880. State Library Victoria.

William Kelly<sup>93</sup> gives a vivid description of a night at the theatre with diggers in “tartan jumpers or red worsted shirts” and their companions dressed in “too low satin dresses”. The performance of *Hamlet* was scarcely noticed until the entrance of Ophelia, which was greeted with clapping and savoury compliments.

The third act was transformed into a most amusing colloquy between the Danish Gravedigger and the gold-diggers from Eagle Hawk, made up of mutual inquiries about the depth of the sinking and the return to the tub, which so tickled Hamlet that he gave up the soliloquy and joined in the joking.....there was no alternative but cut down the remainder of the performance to the last scene. But Hamlet, Ophelia and the Ghost in undress, were obliged to appear before the foot-lights to bear a pelting shower of nuggets –a substitute for bouquets –many of over half an ounce.<sup>94</sup>

A similar incident was recorded by Sutherland who noted that:

<sup>93</sup> William Kelly, *Life in Victoria or Victoria in 1853 and Victoria in 1858* (London: Chapman & Hall. 1860), vol. 11, 189.

<sup>94</sup> William Kelly, *Life in Victoria*, 189.

They shouted greetings across the house and made the noisiest of audiences. But the uproar was mostly good-humoured and sprang from the fervour of the times; and as the diggers crowded the theatre and paid whatever prices were demanded, managers made good profits.<sup>95</sup>

To develop and flourish, theatre, in whatever form it takes, needs a strong economic base and in the early 1850s in Ballarat and Melbourne this was provided by the diggers who needed entertainment and an outlet for luxury spending.

### **Theatres and professional entertainers**

The surface alluvial period of mining in Ballarat was brief. By 1854, the method had changed to deep lead alluvial mining, initially operated by cooperative parties of two, three or four miners and later by small companies. The incomplete Victorian census of 1854 gives the population at the diggings as 16,684 including 12,660 males, 4,023 females and one person of unspecified sex. A report from the Resident Commissioner to the Chief Commissioner on 16 September 1854 gives similar figures with the addition of 4025 children.

With confidence growing in the future stability of the region, Bate<sup>96</sup> records a change in the composition of the settlement, with log huts gradually replacing tents and, with the construction of a road and bridge, a general alignment of the stores and hotels. In Ballarat East, the region, nearest the alluvial mines, the Main Road precinct was developed, and in it a region called Red Hill quickly became an entertainment centre. Publicans built concert halls on their properties to attract the diggers, who, still in the majority, flocked to this part of town looking for entertainment.

---

<sup>95</sup> Alexander Sutherland and R.L.J. Ellery, *Victoria and its metropolis: past and present* (Melbourne: McCarron, Bird, 1888), 512-513.

<sup>96</sup> Weston Bate, *Lucky City: The First Generation at Ballarat 1851-1901* (Melbourne: Wilke and Company Ltd, 1978), 41.





Fig. 11. Eugene von Guerard painting: Ballarat in the early times; as it appeared in the summer of 1853-54. 1884. Collection Ballarat Fine Art Gallery. Note the circus tent in the middle of the settlement.

Roistering diggers came at night, from near and far to find entertainment in Main Road and it was all there. When plays and vaudeville were finished in the theatres, music started, and hundreds of men danced wildly together. Women were scarce and anyone with a partner was regarded with envy.<sup>97</sup>

The Charles Napier hotel and concert room, first built in 1854, burnt down in 1861 and rebuilt in brick in 1861, was a favourite with the diggers. The Star (1855-1863), the John O'Groats (1858), and the United States (1855-1866) were other establishments which competed for business with the early Theatre Royal, the Adelphi Theatre and the Ballarat Assembly Rooms.

The Joss House, a place of music, as well as ceremony and commerce, and the Chinese Circus, with its acrobats and music, and patronised by all nationalities, were included in the mix of attractions.<sup>98</sup>

---

<sup>97</sup> A.W. Strange, *Ballarat the formative years* (Ballarat: B & B Strange, 1982).

<sup>98</sup> City of Ballarat, *Main Road Precinct-SongWays Music Mapping*, 1-6.

[http://www.hulballarat.org.au/cb\\_pages/songways\\_main\\_road\\_precinct.php](http://www.hulballarat.org.au/cb_pages/songways_main_road_precinct.php)



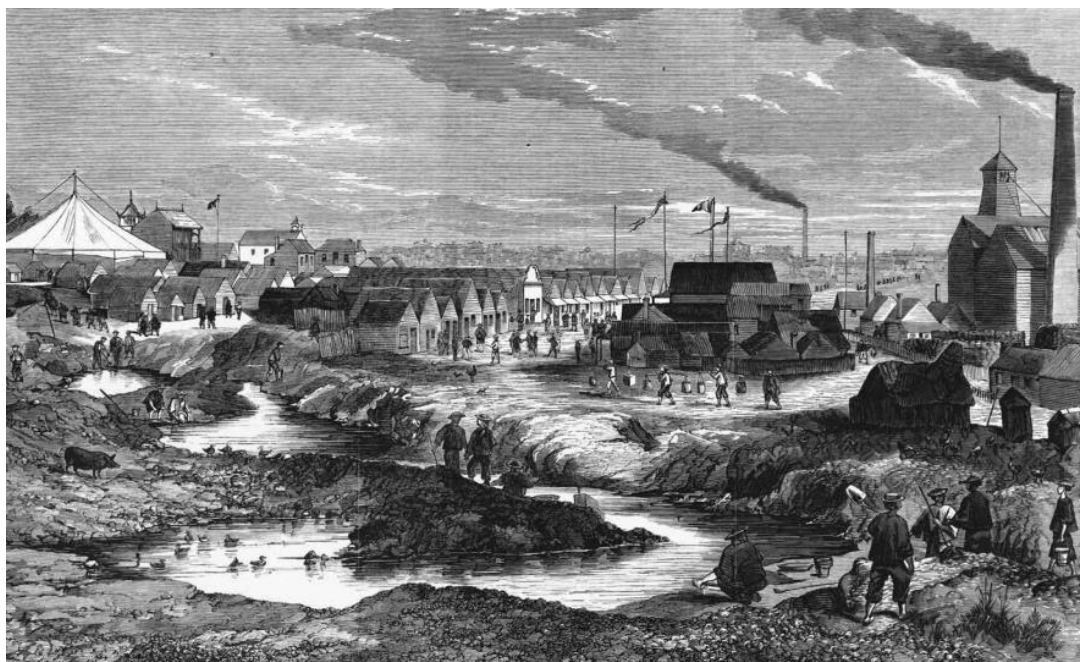


Fig. 12. Chinese quarter Ballarat with Circus Tent and Joss House, Ebenezer and David Syme  
La Trobe Picture Collection, State Library Victoria.

By 1856, most of the entertainment in Main St took place in three large theatres: the Victoria, with a 2500 seat capacity, opened on February 16<sup>th</sup>, 1856 with the headline act of Lola Montez.<sup>99</sup> The elegant Montezuma, with its chandeliers, an Italian façade and a capacity of 1000, also opened in February but with the much less exalted American juvenile prodigy, Miss A.M. Quinn. Both played to capacity crowds. The Charles Napier, still the favourite of the working man, was situated between them. The *Argus* observed:

AMUSEMENTS-Perhaps the most extraordinary feature in this district is the numerous attendance nightly to be met with at the various places of amusement. There are now three theatres-the Montezuma, Charles Napier, and Victoria, the smallest of which will accommodate from 1,200 to 1,500 people, and they are all well attended. Where do the people come from is the question continually asked but asked in vain.<sup>100</sup>

The Theatre Royal, the most ornate of the theatres, was opened in Ballarat West in December 1857.

<sup>99</sup> City of Ballarat, *Main Road Precinct*, 1-6.

<sup>100</sup> *Argus* 19 November 1856.



Fig. 13. Theatre Royal, Sturt Street, Max Harris Collection, Ballarat Mechanics Institute.

It had ten dressing rooms, appropriate refreshment rooms for ‘each grade of audience’, room for a commodious orchestra and all the mechanical devices needed to stage a full opera. It was, according to Doggett, “appropriate for the ‘better’ class of people who tended to settle in the western part of town,”<sup>101</sup> and “expressed the richness of a town like Ballarat.”<sup>102</sup>

In the 1860’s two other venues were added that catered for musical performances: the Ballarat Mechanics Institute built in 1860, and the Alfred Hall, built in 1867 to welcome Prince Alfred, the son of Queen Victoria, to the district.

Ballarat was not the only settlement to respond to the market for theatrical entertainment by the Victorian miners: Bendigo built its own theatres as did Geelong and Melbourne. Melbourne opened three theatres within twelve months. Astley’s Amphitheatre, named after its famous English counterpart, opened with a grand concert on September 11<sup>th</sup> 1854 with equestrian entertainers arriving from overseas in the following November. The Theatre Royal, a building capable of holding 3000 people, opened in 1855 with Sheridan’s play *The School for Scandal* and the Olympic opened two weeks later. This latter prefabricated iron building,

---

<sup>101</sup> Anne Doggett, “The ‘restless fascination of the unknown’: fifteen years of opera in Ballarat’s ‘other’ golden age.” *Journal of Colonial History*, vol. 5, (2004): 79.

<sup>102</sup> Ross Thorne, *Theatre Buildings in Australia to 1905: from the time of First Settlement to arrival of cinema* (Sydney: Architectural Research Foundation, University of Sydney, 1971), 171-172.

commissioned by George Coppin<sup>103</sup> and shipped from Manchester, opened the season on 30<sup>th</sup> July 1855 with the famous Irish actor Gustavus Vaughan Brooke in the leading role in *The Lady of Lyons* by Bulwer Lyons.



Fig. 14. Old Theatre Royal Melbourne – destroyed by fire in 1872. 1861, Sears’ Studios photographer, State Library Victoria, H 20742.



Fig.15. photographer unknown. Astleys Amphitheatre, Melbourne, taken between 1854 and 1857, State Library, Victoria H31437.

<sup>103</sup> George Coppin, (1819-1906). Credited with fathering the Australian theatre, he was a comic actor and entrepreneur. Building and managing theatres during and after the gold rush era, he introduced tours of visiting actors and recognised the need for a school for actors in Australia. *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Volume 3, 1969.

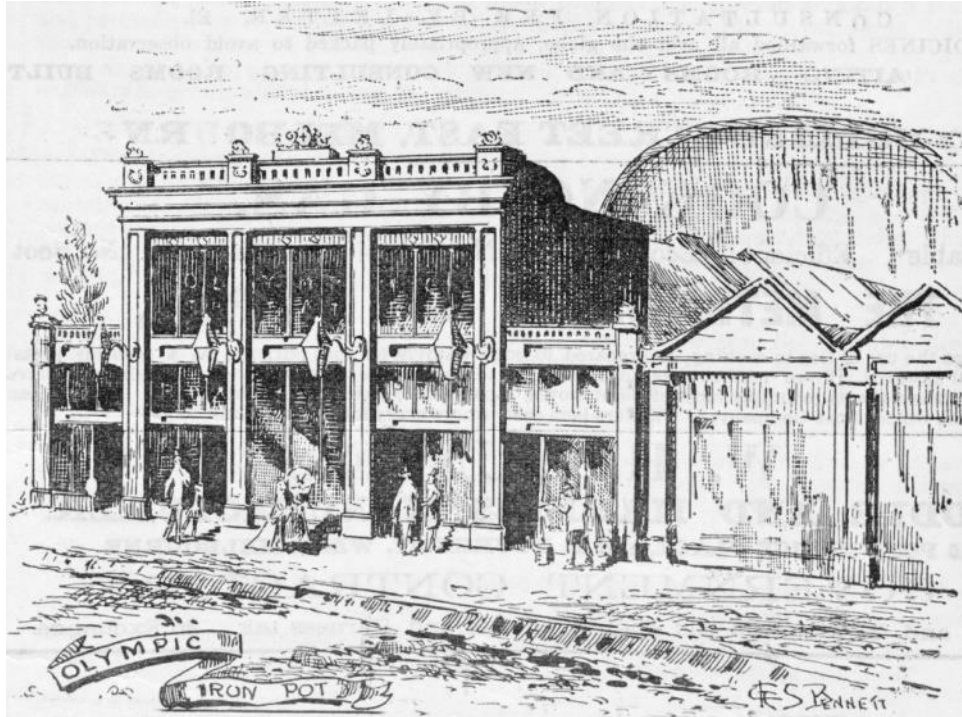


Fig. 16. Coppins Olympic Theatre “The Iron Pot”, c1855, Charles Samuel Bennett, State Library Victoria, H 9185.

In his history of theatre in Victoria,<sup>104</sup> Lesser lists the number of entertainment venues in Melbourne in 1855, noting that, as well as the three theatres mentioned above, the Queens Theatre was still operating, as was the Salle de Valentino for popular concerts, the Criterion Hall, for musical entertainment, the Mechanics Institute and a range of hotels that provided musical and comic concerts.<sup>105</sup>

Lesser does comment that, in succeeding years, not all of the venues thrived.<sup>106</sup> However the number of venues operating in Melbourne in this one year is indicative of the strength of the demand for the performing arts that was present, not only in the gold rush settlements, but also in the nearby towns whose economies were dependant on mining and where the miners spent a significant proportion of their new found wealth.

Reports of the reception given to performing artists by digger audiences in the newly established communities were quickly conveyed overseas, to Europe and

<sup>104</sup> L. E. Lesser, ““Show Business” A History of Theatre in Victoria 1835 – 1948” (master’s thesis, University of Melbourne, 1949).

<sup>105</sup> L. E. Lesser, “Show Business,” 68.

<sup>106</sup> L. E. Lesser, 68.

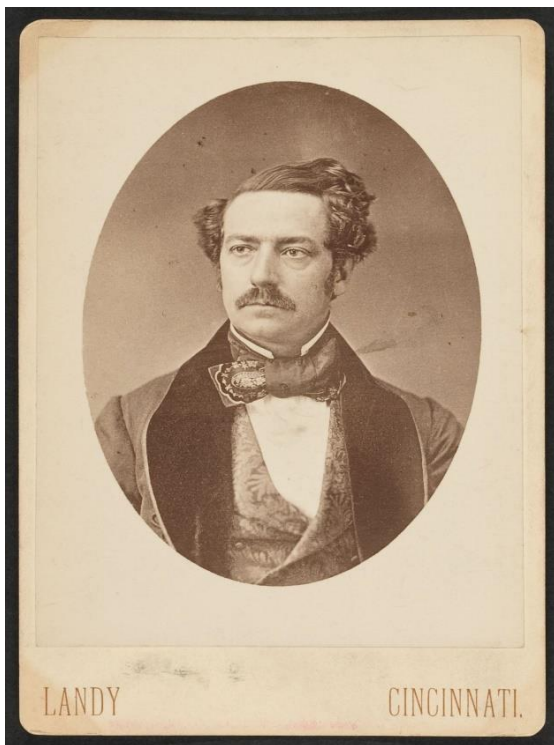


North America. Noting the amount paid to Mr and Mrs Stark, American actors who toured Australia in 1853-54, *The Daily Placer Times and Transcript* commented that:

“[i]t is not best for professional people to allow their heads to be turned by such intelligence; but that there is a good prospect for dramatic talent in Australia cannot be questioned”-[this] “will induce many others in the profession to seek the same sphere of theatrical enterprise, whose like fortune we hope to chronicle”.<sup>107</sup>

A new market for the performing arts had arrived. One that was cosmopolitan and eager to experience all that the old and new world could provide.

The actors, singers and other entertainers who arrived from overseas and performed during the gold rushes of the 1850s and 1860s were many and various.



Harvard University, Houghton Library, W617008.1

Fig. 17. *Gustavus Vaughn Brooke*

Among those from England came Gustavus Vaughn Brooke<sup>108</sup> who arrived in Melbourne in June 1855 under contract to the theatrical entrepreneur George Coppin. Renowned as a great Shakespearean actor, he played to critical acclaim in Sydney and Melbourne before touring the goldfields. He performed in Ballarat in 1854 and 1856 gaining great personal and financial success, even laying the foundation stone of the new Theatre Royal in January 1858 before a brass band and a coterie of local dignitaries. Unfortunately, his investments failed, and he returned to England in 1861. By then his style was too outmoded for London audiences and, intending

to return to Australia, he sailed from Plymouth in the *London* which sank on the 11<sup>th</sup> January 1866. His death was widely mourned throughout Australia, particularly by the gold rush migrants.

<sup>107</sup> *San Francisco Daily Placer Times*, 11, 25 May 1854.

<sup>108</sup> Photograph, Gustavus V. Brooke, Harvard Theatre Collection, TCS 1367.



Fig.18. *Lola Montez* Fineartamerica.com

According to Porter<sup>109</sup> the other, “showiest importation” was Lola Montez,<sup>110</sup> of whom much has been written.<sup>111</sup> Lola’s history, as a lover to King Ludwig of Bavaria, Franz Liszt, and Alexandre Dumas, as a friend to George Sand, and her exploits on the Californian goldfields preceded her, and meant that her arrival in Australia was greeted with great anticipation. She made her debut at the Victoria Theatre, Ballarat on 16<sup>th</sup> February 1856 with her famous “Spider Dance”, a sensually

provocative dance that won great applause from male audience members who showered her with nuggets but was condemned by some of the conservative press. Her antics away from the stage, such as when she whipped a local newspaper editor who gave her a critical review, added to her notoriety. Finally, it was a whipping that she received from the wife of the theatre manager Mr Crosby, which ended her time in Ballarat.

Once news of the lucrative opportunities for entertainers in Australia travelled across the Pacific, artists who had performed before the Californian miners in the previous years, took the opportunity to cross the Pacific to the new rush. Wittmann<sup>112</sup> argues that this movement then became the impetus for the Pacific circuit-

[which] led to a progressively more expansive and organised cultural circuit in the 1860s and:

The robust cultural traffic between California and the Australian colonies during the 1850s was the primary impetus for the development of the Pacific circuit and established its central contour, but the

<sup>109</sup> Hal Porter, *Stars of Australian Stage and Screen* (Adelaide: Rigby Ltd, 1965), 39.

<sup>110</sup> Portrait of Lola Montez, painted in 1847 by Joseph Karl Stieler.

<sup>111</sup> Bruce Seymour, *Lola Montez: A Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996). Doris Foley, *Divine Eccentric: Lola Montez and the newspapers* (Los Angeles: Westernlore Press, 1969). Horace Wyndham, *Magnificent Montez: From courtesan to convert* (New York: Stein and Day, 1972). Clare Wright, “A lover and a fighter: Clare Wright on the trouble with Lola Montez,” *Overland* 195 (2009): 20-28.

<sup>112</sup> Matthew W. Wittman, “Empire of Culture: U.S. Entertainers and the Making of the Pacific Circuit, 1850-1890” (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 2010).

process also led some U.S. entertainers to search out other relatively uncharted markets around the larger Pacific world 1870s.<sup>113</sup>

By the end of the 1890s this circuit would eventually be superseded by a global entertainment circuit but, as will be demonstrated in the chapter on the Eastern Goldfields of Western Australia, it would still prove to be a viable option for many American performers.

Wittmann records that the most prevalent entertainment forms that crossed the Pacific were minstrel shows and circuses due to their ability to “travel well”.<sup>114</sup> While circuses will be discussed in a later section of this chapter; it is worth recording here the story of one of the most successful minstrel shows to visit Australia, the Rainer’s Serenaders who arrived in Melbourne on 6th December 1852.

Within days of landing they were performing at the Mechanics Institute in Melbourne before an enthusiastic crowd,<sup>115</sup> and later that week before Governor La Trobe and the “rank and fashion of the city”.<sup>116</sup> The company acquired a canvas tent and toured widely throughout Victoria, setting up in Bendigo, and Ballarat. The American miner, Charles Ferguson, who met them in the goldfields, recalled they were “coining money” although they did not seem to be able to hold onto it.<sup>117</sup>

It is interesting to mark, as mentioned by Wittman,<sup>118</sup> the differences in reception of blackface minstrelsy by American and Australian audiences, noting that Australian audiences were less appreciative of racist comments in the performances than their American counterparts.<sup>119</sup> Britain had passed the Slavery Abolition Act in 1833, which affected all colonies except India, but it wasn’t until 1865 that the American government commenced legislation to gradually free slaves in all the states. At the time of these performances, the anti-abolitionists were a

---

<sup>113</sup> Wittmann, *Empire of Culture*, 27.

<sup>114</sup> Wittmann, *Empire of Culture*, 28.

<sup>115</sup> *Argus*, 13 December 1852, 5.

<sup>116</sup> *Argus*, 15 December 1852, 5.

<sup>117</sup> Charles D. Ferguson, *The Experiences of a Forty-niner during Thirty-four Years’ Residence in California and Australia* (Cleveland: Williams Publishing Co., 1888) 261.

<sup>118</sup> Wittmann, *Empire of Culture*, 60.

<sup>119</sup> Wittmann, *Empire of Culture*, 61.

powerful force in American politics, and this was reflected in the minstrel shows and in the American audiences' reactions.

Minstrel shows were adaptable, and, in Australia, repertoires were able to accommodate the anti-slavery sentiments of the audience with new works. J.C. Rainer's rendition of *Uncle Tom's Farewell* derived from Harriet Beecher Stowe's novel was one such adaptation that captivated an Adelaide audience:

Not a breath could be heard- the large assembly hung with an air of intensity of feeling on every note, and at the close the pent-up sentiment exploded in a burst of approval and a prolonged round of applause<sup>120</sup>

Waterhouse attributes the popularity of the minstrel shows in Australia to their ability to adapt to local concerns by satirising local politicians and institutions, while maintaining international themes and values.<sup>121</sup> For example the miners of Ballarat were moved to 'roars of applause' by the caricatures of the Chinese by the Backus Minstrels,<sup>122</sup> in contrast to their anti-slavery stance. The relationship between minstrel shows and racial superiority has been discussed by Wittmann, Waterhouse and others, with many views expressed.<sup>123</sup> However in the gold rush towns of Victoria, the minstrel troupes, both from America and Britain, first and foremost provided entertainment. The content of the shows reflected the desire of the working and middle classes in the new colonial settlements for sentimental songs, novel acts and comedy.

Amongst the earliest individual theatre performers who came to Australia from America were James and Sarah Stark, bringing with them reputations from California, Sarah as "one of the most gifted "women on the frontier stage" and James as the "greatest actor." The Starks had tried their fortune on the New York stage with little success but, on hearing about the reception given to Rowe's circus

---

<sup>120</sup> *South Australian Register*, 26 January 1855.

<sup>121</sup> Richard Waterhouse, "Minstrel show and vaudeville house: The Australian popular stage, 1838-1914," *Australian Historical Studies* 23: 93 (2008): 366-385. DOI: 10.1080/10314618908595819

<sup>122</sup> *Ballarat Star*, 15 March 1856.

<sup>123</sup> For views on what minstrelsy meant to Australians in the context of racial superiority see Wittmann, *Empire of Culture*, 68, Waterhouse, *Minstrel show and Vaudeville House*, 379-380. For a global view see Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Colour Line: White Men's Countries and the International Challenge of Racial Equality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).



in Melbourne, they sailed across the Pacific.<sup>124</sup> According to the *Argus* they were given a rapturous reception:

But last night a Mr and Mrs Stark made their first appearance in the Lady of Lyons and fairly took the house by storm. We believe that they are Americans, but they took high honours in Sydney and all last night agreed that nothing like them had been seen in Victoria<sup>125</sup>

The Starks left Australia in April 1854 having made at least 10,000 pounds<sup>126</sup> and having “enlivened the developing Australian theatre.”<sup>127</sup>

They did return for another tour in 1856; but, by then, tastes, had changed from a preference for high drama to music and light comedy, undoubtedly due to the arrival in the colony of such talented singers as Catherine Hayes and, Madame Anne Bishop and with competition from Mr Brooke. In Ballarat, where Brooke was a firm favourite, reviews of the Starks were mixed, causing Sarah Stark to note that a bribe would alter the views of the press. The response from the editor of the *Star* was swift. The “attack was made because we refused to be bribed”.<sup>128</sup>

In contrast, the reception given to Miss Mary Provost when she performed at the Montezuma Theatre in December 1857, was outstanding.

To say that Miss Provost was successful beyond the most sanguine expectation of those who hoped for, but doubted a triumph, would but faintly convey to our readers the warmth of the spontaneous expressions of enthusiasm which repeatedly greeted her powerful efforts of passionate and artistic representation of the arduous character selected for her first appearance.<sup>129</sup>

Performers continued to arrive from overseas despite the expenses of travel, hotels and periods of disengagement. *My Note Book* in February 1857<sup>130</sup> records the pay of the average Australian actor as 5 to 6 pounds a week, in contrast to the twenty-five to thirty shillings a week they would receive in England. This does not take into account the difference in the purchasing power of the currency and, in fact, many of the actors and musicians led a very precarious existence in Australia. Stars were

---

<sup>124</sup> E. Daniel Potts and Annette Potts, *Young America and Australian Gold: Americans and the Gold Rush of the 1850s* (St. Lucia, Queensland: University of Queensland Press, 1974), 123.

<sup>125</sup> *Argus*, 30 August 1853.

<sup>126</sup> This would be the equivalent of approx. 2,568 standard (22 carat) gold or approx. 2354 ounces of fine (24 carat) gold.

<sup>127</sup> E. Daniel Potts and Annette Potts, *Young America*, 127.

<sup>128</sup> *Ballarat Star* cited in *Melbourne Age* 21 August 1856.

<sup>129</sup> *Ballarat Star*, 17 December 1857.

<sup>130</sup> *My Note Book*, (Melbourne, Shaw, Harnett & Co.), February 1857.

usually paid a percentage of the takings together with a guaranteed fee, which very often led to dissatisfaction amongst the remainder of the company. Stars could also return overseas when their tour of Australia finished, but the general stock company having limited means would usually stay, either to remain with the theatre, or to move on to other pursuits.

Plays, pantomimes and minstrel shows were not the only source of entertainment; there was farce, burlesque, melodrama, variety shows, concerts, opera, both serious and comic, and circus. Some of the larger companies performed in the capital cities before moving into the gold rush towns but others confined themselves to the bush, travelling from town to town within their own rural circuit. The English-based Christy troupes spent most of their time on the goldfields before moving into metropolitan hotels, again largely patronised by miners.<sup>131</sup>

The dramatic arts, in both writing and performance were not the only beneficiaries of the wealth and creation of audiences that the gold discoveries provided. Three other distinct genres of the performing arts were directly affected in this era. Two, opera and circus, were imported from Europe, Asia and America but the third, the corroboree, was indigenous to the Australian continent.

### **Opera from two worlds**

Traditional Western style opera benefitted, with the leading opera stars of Europe and America attracted to Australia in the gold rush years, many of whom performed in Ballarat during their tours of the major centres. In 1861, from the goldfields of California, came the William Saurin Lyster's Opera Company. Making Melbourne their base, they held a near monopoly of opera in Australia over the next twenty years. Their visit to Ballarat in June 1861, for four performances, was a sell-out, the miners revelling in the lavish production and dramatic singing.<sup>132</sup>

Love describes this period as *The Golden Age of Australian Opera*<sup>133</sup> and Doggett, discussing the performances in her study, calls it "Ballarat's 'other' golden age."<sup>134</sup>

---

<sup>131</sup> Richard Waterhouse, "Minstrel Show and vaudeville house: The Australian popular stage, 1838-1914," *Australian Historical Studies*, 23:93 (2008): 366-385, DOI: 10.1080/10314618908595819.

<sup>132</sup> *Ballarat Star*, 27, 28 August 1861.

<sup>133</sup> Harold Love, *The Golden Age of Australian Opera: W.S. Lyster and his company 1861-1880* (Sydney: Currency Press, 1981.)

This was a period before the bifurcation of the arts into high and popular culture, when the only impediment to attending a performance was the price of a ticket. But even then, the cost was far below what might be expected in England or Europe. Doggett suggests that, for the miners, “Opera offered something different – a special beauty that could never be part of the daily experience.”<sup>135</sup> In this way she argues that:

Through the combination and interaction of these elements, people could find in opera their own moments of beauty and splendour, and distance themselves from the reality of their everyday world.<sup>136</sup>

I suggest too, that as well as music, this experience would include, the spectacular scenery and, beautiful costumes, the opportunity to dress up for a night out and to make this a special occasion in their difficult lives.

There are too, other elements to be considered when examining the popularity of opera in a gold rush town in the 1850s. Ballarat, like the other mining centres, was very much a cosmopolitan city, with audience members coming from all parts of the globe, many of whom would be familiar with this style of performance even when operas were sung in Italian. Moreover, for those who had never seen opera before, they provided the opportunity to experience something different now that they had the means. It is true that, while at this moment in time, opera was accessible to all classes, it was still considered an exceptional mode of entertainment. This may have been because of an appreciation of the cost of staging such productions, and the skills and musical training required to be a singer in a full opera. It must be noted though that, because of the cost and difficulties of transporting scenery, Ballarat did not always receive all the lavishness that would be presented on stage in a capital city.

Opera singers, especially females, were highly regarded, and treated as stars, very often with a large following encouraged by the press, who were loud in their praise, though whether this was for gain or genuine admiration is difficult to ascertain. A

---

<sup>134</sup> Anne Doggett, “The ‘resistless fascination of the unknown’: fifteen years of opera in Ballarat’s ‘other’ golden age,” *Journal of Colonial History* 5, (2004): 73-99.

<sup>135</sup> Anne Doggett, 88.

<sup>136</sup> Anne Doggett, 99.

local reporter responding to the arrival of the soprano Madame Anna Bishop in Ballarat wrote:

Ours is a microcosm unique – an epitome as it were of all humanities, civilised and savage; wonders and novelties are not strangers to us. Yet it is enough to arrest our attention, and worthy of record, when to the list of other wonders which in the past have demonstrated to us that “truth is strange, stranger than fiction,” we have to note the arrival in our midst of an opera singer of more than European renown.<sup>137</sup>

Opera singers and musicians from Europe and America were not the only entertainers drawn to the Australian colonies at this time. From China came a very distinct group of opera performers with the Chinese miners as their prospective audience.

The number of Chinese miners who came to Victoria in the 1850s is difficult to determine. However as stated previously, there were approximately 20,000 in 1855 with a total of 40,000 entering the country between 1851 and 1861. In Ballarat, as in other settlements, the Chinese lived in separate groups, segregated from the other miners by their appearance, costume, culture and religion. They faced a great deal of prejudice and discrimination, despite a few residents, mainly newspaper editors, calling for more tolerance.<sup>138</sup> What they did have in common with the non-Chinese miners however was a desire for entertainment.

A number of studies have been undertaken by scholars such as Doggett, Love and Wang<sup>139</sup> on the style and form of the performing arts preferred by these Chinese miners. The general consensus amongst these researchers is that classical Cantonese opera and music from Guangdong province was the most popular. It is also known that a simpler form of opera requiring fewer props, without acting and makeup called Yuequ, and Chinese musical concerts were toured around the gold-

---

<sup>137</sup> *Ballarat Star*, 4 October 1856, 2.

<sup>138</sup> *Ballarat Star*, 2 November 1869, 2.

<sup>139</sup> Anne Doggett, “‘Strains from Flowery Land’: responses to Chinese Musical Activity in Mid-nineteenth century Ballarat,” *Context* 33, (2008): 107-120. Harold Love, “Chinese Theatre in the Victorian Goldfields 1858-1870,” *Australasian Drama Studies* 3, no. 2 (1985): 47-86. Wang Zheng-Ting, *Chinese Music in Australia Victoria 1850’s to Mid 1990s* (Melbourne: Australia Asia Foundation, distributed by Lento, 1997), 15-37. “Chinese Music in Mid-Nineteenth Century Victoria.” *Australasian Music Research* 2-5, (1997-1998): 23-38. Wang Zheng Ting and Anne Doggett, “Chinese Music on the Victorian Goldfields,” *Victorian Historical Journal* vol. 78, no.2 (2007): 170-186.

rush towns. Love notes that Chinese entrepreneurs applied for a total of fourteen licences for their troupes to perform on the goldfields between 1858 and 1870.<sup>140</sup>



Fig. 19. Chinese Theatricals in Melbourne, S.J. Calvert (engraver), O.R. Campbell (artist), in Melbourne, Illustrated Australian News for Home Readers, Ebenezer & David Syme, Melbourne, 1872.

The troupes consisted of approximately forty persons, and included six to ten musicians, actors, acrobats and support staff, almost always male. Many of the performers came directly from China; however, it is highly probable that, as the main motivation was economic, performers were also recruited from amongst the local Chinese diggers to reduce the performance costs. We do know from the petition of Quang-Chew<sup>141</sup> that musical instruments were made locally by Chinese craftsmen.

Most performances were held in tent theatres, although, in some mining towns and on at least one occasion in Melbourne, performances took place in the local theatres.

---

<sup>140</sup> Harold Love, "Chinese Theatre," 47.

<sup>141</sup> As quoted in Rolls, 1992, 128, A petition written by the Chinese in response to fears that all the Chinese were to be sent home (1855). It lists the occupations of some Chinese immigrants who were not miners.

The performance in Ballarat on November 1856 was one such occasion, when, at the Charles Napier theatre, a performance of the “Chinese Feast of Lanterns” was held. The feast included:

“3,500 Mandarin lights, also revolving chinghais, dragons etc. The celebrated Chinese musicians O’Wai and Ah Fou, principal musicians to the Oho of Thibet will perform, solos, duets on the Kai Pi and Hue Mue”<sup>142</sup>

The writer comments further that, despite there being crowds of Chinese on the fields, amongst the crowds there were Irish masqueraders in Oriental costume and a touch of brogue in the Celestial solos. From these comments it appears that, at least in this instance, the ethnic boundaries were not fixed, and cross-cultural participation was accepted.

Arguably the theatre was perhaps even more important for the Chinese miners than it was to the non-Chinese because of their social and cultural isolation. Work was hard and they needed to meet their fellow countrymen in an atmosphere that was familiar and reassuring. Chinese opera was not only entertaining; it provided a place for social contact, for education, and the promotion and reinforcement of philosophy and moral ethics.

In his study, Love makes a comparison between the arrival of European theatre and Chinese theatre to the goldfields, concluding that they were both a product of the same economic forces.<sup>143</sup> I suggest that this is only partly the case as there were other factors at play with regard to Chinese theatre.

The nineteenth century was a time of great upheaval in China. After the Opium Wars of the 1840s, China was forced to open its doors to western countries. There was political and economic instability, and many revolts and conflicts. A rebellion led by the Cantonese opera singer Li Wenmao established the Kingdom of Great Success (Dacheng guo 1855-61) with the result that the Manchu government banned Cantonese opera in China from 1856 to 1871.

Chinese performers and displays about the Chinese had been seen in North America for many decades before 1850. However, the earliest documented Chinese

---

<sup>142</sup> C.R.C. Pearce, “Early Ballarat, Glimpses in 1856.” *Argus*, Saturday, 10<sup>th</sup> October 1931. 4.

<sup>143</sup> Harold Love, “Chinese Theatre on the Victorian Goldfields,” 82.

operatic performance took place in California in 1852,<sup>144</sup> again prompted by the mass migration of Chinese miners to the Californian goldfields. When the ban on Cantonese Opera was imposed, the lure of financial rewards and most likely, the opportunity to practice their craft without persecution, performers moved overseas in even greater numbers, both to North America and to the Victorian Goldfields.

### **Aboriginal Corroborees**

The greatest display of 'savage' exotica from a settler perspective was provided by the Aboriginal Corroborees. Failing to understand the cultural significance of the ritual, Sherer claimed that:

It is one of the most extraordinary exhibitions of savage hilarity of which the human mind can form any conception. All that was ever put on stage whether in German Opera or British pantomime sinks before it into utter significance<sup>145</sup>

While recording a history of 'tourist corroborees' in Victoria, Cahir and Clarke argue that the gold era gave many Aborigines opportunities to perform in exchange for food and other goods, and to increase the frequency of corroborees performed purely for pleasure.<sup>146</sup> Performances generally took place in the bush but, as they became more frequent, the performers became more sophisticated, with some choosing to perform in the theatrical venues of the goldfields and Melbourne, very often assisted by non-Indigenous promoters:

A most novel scene I witnessed at the Royal theatre on Thursday evening. The Ararat tribe of Aborigines [Djabwurrung] has been here for some days, and most pleasing it is to see them so far advanced in civilization....An offer was made to them to appear and dance at the Royal which offer was accepted with avidity. Upon the curtain being raised the dance commenced: and the strict time kept, together with their various steps, completely astonished the audience.<sup>147</sup>

---

<sup>144</sup> Daphne Lei, "The Production and Consumption of Chinese Theatre in Nineteenth-Century California," *Theatre Research International*, vol. 28, no. 3, (2003): 289-302.

<sup>145</sup> John Sherer, *The Gold-Finder of Australia* (London: Clarke Beeton, 1853), 131.

<sup>146</sup> David A. Cahir and Ian D. Clark, "'An edifying spectacle': A history of 'tourist corroborees' in Victoria, Australia. 1835-1870," *Tourism Management* 31 (2010): 412-420.

<sup>147</sup> *Ballarat Star*, 21 May 1860, 4.

Cahir, notes the popularity of these performances with non-Indigenous audiences and how a Western-style business acumen soon developed in the performers, with monetary considerations an underlying feature. <sup>148</sup>

There is considerable discussion and a range of opinions on the meaning and value of these nineteenth century public corroborees, both to the Indigenous performers and to the non-indigenous spectators. <sup>149</sup> For example Parsons argues that the corroborees evolved as a joint invention between performers and audience, that they articulated an Indigenous sense of place, and reinforced the sense of displacement that the new settlers felt in this strange environment. <sup>150</sup> Elsewhere Casey suggests that these events served multiple functions for the Indigenous performers, including an opportunity to communicate and educate about Indigenous cultures and to earn money or goods whilst engaging with the settler economy. <sup>151</sup>

For the Aboriginal performers and the goldfields audiences this was a time of uncertainty and change, with both groups experiencing conflicting emotions and desires. The Indigenous people had been dispossessed and faced an uncertain future, and the new settlers had moved into an alien landscape with none of the comforting characteristics of home. It is possible to argue that, for both groups, the performing arts and theatre in the form of the corroborees were spaces into which emotions could be projected and experienced in a non- threatening manner.

---

<sup>148</sup> David 'Fred' Cahir, "Black Gold: A History of the Role of Aboriginal People on the Goldfields of Victoria, 1850-70" 187-205.

<sup>149</sup> For examples see Michael Parsons, "'Ah that I could convey a proper idea of this interesting wild play of the natives': corroborees and the rise of Indigenous Australian cultural tourism," *Australian Aboriginal Studies* 2, (2002): 14-26. Maryrose Casey, "Colonists, Settlers and Aboriginal Australian War Cries: Cultural performance and economic exchange," *Performance Research: A Journal of the Performing Arts* 18:2, (2013): 56-66. Maryrose Casey, "Theatre or corroboree, what's in name? Framing Indigenous Australian 19<sup>th</sup> century commercial performance practices," in *Creating White Australia*, eds. Jane Carey and Claire McLisky (Sydney: Sydney University Press, 2009), 123-139.

<sup>150</sup> Michael Parsons 'Ah that I could convey a proper idea of this interesting wild play of the natives' 17.

<sup>151</sup> Maryrose Casey, "Theatre or corroboree, what's in name?" 125.



Haebich,<sup>152</sup> when describing early colonists watching welcome performances by the Nyungar people of Western Australia, suggests that they:

Might see a demonstration of power and control over a vanquished people dancing for their conquerors, or a primitive spectacle flattering their sense of mastery as civilised people<sup>153</sup>

Whereas the Aboriginal performers:

Might have been dancing their own ceremonies of welcome and sovereignty while they celebrated their accomplishments as performers and enjoyed the sensations of dancing freely<sup>154</sup>

What Haebich does remind us, is that, on the corroboree ground, as in all theatrical spaces, the dancers and musicians were in control.

### **The Travelling Circus**

The *raison d'être* of circus was not to address the great questions of the age or even to enrich the intellect or soul with profound wisdom or instruction, although it rose, as if by chance to these heights on occasion. Instead its purpose was to present elements of surprise, danger, and humour that touched the basic human senses. These stimuli temporarily attached some colour and dimension to the lives of people, relieving them, if briefly, of their isolation and boredom.<sup>155</sup>

Circus came to Australia in 1842 with the arrival of Luigi Dalle Case in Sydney. Soon after, purpose-built amphitheatres that could cater for 'Equestrian, Gymnastic and Theatrical entertainments'<sup>156</sup> were built in Sydney, (1842, 1850), Brisbane, (1847) Tasmania, (1847-1850) and Melbourne, (1854-1857). These theatres were built with the traditional discriminatory seating arrangements to cater for the respectable patrons and the lower orders. Perhaps not discriminatory enough, as St Leon highlights, since the arbiters of moral values were quick to point out any perceived lapses in taste amongst the audience or performers.<sup>157</sup> In contrast, the police licensing authorities in Hobart supported the building of an amphitheatre in

---

<sup>152</sup> Anna Haebich, *Dancing in Shadows: Histories of Nyungar Performance* (Perth: UWA Publishing, 2018).

<sup>153</sup> Anna Haebich, *Dancing in Shadows*, 99.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid*, 99.

<sup>155</sup> Mark Valentine St Leon, "Circus & Nation: a critical inquiry into circus in its Australian Setting, 1847-2006, from the perspective of society, enterprise and culture." (PhD. Thesis, University of Sydney, 2006), 316.

<sup>156</sup> Mark Valentine St Leon "Circus and Nation." 6.

<sup>157</sup> Mark Valentine St Leon, "Circus and nation." 8.

the city, despite opposition, on the grounds that it “would tend to diminish crime and facilitate the operations of the Police”<sup>158</sup>

As new theatres were built in the capital cities and entertainment options became more diverse, circus entrepreneurs, who had invested capital and brought performers from Europe and North America to Australia, looked towards the goldfields for new audiences.

[They were] enticed for want of an audience onto the goldfields and then to the emerging townships of the interior. Australia’s earlier itinerant circus proprietors worked out – by trial and error – the practicalities of presenting circus entertainment on a new frontier, to negotiate new terrain, climatic conditions and the emerging rhythms and patterns of Australian life.<sup>159</sup>

One of the earliest circuses to move into the goldfields was Burtons, which was performing in Maitland in New South Wales to crowded houses when news came that gold had been discovered at Ophir. The audience disappeared and, rather than play to an empty tent, Burton dismantled the circus and followed the rush. At Mudgee he heard that gold had been found on the Turon River, so, after a change in direction, the circus gave its first performance on the goldfields, on the Turon.

There they found a party of happy, successful diggers, brimming with excitement over newfound gold, and prepared to have a night’s entertainment at any cost. The sun was going down as the tired, hungry and travel-worn company reached the camp, and a show that night seemed an impossibility: but while a contingent of the miners was told to get ready a hurried feast – the best the diggings could provide – a number of the sturdiest young fellows set to work to make a rude enclosure of logs and mark out a ring. There was no time to set up a tent. Therefore with no illumination except the light from the fires inside the enclosure, which served the double purpose of keeping the spectators warm and enabling them to see the show, under a roof of stars, the appreciative audience lustily applauded alike acrobats, trick ponies, clowns and columbine with hearty good humour. It was a ‘smoke’ concert with no charge for admission and no doorkeeper but where gold was to be had for the digging no one grudged to pay liberally. The diggers “ran the show” and Henry Burton says, “We had no reason to complain of deadheads, for each vied with each other in planking down his money.”<sup>160</sup>

After Burton, travelling shows of all genres, multiplied, and established routes and routines across the goldfields and rural Australia. Travelling was difficult, especially

---

<sup>158</sup> E. Daniel Potts and Annette Potts, *Young America and Australian Gold*: 149.

<sup>159</sup> Mark St Leon, *Circus: the Australian Story* (Melbourne: Melbourne Books, 2011), 48.

<sup>160</sup> Mary Salmon, “An Old-Time Circus,” *Australian Town and Country Journal*, 3, (1904):34.

for circuses which had to transport their tents, a variety of animals, performers and musicians, on rough roads and across muddy creeks. However, since the rewards were great, the showmen used their ingenuity to make sure they could get to the regional towns and perform before the eagerly awaiting audiences.<sup>161</sup> Troupes, such as Burton's, established regular routes, with visits to communities often being annual events. Routines were well planned, with the roadsters going ahead to prepare the camp sites, put up the posters and give advanced publicity. The circus would announce its arrival with much fanfare and a parade down the main street accompanied by the loud circus band. A large tent was erected, the ring prepared and seats installed with no discretionary seating; in the goldfields all were equal:<sup>162</sup> "So popular was Burton's Circus on the diggings of Ballarat in June 1854 that the diggers preferred to patronise the 'ably conducted' circus on a long winter's night rather than 'besotting themselves in some sly grog shop'".<sup>163</sup>

Circus, by its form and content is largely apolitical and not intellectually demanding, which is partially why it was such an attraction for miners. However, being popular became a drawback in November 1854 in Ballarat. The Jones circus was in town as the diggers became increasingly agitated about gold mining licenses. A meeting of miners held in the large circus tent evolved into a massive meeting of seven thousand diggers on nearby Bakery Hill. The circus tent was commandeered for the storage of arms and, as the diggers built a stockade, the German Circus band was forced to play to keep up the spirits of the men. The following day, the historic battle of the Eureka Stockade was fought.

Over the decades, the circus has been adapted and transformed to meet the tastes and expectations of contemporary audiences. Circuses however still travel across continents and countries,<sup>164</sup> using the latest forms of transport. They too are part of the global circuit that had its origins in the Pacific circuit of the 1850s.

---

<sup>161</sup> See Mark St. Leon, "Circus and Nation," 65-72.

<sup>162</sup> Mark St. Leon, "Circus and Nation," 9 describes how Rowes North American Circus catered for miners and respectable families alike and from *New York Clipper*, 31st May 1873, "money, the great leveller, had overturned every barrier to social distinction".

<sup>163</sup> Mark St. Leon, *Circus Australian Story*, 61.

<sup>164</sup> Examples are the large intercontinental circuses such as the Great Moscow Circus, (Russia), and Cirque du Soleil (Canada) and the small family run troupes such as Ashton's and Royale.

## An Australian Repertoire

Most of the plays performed on the stages of Ballarat and Melbourne in the 1850s and 1860s were similar to those produced before the gold rush and were generally taken from the English repertoire. Shakespeare was very popular, as were the English classics. Indeed, Clarence Holt, and Charles and Ellen Kean thought that performances of Shakespeare were particularly popular with miners and their wives and that their responses were remarkably intelligent.<sup>165</sup> It must be noted however, that the Shakespearean plays were shortened to allow for an afterpiece, usually a comedy, and the style of delivery was declamatory, so the rhetoric became more

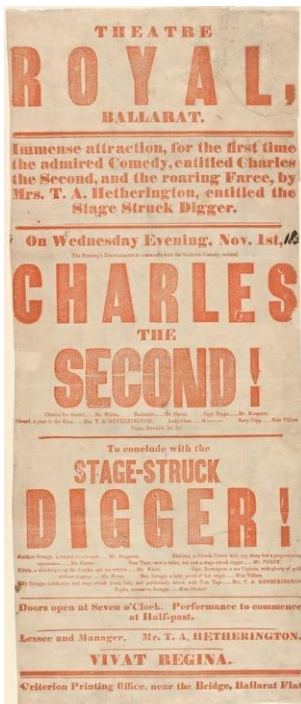


Fig. 20. *Theatre Royal Playbill, City of Ballarat*

important than the literary qualities.

The discovery of gold, however, introduced a new focus of colonial life that could be presented on the stage. As Williams states, “For the first time the Australian theatre had found a highly theatrical (and morally acceptable) subject on its own doorstep.”<sup>166</sup> The demand for entertainment, the building of new theatres, and a new Australian topic, encouraged residents, many of whom had come searching for gold, to take up a pen and write about Australian life. Plays about gold and diggers abounded.

In this section a range of these gold rush plays will be explored. Some were written by local authors and others by English writers, but all were motivated by this new

topical event.

Ballarat produced its own playwright, Mrs T. A. Hetherington, the wife of the Ballarat Theatre Royal manager who, in November 1854, wrote and staged *The Stage-Struck Digger* at the Theatre Royal.

<sup>165</sup> Richard Waterhouse, “Travelling shows in rural Australia,” *Australian Drama Studies* 35, (October 1999): 20.

<sup>166</sup> Margaret Williams, *Australia on the Popular Stage, 1829-1929: an historical entertainment in six acts* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1983), 49-50.

[it] included amongst its characters a Ballarat storekeeper, a French count 'with anything but prepossessing appearance', Tom Tape, the stage-struck digger himself, an old sea captain named Captain Dorrington, 'with plenty of gold, without digging', and Sally Scraggs, 'a romantic and stage struck young lady'.<sup>167</sup>

All the characters were from the stock repertoire of comedy but were given a local and contemporary colonial flavour.<sup>168</sup>

The Coppin playbills<sup>169</sup> give examples of similar plays and pantomimes where traditional templates were used, but with the insertion of topical themes and characters from the gold rush towns and surrounds.

Written by an unknown local author, the musical *The Gold Digger's Spell; or Avarice, Intemperance and Ruin*, performed in Geelong in 1852, is a typical example of a local production. It tells the tale of a woodcutter who, finding his fortune on the goldfields, gives in to drink and finally loses his life, leaving behind a widow and orphan children. This production, despite advertising itself as new and original, follows the familiar pattern of a Victorian temperance melodrama but with colonial characters and an Australian setting.<sup>170</sup>

When considering plays written in Australia about the gold rush in the middle of the nineteenth century, it is pertinent to remember that, although mainly written as farce, they were still a reflection of the political and social environment in which they were produced and received. Therefore, the elements of ambivalence and uncertainty about the consequences of sudden wealth and the destabilising effect it had on the population and the country, as portrayed in the performances, come from the social and political attitudes of the time. For example, the play *Port Curtis Mad*, written by James Neild, and performed at the Melbourne Theatre Royal on 18<sup>th</sup> October 1858 describes the dire consequences that can result from the news of new gold strike. It tells the story of a merchant from Melbourne who is nearly driven mad by the consequences of the gold discovery at Port Curtis, as the

---

<sup>167</sup> Margaret Williams, *Australia on the Popular Stage, 1829-1929*, 51-52.

<sup>168</sup> Margaret Williams, *Australia on the Popular Stage*, 52.

<sup>169</sup> Playbills for performances by George Selth Coppin, 1843 March 25-1881 December 9. State Library Victoria.

<sup>170</sup> Australian Variety Theatre Archive. <http://ozvta.com/1850s/1852>. Accessed March 2018.

Melbourne workers leave their employment to follow the rush, only to find it was a false promise.<sup>171</sup>

Pantomimes were also quick to respond to the discovery of gold. Local scenes had been included in earlier productions such as *Harlequin in Australia Felix; or Geelong in an Uproar* performed at the Albert Theatre in Geelong in 1845,<sup>172</sup> but the pantomime *Squatters and Gold Diggers: or which is my Choice*, produced in 1852, contained all the reassuringly familiar elements the audience expected but also introduced local characters such as Mr Barlamb Sheepface (a squatter) and Nuggity Spar (a gold digger).<sup>173</sup>

The new topic and the increased demand for entertainment gave added impetus to local authors such as William Akhurst<sup>174</sup> who wrote a new pantomime every year for Melbourne audiences. Akhurst's first pantomime *Harlequin, or the Fairy Queen of Diamonds, and the Lords of the Mineral Kingdom*, telling the story of copper as it was supplanted by gold, opened to great acclaim at the Olympic Theatre on 26<sup>th</sup> December 1855.<sup>175</sup> It was the first of many productions written by Akhurst that include gold and the wealth it brought to Victoria as a subject.

The perceived evils associated with mining are best portrayed as the character Orognome in what is probably Akhurst's most famous pantomime, *The House that Jack Built; Or, Harlequin Progress and the Loves, Laughs, Laments and Labours of Jack Melbourne, and Little Victoria: A Fairy Extravaganza Opening to Pantomime*.

As Richard Fotheringham noted:

Since before 1820 the "House that Jack Built" story has been used for political commentary. Akhurst follows this tradition in making his hero Jack Melbourne and little Victoria represent the hopes and fears for the future of that colony, and his villain Orognome some of the current vices, particularly

---

<sup>171</sup> Margaret Williams, *Australia on the Popular Stage 1829-1929*. 54.

<sup>172</sup> Margaret Williams, *Australia on the Popular Stage 1829-1929*. 58.

<sup>173</sup> Australian Variety Theatre Archive. <http://ozvta.com/1850s/1853>. Accessed March 2018.

<sup>174</sup> William Mower Akhurst (1822-1878) Dramatist. Born in London, Akhurst arrived in Australia in 1849 and worked initially at the Melbourne Argus as a sub-editor and musical critic. He wrote at least 40 stage pieces in Melbourne before returning to England in 1870. *Concise Companion to the Theatre in Australia*, eds. Philip Parsons and Victoria Chance. (Sydney: Currency Press, 1997) 17.

<sup>175</sup> *Argus*, 27 December 1855.

unscrupulous, and fraudulent manipulation of mining stocks and share trading “Under the Verandah.”

176

In the melodramatic plot, the hero Jack is drugged by the villain, the Gold Sovereign, and left to die on the underground tracks over which the gold ore trucks pass. He escapes, with the aid of Victoria and a marsupial attendant only to be duped again by Orognome (disguised as an ‘under the Verandah man’)<sup>177</sup> who sells him bogus land and mining stocks. Needless to say, as in all good melodramas, it all ends happily. However, it is possible to argue that the pantomime was intended not only to expose the corruption of stockbrokers but also to point to the hero for being a fool enchanted by the siren call of gold.

This same scepticism about stockbroking can be seen in a pantomime staged at Melbourne Theatre Royal on Boxing Night 1870: *Goody Two Shoes, and Little Boy Blue; or, Sing a Song of Sixpence! Harlequin Heydiddle-Diddle – ‘Em, and the Kingdom of Coins!* Written by Marcus Clarke it reflects on the suspicion about corruption in the Bendigo and Ballarat stock exchanges.<sup>178</sup>

I have lots of property in Ballarat,  
In Castlemaine I own near half the town.  
For shares go higher up, as mines go deeper down,  
My principle’s my interest.

Interestingly though, Williams,<sup>179</sup> notes in this production, gold is portrayed as the hero rather than the villain to the extent of sustaining Empire.

Gold rules the bench, the camp the grove, the state,  
Gold rules the Railway Lines, and keeps them straight;

Gold rules all the classes, nobles, peasants, slaves,  
Gold helps Britannia, too, to rule the waves.<sup>180</sup>

---

<sup>176</sup> Richard Fotheringham, eds. *Australian Plays for the Colonial Stage 1834-1899* (St. Lucia, Queensland: University of Queensland Press, 2006), 220-221.

<sup>177</sup> The term ‘Under the Verandah man’, is taken from the veranda on the corner in Stuart Street, Ballarat, where a good deal of financial and social dealings were carried out.

<sup>178</sup> Marcus Andrew Clarke (1846-1881), journalist, novelist and playwright, was born in London, arrived in Australia in 1863. He wrote songs, sketches, dramas, and pantomimes for the Melbourne stage, all commenting on the politics of the day. His most famous and best remembered work is the novel, *For the Term of His Natural Life*, which was the basis for many stage adaptations. Australian Dictionary of Biography, by Brian Elliott, <http://adb.anu.edu/biography/clarke-marcus-andrew-3225>. Accessed 07/18/2018.

<sup>179</sup> Margaret Williams, *Australia on the Popular Stage 1829-19*, 68.

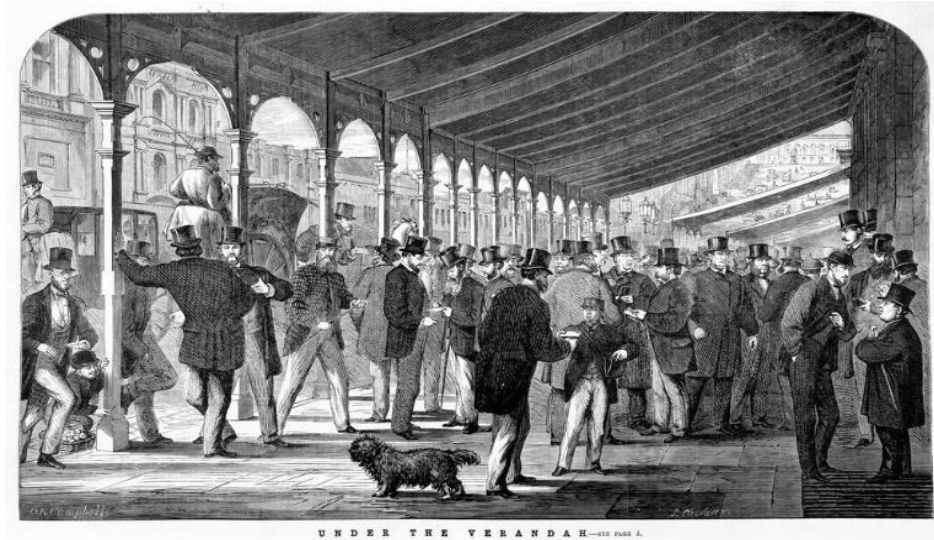


Fig. 21. UNDER THE VERANDAH, Samuel Calvert (engraver), Oswald Rose Campbell (artist), Wood engraving published in *The Illustrated Australian News*. Published Melbourne by Ebenezer and David Syme, 8 September 1868. Depicts the verandah on “the corner” in Sturt Street Ballarat where a good deal of financial and social dealings were carried out.

Aware of the changing perception of the colonies of Australia, from a dumping ground for Britain’s undesirables to a source of wealth for the centre of Empire, English authors were quick to pick up on the latest topic and began writing plays about the Australian goldfields and the diggers. Marty Gould in his study of nineteenth century theatre<sup>181</sup> proposes that, as well as providing popular topical entertainment, the plays provided information to potential emigrants, more importantly they also ‘redefined Britishness by re-enacting Britain’s relationship with its Imperial hinterland’.

In the farce, *Wanted, one thousand spirited young milliners, for the gold diggings!* by J. Stirling Coyne,<sup>182</sup> performed at the Royal Olympic Theatre, London in 1852, and staged in Sydney almost immediately afterwards, information about the lack of females on the diggings is used to great advantage by two likely lads who advertise for young women willing to emigrate, in order to meet respectable ladies. Needless

<sup>180</sup> Arguably the discoveries of gold in Australia and North American colonies and then in South Africa bolstered British financial dominance under a gold standard regime.

<sup>181</sup> Marty Gould, *Nineteenth Century Theatre and the Imperial Encounter* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 140.

<sup>182</sup> J. Stirling Coyne, *Wanted, 1,000 Spirited Young Milliners for the Gold Diggings!* (London: Lacy, 1852).



to say, the ruse is discovered but the audience are never told whether the young people do finally immigrate to Australia.

A selection of gold rush plays such as *Off to the Diggings*, by J. Courtney, *In for a Dig: or Life at the Diggings* by Hugo Vamp, and *The Goldfields of Australia; or, Off to the Diggings*, by an unknown author,<sup>183</sup> were produced in a variety of venues around London in the early 1850s. A review published in the *Theatrical Journal*<sup>184</sup> of Mrs Alfred Phillips', *Life in Australia from Our Own Correspondent*,<sup>185</sup> at the Olympic Theatre in 1853, praised the scenic effects and commented:

Managers always on the alert to turn a popular subject into a dramatic form, have, therefore seized upon Australia, and have brought visibly before the public all the singular scenes and incidents that a gold-seeking emigrant is supposed to encounter in the diggings.<sup>186</sup>

Noting the different theatres, in which these plays were produced, Gould suggests that the patrons would range from the respectable middle class to the working classes, implying that there was interest in obtaining information about the Australian gold rushes from all sections of society.<sup>187</sup>

Charles Reade,<sup>188</sup> the English author, wrote two plays that included scenes from the gold rush in Australia. *Gold*, first performed in Drury Lane in January 1853, had mixed reviews but was praised for its panoramic scenes of the diggings.

But, at the same time we must also express our belief that *Gold*, as it is called, will draw numerous audiences. The scenes of the 'diggings' in Australia with all the mechanisms of 'cradles', the chymistry (sic) of testing, and instances of rude administration of justice in a lawless state of society, furnishes a living picture of a region which now engrosses the attention of every class of the community, and

---

<sup>183</sup> J. Courtney, *Off to the Diggings*. (1852) Lord Chamberlain's Plays manuscript ( LCP ms). 529358-H (October), British Library, London. Hugo Vamp, *In for a Dig: or Life at the Diggings*. (1853) LCP ms.52939-N (April), British Library, London. *The Goldfields of Australia; or Off to the Diggings* (1853) LCP ms.52937-G (January). British Library, London.

<sup>184</sup> "Metropolitan Theatres," *Theatrical Journal; London* Vol. 14, Iss. 696 (Apr.1853): 114-116.

<sup>185</sup> Mrs Alfred Phillips (1853) *Life in Australia from our own correspondent*. LCP ms. 52938-B (February) British Library. London.

<sup>186</sup> "Metropolitan Theatres," *Theatrical Journal; London* Vol. 14, Issue. 696 (Apr.1853): 114.

<sup>187</sup> Marty Gould, *Nineteenth Century Theatre and the Imperial Encounter* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 140.

<sup>188</sup> Charles Reade, (1814 – 1884). A fellow of Magdalen College, he alternated this commitment with a literary, bohemian life in London. Author of many novels, the most famous being *The Cloister and the Heath* (1861) and plays such as *Hard Cash* (1863) and *It is Never Too Late* (1856). A contentious figure in his lifetime, he is now the subject of many academic studies as interest in Victorian popular culture increases. Beth Palmer, Charles Reade. Oxford Biographies, DOI: 10.1093/OBO/9780199799558-0046.

those who care little for the piece may go to see this particular scene, as they would go to one of the numerous dioramas of the day.<sup>189</sup>

*Never too late to mend*, an adaptation of *Gold* and the novel of the same name, was first presented in Leeds in 1865. This play proved to be very popular in England and Australia and was included in most theatrical repertoires until the end of the Victorian era.



Fig. 22. Theatre Royal, *IT IS NEVER TOO LATE TO MEND* by Charles Reade, Proprietors and Managers Messrs Mercer and Wainwright. Printed by C. I. Culliford & Sons, Lithographer, 2A Field Court, Crays Inn, London, C1865. National Library of Scotland, ID Weir.3(3).

<sup>189</sup> *The Times*, 11 January 1853.

The plot centres on the hero, George Fielding, who, unable to find sufficient work in England to marry the woman he loves, goes to Australia to make his fortune. There are numerous sub plots, including one that tells the story of the friend who is transported to Australia as a convict but finds salvation in the frontier colony. Another focuses on the conditions in English prisons and a tortured young convict who takes his own life, and yet another includes an Aboriginal character who gives the hero an enormous gold nugget enabling him to return to England and claim his bride.

It is interesting to note the number of writers and academics, who have used this play as a topic for research and comment.<sup>190</sup> Yet, in an abstract analysis, it is still the story of a poor person who by going to the diggings makes his fortune and returns home a wealthy man. Although we can never know the reaction of the audience to this play, apart from the critics' privileged comments in newspapers, it is reasonable to assume that by watching this play most audiences would be encouraged to immigrate to Australia to discover gold and, thereby to advance financially and socially.

Gould comments on a similar play<sup>191</sup> *The Golden Nuggett: or, the Fatal Treasure*,<sup>192</sup> presented in 1853, in which the hero, a wealthy man who lost his fortune on the death of his uncle, goes to Australia where his geological knowledge proves invaluable to himself and the other miners. After many adventures, the hero returns to England where his wealth is restored, and to what is seen as his proper social and economic position. His financial wealth does not come from Australia, that was already present in England. For this hero the benefit comes from his development of a generosity of spirit which he exhibited by helping the other miners.

---

<sup>190</sup> For example, Ian Henderson, "Jacky-Kalingaloonga: Aboriginality, Audience Reception and Charles Reade's *It is Never Too Late to Mend* (1865)," *Theatre Research International* Vol 29, no 2, (2004): 95-110. Sheila M. Smith, "Propaganda and hard facts in Charles Reade's didactic novels: A study of *it is never too late to mend* and *Hard Cash*," *Culture, Theory and Critique*, 4:1, 135-149, DOI: 10.1080/14735786009391435. Jean Margaret Elliott, "A comparative study of the dramatic and narrative versions of Charles Reade's 'It is never too late to mend' " (PhD thesis, University of London, Holloway College 1984), ProQuest Dissertations Publishing (1984) 10097592.

<sup>191</sup> Marty Gould, *Nineteenth Century Theatre*, 142.

<sup>192</sup> Unknown author, *The Golden Nuggett: or, the Fatal Treasure*, (1853) LCP ms. 52943-J (November) British Library. London.

Reading through the plays written about the gold rush and produced on the stage in England in the 1850's and 60's, Australia is, almost without exception, presented as a rough and ready place, full of bushrangers, corrupt officials, and physical dangers, yet at the same time the plays encourage poor workers who want to make their fortune, or any person who is seeking adventure, to immigrate, and be certain to be rewarded.<sup>193</sup>

### **The supporting cast**

As the performing arts on the goldfields and surrounding districts progressed from simple camp-fire songs to performances of drama, comedy, and opera in theatres, and as touring companies and circuses both with logistic needs multiplied, so the numbers of the supporting cast required grew in proportion. What was required, as well as the performers, were competent musicians, stage designers, carpenters, painters, costume designers and dressmakers, wig makers, managers, sign writers and, for touring something as complex as a circus, a whole team of road hands.

Amongst the cosmopolitan migrants who came to Victoria in the 1850s were many who brought with them skills that could be used in the evolving Australian performing arts industry. A common tale is that of the aspiring gold seeker- who, failing to make a fortune prospecting for gold, falls back on their previous accomplishments or occupations to make a living. There were also those who came knowing that, with the increased population, and a rise in discretionary income there would be a demand for entertainment and theatrical tradespeople.

One such person was John Hennings, a scenic painter, who arrived in Melbourne from Germany in July 1855. He dominated stage design in Melbourne for thirty years with his settings admired for their poetic imagination and architectural accuracy.<sup>194</sup> Another was Philip William Goatcher, who jumped ship in Melbourne in 1867 when he was only fifteen to pan for gold. Having little success, he turned to scene painting and, after various sojourns in America and London, he established a reputation as the premier drop curtain painter on both sides of the Atlantic.

---

<sup>193</sup> The plays too are mostly morality tales centring on evil, redemption, the possibility of fortune and the virtues of hard work and privation.

<sup>194</sup> John Henning, (1835-1896), see Australian Dictionary of Biography, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/hennings-john-12976>.

Goacher returned to Australia in 1890 under contract for 1,000 guineas a year. He painted for many theatre and opera productions including for the *Silver King*<sup>195</sup> which was the opening production for Perth's Theatre Royal in 1897. The need for a drier climate due to ill health saw him move to Western Australia in 1906 where he established a painting and decorating business. One of the most outstanding examples of his work was a scenic curtain painted for the town hall in the gold rush town of Boulder in Western Australia in 1906. Goacher died a millionaire in Perth in 1931.<sup>196</sup>

In the previous section, the range of plays and pantomimes inspired by the gold discoveries were explored, but there were other genres of the performing arts that benefited directly from the gold rush, one of note being the musical economy. In his research into early colonial Australian musical composition, Graeme Skinner sees the real "age of gold" in Australian music as the 1860s, centred in the newly rich metropolis of Melbourne.<sup>197</sup> Melbourne based composers such as Joseph Wilkie,<sup>198</sup> Thomas Reed,<sup>199</sup> Henry Hemy,<sup>200</sup> and George M. Weinritter,<sup>201</sup> who, together with Walter Bonnick,<sup>202</sup> wrote some of the earliest music for students were notable, as well as one of the earliest women composers, Harriett Fiddes,<sup>203</sup>

---

<sup>195</sup> *The Silver King: a drama in five acts*, was written by Henry Arthur Jones and Henry Herman (New York: Samuel French, 1907). An 1881 drama, it played all over the Continent, America, South Africa and Australia. Adapted into a silent film in 1929.

<sup>196</sup> Philip William Goacher, (1852- 1931), see <http://www.goacher.org/notables/phil>

<sup>197</sup> Graeme Skinner, "Towards a General History of Australian Musical Composition: First National Music 1788-1860" (PhD thesis, Sydney Conservatorium of Music, University of Sydney, 2011), 15.

<sup>198</sup> Joseph Wilkie (England?-1875) Australia 1850-1872, composer and music retailer. Composed *The Separation Polka*, first performed at the "Separation Ball" when Victoria split from New South Wales in 1851. *The Argus*, 9 January 1851, 1.

<sup>199</sup> Thomas Reed (England 1795-1871) Australia 1850-1871, composer and music retailer. In 1851 he organised a concert series at the Melbourne Mechanics Institute featuring Melbourne's prima donna, the singer Mrs Testar, and the young pianist composer, Henry F. Hemy. "THE MECHANICS INSTITUTION", *The Argus*, 12 June 1851, 3.

<sup>200</sup> Henry Hemy (UK 1881-1888) Australia 1851, composer and musician produced one local work, *The Victoria Quadrilles*, dedicated to his Excellency Sir Charles Joseph La Trobe, "THE MECHANICS INSTITUTION MUSIC CLASSES", *The Argus*, 12 June 1851, 2.

<sup>201</sup> George M. Weinritter, polish immigrant, Australia 1856-1884, composer and music teacher composed *Kangaroo Hunt Polka*, (1857), *Argus* 21 February 1857, 8. The Pic-Nic Point Schottische and The Yarra-Yarra Waltzes, "NEW MUSIC", *The Argus* 1<sup>st</sup> May 1857, 5.

<sup>202</sup> Walter Bonwick (England 1824-1883) Australia 1855-1883, composer and musician wrote "MR WALTER BONWICK'S EASY AND PROGRESSIVE SONGS", *The Argus* 11 July 1857, 5.

<sup>203</sup> Harriett Fiddes Australia 1853-1856, opera singer and composer toured with Lola Montez in Australia in 1855. Composed *Australian Schottische*, played at Coppin's Olympic Theatre in 1956, *The Argus* 22 April 1856, 7. *The Souvenir*, "NEW MUSIC", *The Argus* 25 November 1856, 5.

who composed the Australian Schottische. Skinner also pointed to the goldfields' composers, Thatcher and Coxon, who composed their own ballads, and the Ballarat composer, Alfred Oakley,<sup>204</sup> who wrote the music for *Song for the Bush*, which was performed at the Star Concert Hall in August 1856.

Musicians of all descriptions not only performed in concerts but also as an accompaniment to other art forms. John Whiteoak describes in detail the role that the 'German Bands', who appeared in the gold-rush era, played as street bands

and supporters of other performing arts forms, noting they were very much in demand, in dance venues, in circuses, at private functions and for other theatrical events.<sup>205</sup> In the circus, the bands played the dual role of attracting the crowd by marching down the street before the main event, and by accompanying the acts that followed. As an appendix to her thesis, Doggett gives a very comprehensive list of the bands, musicians, orchestras and singers, both amateur and professional that performed in Ballarat in the gold rush years.<sup>206</sup>

Information about up-coming performances was circulated by a variety of means, including play bills and advertisements in the local press. A glance at the reviews in the newspapers of the day also told the story of the entertainment on

offer on any night of the week.

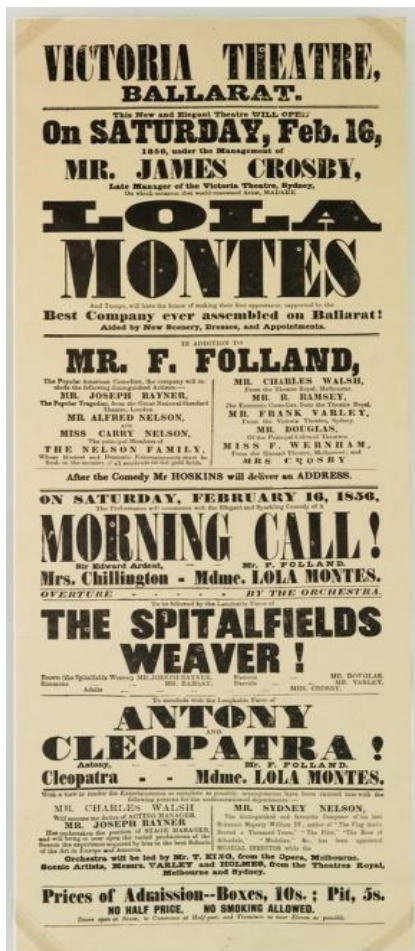


Fig. 23. Poster from Gold Museum, Ballarat

<sup>204</sup> Alfred Oakley, Australia 1853-1866 or later, musician and composer. He wrote the music for Mulholland's *Song of the Bush* sung at the Star Concert Hall in August 1856, Ballarat Star, 30 August 1856.

<sup>205</sup> John Whiteoak, "The development of Australian circus music," *Australasian Drama Studies* 35, (October 1999): 59-72. "What were the so-called 'German Bands' of pre-world war 1 Australian street life?" *Nineteenth Century Music Review*, (Cambridge University Press, 2017) 1-15.

Downloaded from <http://www.cambridge.org/core>, 16/2017.

<sup>206</sup> Anne Doggett, "And for harmony most ardently we long," Volume 2.

The relationship between theatre managers, promoters and the press was usually very cordial, both appreciating the advantages they gained from each other, the press, from the income derived from advertising and copy for the reporters, and theatre managers, from favourable rates and reviews. However, there were occasions when things did not always go to plan and reporters were quick to take umbrage if they felt they were not being treated with the respect they deserved.

The proprietors of the Montezuma Theatre seem to be even yet somewhat ignorant of the position which the press claims and has, by courtesy, given to it in all well-regulated theatrical establishments. While the Montezuma, or any other proprietors neglect to afford our reporters fitting opportunities of judging of the performances the only course left to us, and one which we will rigidly follow, is to forget that such houses exist as places of public amusements.<sup>207</sup>

This reporter then moved down the street where he received a welcome reception at the local Chinese theatre, where an audience of 2000 were being entertained by Chinese musicians. Despite the reception, the reporter however, was not generous in his praise.

The sound produced reminded us of certainly nothing terrestrial which we have ever heard before. The novelty of the entertainment drew a large company together, but the music was far too peculiar to be generally appreciated<sup>208</sup>.

Clever managers, such as Coppin, were able to use the press to their advantage by reporting in advance when eminent performers were expected from overseas, speaking of them in glowing terms and quoting the amount of moneys paid to induce them to perform in Australia.<sup>209</sup> Such amounts were only made possible by the prices that the audience members were prepared to pay for their seats. Lessor, recounting a concert given by Miss Catherine Hayes, a notable English soprano, at the Queens Theatre, Melbourne, in October 1854, records that a private box cost twelve guineas, a seat in the dress circle one guinea and in the gallery ten shillings. Within an hour of the tickets going on sale they were sold out.<sup>210</sup> The gold rush migrants were clearly prepared to pay for the best.

---

<sup>207</sup> *The Star*, (Ballarat) 4 November 1856, 2.

<sup>208</sup> *The Star*, (Ballarat) 4 November 1856, 2.

<sup>209</sup> The amount of \$10,000 for one hundred performances paid to the great tragedian Gustavus Vaughan Brooke.

<sup>210</sup> L.E. Lessor, "Show Business", 36.

A more extravagant style of advertising was introduced when the American entertainers arrived. The Rainer's Serenaders arrived in Melbourne in 1852 with several woodcuts, from which to produce large illustrated advertisements for newspapers, something that was unheard of at the time. Examples of their colourful playbills, held in the Victorian State Library, are indicative of the amount they were willing to spend to advertise. They also employed an agent, a Mr Totten.

During the two months he has been here, he has ever proved himself to be upright, prompt and energetic; and we have no doubt that his activity and business habits have tended in no small degree to render the company as popular as it has been here<sup>211</sup>

Claims that the company had performed before Queen Victoria and the President of the United States were somewhat sceptically accepted by the critics, who were generally from British stock. The Ballarat Star<sup>212</sup> reported on the "too lavish praises of everything presentable" that came from the American performers, a characteristic that was also noted by Hal Porter, "their advertisements were not one lying superlative less vulgar than now."<sup>213</sup> Regardless of the commentators, as the economy and the performing arts expanded during the gold rush, so did the methods of marketing.

### **An artistic legacy**

The gold-rush that commenced in the 1850's in Victoria transformed the performing arts throughout Australia. The demands of the miners for entertainment to balance the lack of amenities, the support of kin, and the harsh working conditions, coupled with an increase in discretionary income and a cosmopolitan population, precipitated the growth in an industry that provided employment, communal and personal wealth. Australia's mining regions became part of a Pacific circuit, and, in later years, a global circuit of travelling entertainers, whilst conjointly supporting the growth and competence in the skills needed to develop Australia's own performing arts industry.

---

<sup>211</sup> *Argus*, 4 February 1853.

<sup>212</sup> *Ballarat Star*, Thursday, 17 December 1857.

<sup>213</sup> Hal Porter, *Stars of Australian Stage and Screen* (Adelaide: Rigby Ltd, 1965), 39.



This conclusion is echoed by Wenzel as she highlights the slower development of opera, music and drama in the non- mining capital cities of Brisbane, Adelaide and Sydney and points to Melbourne as the centre where the greatest developments took place.<sup>214</sup> In so doing, she emphasises the importance of the gold rush, and the influx of a large varied population, stating it was:

Of great significance to the other Australian colonies, for the new pace of events pushed the country into a stage of development which might have otherwise taken many more decades to accomplish.<sup>215</sup>

### **PART 3: BUILDING A COMMUNITY**

The performing arts played a role in the emerging gold rush communities, as an essential element in the establishment of social and cultural institutions, and in the activities needed for permanent settlement. In outlining this role in the chapter on Ballarat, consideration is given to the change in the demographic composition from a predominance of single men to that of families as mining methods, and the capital structure of mining evolved, and on how this change influenced the civic and cultural landscapes. How cultures were transferred from the settlers' homeland to this new environment, and the use made of the performing arts for recreation are also examined.

#### **New ways of mining in a new town**

The change of mining methods in the new industry offered the miners an opportunity to settle down with a family, to construct a more diversified economy, and to build and shape a community, which, for the majority of the miners meant at least partially reproducing the European communities they had left behind.

The demographics of the goldfields changed considerably, "[n]ew female migration brought the reunification of family and friends, as well as adventurous single women attracted by their prospects in the famous colony".<sup>216</sup> Whole families, looking for new opportunities, took advantage of the changing conditions to

---

<sup>214</sup> Ann Wentzel, "The rapid development of music in Australia, 1851-1861," *Musicology Australia* 3, no. 1 (1968): 69-73.

<sup>215</sup> Ann Wentzel, "The rapid development of music in Australia, 1851-1861," 69.

<sup>216</sup> Bate, *Victorian Gold Rushes*, 29.

immigrate to the goldfields and with these families came a need for permanent housing and the services to support them.

In the 1850s, the majority of the miners and their families lived in East Ballarat, near the alluvial diggings, living initially in tents which were transformed into huts and then, as families grew and the workforce stabilised, into more permanent dwellings. The 'Miners Right' negotiated after the Eureka rebellion in 1854 did more than enact mining legislation, it also granted each holder of a mining licence a quarter acre of land on which to build a dwelling. Initially required to adjoin the claim, this legislation was changed in subsequent years to allow for the dwellings to be further afield, for improvements on the land to take place and for it to be sold.<sup>217</sup> In his study, Dingle notes, how, the availability of cheap land, the skills of the miners and the help of mates, enabled families to construct small cottages out of basic materials.<sup>218</sup> These homes were paid for out of wages, with some goldfields communities, such as Ballarat West, having a rate of owner occupancy of 73 per cent and Bendigo having an overall rate of 89 per cent in 1871. This rate was twice that of the capital cities.

Ballarat West, an area laid out on a grid system by government surveyors in 1851, was preferred by those in most professional occupations, including doctors and it was where the government offices were first established. Main Street in the East, on the road to Geelong, became the main commercial district, with all the amenities including restaurants, theatres and hotels.

The building of the physical infrastructure proceeded rapidly during the 1850s and 60s with Anthony Trollope, who visited Ballarat in 1871, finding a "town so well built, so well ordered, endowed with present advantages so great in the way of schools, hospitals, libraries, hotels, public gardens and the like."<sup>219</sup> Proceeding in tandem with the construction of buildings, came the evolution of the social and cultural infrastructure in which the performing arts played a part.

---

<sup>217</sup> See Charles Fahey, Heather Holst, Sara Martin, and Alan Mayne, "A miner's right: making homes and communities on the Victorian goldfields," in *Eureka: Reappraising an American Legend*, ed. Alan Mayne (Perth: Network Books, 2006), 201-220.

<sup>218</sup> Tony Dingle, "Miner's Cottages," *Australian Economic Review* 50, Iss. 2, (July 2010): 162-177.

<sup>219</sup> P.D. Edwards and R.B. Joyce eds., *Anthony Trollope, Australia* (Brisbane: University of Queensland Press, 1967), 392.

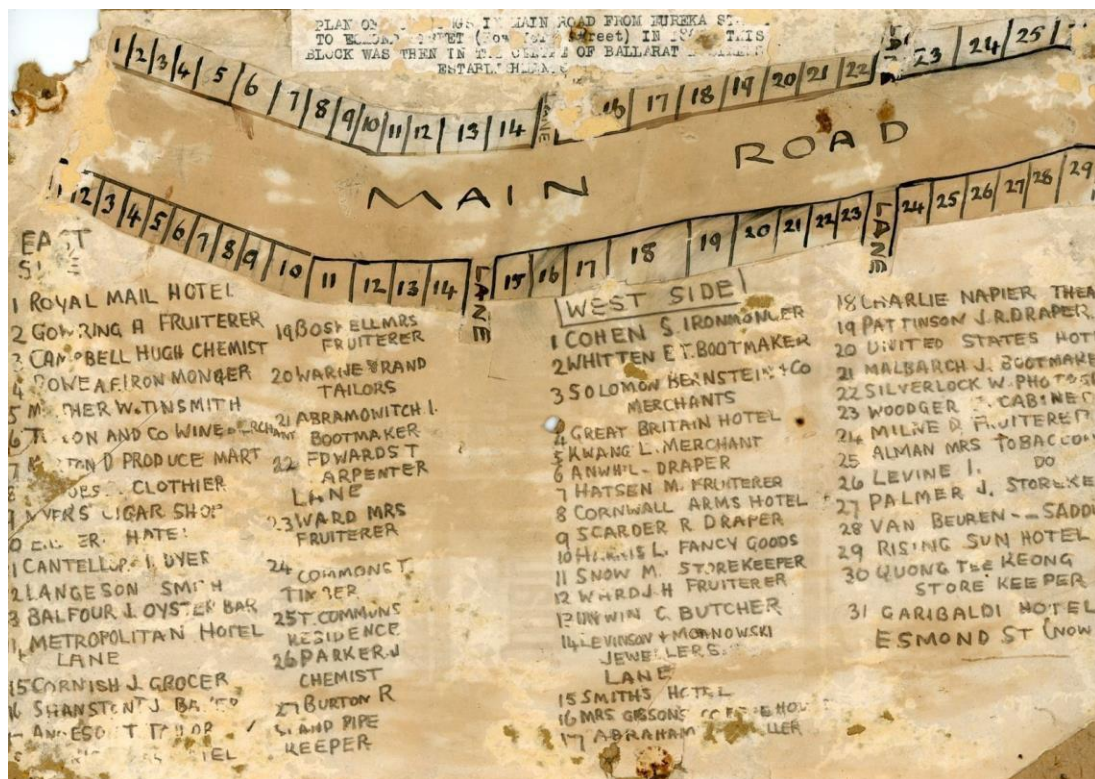


Fig. 24. Main Road. Map Sketch, Ballarat Historical Society Collection.

Dingle poses some interesting questions relating to the higher home ownership levels in mining towns, querying whether, as a consequence, the social gap between capital and labour was narrowed and whether there was greater worker involvement in community activities.<sup>220</sup> As demonstrated here, the involvement of the miners and their families in the performing arts that are characteristically used to build a community will provide a valuable source of such indicators.

### The transfer of cultures and institutions

The population of Ballarat in the 1850s was cosmopolitan, with the largest group originating from the British Isles. Of these the majority came from England, followed by Scotland, Ireland and Wales. The largest non-British group were the Chinese, with smaller groups of North Americans, Germans and other Europeans. The Indigenous population was not counted in the census; however, we do know they were present on the goldfields by the frequent references to them in the press

<sup>220</sup> Tony Dingle, "Miners' Cottages," 176.

and in government reports. Cahill also notes, how they were involved in a range of activities from gold mining to domestic duties.<sup>221</sup>

Eager to build a community in Ballarat similar to the ones that they had left behind in their homelands, the non- indigenous settlers moved quickly to establish familiar cultural and social institutions such as churches, schools, hospitals, sporting and performing arts groups, and, because the English comprised the majority of the population, to a large extent this was a transfer of their Victorian (in temporal terms) values and culture to a new environment. These institutions formed the basis of the evolving community, connecting and blending the divergent elements into a whole.

With the establishment of a more stable community it was important for the settlers, especially the middle class, to assert the values of respectability- in contrast to the rough chaos of the earlier years. To this end, the performing arts played an important role. The thoughts of Matthew Arnold that culture was needed to save society from anarchy<sup>222</sup> and those of Haweis, "Let no one say the moral effects of music are small or insignificant,"<sup>223</sup> were important to them in the pursuit of this aim, as can be clearly demonstrated in the attention given to church music and the inclusion of music instruction in schools.

Soon after gold was discovered, the religious institutions followed the miners into the fields, with services held in the open-air, in tents, in makeshift buildings and finally in brick and stone structures. The first mass given to a group of Irish Catholics by Father Patrick Dunne was recorded in October 1851.

On the Sunday after his arrival Father Dunne celebrated the first Mass that was offered up in what is now the episcopal city of Ballarat, and afterwards it became a familiar and a very edifying spectacle to see, every Sunday morning, hundreds of bearded diggers devoutly kneeling in the open air, whilst the Holy Sacrifice was being offered up in the tent.<sup>224</sup>

---

<sup>221</sup> David 'Fred' Cahill, "Black Gold: A history of the role of Aboriginal People on the Goldfields,"

<sup>222</sup> One of the ideas expressed by Matthew Arnold, (1822-1888) cultural critic and poet, was that the 'working classes' needed "rational amusements." Stefan Collini ed., *Culture Anarchy and other writings* (Cambridge: University Press, 1993).

<sup>223</sup> H.R. Haweis, *Music and Morals*, (London: Strahan & Co., 1871), 112.

<sup>224</sup> Cardinal Patrick Francis Moran, *The History of the Catholic Church in Australia* (Sydney: The Oceanic Publishing Company, 1895).

Other denominations very often linked to a particular national, or cultural grouping, quickly followed.



Fig. 25. 'St Alipius' Roman Catholic Church at Gravel Pit, Ballarat.' View from the back of the church showing the priest's tent. Eugene von Guerard *Katholisch Kapelle aus den Gravel Pit Lunis 3u Ballarat January 1854*. La Trobe picture collection. H12532.

In the ritual of church services on the goldfields music played a role; and, as Doggett notes most of the music was associated with words, in psalms, hymns and choirs.<sup>225</sup> The majority of tunes would be familiar, recalling memories of home and reinforcing their bonds to the other members of the congregation. There were Anglican hymns, Methodist hymns, Lutheran hymns from Germany, and Evangelical hymns. However, the source of the hymnals varied, some came from home but increasingly they were composed and published in Australia.<sup>226</sup> In her article on the Cornish miners,<sup>227</sup> Crogan describes the role of music in their Methodist services and shows how a tradition of Cornish-led church music was established in Ballarat

<sup>225</sup> Anne Doggett, "And for harmony most ardently we long, 84.

<sup>226</sup> Dianne Gome, "Hymnody in the Australasian colonies, 1788-1901: a preliminary investigation of sources and functions of hymns," *Australasian Music Research* vol. 1, (1996): 84.

<sup>227</sup> Jan Crogan, "Methodists and Miners," in *A World Turned Upside Down: Cultural Change on Australia's Goldfields 1851-2001*, ed. Kerry Cardell and Cliff Cumming (Canberra: The Australian National University, 2001), 61.

in the nineteenth century by John Woolcock and his brother Vivian Woolcock, a foundation member of the Ballarat Liedertafel.

Hymns and religious songs were used on other occasions, especially at solemn ceremonies such as funerals and, in this mining community, funerals were held regularly. The local newspapers recorded mine accidents or premature deaths almost daily. Funeral processions were public affairs, frequently attended by thousands of people, and they almost always included a band of musicians setting the tone.

For the evolving community of Ballarat, the singing or reading of hymns was part of the movement for self-improvement and, a perceived bulwark against undesirable activities such as drinking and gambling. In his report as inspector for the Board of Education, James Bonwick noted that children on the goldfields lived in a world of gambling, swearing, drunkenness, and licentiousness,<sup>228</sup> and therefore that singing was seen, as noted below, as a highly desirable item on the school curriculum or at Sunday School.

The first schools were held in tents, later progressing to wooden huts and then to more substantial buildings of brick or stone. Education was not compulsory, and parents were expected to contribute to the cost. In the early years, school attendance numbers were erratic, later becoming more consistent as the community stabilised. However, reflecting contemporary values, the education of boys was still given a higher priority than that of girls, who were expected to become mothers and home builders.

Both the National and Denominational Schools<sup>229</sup> provided musical education but it appears to have been given a higher priority in the latter. The Denominational School Board, when announcing the appointment of specialist music teachers in 1857, commented that:

[t]he influence of singing in harmonising and refining the mind of the young is acknowledged to be great, and is of no small importance in a community such as this.....there is reason to expect that the

---

<sup>228</sup> L. J. Blake, ed. *Vision and Realisation: A centenary history of State education in Victoria* vol.1 (Melbourne: Education Department of Victoria, 1973), 34.

<sup>229</sup> Until 1862, there were two Schools Boards in Ballarat, the National and the Denominational, both receiving state aid.

[the newly –appointed singing masters) will exercise a most favourable influence, not only on the music, but also on the moral associations of these goldfields.<sup>230</sup>

The value placed on music education can be gauged by the annual salary paid to the singing masters of 300 pounds, three times that of the local headmaster who earned 100 pounds.<sup>231</sup>

The Governor, Sir Henry Barkley, commented at the end-of-year school festival, that he was delighted to see such a taste for music cultivated amongst children, as it was one of the most humanising influences that could be brought to bear on mankind.<sup>232</sup>

When, two years later, the singing masters were to be withdrawn due to a shortage of funds, there was a public outcry.

[T]he teacher of music is a most powerful auxiliary to the school master and a powerful helper to the young in their intellectual and moral progress. We believe that the children of the lower classes on the goldfields stand especially in need of the civilizing and elevating influence of music and we attribute much of the marked improvement of the last few months to this salutary influence.<sup>233</sup>

In schools without a specialist music teacher it fell to the ordinary teachers to hold music classes - for which they were generally ill equipped.

Music tuition was reduced when the two school boards came under the Council of Education in 1862 and fees for music classes were introduced. However, when the fees were abolished in 1872, singing classes for the supposed betterment of the students became popular once again.

### **Recreation and Socialisation**

Entertainment in the goldmining settlements was mainly by participation in the performing arts or in sporting activities. Both were used for relaxation, to socialise, build networks and perhaps most importantly, in the case of the performing arts, to

---

<sup>230</sup> Report of the Denominational School Board, 1856 & 1857, p 10: *Victoria Parliamentary Papers, 1857-1858, vol. 2.*

<sup>231</sup> L.J. Blake (ed). *Vision and Realisation; A centenary history of State education in Victoria*, vol.1 (Melbourne: Education Department of Victoria, 1973), 38.

<sup>232</sup> Argus, 23 December 1858.

<sup>233</sup> Denominational School Board, Registered Correspondence 1859/988; P.R.O. Vic. From a resident in Ballarat as quoted in Robin Stevens, "Music: A Humanising and Civilising Influence in Education," in *The Colonial Child*, ed. Guy Featherstone (Melbourne: Royal Historical Society of Victoria, 1981), 68.

establish cultural standards. This section will consider a variety of activities that the settlers participated in as they established their town.

Piano playing and singing with friends and relatives at home was one of the most popular cultural activities. Pianos were advertised in the newspapers daily, and, in case skills needed improving, tuition was readily available.

As the advertisement suggests, it was generally the females in the family who played the piano, an accomplishment that was encouraged for young women, even for those from working class homes.

Another popular form of entertainment on the goldfields was dancing. Many of the local hotels had dance halls attached, with the standard of dress and behaviour left to the discretion of the proprietor. Frequently women were allowed into the halls free of charge to provide partners for the miners. Brereton,<sup>234</sup> found it difficult to determine whether they were prostitutes; certainly, females frequenting hotel dance halls were not considered 'respectable.'

In contrast, balls, with respected masters of ceremony and well-known bands were favoured by the 'respectable' ladies. Close couple dances and Quadrilles were the most popular with the serious dancers, who frequently attended private dancing lessons before attending the monthly dances at the Quadrille club.<sup>235</sup> However, subscription balls, held to raise money for charity, or at special festivals and occasions, were the most important events at which to socialise, display your new found wealth and mingle with society.

It was a ball in which fanciful dresses of the most *outré* description abounded particularly amongst the ladies, many of whom in their ambition to figure in low cut dresses, ran into that extreme of nudity about the region of the shoulders which opera-dancers delight in extending to their legs...<sup>236</sup>

---

<sup>234</sup>Rosylyn Brereton, "Entertainment and Recreation on the Victorian Goldfields in the 1850s." (B.A. honours thesis, 1967), 35.

<sup>235</sup>Katherine Brisbane, ed. *Entertaining Australia: an illustrated history* (Paddington, N.S.W.: Currency Press, 1991) 49. *Ballarat Star*, 2 September 1865.

<sup>236</sup>Robyn Annear, *Nothing but gold: The diggers of 1852* (Melbourne: The Text Publishing Company, 1999) 51.





Fig. 26. Subscription Ball, Main Road Ballarat by S. T. Gill. Courtesy of the La Trobe Collection, State Library of Victoria, H331.

Amongst the miners who flocked to the goldfields in the 1850s were many who could play a musical instrument and some who had participated in bands and orchestras overseas. The immigrants from British mining towns were already familiar with the banding tradition. In England's industrial North, as part of the 'rational education' movement, factory owners had encouraged and sponsored works bands, some of whom had competed in national competitions, and were highly skilled.

Whiteoak<sup>237</sup> notes that the development of a band is very often dependant on the arrival of a passionate dedicated individual - and, in the case of Ballarat, one such person was Samuel Prout, who migrated to the goldfields with his band of Cornish miners. In Ballarat, he formed "Prout's Ballarat Band" which became famous for its splendid marching and spectacular turnout.<sup>238</sup>

For bands of any description to flourish, the requirements are a stable population, and the opportunity for the bandsmen to practise on a regular basis. As Ballarat

<sup>237</sup> John Whiteoak, "'Pity the Bandless Towns': Brass Banding in Australian Rural Communities before World War Two," *Rural Society*, vol. 13, no. 3 (2003):287-292.

<sup>238</sup> C.C. Mullen, "Brass Bands have played a Prominent Part in the History of Victoria," *Victorian Historical Magazine*, vol. XXXV1, (February 1965): 30-47.

transitioned to more long-term mining, those conditions were created, and the bands flourished. Some, such as the Volunteer Rifle Rangers bands,<sup>239</sup> were affiliated to military organisations, others to institutions such as the Fire Brigade,<sup>240</sup> and the Mechanics Institute,<sup>241</sup> while others were linked to organisations such as the Band of Hope,<sup>242</sup> and the Odd Fellows.<sup>243</sup> The Ballarat Town Band and the Ballarat District Band represented the town.<sup>244</sup>

The repertoire of the Ballarat bands was similar to those of the English bands they had left behind, and covered a range of marches, dance music, opera and classical scores. Bands played on civic occasions, around the town to entertain the residents, and to raise funds for charitable purposes. A Ballarat band, the Ballarat Rangers, was sufficiently competent to compete against two military bands in the first band contest held in Victoria in 1862.<sup>245</sup> They came third but were highly commended.

In her review of the bands of Ballarat, Morrison suggests that, during the gold rush in Victoria, the bands lost their industrial working-class association and became an art form applicable to the whole community.<sup>246</sup> The tradition of brass band playing continued after the Victorian gold rush and was evident in the Eastern Goldfields as the miners moved to the goldfields of Western Australia. Brass banding is now an established art form in most major centres with an annual Australian competition rotated between the states in which musicians from all walks of life compete and entertain.

Those musicians and singers of a more classical bent were able to join the Ballarat Philharmonic Society, established in 1858 by a professional musician, Austin Turner, or the Ballarat Harmonic Society established in 1863. A report in the *Star* on a performance of *Samson* by the Harmonic Society noted that the performers

---

<sup>239</sup> *Star*, 15 May 1861, *Star*, 2<sup>nd</sup> September 1869.

<sup>240</sup> *Star*, 31 May 1864.

<sup>241</sup> *Star*, 27 September 1860.

<sup>242</sup> *Star*, 17 December 1870.

<sup>243</sup> *Star*, 27 September 1860.

<sup>244</sup> *Star*, 6 November 1861.

<sup>245</sup> C.C. Mullen, "Brass Bands have played a Prominent Part in the History of Victoria," *Victorian Historical Magazine*, vol. XXXV1, (February 1965): 34.

<sup>246</sup> Wendy J. Morrison, "some aspects of the English influence on music in Ballarat during the establishment years" (Honours thesis, University of Melbourne, 1984) 25.

numbered over a hundred and that at least one hundred pounds was raised at the door with many patrons turned away.<sup>247</sup> The local musicians and singers were frequently supplemented by performers from other societies, but the greatest acclaim was often given to those of Ballarat 'rearing'.

Furthermore, the occasion was marked by the first appearance, as solo singers, of two ladies of Ballarat rearing, who did themselves and the town credit, and were received by the audience in the heartiest fashion. These ladies were Miss Henrietta Hoffmeister and Miss Louisa T. Robinson the latter a pupil of Mrs James Sance, who herself sustained no indifferent share of the musical labors of the evening.<sup>248</sup>

Observable trends from this and other reports, are of the participation of women in amateur performances and the evolution of a music industry necessary to supply the musicians and teachers with music and instruments.

As mentioned previously, it was customary for females from the respectable middle-class and working class to provide entertainment in the home by playing the piano, but only rarely would they perform in public. That was left to professional women, usually considered of 'dubious reputation'. However, as the population of Ballarat increased and became more balanced in gender terms, the participation of women in choirs, especially those from the churches, and as performers at charity functions was notable. They also took up positions as teachers of music, both choral and piano.

Growth of musical and other performance practice as well as private interest demanded industry and commerce to provide the material means to support them. For example, R. H. Sutton established the first music warehouse in Ballarat in 1854 to supply musical instruments and sheet music to the community. The business flourished and, in 1894, it was considered the largest musical warehouse in Australia.<sup>249</sup>

Music and dancing were not the only forms of the performing arts practised by the new settlers; amateur dramatics also had their part, the residents frequently

---

<sup>247</sup> *Star*, 28 December 1864.

<sup>248</sup> *Star*, 28 March 1864.

<sup>249</sup> Pauline Veronika Righetti, "The First Fifty Years of Music in Ballarat" (Special Studies thesis, University of Melbourne, n.d.) 1-2.

performing in supporting roles in plays with the professionals, or in clubs and groups of their own, an activity that was approved of by the critics.

Amateur histrionic performances have in these days, and among Australians, come to be recognised as one of the legitimate sources of social amusements, not incompatible with other civic pursuits, a fit relaxation from toil more important, and one of the unobjectionable and harmless enjoyments of a cultivated leisure.<sup>250</sup>

The writer goes on to comment that times have changed from when the activity was frowned upon by parents and employers who feared the young amateur actor would aspire to a career in the stage. Noting that nowadays the actor's art requires too much study and that few amongst the amateurs can devote sufficient time to this study and to rehearsals, the same writer concedes that, with amateurs the audiences are kind and do not censure. This was certainly borne out in the local newspapers where the amateur performers were given favourable reviews in contrast to the professionals on the same stage who were viewed with a critical eye.<sup>251</sup>

Two very active amateur theatre groups, the Garrick Club and the Histrionic Club, performed regularly in local and regional venues, with proceeds donated to institutions such as the Benevolent Asylum, the District Hospital and other charitable causes. Their repertoire was generally British with an occasional North American glance. Most plays would be familiar to the mainly migrant audience.

The acceptance of theatre as a 'respectable' pastime and the availability of published books of plays in the 1860s also led to the performance of plays in the home, by family and friends. These 'home theatricals', could include stage hits or original plays suitable for the domestic living room. The plays became so popular that, by the 1880s they were reported in newspapers, and, as noted by Fotheringham, were often moved from the home to the local town hall to be performed in front a larger audience.<sup>252</sup>

---

<sup>250</sup> *Star*, 11 February 1858.

<sup>251</sup> *Star* 14 February 1857, *Star* 25 February 1857.

<sup>252</sup> Richard Fotheringham, ed. *Australian Plays for the Colonial Stage*, xiv.

## **Establishing an identity**

In many of the mining settlements - where there were large ethnic groupings, the miners, in addition to participating in general recreational pastimes, frequently joined together to maintain their own cultural identities. By banding together in voluntary organisations, they gained companionship, feelings of comfort and familiarity, and reinforced their own sense of identity in this complex multicultural environment.

The Cornish, Scots, Irish and Welsh Celtic immigrants had their own institutions as did the Germans, the Americans and the Chinese. Anne Doggett contends that the English, as the dominant cultural group, had no need to articulate their ethnicity through their cultural practices.<sup>253</sup> I suggest that, although this was not done overtly, it was still the case that the English reproduced many of their cultural traditions in this emerging community in order to reinforce their identity against other traditions and to find a place in the local landscape. Consideration must also be given to the fact that the English were not a homogeneous grouping, for the Cornish had their own cultural traditions as did the miners from Yorkshire and other districts while, conversely, many traditions, such as those associated with festivals like Christmas, were common to many cultures.

For the purpose of this study, three examples of the use of the performing arts in establishing a distinct identity in Ballarat are examined, two from the Celtic tradition, the Welsh and the Scots, and the third a non-European group, the Chinese.

The gold rush in Victoria was the main stimulus for migration from Wales to Australia in the 1850s. The number of people born in Wales in Australia rose from 1,800 in 1851 to 9,500 in 1861 and in Victoria from 377 in 1851, to a peak of 6,614 in 1871.<sup>254</sup>

---

<sup>253</sup> Anne Doggett, "Harmony on the Goldfields: Music and Identity in Multicultural Ballarat," *Victorian Historical Journal*, vol., 75, no. 1, (2004): 49-69.

<sup>254</sup> Census of Victoria 1871.

A recent study looking at the occupations of the Welsh migrants to Ballarat East and West and Sebastapol, concluded that the migrants were far more likely to have come from a mining background and that there was an expectation they would remain in the industry.<sup>255</sup> This proved to be the case, with an ethnic Welsh clustering around many of the mines,<sup>256</sup> which, in turn, supported the maintenance of homogeneity and a shared culture.

To assist in maintaining their sense of identity, of 'Welshness,' the miners were assisted by some mainstays of their culture, their language, their religious nonconformity, and a strong affinity for music and poetry, expressed in choral singing and the traditions of the Eisteddfod. Many held the view that the Eisteddfod was the most important maintainer of culture.<sup>257</sup> The Eisteddfod, a cultural festival of literature, music and choral competition was held annually and brought together the Welsh from Ballarat and surrounding districts. A newspaper report of a Grand Eisteddfod held on Christmas Day 1858, lists the items adjudicated as speeches, choirs, readings from religious and literary texts, solos and duets.<sup>258</sup> Most were presented in the Welsh language. The guest speaker was a Methodist minister from Melbourne who commented that the performances brought back memories of the hills of Cambria, before exhorting the audience to cultivate their minds.

Tyler presents strong evidence, taken from a list of published names, that miners were the main organisers, patrons and participants in the Eisteddfods. He also concludes that the festival was largely the preserve of the working man and these were employed in the gold mines.<sup>259</sup> This was mainly the case, but there is also evidence that they were supported in this cultural endeavour by Welsh mine owners and other Welsh born individuals.<sup>260</sup>

---

<sup>255</sup> Robert Llewellyn Tyler, "Occupational Mobility and Cultural Maintenance: The Welsh in a Nineteenth Century Australian Gold Town," *Historical Studies in Ethnicity, Migration and Diaspora* vol. 24, Issue 3, (2006):277-299.

<sup>256</sup> Robert Llewellyn Tyler, "Occupational Mobility and Cultural Maintenance," 279.

<sup>257</sup> Caroline Trosset, *Welshness Performed: Welsh Concepts of Persons and Society* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1993), 4.

<sup>258</sup> *Star*, 30 December 1858, 2.

<sup>259</sup> Robert Llewellyn Tyler, "Occupational Mobility and Cultural Maintenance," 281.

<sup>260</sup> Bill Jones, "Welsh identities in colonial Ballarat," *Journal of Australian Studies* 25, no. 68 (2001): 34-43.

There is evidence too that the miners were prepared to share their culture with others, with reports of choirs of miners performing around the district, including this one in the *Australian Monthly Magazine* of 15 July 1866.

This Welsh Society of working gold-miners – numbering about fifty members, some twenty of whom work (and sing while they work) in one mine in Sebastopol gave a concert in the Exhibition Building, Melbourne on the 31<sup>st</sup> May... The Male members of the Union, as we before said, are miners, the conductor being also a working miner, and they are assisted by their wives and other female relatives and friends.<sup>261</sup>

Other reports refer to choirs, harp music and singing being used to entertain the general public at a variety of concerts<sup>262</sup> and to accompany dancers with the music of the harp and fiddle.<sup>263</sup>



Fig. 27. Painting S. J. Gill "Dancing Saloon, Welshmen" Main Road, Ballarat 1855. Mitchell Library.

In subsequent years, other nationalities were encouraged to participate in the Eisteddfods transforming the event into a cosmopolitan, mainly musical, festival.

John Basson Humffray, a Welsh Chartist and one-time minister of mines for

<sup>261</sup> *Australian Monthly Magazine*, 15<sup>th</sup> July 1866. 392

<sup>262</sup> *Star*, 9 November 1864, 3.

<sup>263</sup> *Star*, 23 October 1861, 3.

Victoria,<sup>264</sup> gives a reason for the expansion of the programme in a report on an eisteddfod in 1886 stating:

But on the success of their first attempt they were encouraged to go on: and .....they became more expanded in their views, and issued a programme inviting all, irrespective of nationality ...to enter...[into] public competition at the Eisteddfod: and in so doing they set an example to the colony of cosmopolitan liberality in fostering the development of native talent, and which has been happily imitated by many kindred societies- in this and other colonies in Australasia... While we preserve our nationality... it would be idle and foolish to forget that we are an integral portion of the great British nation...whose language and peoples form a belt around the earth.<sup>265</sup>

What it meant to be Welsh in the gold-rush towns of Victoria was a contested subject with questions raised about the preservation of language and culture from the home country in a new environment. However, the tradition of the Eisteddfod continues in Australia today, with the Royal South Street Eisteddfod in Ballarat the largest performing arts competition in Australia.

In the history of the Western District of Victoria, Margaret Kiddle records how the Scots were at the forefront of the immigrants who moved to Van Diemen's land and then to Western Victoria after the Napoleonic Wars.<sup>266</sup> From a collated list she was able to ascertain that at least two thirds of the early settlers were Scottish, and most were Lowland farmers.<sup>267</sup>

The Scottish diggers arrived on the goldfields by a variety of means, with some travelling on unassisted passages directly to the fields, others from the Highlands by assisted passages and who were intended to provide labour to the pastoral industry, and some who were already working in the country.

The Scots on the goldfields of Victoria and the surrounding pastoral leases were not a homogeneous group, with differing opinions on the value of the gold discoveries

---

<sup>264</sup> Diane Landmore, "John Basson Humffrey," in *Australian Dictionary of Biography* vol. 4, (MUP): 1972.

<sup>265</sup> Theos Williams and J.B. Humffray (eds). *Ballarat Eisteddfod: Report of the Meetings Held in Ballarat in 1885-1886 with Introductory and Historical Notes together with The Programme of the Eisteddfod to be held in 1887.* (Ballarat:James Curtis, 1886).

<sup>266</sup> Margaret Kiddle, *Men of Yesterday: A Social History of the Western District of Victoria 1834-1890* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1961), 14.

<sup>267</sup> Kiddle, *Men of Yesterday*, 517.



between the Scottish squatters and miners. As noted by Cardell and Cumming,<sup>268</sup> even before the discovery of gold, there was no harmony amongst the original settlers. Despite these differences, the maintenance of cultural traditions appears to have united the diverse elements to present a portrait of “Scottishness.”

Like other ethnic groupings, such as the Welsh, the Scots transported a variety of cultural elements to the new landscape. While associations, such as the Caledonian Society (1858) and the Buninyong Highland Society (1857), were established with a benevolent focus they also organised annual gatherings or Highland games. The participants were the working-class Scottish miners, but they generally looked to the established squatters to act as patrons and organisers.<sup>269</sup>

A record of the first gathering held by the Buninyong Society on 1<sup>st</sup> January 1858 records the traditional events of stone and hammer throwing and foot races but notes there was only one piper present who did not often enliven the audience with the strains of his instruments.<sup>270</sup> By the first gathering of the Caledonian Society, held on 1<sup>st</sup> January 1859, the programme of competitive events had widened to include pipe music, dancing, costume and tilting on horseback. The bagpipes featured prominently with prizes given to the best players in three categories, piobaireachd, marches and dances with music evocative of home.<sup>271</sup>

For the second annual gathering, held on 2<sup>nd</sup> January 1860, businesses closed for the day and the procession to the games proceeded down Main St:

In front walked two kilted Highlanders with drawn swords, and immediately after them came pipers and others in the same costume. The brass band came next, consisting of Mr Labalestrier and his troupe, all attired in what might be accepted either as ‘military’ or a fancy costume; the drummers being distinguished by garments of a rosy red, the more noticeable as their colleagues were attired in cream coloured dresses. A cavalcade of mounted tilters with lances closed the procession which

---

<sup>268</sup> Kerry Cardell and Cliff Cumming, “Squatters, Diggers and National Culture: Scots and the Central Victorian Goldfields 1851-61,” in *A World Turned Upside Down: Cultural Change on Australia’s Goldfields 1851-2001*, eds. Kerry Cardell and Cliff Cumming (Canberra: The Australian National University, 2001), 89.

<sup>269</sup> Kerry Cardell and Cliff Cumming, “Squatters, Diggers and National Culture: Scots and the Central Victorian Goldfields 1851-61” 98.

<sup>270</sup> *Star*, 2 January 1858.

<sup>271</sup> Anne Doggett, “And for harmony most ardently we long,” 159. Piobairreachd means ‘piping’ or ‘an act of piping’.

gathered crowds as it passed along, now marching to the music of the band and now to the pibroche of the pipers.<sup>272</sup>

The reporter estimated a crowd of between 5,000 and 6,000 spectators at the event with local businesses and hotels taking advantage of the occasion to supply the crowds with refreshments. Financially the day was a great success for all concerned. Reports on the programme were mixed, but the bands were well received.

The annual Highland Games became an occasion looked forward to by the whole community but other gatherings, such as the celebration of the birth of Robert Burns, attracted migrants mainly of Scottish descent. The 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Burn's birth in 1859 was celebrated by two dinners, one of which strictly maintained the Scottish musical tradition with a piper and Scottish songs while the other included a variety of musical items and no piper.<sup>273</sup>

The centenary of the birth of Sir Walter Scott in 1871 gave rise to a much grander occasion, commencing with a procession led by a piper to the Albert Hall. Many of the people present were in Highland bonnets but amongst the crowd of 2,000 were migrants from all nations. Welshman Mr Joseph Jones MLA, took the chair, jesting that, in the absence of the original chairman Sir James McCulloch, a Welshman was the next best thing. The evening passed with music, songs, the poetry of Scott and local poets and a number of congratulatory speeches.<sup>274</sup>

The tradition of the Highland Games continues in a few centres but the majority, as they widened to include the larger community, added additional sports or became part of the annual Agricultural Shows. The role played by the performing arts in the Games has lessened over time.

Chinese miners who came to Victoria dug for alluvial gold. A few worked in quartz mines or were employed by the company- based alluvial mines but they lacked capital to establish their own companies or met with local opposition. In December 1873, Peter Lalor tried to employ Chinese miners to break a strike in the Clunes

---

<sup>272</sup> *Star*, 3 January 1860, 2.

<sup>273</sup> *Star*, 26 January 1859, 2.

<sup>274</sup> *Ballarat Star*, 16 August 1871, 2.

companies, but they were halted by an angry crowd.<sup>275</sup> Typically, Chinese miners worked in teams, mostly going over ground that had been worked previously by the non-Chinese. Blainey quotes R. Brough Smyth, the Secretary of State for Victoria in 1869, who noted “They are good miners in shallow ground.” He goes on to describe how they will stand for hours in water scooping gravel while their partners wash the gravel in cradles or boxes.<sup>276</sup>

The miners worked hard and lived frugally but we do know, by the presence of joss houses and gambling dens, that they had their distractions. However, as Wang writes,<sup>277</sup> there is a distinct lack of evidence about the performing arts as recorded and practised by the Chinese miners themselves. Wang attributes this to the fact that the majority of the miners were illiterate and intended to stay in the region for only a short period before returning to China.<sup>278</sup> Most of the information we have, therefore, has been taken from local newspapers and reports written by non-Chinese settlers, which give a Eurocentric perspective on the cultural activities of the Chinese miners.

Research conducted by Love and Wang detailed the Chinese Opera companies that performed in the gold rush settlements but did not provide conclusive evidence about whether all the performers were overseas actors and musicians, or whether local Chinese miners with the appropriate skills were recruited to complete the companies.<sup>279</sup> We do know from Rolls that the Chinese migrants had musical instruments with them when they arrived<sup>280</sup> and that there were musical instrument makers in the Chinese community,<sup>281</sup> so we can reasonably assume that the instruments were used either for their own self-expression or to entertain others. Rolls did record one Chinese song from the Victorian goldfields:

---

<sup>275</sup> Geoffrey Blainey, *The Rush That Never Ended*, 85

<sup>276</sup> Blainey, *The Rush That Never Ended*, 85.

<sup>277</sup> Wang Zheng-Ting, “Chinese Music in Mid-Nineteenth Century Victoria,” *Australasian Music Research* 2-5 (1997-1998):23.

<sup>278</sup> Wang Zheng-Ting, “Chinese Music in Mid-Nineteenth Century Victoria,” 24.

<sup>279</sup> Wang Zheng-Ting, “Chinese Music” 26.

<sup>280</sup> Eric Rolls, *Sojourners: the epic story of the China’s centuries-old relationship with Australia: flowers and the wide sea* (St. Lucia, Queensland, University of Queensland Press, 1992),116.

<sup>281</sup> Eric Rolls, *Sojourners*, 128.

Don't marry your daughter to a scholar.  
He'll shut himself in a lonely room.  
Don't marry your daughter to a baker.  
He'll sleep in her bed six months in three years at most.  
Don't marry your daughter to a farmer.  
The smell of shit will choke you.  
Marry your daughter to a Gold Mountain guest.  
When his ship comes home he will bring a fortune.<sup>282</sup>

The Chinese miners, with their distinctive appearance and habits, had no need to practise their culture in order to advertise their presence, but this did not deter them from displaying their skills in the performing arts at numerous ceremonial occasions and in public venues.



Fig. 28. INTERIOR OF CHINESE GAMBLING HOUSE, artist Thomas S. Cousins. Wood engraving published in *The Illustrated Australian news for home readers*, publisher Ebenezer and David Syme, 9 Oct. 1871

Instrumental and singing concerts were held in concert rooms, of which there was at least one in Ballarat, and, also, as an accompaniment to games of Fan-tan in the gambling houses. Amateur performers took part in their own festivals and processions as well as those of the wider community. In 1858, they were invited to join the welcome procession for the new Governor of Victoria Sir Henry Barkly and

<sup>282</sup> Eric Rolls, *Sojourners*, 116.

later in his farewell. The procession to welcome the new Governor of Victoria, Sir Charles Darling to Ballarat in 1863 was another public occasion in which the Chinese were invited to join.

The Chinese processionists here joined in. The Celestial turn-out was most respectable. First came a coach and four horses with a band of instrumentalists, making all sorts of horrible noises. The musicians were followed by eight two-horse vehicles, each of which was laden with well-dressed Chinese.<sup>283</sup>

The Chinese musicians raised money for local charities, such as the Ballarat District Hospital and the Asylum, but, despite these endeavours, their cultural activities were still regarded as bizarre by the general population with Doggett proposing that these performances had both positive and negative benefits for the general Chinese community:

Their cultural performances enabled the Chinese to contribute to the community in many ways and their efforts brought about a certain amount of cultural recognition...however people were far more negative about the Chinese music they heard than they were about Chinese costumes, acting, embroidery or acrobatic displays. This music appeared to hinder, rather than foster, any form of sympathetic understanding, and it set up further opportunities for ridicule and contempt.<sup>284</sup>

The lack of empathy or enjoyment by the non-Chinese on the goldfields, of Chinese music, with its cymbals, drums, and gongs, is well recorded in newspaper accounts, despite some enthusiasm being shown for the acrobats and the lavish costumes. This was not unexpected, however, given the lack of exposure of Europeans to these unfamiliar sounds and rhythms.

At the time that these performances took place and until fairly recently, it was assumed that music was pleasing to the ear because of 'right frequencies and vibrations' and that there was a physical basis for this. European tonal music was deemed to be correct and European derived cultures were considered smarter than other cultures because they could hear the harmony and dissonance. However, recent research on music reception by Professor Neil McLachlan and his

---

<sup>283</sup> *Ballarat Star*, 10 December 1863, 2.

<sup>284</sup> Anne Doggett, 'Strains from a flowery land', 111.

colleagues<sup>285</sup> has disproved and shown that music appreciation depends on memory and acculturation. So, to diggers brought up in the Western tradition and not exposed to other cultures, the sounds of Chinese music would seem strange indeed and outside any audiological terms of reference that they may have had. It is interesting too, to consider the negative and positive attitudes of the non-Chinese audiences who were drawn to listen to and observe the Chinese performers. At the Caledonian Games of 1864 the Chinese were one of the most popular items with displays of fighting and acrobatics “despite the hideous music.”<sup>286</sup> Doggett suggests that “the non-Chinese recognised the importance of Chinese culture, “<sup>287</sup> but it is also possible to claim that it may have been the appeal of the novel and exotic.

With the decline in mining and immigration into Australia by the Chinese after the 1870’s, information about their operatic and musical activities is scarce except for Chinese involvement in festivals such as the Bendigo Easter Festival, in which they have participated since 1892. <sup>288</sup> The Chinese section of this parade includes cultural groups from Bendigo and Melbourne showcasing various elements including lion and dragon dancing.

### **To build a town**

It is possible to conclude from this short study that the performing arts played a significant role in the development and establishment of the community of Ballarat as it transitioned from a rough and ready mining camp into a permanent settlement. Music, in particular, with its implications of morality and character building, played a prominent role in churches and schools. Recreational pursuits, such as participation in choirs, bands, orchestras and amateur theatricals enabled residents to develop their skills, and network with like-minded individuals as well as entertaining themselves and others. Dancing and attending balls were a way of

---

<sup>285</sup>Neil McLachlan, “Pythagorus v Darwin” interview with Neil McLachlan by Andrew Ford on the *Music Show*, 20 April 2013, reporting on research conducted by the University of Melbourne, School of Psychological Sciences on the reception of music.

<sup>286</sup>*Star*, 2 January 1864, 3.

<sup>287</sup>Anne Doggett, ‘Strains from a flowery land’, 120.

<sup>288</sup>*Weekly Advertiser*, 22 April 1892, reprinted in *The Chinese and the Bendigo Easter Fair* (Bendigo, Vic: Bendigo Chinese Association, c. 1983).

exercising and displaying your wealth. Forming ethnic clubs and maintaining cultural practices gave identity, comfort and companionship.

Predominantly British culture and institutions were transferred to Ballarat by the settlers, to assist them in their familiarisation with the environment, and to make it appear less alien. However as seen in the adaptation of the eisteddfod and the highland games, the environment in which they found themselves was different, it was cosmopolitan and the differences between the classes were less clear. Within a few short years most of the cultural institutions in Ballarat had adapted to their relocation and were moulded into a distinctive Australian landscape.

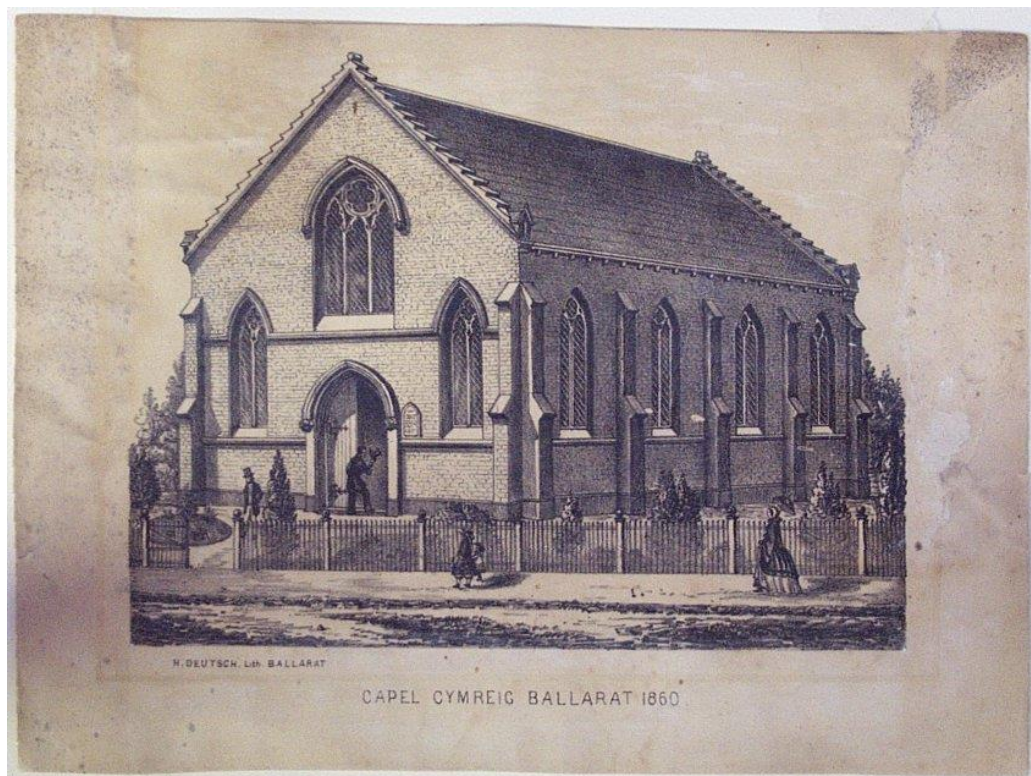


Fig. 29. Capel Cymreig, Ballarat. 1860. Ballarat Historical Society.



## CHAPTER 3

### KALGOORLIE AND THE EASTERN GOLDFIELDS



Fig. 30 Off to the New Rush, 1890's. Eastern Goldfields Historical Society.

In the second study of this thesis exploring the relationship between mining and the performing arts in the nineteenth century in Australia, the focus is on the role that music, theatre and dance played in the lives of the prospectors, the miners and their families in a remote mining region of Western Australia from 1890 to 1914. To do so it is necessary to consider the data collected from primary and secondary sources about the performing arts within the historical, social and economic contexts in which this mining settlement was formed, and to note that there were distinctive features of the environment, population, social patterns and trends that were particular to the Eastern Goldfields of Western Australia in the late nineteenth century. Some of the most noteworthy distinctive features of the region and the



period were: the distance of the communities of Coolgardie, Hannans, now called Kalgoorlie, and Boulder from the major population centres in Western Australia and the Eastern States, the poor transport and infrastructure until the railway was pushed through to Coolgardie in March 1896, the origins, ethnicity, and gender of the early population; the changes that occurred when women and children came to the fields in large numbers, and the historical, social, and cultural conditions of the period in which the settlements were established.

To enable comparisons with the study of Ballarat, this chapter is also composed of three separate parts. The first part comprises a geographic and economic description of the colony of Western Australia from when it was first established in 1829, to the discovery of gold in 1892, in an area now called the Eastern Goldfields.<sup>1</sup> This is followed by an outline of the history of the performing arts in the colony during this period, and a description of the circumstances that led to the discovery of gold in the region, and the impact of this discovery on the number and makeup of the population of Western Australia.

The second part of the chapter details the ways in which those in the performing arts entertained the prospectors and miners in this remote corner of the colony, and the efforts made by professional entertainers to reach them and to perform. The building of theatrical infrastructure, both on the goldfields, and in the capital city Perth, and the further development of an Australian theatrical repertoire with mining as the subject are also considered.

The final part of the chapter reviews how the performing arts contributed to the establishment of the Eastern Goldfields towns' institutions, to the cultural maintenance of their citizens, and to their own artistic pursuits. By examining all aspects of the role, the performing arts played, in the three communities that are included in this study, it is possible to determine the significance of their role in the early years of these frontier towns.

---

<sup>1</sup> This was the official statistical district as well as the (relatively small) officially designated Gold Field based on Kalgoorlie-Boulder.

## PART 1: THE EARLY HISTORY AND THE DISCOVERY OF GOLD

### The Colony of Western Australia 1829-1890.

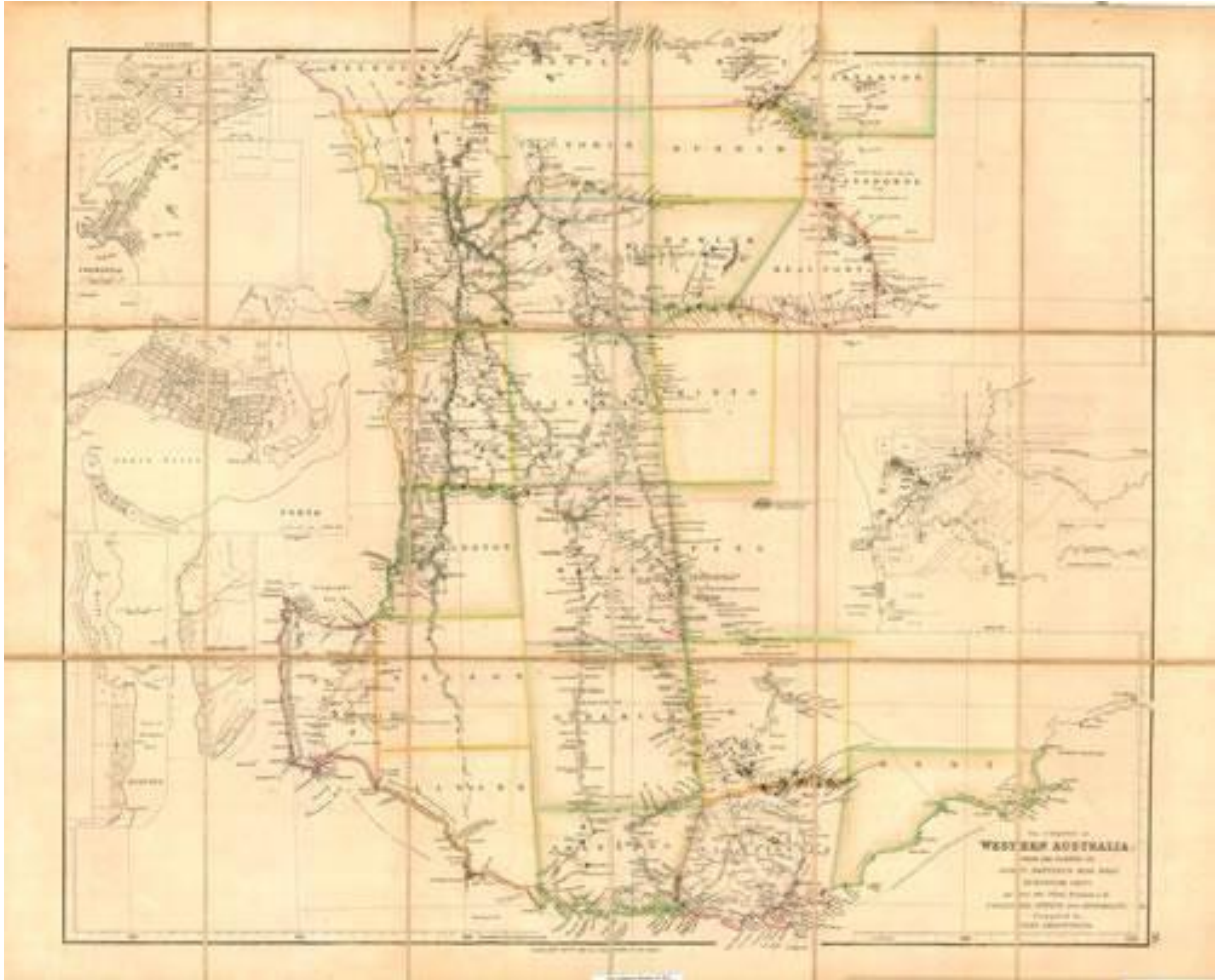


Fig. 31 Map of the colony of Western Australia. 1839. Drawn on linen by John Arrowsmith from surveys of John Septimus Roe, the first Survey General of Western Australia. State Library of Western Australia.

Occupying one third of the continent of Australia, Western Australia has a history of human occupation from at least 45,000-80,000 BP, when the Aboriginal people arrived from the north at a time of low sea level between the continents of Asia and Australia. From the seventeenth century onwards, many expeditions from Europe and Asia briefly landed on the west-coast, either deliberately or by mischance and, when they were able departed,<sup>2</sup> but it was not until 1827, when an expedition led by Major Edmund Lockyer, on behalf of the New South Wales colonial government,

<sup>2</sup>The first European expedition to land in W.A. was led by the Dutch explorer Dirk Hartog in 1616. The first English vessel was the Tryall, led by John Brooke who landed in 1622.

landed at Albany in the south of the region, that the western third of Australia was officially claimed for the British Crown. The Swan River Colony was established in 1829, and for the next forty years, the colony was ruled by governors whose principal responsibility was to the British Crown.<sup>3</sup>

The first Governor of Western Australia, Captain James Stirling, had sole authority until in 1832, a Legislative Council of four government officials was appointed and, in 1839, four colonists were appointed to assist him. From 1870 a period of representative government, with elected members, existed until, after considerable lobbying, Western Australia was granted responsible government in 1890 and joined with the other states to form the Commonwealth of Australia in 1901.<sup>4</sup>



Fig. 32. Captain Stirling's Exploring Party 50 Miles up the Swan River by W.J. Huggins, 1827, oil on canvas. National Library of Australia, obj 134156746.

In the years subsequent to its establishment as a free enterprise settlement in 1829, the colony grew only slowly, with the settler population moving from a base of 1,003 in 1829 to 5,886 in 1850, despite having developed a diverse range of economic activities. Settlers were encouraged to move beyond the Swan River area

<sup>3</sup> B.K. de Garis, "Political Tutelage 1829-1870," in *A New History of Western Australia*, ed. C. T. Stannage (Perth: University of Western Australia, 1981), 297.

<sup>4</sup> B. K. de Garis, "Self-Government and the Evolution of Party Politics 1871-1911," in *A New History of Western Australia*, ed. C.T. Stannage (Perth: University of Western Australia, 1981), 326.

in search of agricultural land, but most remained around the southwest coastline at Bunbury, Augusta and Albany.

In 1847, at a time when the eastern states colonies' anti-transportation leagues were protesting against the efforts to retain the system, the Western Australian government requested the introduction of convict transportation. An agreement was reached with the British Government in 1849 that no limit would be placed on the number or type of convicts sent, except that they would all be male and that the British Government would defray all the expenses that they incurred.

The period from 1849 until 1868, when transportation finally ceased, saw an increase in the non-indigenous population of Western Australia from 4,645 to 24,292. The North West was settled in the mid-1860s and the Murchison and Gascoyne in the 1870s. Males exceeded females by a ratio of 2:1.

Van Den Driesen's statistical analysis of the early demographic patterns in Western Australia revealed that convicts made up 54 per cent of the adult male population in 1859 and still represented 36 per cent in 1870.<sup>5</sup> The social and economic impact of such a large proportion of convicts on the population of the colony was considerable, and yet, as argued by Bob Reece, it is a subject that has attracted little academic or popular interest.<sup>6</sup> Even the role that the convicts played in building the infrastructure of roads, bridges and public buildings has never been thoroughly researched. One explanation put forward by Reece<sup>7</sup> as to why this is so, is that there has not been a sufficient time lapse for the Western Australian convicts to be endowed with a romantic hue unlike their counterparts in the Eastern States, thus making convictism a best forgotten subject locally. A noted

---

<sup>5</sup>I.H. Van Den Driesen, "Convicts and Migrants in Western Australia 1850-1886: their number, nature and ethnic origins," *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, v. 72, (June 1986): 40-58.

<sup>6</sup>Bob Reece, "Writing about Convicts in Western Australia," *Studies in Western Australian History*, 24 : (2006), 98-113.

<sup>7</sup>Reece, "Writing about Convicts," 103

consequence is that apart from a few exceptions<sup>8</sup> there is an absence of folklore and balladry celebrating and mythologising convict exploits in Western Australia.<sup>9</sup>

The years following the end of transportation in Western Australia in 1868 were again a period of gradual population growth with an increase from 24,653 in 1869 to 46,290 in 1890, with natural increase being the major determinant as the ratio of males to females came more even.<sup>10</sup>

Table 2: Population of Western Australia 1829-1903.

Year	Males	Females	Total	No of females to 100 males
1829	769	234	1,003	30.43
1840	1,434	877	2,311	61.16
1850	3,576	2,310	5,886	64.60
1860	9,529	5,698	15,227	59.80
1870	15,474	9,610	25,084	62.10
1880	16,559	12,460	29,019	75.25
1881	17,216	12,797	30,013	74.33
1882	17,551	13,215	30,776	75.29
1883	18,005	13,695	31,700	76.06
1884	18,623	14,335	32,958	76.97
1885	19,989	15,197	35,186	76.03
1886	23,044	16,540	39,584	71.78
1887	24,807	17,681	42,488	71.27
1888	24,275	17,862	42,137	73.58
1889	25,006	18,632	43,689	74.33
1890	26,794	19,496	46,290	72.76
1891	32,054	21,225	53,270	66.22
1892	35,632	23,026	58,658	64.62
1893	40,182	24,855	65,037	61.86
1894	53,121	28,893	82,014	54.39
1895	66,579	34,564	101,143	51.91
1896	91,586	46,210	137,796	50.46
1897	103,880	57,814	161,694	55.65
1898	105,440	62,370	167,810	59.15
1899	105,708	64,943	170,651	61.44
1900	109,923	69,785	179,708	63.49
1901	118,241	73,863	194,109	64.16
1902	129,386	83,941	213,327	64.88
1903	135,961	90,993	226,954	66.93

<sup>8</sup> The celebrated escape by Fenian John Boyle O'Reilly and the bushranger Joseph Bolitho Johns (Moondyne Joe).

<sup>9</sup> Reece "Writing about Convicts," 106, quoting from C.T. Stannage, *The People of Perth*, (Perth: Perth City Council, 1979), 9, who asserts that, convicts 'have been suppressed in folk memory and edited out of historical writing'.

<sup>10</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics

The early colonists were slow to prosper, with most of their energy devoted to meeting the basic needs of food and shelter. The colony was mainly pastoral and agricultural with wool as the main export commodity followed by wood and whale products. To avoid the difficulties of haulage on the sandy plains, the Swan River and the coast became the main transport routes.

The arrival of the convicts between 1850 and 1868, as argued by Richard Hartley,<sup>11</sup> gave the economy a boost in three important ways. The first was by the use of convict labour to build important infrastructure and public buildings, secondly, by the attraction of capital due to the incentives offered by the Government, and thirdly by the expansion of the pastoral industry to the north. This latter development led to the discovery of the Northampton mineral field, and the development of a pearling industry.

When convict transportation ceased in 1868, economic growth again became very slow with wool still the major export, followed by timber and sandalwood, lead/copper and pearl shell. It took the discovery of payable gold ore in the Kimberley region of North Western Australia in 1885 to give the colony another economic boost

### **The Performing Arts in Western Australia before 1892**

#### **WESTERN AUSTRALIA FOR ME**

From the Western world we have come to explore,  
The wilds of this Western Australian shore;  
In search of a country we've ventured to roam,  
And now that we have found it let's make it our home,  
And what though the colony's new, Sirs,  
And inhabitants yet may be few, Sirs,  
We see them increasing here too, Sirs,  
So Western Australia for me,<sup>12</sup>

---

<sup>11</sup> Richard G. Hartley, *Industry and Infrastructure in Western Australia 1829-1940*, (Perth: Institution of Engineers, 1995), 13.

<sup>12</sup> Extracted from the first song written in the new colony of Western Australia, written by George Fletcher Moore, one of the earliest settlers. Sang to the tune of an Irish Folk song *Ballinamona Oro*. First public performance on 2<sup>nd</sup> September 1831, A. H. Kornweibel, *Apollo and the Pioneers* (Perth: The Music Council of Western Australia, 1973). V11.

The colonists who landed on the shores of Western Australia in June 1829 brought with them the social and cultural values of their European homelands. Determined to establish, in this new land, settlements that mirrored the society that they had left behind; they included in their luggage, a selection of musical instruments, including a variety of pianos. Jean Farrant in her article, "Playing in tune",<sup>13</sup> notes that, as the piano was a symbol of gentility in nineteenth century England the new immigrants, like those in the Eastern colonies, were anxious to acquire the status of colonial gentry, and had to travel with the required symbols. Transporting a piano across the world was not easy or cheap, yet, as Deborah Crisp<sup>14</sup> notes, even the genteel poor had visions of a drawing room with a piano, where the ladies of the household could entertain the menfolk in the evening.

Not all the pianos survived however, for as Captain Marshall McDermott, who landed in 1830, recorded in his memoir "less fortunate predecessors at an earlier period had to resort to tents; and their furniture, 'including grand pianos (some of them gutted to make cupboards, etc.)', lay exposed to all weathers on the beach. "<sup>15</sup> This fact did not seem to dampen the enthusiasm of the daughter of Mr and Mrs James Purkis, who arrived in February 1830, and declared that "although on a sandy, wind-swept beach, (they) managed to have some pleasure as they had a piano."<sup>16</sup>

From the journal of George Fletcher Moore,<sup>17</sup> we learn that the piano was not the only instrument used to make music. Moore, who played the flute, writes:

---

<sup>13</sup> Jean Farrant, "Playing in Tune: music," in *Farewell Cinderella: creating arts and identity in Western Australia*, eds. Geoffrey Bolton, Richard Rossiter, and Jan Ryan (Perth: University of Western Australian Press, 2003), 91-128.

<sup>14</sup> Deborah Crisp, "The piano in Australia, 1770 to 1900: some literary sources," *Musicology Australia* XV111, (1995). 25-38.

<sup>15</sup> Captain Marshall McDermott was a retired army officer from the Napoleonic wars, who arrived in Western Australia in 1830 with his musically gifted wife. His memoirs were printed privately in Adelaide in 1874. Quoted in A. H. Kornweibel. *Apollo and the Pioneers* (Perth: The Music Council of Western Australia (Incorporated) 1973) 1.

<sup>16</sup> Charlotte Elizabeth Vigors Shenton, "Reminiscences of Perth 1830-1840," compiled by Mrs Shenton from reminiscences of the writer's mother Mrs F. Lochee, *Journal and Proceedings, Western Australia Historical Society* 1, part 1 (1927) 1-4.

<sup>17</sup> George Fletcher Moore, *Diary of Ten Years Eventful Life of an Early Settler in Western Australia*, (London: M. Walbrook, 1884).

The shepherd has sent word that if I buy a set of bells for him, he will stay with me. I have bought twenty sweet musical regularly tuned bells, with straps and buckles; at three shillings each.....It is delightful to hear them on a fine evening. (July 1833).

Later, he noted that:

The sound of the clarinet is something new in this colony. One of these reapers has brought one with him and is now delighting the kitchen audience with "Ye banks and braes". (Dec 1843).

Moore's journal gives one of the few accounts that make mention of music-making amongst the working classes. Another was noted in 1835 in the *Perth Gazette*,<sup>18</sup> reporting on the Fremantle Petty Sessions, when Fredrick Oughton preferred an assault charge against the landlord of the Wheatsheaf Tavern for evicting him after singing "an indelicate parody" of the song "The Glasses Sparkle on the Board to a delighted audience".<sup>19</sup> Arguably the scarcity of information about working class entertainment is a reflection of the imbalance in the colonial society, where the population numbers were tilted in favour of landowners. It could also reflect a lack of interest by newspaper reporters and other recorders, in the lives of the labourers and servants in their community.

There is no doubt that music making was one of the major forms of entertainment for the early Perth citizens with many accounts of music making in the home,<sup>20</sup> at public functions,<sup>21</sup> for special occasions,<sup>22</sup> and all public holidays being an excuse for a supper, entertainment, and a ball.<sup>23</sup>

For the settlers living on isolated rural properties or in small hamlets; music making may have been their only form of entertainment in their home, or, when they had the opportunity, to gather together for social occasions. Bessie Bussell, living in the south-west of the colony, wrote to her sister, describing how, when a fire was

---

<sup>18</sup> *The Perth Gazette and Western Australian Journal* published from 1833 to 1848.

<sup>19</sup> A.H. Kornweibel, *Apollo and the Pioneers*, 12-13.

<sup>20</sup> Moore, *Diary of Ten Years*, June 1831, where he details a visit to the home of a Mr Leake with Mrs McDermott playing the piano.

<sup>21</sup> *The Perth Gazette*, 27 September 1833, report of a public dinner given by 'civil officers and colonists' for Lieutenant- Governor Irwin, prior to his departure to England. Details of 'many excellent songs' sung.

<sup>22</sup> St Patrick's Day, 17<sup>th</sup> March 1840, dinner party with songs. Report in the *Perth Gazette and Journal*, 28 March 1840.

<sup>23</sup> *Perth Gazette and Journal*, 8 June 1839.



discovered on their property, her brothers rescued her piano and her music.<sup>24</sup> She describes in her diary what the piano meant to her “.....when evening comes round and all our duties are over I open the piano with, I think, much more pleasure than I ever did in England, and all are ready to join in the chorus.” After the fire, the much travelled piano found a temporary home in the Augusta house of Mrs Georgiana Molloy, where it again gave pleasure accompanying dances and singing.<sup>25</sup>

There are few extant records of the songs performed in the homes of the early settlers in Western Australia, but, as there were no music shops and all songs had to be copied either from the sheet music they brought with them or sent from overseas, it is likely that the main repertoire was similar to that available in Britain at the time, and would have reflected the popular taste for sentimental ballads, and folk songs. Both Farrant<sup>26</sup> and Kornweibel<sup>27</sup> point to the difference in musical taste amongst the social classes, suggesting that the ‘lower orders’ taste was for ruder and more robust songs. Arguably this classification is too simple. The Victorian preference for sentimental songs permeated both the middle and working classes in Britain, from where the majority of colonists came. We know also, from the diaries of prospectors and miners who moved to the Eastern Goldfields later in the century, that sentimental ballads were sung around campfires, and in hotels, by all classes, as well as folk songs from their country of birth and even musical arias from opera.

The first reported public concert in the colony was performed on May 7<sup>th</sup>1845 in St Georges Church, Perth. The programme consisted of a selection of ‘sacred’ music, with funds raised to be donated to the purchase of a church organ.<sup>28</sup> Four similar concerts followed.<sup>29</sup> However it was only with the aid of a generous donor that the musical instrument was finally purchased. One of the most unusual concerts was

---

<sup>24</sup> Bessie Bussell arrived in Australia in 1833 with her brother John and sister Fanny. Other members of the family preceded them in 1830 with the mother and younger sister arriving in 1839. A collection of the families’ diaries and letters are kept at the Battye Library in Perth, Western Australia. ACC1008A.

<sup>25</sup> Kornweibel, *Apollo and the Pioneers*, 9-10.

<sup>26</sup> Farrant, *Playing in tune*, 94.

<sup>27</sup> Kornweibel *Apollo and the Pioneers*, 12.

<sup>28</sup> *Perth Gazette*, 18 May 1845.

<sup>29</sup> Details of the concerts are given in Edmund Clifton “Music and the Stage in the Early Days,” *The Western Australian Historical Society Journal and Proceedings* vol. 1, part V111 (1930): 1-18.

given on the 21<sup>st</sup> May 1846, when Dom Rosendo Salvador, the founder of the New Norcia mission, played at the Perth courthouse to raise funds for the mission and to avert a local famine. This very talented musician charged his seventy-member audience, one pound each for the privilege of hearing him play. The concert was a great success but, despite entreaties for him to stay in Perth, the missionary returned to his mission and never played a full length recital again.<sup>30</sup> The practice of using music to raise money for charitable purposes was well established in Britain when the colonists departed, and was one that they took to their new home. It would be repeated many times, gaining momentum when the prospectors and miners needed to establish settlements quickly in the Eastern Goldfields.

The earliest recorded public entertainments in the colony were Aboriginal corroborees. The first, noted in the Perth Gazette of the 16<sup>th</sup> March 1833, describes an event organised by Yagan,<sup>31</sup> attended by the Lieutenant- Governor, Captain Irwin, and “respectable inhabitants”, including several ladies, all of whom were, according to the report, highly entertained. A more descriptive account of a corroboree was given in the Weekly Journal of the Department Superintending Native Tribes, of December 2 to 8, 1833.<sup>32</sup> The occasion, a visit of an Aboriginal from the Murray area called Morang was celebrated in style.

This Corroboree was extremely well got-up, the spectators being seated in a semi-circle with a number of small fires in front resembling the stage lights in a theatre. It was the first at which I have seen a woman perform. Gibban’s wife advanced receipting and waving her arms as if to excite the performers, who came forward in a band of 18 young men with spears poised, they danced forward and then formed a circle, then a line and after a number of manoeuvres retired out of sight until the next act. During the interval a man sang remarkably well and accompanied himself with a Callee (throwing stick) against a Meero (shield)...The same air , correct to the note, was answered by the band behind the scenes, first faintly and then increasingly as they advanced to the stage or foreground.

---

<sup>30</sup>*Inquirer*, 14 May 1845.

<sup>31</sup> For details of the life of Yagan, see Neville Green, “Aborigines and White Settlers in the Nineteenth Century,” in *A New History of Western Australia*, ed. C. T. Stannage (Perth: University of Western Australian Press, 1981), 82.

<sup>32</sup> State Records Office of Western Australia, Colonial Secretary’s Office, Inwards correspondence, 1833, 29, 157-9.

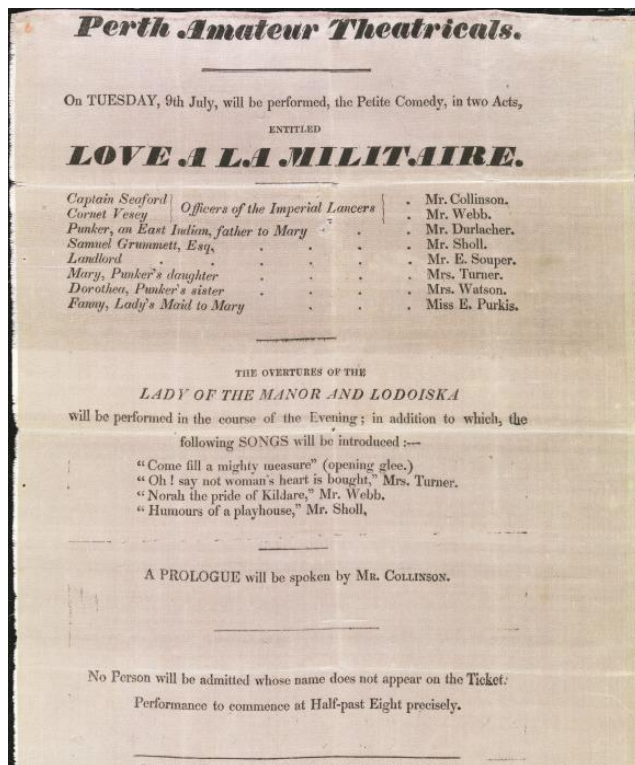


Fig. 33 Playbill for Love a la Militaire, performed on 9th July 1839.

State Library of Western Australia, 61876057-2.

Amongst the settlers' public entertainments developed shortly after colonisation were a total of seventeen plays, produced by amateurs in a variety of venues from 1839 to 1854, the earliest being the play 'Love a la Militaire'<sup>33</sup> performed in a local hotel.

This play was produced by a group of 'ladies and gentlemen' whose repertoire was generally light except for a performance of the melodrama, *The Miller and his Men* by Isaac Pocock in 1854. The other group of

amateur performers 'tradesmen and mechanics of the town'<sup>34</sup> were more adventurous in their choice of plays, presenting the first melodrama in Western Australia, *Inchcape Bell* by Edward Fitzball, in 1842. The repertoire for both groups came from the canon of British plays.

In his article, 'Imperialist discourses: theatrical performances in Perth to 1854'<sup>35</sup> Dunstan comments on the colonists' deference to London theatre culture arguing that this, "institutionalised their own marginal, liminal colonial relation to their dominant British counterpart".<sup>36</sup> However, this argument does not take into account that there were no other possibilities. The early colonists brought their culture with them and, in the few years after settlement, when their main priority was to survive, the simplest and easiest option was to reproduce what they knew: the same culture but in a different setting.

<sup>33</sup> *Perth Gazette*, 20 July 1839.

<sup>34</sup> *Inquirer*, 21 December 1842.

<sup>35</sup> Bill Dunstan, "Imperialist discourses: amateur theatrical performances in Perth to 1854," *Australasian Drama Studies* 23, (October 1993): 45-55.

<sup>36</sup> Dunstan, "Imperialist discourses" 47.

However even these performances were not without controversy: a local Congregational lay preacher Henry Trigg wrote to the Perth Gazette in 1839 disapproving of “theatricals”,<sup>37</sup> contradicting the opinion of a mainly Anglican religious community with more liberal views. However, the consequence of the complaint was that the female roles in the colonial productions were performed by males for the next thirty years.

As the population increased in the years between 1850 and 1890 so did amateur performances of music and theatre, notwithstanding peaks and troughs throughout the decades that appear to have been influenced by economic conditions, and the interests of individual members of the colony.<sup>38</sup>

In 1851 the first professional entertainers, the New York Ethiopian Serenaders arrived, en route by sea from Sydney to Calcutta.<sup>39</sup> They were closely followed by a ‘Mr Cullen’, who gave readings of Shakespeare in the Stag’s Head in Fremantle in 1852.<sup>40</sup> However, because of its remoteness, sparse, scattered population and limited economic activity, Western Australia did not attract significant numbers of professional entertainers until the 1860s when the shipping service expanded to include Western Australia. Performers on their way to Asia from the Eastern States would pause to perform in Perth and Fremantle for a few nights before moving on. An exception was the Lyons Rocky Mountain Wonders, who, in 1869 toured the regional towns of York, Northam, Newcastle (Toodyay, from 1910) Geraldton, and Bunbury as well as performing in Fremantle and Perth. The director, Mrs H.P Lyons formed a relationship with the Fremantle Amateur Dramatic Corps, taking various female roles and, by so doing reinstated women’s place on the local amateur stage.

---

<sup>37</sup> *Perth Gazette*, 5 October 1839, 12 October 1839.

<sup>38</sup> Kornweibel, *Apollo and the Pioneers*, notes how in the eighties and nineties the development of music owed much to four men, Stone (1844-1920) who became Chief Justice in 1901, Hensman (1834-1902) who became a Judge in 1892, and Onslow (1842-1908) Chief Justice in 1883, and the arrival of Sir William Cleaver Francis Robinson who was to serve three terms as Governor of Western Australia, (January 1875 to September 1877, April 1880 to February 1883, and October 1890 to March 1895). 76-83. All these men had a profound interest in music with Sir Robinson composing music for a range of official events.

<sup>39</sup> B. Coachley, “Music and Drama in Western Australia,” vol. 1, “1829-1879: Must have a Beginning you know,” 1995, unpublished manuscript in Battye Library, Perth. 7.

<sup>40</sup> *Perth Gazette*, 25 October 1852.

Her husband, Mr H.P. Lyons eventually became the proprietor of the Stirling Arms Hotel in Guildford.<sup>41</sup>

A few courageous souls had ventured into the regions previously, with Newcastle recording its first visitors “Miss Edith Mitchell and Miss Annie Hill” presenting their “Classical Dramatic, Vocal and Miscellaneous Entertainment,” in October 1865. Originally from England, they were the first professional female actors to appear in Western Australia.<sup>42</sup> Before the arrival of the railway, travel to the country centres was difficult but once the centres were linked by rail in the 1880s, performances by travelling companies became more frequent. York, on the railway line from Albany to Perth, became a significant stopping off point for entertainers as did Albany itself. Albany was the colony’s major port prior to the construction of Fremantle Harbour in the 1890s, and was where the entertainers frequently rested, and performed, on their way to and from Perth. The Hyperion Opera Company of five players were even more adventurous in 1881 following a circuit from Perth<sup>43</sup> to Northampton, Greenough Flats, and Geraldton.<sup>44</sup>

A discouraging factor for all performers was the lack of a purpose- built theatre or concert hall in Western Australia. Entertainers, both amateur and professional, performed in hotels until the Court House was built in 1845 and the Mechanic’s Hall in 1852. However even the local amateurs, like the Perth Dramatic Corps gave up on the Mechanic’s Hall in 1869.<sup>45</sup> The Perth Town Hall, built in 1870, was ill equipped as a theatre but became the main venue for visiting artists until, with an influx of population and capital due to the gold rushes, purpose built theatres were constructed at the end of the nineteenth century.

There was one group of entertainers however who did not require a building, the circus performers. Stebbing’s Intercolonial Circus arrived from Adelaide in 1869 and gave a performance on the Fremantle cricket ground for 800 people,<sup>46</sup> but it took

---

<sup>41</sup> David Hough, “The Playmakers,” in *farewell Cinderella*, eds. Geoffrey Bolton, Richard Rossiter, and Jan Ryan (Perth: University of Western Australia Press 2003). 18.

<sup>42</sup> AusStage. <http://www.austage.edu.au/pages/contributor/447176>.

<sup>43</sup> *The West Australian*, 1 April 1881, 3.

<sup>44</sup> *Victorian Express* (Geraldton), 4 May 1881, 3.

<sup>45</sup> Hough, “The Playmakers”, 18.

<sup>46</sup> *South Australian Register*, 12 March 1864: *Inquirer*, 28 April, 3 May 1869.

another nine years before the next troupe arrived and not until the 1880s and 90s that they started to arrive with any regularity.

From this overview it is possible to conclude that for the early colonial settlers in Western Australia the performing arts were a component in their lives. The settlers transferred their original culture from Europe into a new space, and despite the restrictions of isolation, and the lack of facilities, they reproduced the artistic elements of the culture of their homelands as best they could. Professional entertainers came to Western Australia when it was profitable and convenient to do so but, in the years before the discovery of gold, their visits were constrained by the demographics of population, the economy, the lack of infrastructure and the relative isolation of Western Australia.

### **Gold in the West and a League of Nations**

The Western Australian government looked with envy to the Eastern Colonies and the wealth generated by the mining industry, in particular the gold discoveries, and the subsequent economic expansion of these colonies. As a consequence, the W.A. Government decided in 1872 to offer a reward of 5,000 pounds for the discovery of the colony's first payable gold field. The 1880s also saw substantial public capital investment in telegraph lines and rail and the first outlays on water and sewerage, paving the way for the infrastructure needs of an emerging mineral industry.<sup>47</sup>

The discovery of gold in the Kimberley region of Western Australia in 1882, drew to the state, tough and experienced prospectors who knew how to live in hot, arid conditions.<sup>48</sup> They were a distinct breed, employing Aboriginal trackers to find water, care for their horses and to look for gold. They could use dry blowers to sift the dirt in an area where water was scarce and would endure the heat and the dust.<sup>49</sup> Subsequently prospectors made discoveries in the Pilbara, the Murchison, and the Yilgarn, finally halting at Southern Cross in 1888. Arguably too, there is

---

<sup>47</sup> N.G. Butlin, *Australian Domestic Product, Investment and Foreign Borrowing, 1861-1938/39*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962). Perth was also joined via telegraph to Adelaide in 1877 and the Broome to Java cable was laid in 1889, linking Western Australia to the other colonies and the outside world where communication had previously been by sea mail.

<sup>48</sup> Blainey, *The Rush That Never Ended*, 167.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid*, 172.

another proposition that many prospectors came into the Eastern Goldfields directly from the west coast.

East of Southern Cross was an undulating plain with a covering of shrubby bushes and gum trees; an area that had disappointed the government explorers, Lefroy, Hunt, Giles, and Forrest, who claimed the land had little value and was 'worthless' even for pasture.<sup>50</sup> There were no rivers, no established tracks, and an average annual rainfall of 260mm. Regardless, over the next four years prospectors ranged out over this land. Many were ill-equipped, lacking sufficient water and supplies and were either forced back empty handed, or found gold but not enough to tempt them to return: the first exceptions were Arthur Bayley and William Ford who discovered gold 188 kilometres to the east of Southern Cross at a place called Fly Flat near Coolgardie in September, 1892.

Exactly nine months after Bayley reported the find at Coolgardie, Paddy Hannan arrived at Coolgardie with news of a rich discovery at what is now Kalgoorlie, thirty-seven kilometres east of Coolgardie; he applied for and was granted a reward claim. This find of alluvial gold was especially important as it led to the discovery of the lodes of the Golden Mile, one of the richest square miles of gold that has ever been mined.

The discoveries continued with Coolgardie and Hannans, as Kalgoorlie was then called, becoming the jumping off points for a new wave of prospectors. It would take a further three years before the goldfields of southern Western Australia were plotted and their full extent known. As Blainey<sup>51</sup> comments:

men could travel from within a hundred miles of the southern coast of Australia and go by various routes all the way north to the Tropic of Capricorn, traveling through auriferous zones almost the entire way, and finding the longest stretch of gold less country a mere thirty miles.

While the west was beginning to boom, the eastern colonies were plunged into a great depression. Artificially inflated land prices plummeted, forcing banks and

---

<sup>50</sup> Regardless of the early assessments and before the discovery of gold in Coolgardie in 1890 the Hampton Plains Company bought a large parcel of land, 18 blocks near what was to become Coolgardie and Lake Lefroy. The Government granting it the rights to all minerals on condition that it paid royalties on gold and silver mined. Which meant that later mining on those blocks was subject to negotiation between the Company and prospective miners.

<sup>51</sup> Blainey 183.

building societies into bankruptcy. The prices of wool, and wheat slumped on the world market, with a drought and labour disputes compounding the problem. Many thousands became unemployed. However as pointed out by Blainey,<sup>52</sup> the nation's crisis became a triumph in the West as many of these men moved across the continent to the goldfields looking for work. The world-wide recession brought other benefits to Western Australia as investors in London searched for outlets for their money.<sup>53</sup> The price of gold was stable but had greater purchasing power in the face of depression and deflated commodity prices, making shares in the newly formed gold mines attractive. In 1894 ninety-four mining companies were floated, and the boom had begun.

In 1890 the total population of the colony of Western Australia was 46,290, by 1900 it had reached 179,708, due mainly to migration from the east; that made it the largest internal migration in Australia's history. Not all of the migrants were born in Australia. Many, as indicated in the census of 1901, came from other continents and brought with them their own customs and affinities.

The populations of Coolgardie, Kalgoorlie and Boulder grew very rapidly, with the steady flow of prospectors and miners into the region becoming a flood as the need for more labour to work the mines grew. Coolgardie was the first to feel the influx, closely followed by Boulder, Kalgoorlie and the surrounding townships. Immigrants came from Africa, Europe, America, China, India and New Zealand as well as migrants from the other colonies of Australia.<sup>54</sup> Of the Europeans who came, the British represented the majority with the Germans, Austrians,<sup>55</sup> and Italians numerically the next largest groups. The first migrants to the Goldfields were typically male and reasonably young. However, as the tents and humpies became corrugated iron and hessian shacks and brick and stone buildings were built, families quickly joined them.

---

<sup>52</sup> Ibid, 184.

<sup>53</sup> A significant portion of the finance capital raised did reach Western Australia, as the boom in West Australian Companies was accompanied by company promoters who sold their initial holdings into the public companies registered almost entirely on the London Stock Exchange.

<sup>54</sup> W.B. Kimberley, *The History of Western Australia* (Melbourne: F.W. Niven & Co. 1897), 322.

<sup>55</sup> The designated Austrians were mostly citizens of the Austro-Austrian Empire and from areas that were to form the state known as Yugoslavia.



Table 3 : Birthplace of the population Western Australia, census 1901

Birthplace	Males	Females	Total
Western Australia	26,529	26,134	52,663
New South Wales	8,395	5,727	14,122
Victoria	24,342	15,149	39,491
Queensland	1,474	1,121	2,595
South Australia	9,686	6,564	16,250
Tasmania	1,071	679	1,750
Undefined	61	20	81
New Zealand and Fiji	1,778	963	2,741
<b>Total Australasia</b>	<b>73,336</b>	<b>56,357</b>	<b>129,691</b>
England	17,215	8,165	25,380
Wales	644	265	909
Scotland	3,953	1,447	5,400
Ireland	6,413	3,449	9,862
Austria-Hungary	390	28	418
Belgium	25	5	30
Denmark (including Iceland)	281	39	320
France (including Corsica)	170	84	254
Germany	1,255	267	1,522
Greece	146	2	148
Holland	36	5	41
Italy	1,296	58	1,354
Norway	405	15	420
Portugal	37	3	40
Russia	323	66	389
Spain	142	9	151
Sweden	715	39	754
Other European Countries	186	49	235
<b>Total Europe</b>	<b>33,632</b>	<b>13,995</b>	<b>47,627</b>
Total Asia	4,416	394	4,810
Total Africa	160	83	243
Total America	918	233	1,151
Other	413	187	600
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>	<b>112,873</b>	<b>71,249</b>	<b>184,124</b> <sup>56</sup>

These settlers however were not the first inhabitants of this region of Western Australia; the land had been occupied by the Aboriginal people for thousands of years before white persons came, with several successful gold strikes attributed to their assistance.<sup>57</sup>

<sup>56</sup> *Western Australian Year Book*, 1902-4.

<sup>57</sup> Neville Green, "Aborigines and White Settlers," in *A New History of Western Australia*, ed. C.T. Stannage (Perth: University of Western Australia Press, 1981), 117.

The medley of people living in the Eastern Goldfields in the 1890s brought to the settlements a diverse range of cultural backgrounds and practices, all of which were subject to the effects of the arid and isolated environment and the influence of their fellow citizens.

The conditions that led to the discovery of gold in Western Australia, how gold was found and mined, with investment from London and labour from other colonies, is a familiar narrative that is usually coupled with reports of the hardships that the miners and their families suffered, of mine disasters and desperate working conditions. However, more recent research by social historians has revealed additional narratives. Eklund, in his recent publication <sup>58</sup>asks questions concerning the process of community formation, and how people in remote communities with few resources create a life and make sense of their worlds.<sup>59</sup> Mirroring the research on Ballarat in the previous chapter, the following sections will consider what role the performing arts played in the lives of the prospectors, miners and their families in this very isolated inland area of Western Australia, as they sought to build their community there in the latter part of the nineteenth and the early twentieth century, and what effect this had on the newly formed Australian performing arts industry.

## **PART 2: SONGS AND BALLADS, THEATRES AND ENTERTAINERS**

While the following discussion, structured in a manner similar to that of the previous chapter, identifies similar areas for comparison, the differing local conditions and circumstances suggest other areas requiring separate discussion and the amalgamation of some topics that were presented separately in the Ballarat chapter.

This section includes the early entertainment provided by the miners themselves, details of the venues used by both amateur and professional entertainers in the goldfields, and the capital city, and descriptions of the professional artists and troupes, including the circuses, who arrived in the goldfields to entertain the new

---

<sup>58</sup> Erik Eklund, *Mining Towns Making a Living, Making a Life* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press Ltd, 2012).

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid*, p5.

settlers. The artists and circuses are similar, because, in this remote part of Western Australia all entertainers who ventured as far as the Goldfields could be classified as travellers and, to a lesser or greater extent required similar logistic support and conditions.

The goldfields, and their miners and prospectors, continued to be topics in performance on the stage, from the time of the Victorian gold rush to the gold rush in the West and beyond. This repertoire will be followed as it reflects the considerations of the age. Also identified is the emergence of a new form of the arts, namely film, that would, for a period of time, become the dominant genre in the industry.

### **Campfire songs and local ballads**

At the beginning of 1893 an estimated 700 men were in Coolgardie with at least another 200 on the track travelling from Southern Cross. Conditions were harsh, with water and food in short supply. F. Cammilleri, who subsequently became a very successful prospector, complained as he wrote in his diary that 'we had nothing but tinned meat since leaving York'.<sup>60</sup> A stage magician, Carl Hertz<sup>61</sup> travelling to Kalgoorlie in September in 1897 echoed these sentiments as he commented about the lack of fresh meat but also gave thanks to Chicago because it almost fed the entire country on tinned corned beef, roast beef and condensed soup.<sup>62</sup> Despite the conditions, in less than a year Coolgardie had a dozen stores and hotels of hessian and bush poles, with the miners sleeping in tents and temporary shelters.<sup>63</sup>

---

<sup>60</sup> F.W.P, Cammilleri, *Diary*. The State Library of Western Australia, Perth, W.A. 12/BUS.b11425933.

<sup>61</sup> Carl Hertz was the stage name of Louis Morgenstern, an American magician and illusionist. 14-May -1859 to 20-March-1924. He toured extensively in Australia in 1896-1897 and was credited with being the first person to show projected motion pictures.

<sup>62</sup> Technologies not available to the Victorian miners. Carl Hertz, *A modern mystery merchant: the trials, tricks and travels of Carl Hertz, the famous American Illusionist* (London: Hutchinson & Co, 1924), 154.

<sup>63</sup> Blainey, *The Rush That Never Ended*, 178.



Fig. 34. Coolgardie 1894, courtesy Eastern Goldfields Historical Society.

Notwithstanding the view of some historians that the pioneers had little energy for anything except survival and the job in hand and that there was a lack of traditional mateship because of the conditions,<sup>64</sup> contemporary accounts suggest otherwise.

In the early days of the field you could walk down Bayley Street at night and within almost every second humpy, the delightful strains of various instruments, the popping of corks, and roars of hearty laughter could be heard as those within waxed merry, played euchre with dirty packs of cards or cribbage with bars of soap and matches for markers.<sup>65</sup>

Another journalist from 'The Sydney Town and Country Journal' wrote in a poetic vein about a similar scene:

— like against hundreds of white tents in front of which red fires gleam and smoke ... one can see a thousand slants of light from Bayley Street, hear the hum of a thousand voices, see candlelight striking through and dark forms showing silhouette wreathes upward into the sky that seems never to wear a cloud on its bosom, while snatches of song and music mingle with the doleful note of the

---

<sup>64</sup> Martyn Webb and Audrey Webb, *Golden Destiny: The Centenary History of Kalgoorlie-Boulder and the Eastern Goldfields of Western Australia* (City of Kalgoorlie-Boulder: 1993), 123.

<sup>65</sup> *Coolgardie Miner*, 24 November 1894.

camel, the neigh of horses, the noisy clamour of public houses or the noise of traffic in New Bayley St.<sup>66</sup>

**The campfire story tellers and musicians were remembered with warmth by the early prospectors.**

There were many good story tellers amongst the boys of the “old camp”<sup>67</sup> but Jack Duffy<sup>68</sup> was the best raconteur of them all. His stories were mostly true, drawn from varied and adventurous experiences. He had a fertile imagination and could embellish a story and give it life, creating the illusion of reality.<sup>69</sup>

Cosgrove<sup>70</sup> played the fiddle, and it was not an unusual sight to see him sitting on a box under the salmon gums in Bayley Street, playing the well-remembered Irish Ballads, while Lord Percy Douglas<sup>71</sup> solemnly took round the hat.<sup>72</sup>

**Herbert Hoover, a young engineer sent to Coolgardie in 1897 to oversee the interests of his firm, Bewick Moreing and Co, also observed the use of music by the miners to alleviate the strain of living and working in such difficult conditions.**

He [Hoover] found to his delight that Western Australian diggers had one great virtue. When they took solace in strong drink for their life in the desert they never seemed to think of ‘shooting up the town’ Besides they had nothing to shoot with. They ran to sentiment. They’d put their arms around each other’s shoulders and sing of Mother.<sup>73</sup>

Although Hoover is not strictly correct in his comment about firearms, it is obvious from these and the other observations that the miners did have time for activities other than work; that the company of other men during their leisure hours was a component of their lives and that music was a part of this. Hoover too was not the first person to observe that these rough, tough men sang sentimental songs; Clara Saunders noted that Carr Boyd filled the air with his favourite song ‘Darling,

---

<sup>66</sup> Richard Wattone, *Quest for Gold* (Scarborough: Contraland Press, Western Australia, 1985,) 16.

<sup>67</sup> The name given to Coolgardie after the discovery of gold in Kalgoorlie.

<sup>68</sup> An early goldfields character who was the first trooper in Coolgardie and after resigning from the force commenced auctioneering and started the first Open Call. Many amusing incidents are told about his exploits.

<sup>69</sup> Arthur Reid, *Those were the Days* (Carlisle: Hesperian Press, 1986,) 25.

<sup>70</sup> Bill Cosgrove, the partner of Jack Duffy, who figured in many of his exploits. His son became Jack Cosgrove, the actor.

<sup>71</sup> Lord Percy Douglas with his companion Hon. David Carnegie arrived in Australia in 1892 to look for gold mining prospects for English investors.

<sup>72</sup> Reid, *Those were the Days*, 25.

<sup>73</sup> Clark, *History of Australia*, 160.

Goodbye Darling',<sup>74</sup> and it can be observed that concert programmes during these years were composed mainly of Victorian sentimental ballads. Bellanta<sup>75</sup> argues that such songs offered men an acceptable outlet for emotions that they would not normally show in public. That might reasonably explain the relative lack of robust manly songs in the repertoire of the early concerts, and the proliferation of songs about 'home, sweet home' and 'long, lost loves'.

Importantly, during a period in the Goldfields history when there were no stores selling musical instruments in the mining camps, the miners still had access to them. Balharry confirms their availability:

While at Southern Cross I bought my native boy an outfit.....the natives were thrilled if you gave them any kind of musical instrument such as a mouth organ, tin whistle or Jew's harp<sup>76</sup>

Southern Cross, 188 kilometres to the west of Coolgardie and the Eastern Goldfields became, before the railway was built, the major provisioning centre for the prospectors and miners, where they purchased their equipment, and stores and, apparently, musical instruments. Arguably these musical instruments were of sufficient value and meaning to the early pioneers to be either conveyed along the track with the prospector's original belongings or to be transported to the fields by the early camel and bullock trains.

Another interesting feature noted by Farrant<sup>77</sup> are the number of leases and place names in the Goldfields such as "Maritana", "Mikado", or "Struck Oil"<sup>78</sup> that are derived from musical theatre, evidence of a knowledge of a musical genre that the prospectors must have brought with them as part of their cultural baggage.

---

<sup>74</sup> Sara Saunders, *Notes from the Memories of Clara Saunders: One of the Pioneer Women on the Coolgardie Goldfields* (Perth: Batty Library, PR 7730.)

<sup>75</sup> Mellisa Bellanta, "Australian Masculinities and Popular Song: The Songs of Sentimental Blokes 1900-1930's," *Australian Historical Studies* 43:3 (2012): 412 – 428.

<sup>76</sup> J.F. Balharry, *Letters to G. Spencer Compton* (written about the Eastern Goldfields in the 1890's), Batty Library 2214A.

<sup>77</sup> Farrant, "A Social History of Music," 7.

<sup>78</sup> *Maritana* is a three-act opera written by Vincent Wallace and Edward Fitzball, it premiered at the Theatre Royal in Drury Lane, in September 1845. *The Mikado*, a comic opera in two acts was written by Arthur Sullivan and W.S. Gilbert. First performed in London in March 1885. *Struck Oil* was originally a one-man play written by Sam Smith, after various reworkings, the play premiered in Salt Lake City in 1874. It first played in Australia in Melbourne in August 1874.

### **Damn Coolgardie**

Damn Coolgardie, damn the track,  
*Damn it there and damn it back,*  
Damn the country, damn the weather,  
Damn the goldfields altogether.<sup>79</sup>

In the recorded history of the gold rush in Western Australia, it has not been possible to find any reference to local balladeers performing topical songs on the stage, similar to those from the Victorian goldfields. The songs sung around the campfire or in the theatres mostly came from a repertoire of popular tunes imported from Britain or America. However, contemporary newspapers, both local and metropolitan, have proved a valuable source of written ballads, which may have been sung or recited by the bush poets. Arguably these verses were poetry and, as such, fall within the literary canon rather than that of the performing arts. However, this does not take into account the nineteenth century custom of reading poetry in taverns, round the campfire, and at social gatherings, or that many of these ballads were written with a chorus verse to be sung by an audience, as in the following:

#### **New Song for Western Australia – First verse and chorus.**

Hurrah for the gold which at last is found,  
And Hurrah for Western Australia:  
Our long defer'd hopes at last are as sound  
Yes! as sound as the gold of Australia  
  
Then dig away boys, be jolly and wise,  
And push ahead Western Australia;  
Yes, let your song be like a glad jubilee  
We'll push ahead Western Australia.<sup>80</sup>

As the following examples indicate, bush poetry was also part of the performing arts repertoire that would have been recited out loud or sung by the prospectors and miners on the goldfields.

---

<sup>79</sup> A popular drinking toast, no known author.

<sup>80</sup> The song published in the Herald (Fremantle) 13 December 1893, is part of a longer song, with the second verse repeated as a chorus after the other four verses.

Terrell,<sup>81</sup> in his collection of gold rush era poets noted that many of the writers were journalists<sup>82</sup> who not only worked on the local newspapers as reporters but also provided the community with entertainment or social and political commentary in rhyme. There were others who tried their hands at verse including the prospector, Dorrie Doolette,<sup>83</sup> the explorer David Carnegie,<sup>84</sup> the mining engineer Herbert Hoover,<sup>85</sup> and many who published anonymously or under a pseudonym.<sup>86</sup>

The subjects in the verse were wide ranging, frequently referencing the feelings of the prospectors and miners and expressing a range of emotions from hope and joy, to despair and anger.

#### **To COOLGARDIE**

Hurrah! For old Coolgardie  
 All true me, brave and hardy;  
 Roll up your swags and come along,  
 With smiling face, and lively song:  
 Come, all true men and hardy,  
*Let's start for old Coolgardie.*

#### **THE RETURN**

Oh, rotten old Coolgardie;  
 Fools, knaves and idiots tardy;  
 Roll up your rags and limp along,  
 With dirty face and doleful song;  
 Fools, knaves and idiots tardy,  
*Let's start from old Coolgardie.*<sup>87</sup>

Doolette wrote about the difficulties of mining in the *Windlass Song*<sup>88</sup> as did “Cross Cut” Wilson in *A Man was Killed in the Mine Today*,<sup>89</sup> while another verse tells the story of gold, from where it was found and mined by the prospectors, to when it was locked in the vault by the directors:

<sup>81</sup> John Terrell, *Golden Threads: Poetry from Western Australia's gold rush era* (Bateman, WA: John Terrell, 2018).

<sup>82</sup> Edwin Greenslade “Dryblower” Murphy, 1866-1939, published in the *Coolgardie Miner*, and *The Sun*

John Philip “Bluebush” Bourke, 1860-1914, *The Sun*. Fredrick Charles Vosper, 1869-1901, *Coolgardie Miner*, and *The Sun*. Alfred Thomas “Spinefex” Chandler, 1852-1941, *Goldfields Courier*, *Golden Age*, *Coolgardie Miner*. Charles Wiltens “Viator” Hayward, 1866-1950, *The Sun* and *The Sunday Times*.

Julian “Curlew/Saladin Stuart, 1866-1929, *The Westralian Worker*.

<sup>83</sup> Dorham Doolette, 1840-1924, mining entrepreneur and prospector.

<sup>84</sup> David Carnegie, 1871-1900, prospector and explorer.

<sup>85</sup> Herbert Hoover, 1874-1964, mining engineer, geologist and politician

<sup>86</sup> For example, Thomas Henry “Crosscut” Wilson, 1867-1925, miner. Francis William (Prospect Good) Ophel, 1871-1912, prospector.

<sup>87</sup> The first verses of two songs published in the *Inquirer and Commercial News*, (Perth) 9 February 1894, 21.

<sup>88</sup> Published in *The Sun*, 6 November 1910

<sup>89</sup> Published in 1909.



### **Where the Gold is Found – First verse**

Away far out on the Ninety track  
That's where the gold is found;  
Past Lake Darlot, 'way out back-  
That's where the gold is found:  
That's where the diggers brave are toiling,  
'Neath a scorching sun whose heat is broiling,  
Fighting for luck in strife turmoiling-  
That's where the gold is found.<sup>90</sup>

Personal stories are told too as in *The Coolgardie Miner*<sup>91</sup> which narrates the tale of a miner longing for home and family, and how, now that his fortune is made, he will sail back to England and leave it no more.

Like the ballads of the Victorian Gold rush, it is possible to follow the history of the era through verse and song -

### **Ten Years Ago- First verse**

Ten years ago Westralia slept  
A Cinderella lone and shy  
Within whose veins no ardour lived  
For whom her gilded not the sky.  
Ten years ago she walked and yawned  
Unconscious of her destined fate  
Ten years ago her hey day dawned  
To lift her to her highest state  
Her wondrous wealth bewitched the West  
Towards her turned the human flow  
When Bayley back the curtain hurled  
*Ten years ago*<sup>92</sup>

Local events were included, as in *The Riot where no one was hurt*<sup>93</sup> which references the incident in 1898 when the Premier of Western Australia, John Forrest, was jostled and pushed onto the tracks at Kalgoorlie Railway Station, and *Down in the Goldmine* which records the rescue of the miner Vareschetti from the flooded Bonnievale mine in 1907.

---

<sup>90</sup> First verse, *Where the Gold is Found, Coolgardie Miner*, 15 May 1895, 3.

<sup>91</sup> Warren Fahey, *The World Turned Upside Down, The Australian Gold Rush told through Song, Story and Reminiscence* (Potts Point, NSW: Bodgie Books, 2001), 161.

<sup>92</sup> Edwin Greenslade "Dryblower" Murphy, *Ten Years Ago*, September 1910.

<sup>93</sup> Andree "Viator" Hayward, *The Riot where no one was hurt*, April 1898.

### Down the Goldmine - First verse and chorus

Coolgardie folk remember well, the torrent from the sky  
Westralia's tunnels took the flood, men were forced to fly  
It chilled the blood to have to hear the wailing whistle blow  
As miner Vareschetti lay, a thousand feet below.  
It's down the goldmine, underneath the ground  
Floods are apt to fill the mine, men are apt to drown  
Dare the dark and the dreary water, send a diver down  
Deep down in the goldmine, underneath the ground.<sup>94</sup>

The most prolific composer of song and verse about the goldfields was Edwin Greenslade (Dryblower) Murphy. Born in Victoria he arrived in Coolgardie to search for gold in 1892, after walking from Perth. Shortly after his arrival the *Coolgardie Miner* was published, and Dryblower became a regular contributor. He had a varied career, moving to London to float a goldmine, back to Kalgoorlie to work on the *Sun*, and eventually to work as a columnist on the *West Australian* and *Sunday Times* in Perth for the next 40 years.<sup>95</sup>

In his career as a journalist Dryblower wrote over 2,000 verses plus many short stories and caricatures. However, his favourite topic was always the goldfields. A contemporary, reviewing his journalism wrote that:

In the 40 years of the history of this paper, Dryblower's work runs through it as the theme song of a new brilliant Journalism.

Always the goldfields have been nearest and dearest to Dryblower's heart.

When Bayley's Day comes round his thoughts always wing to the old times of mateship and good cheer days when Coolgardie was young: when Paddy Hannan was writing the name of Kalgoorlie on the map of the world.<sup>96</sup>

Dryblower's ballads and verse, composed during the gold rush and in the subsequent decades, are still of interest to folk music enthusiasts today. They tell stories of gold discoveries, and the lives of the miners and their families, frequently

---

<sup>94</sup> Author of ballad unknown, music by Joseph Bryan Geoghegan.

<sup>95</sup> To learn about 'Dryblower' Murphy, see *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol. 10, (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1986), 634-635. Arthur L. Bennett, *Dryblower Murphy: his life and times* (Fremantle: Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 1982).

<sup>96</sup> Victor Courtney, "Back to the Goldfields and the Work of "Dryblower," *Sunday Times*, 11 Sept 1938.

mixed with satire and politics. *The Goldfield's Dream, A Grecian Gift*, refers to the political decision to use water from Mundaring Weir to irrigate the grape-growing, farming region of Guildford, so decreasing the amount available to the Goldfields and the wheatbelt.<sup>97</sup>

#### **The Goldfield's Dream, A Grecian Gift- first and last verse**

That arid desert brown and wide  
That spreads between the Fields and Perth,  
Conflicting towns and camps divide  
The subjects and the salt of earth  
The Fields are ever slaves to Perth-  
Its lot is plenty, ours is dearth  
We thought to see the desert glow  
With orchards bloom and flame of flowers  
From Southern Cross to Ivanhoe  
And through those northern towns of ours;  
Alas, it was an idle dream,  
A Grecian gift's our water scheme.

There is much that can be written about Dryblower and his goldfields ballads, but what lingers in memory are his humorous verses, written to be performed before a local audience of prospectors and miners.

#### **HOLUS BOLUS**

He lay in the hospital, pallid and weak,  
The wreck of a once healthy man;  
His breathing was wheezy, his voice was a squeak.  
As his story of woe he began.

"Twas Danny O'Hara," he murmured in pain,  
"Who told me his camel was bad,  
A bulky young bull, with the strength of a crane,  
But a temperament quiet and sad.

The camel was sick, up at Cassidy's Hill,  
And he'd think me an angel from heaven  
If I'd help him to give it a pick-me-up-pill,  
To keep it from "throwing a seven".

A pipe was procured, three feet of bamboo,  
Then Danny, myself and the pill.  
Went bravely this medical office to do  
For the patient at Cassidy's Hill.

---

<sup>97</sup> First published in the *Sunday Times*, April 30 1905, also in the *Kalgoorlie Sun*, 2 April 1905.

“When the pill’s in the pipe, and the pipe’s in his jaws,  
 Which I’ll open”. O’Hara observed,  
 “You place the free end of the blow-pipe in yours,  
 And puff when his gullet’s uncurved,  
 “I’d blow it myself, but me bellows are weak,  
 And I haven’t the strength in my lungs,  
 Since I had that bad accident up at The Peak,  
 My puffing machinery’s bung.  
 “The pill is composed”, he further explained,  
 Of axle-grease, sulphur and tar;  
 And piquant and suitable flavour is gained  
 By a dip in the kerosene jar.  
 “To aid his digestion there’s gravel and shot,  
 And I’ve seasoned it strongly with snuff;  
 And I want in his system to scatter the lot,  
 So take a deep breath and then puff.”  
 With the pipe to my lips a long breath I drew,  
 Till my diaphragm threatened to burst,  
 Then, bang! Down my gullet the flaming pill flew!  
 For the blithering camel blew first!<sup>98</sup>

The poets and storytellers in the West were unlike their counterparts in the Victorian gold rush of the 1850s in that they were not solely performing balladeers like Thatcher, though their themes and subjects were drawn from a similar set of experiences. Collectively, they tell the history of the gold rush from a human perspective, with all the human emotions; they entertain and distract, and comment on political and social events. Some research has been done on the ballads and verse of the Australian goldfields by musicians such as Both and Fahey.<sup>99</sup> However, the songs and verse of the goldfields of Western Australia are worthy of a separate study in themselves for, while seeking to explore common human themes, they are composed and performed in very different physical, social, political and economic circumstances.

<sup>98</sup> E.G. Murphy (Dryblower), “Holis Bolus” *West Australian Bush Poets from the Past*, <http://wabushpoets.asn.au/pastpoets/Murphy/holisbolus.html> accessed 14 September 2018.

<sup>99</sup> Ross A. Both and Warren Fahey, “Songs from the Australian Goldfields, Part 1: Gold mania,” *Journal of Australasian Mining History*, Vol. 13, October 2015: 144. Ross A. Both and Warren Fahey, “Songs from the Australian Goldfields, Part 2: Life on the Goldfields,” *Journal of Australasian Mining History* Vol. 14, October 2016: 128.

### **Makeshift theatres and travelling entertainers**

As it was for their counterparts in Victoria, it was not very long before the Western Australian' prospectors and settlers began to look for more sophisticated entertainment than that provided by their own talents. The geographic location of these fields was, however, vastly different from those in the East. The capital city, Perth, was located six hundred kilometres to the west and the nearest port, Esperance, was over four hundred kilometres to the south. Travel was along dusty tracks until the railway from Perth was completed in 1896.

This was at the time of a depression in the Eastern Colonies and the United States when the demand for entertainers in those regions had slowed considerably. Fortunately, this was also the era of the travelling company, and, even before the railway was built or there were any dedicated theatre buildings, the lure of gold attracted many professional entertainers who were looking for employment, to the West. They were prepared to chance their arm on dusty roads and camp in hessian tents in the expectation of making a fortune. Carl Hertz, the American illusionist, who travelled to the goldfields in 1897, gives an insight into the conditions experienced by these hardy travellers in his autobiography.<sup>100</sup>

I started from Perth and made a trip five hundred miles inland to Boulder City, stopping at about a dozen mining camps on the way..... eight assistants accompanied my wife and myself on our travels, and, in order to get through the country in certain parts, we were obliged to charter twenty camels to transport ourselves and all the apparatus necessary for my illusions, since I presented my audiences even in the most out-of-the way places with precisely the same entertainment I gave in England<sup>101</sup>.

The Hertz party hired the camels and their handlers in Perth at a cost of 50 pounds, which did not include the cost of food to be provided by the hirer. The cost of the food, consisting mainly of tinned meat from Chicago, the scarcity of water and the discomfort of sitting on a camel all day added to the challenges. A manager was sent ahead of the party to make preparations which included, in a number of sites, having to build a theatre.

---

<sup>100</sup> Hetz. *A Modern Mystery Merchant*.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid, page 153.



Fig. 35. Advertising with camels, used by Carl Hertz in Western Australia. State Library of Victoria, mp017239.

The theatre consists of a sort of corral built of sage brush, and you can enclose as much ground as you think fit. The fence is about twelve feet high, and the natives weave the twigs so closely together that the "Peeping Toms" cannot see through, much less crawl through<sup>102</sup>.

To build a temporary theatre to accommodate 1,000 people was considered cheaper than renting a similar venue, even if one was available. Reserved seating consisting of a bench down to a kerosene-box was always 24 shillings, other seating 12 shillings and standing room 6 shillings.<sup>103</sup> Very often the canny miners would pay the 6 shillings to see the first act and if they liked the show would scramble for the seating and be charged accordingly. Hertz recommended that all entertainers should carry a gold scale as all trade was carried on in gold dust and nuggets and that to travel without one would be like sailing a ship without a compass. The following detail gives an indication of the profitability of the journey and why the entertainers took up the challenge.

As the miners everywhere were very liberal there was always a good profit in the box-office in overweight gold. In the rush of buying reserved seats the miners were not very particular as to the exact weight of the gold which they threw down and were always sure to give more than the required

---

<sup>102</sup> Ibid, page 155.

<sup>103</sup> 6 shillings was over half a day's pay for a mine labourer.

amount. Indeed, I have sometimes found on weighing up after the show that I had nearly 20 pounds worth more than the box-office count of tickets called for<sup>104</sup>.

Arriving at Coolgardie on a Sunday, Hertz was surprised at the number of people walking up and down aimlessly. On enquiring whether there was any entertainment available, he was told that it was not allowed on a Sunday. After a number of calls on the mayor, Hertz finally convinced him that his Sunday performance would be a sacred illusion show called "Noah's Ark" and was given permission to perform. The show proved to be a great success with a packed house and was reported that hundreds were turned away from the door.

The townships of Coolgardie and Kalgoorlie grew very quickly, as did the appropriation of spaces for performance. Camp fire singsongs became boisterous musical gatherings in the rough and ready pubs. Impromptu concerts were given by 'very much amateurish comrades'<sup>105</sup>. The backs of wagons,<sup>106</sup> canvas tents,<sup>107</sup> marquees,<sup>108</sup> and any spare ground were used as venues for both local and travelling entertainers.

Facing the light of a store were about 150 residents, chiefly miners, of the district, some seated on boxes, cases or anything available; others not so fortunate, squatting in the dust of the streets, whilst a few of necessity preferred standing. After a few remarks from a gentleman who proved himself a first class master of ceremonies, the evening's amusement commenced with a song, then a recitation, more songs, more recitations, stump speeches, step dances - the stage being a fruit case, which, however, answered very well for the occasion.<sup>109</sup>

The first recorded professional company to come to Coolgardie, in April 1894, was Mr J. Mark's Variety Company, who performed in a room adjoining Mr Paisley's store<sup>110</sup>.

---

<sup>104</sup> Ibid, p.156.

<sup>105</sup> *Coolgardie Pioneer*, 11 December 1897.

<sup>106</sup> A concert performed by the Coolgardie Popular Concert Party at night on the back of a wagon in Bailey St, Coolgardie in June 1894. *Coolgardie Miner*, 23. June. 1894.

<sup>107</sup> St George Variety Company tent season in Coolgardie, September 1894. *Coolgardie Miner*, 12 September 1894.

<sup>108</sup> Coolgardie Minstrels, a farce 'The New Find', performed in Messrs Ivory and Downie's Marquee, October 1894. *Coolgardie Miner*, 6 October 1894.

<sup>109</sup> *West Australian*, 15 December 1894.

<sup>110</sup> *Coolgardie Miner*, 14 April 1894.

As the entertainers kept on coming, one enterprising local miner, Frank Smallage, seeing the need for a permanent performance space, built a hall, later to be called the Olympia or the Theatre Royal, in Woodward Street, Coolgardie. Opened in October 1894, it was a rectangular auditorium of 13.2 x 8.8 metres with a proscenium stage of 6 x 6.3 metres and providing regular seating for 322 and 429 when crowded<sup>111</sup>. The local paper commended the proprietor on fulfilling a long felt want, but noted that the stage required raising another foot to assist the audience in the back<sup>112</sup>

In November 1894, the first professional company, the Wilkinson Gaiety Company, arrived at the theatre. Playing to packed houses, the company put on three shows, Hamlet/Aladdin, Lurline and La Sonnambula. The first part of each programme consisting of minstrel entertainment was followed by a burlesque. The only flaw in the performances, according to the local reporter, was that some of the scenery was still on the track<sup>113</sup>.

The theatre was put to multiple uses including that of a boxing stadium. Albert Calvert when speaking of the theatre in his journal notes:

It has tempted a number of companies, chiefly of music-hall celebrity, to undertake the long journey to entertain the gold-seekers, who are still more delighted to do honour to athletic heroes. The pugilist or wrestler of note is always sure of an ovation in the Golden City<sup>114</sup>.

The Theatre Royal played host to over three hundred professional and amateur performances from October 1894 until it closed its doors in June 1897<sup>115</sup> being sold to the Catholic Church for use as a school.

The extension of the railway, from Perth to Coolgardie in March 1896 and on to Kalgoorlie in September 1896 opened up possibilities for a wider range and more sophisticated forms of entertainment, which in turn led to the need for bigger and better performance spaces. Once such venue was the Royal Cremorne Theatre in Bayley Street, Coolgardie that was opened in October 1896. Described as an open-

---

<sup>111</sup> Coolgardie Municipal plan of fire escape exits from the building.

<sup>112</sup> *Coolgardie Miner*, 30 October 1894.

<sup>113</sup> *Coolgardie Miner*, 20 November 1894.

<sup>114</sup> Albert F. Calvert, *My Fourth Tour in Western Australia* (London: William Heinmann, 1897), 90.

<sup>115</sup> See list of performances on [www.ausstage.edu.au/pages/venue/13817](http://www.ausstage.edu.au/pages/venue/13817)



air pleasure resort it was 'prettily decorated, with landscape scenery round the walls, and in the further corner, a small stage and proscenium arch are fixed for the vocalists and other performers. <sup>116</sup>The floor was covered in red sand and hung all around with Chinese lanterns and gold and silver balls. It appears to have been used mainly by touring variety companies producing comedies or concerts but occasionally was host to such novelties as Professor Fenton's Variety Company ; the Bucking Bullock, with a performing donkey, pony, goat<sup>117</sup> and other animals; or a screening of Edison's Cinematographe as an adjunct to a concert. It is difficult to determine when the theatre ceased operating but local and touring parties were still using the venue in 1905.

The largest theatre in Coolgardie, the Tivoli Theatre, opened on Bayley Street, in April 1897 with a Grand Sacred Concert in aid of the Mt Charlotte mine disaster. Built of iron with a seating capacity of 1000, and with seven exits and the dressing rooms detached from the main building, it was declared by the superintendent of the Fire Brigade as having fire arrangements close to perfection<sup>118</sup>. As well as hosting touring companies, it appears to have been the venue of choice for organisations hoping to raise money for local causes<sup>119</sup>. Unfortunately, the fire arrangements proved not to be perfect and the building was destroyed by the great fire in Bayley Street on 4<sup>th</sup> March 1898.

Kalgoorlie was much slower to provide a dedicated performance space for travelling or local theatre groups, instead relying on local hotels and businesses premises such as Quigley's Assembly Rooms in the Club Hotel on Hannan Street, or Solomon's Hall at Solomon's Auction Mart.

Solomon's Hall made a very good auditorium and special exertions were made by Mr Stevens to have everything in readiness by last night for the comfort and convenience of the audience.....The scenery, considering all the drawbacks of the situation, was remarkably good, and the transformation scene at the conclusion had a really fine effect<sup>120</sup>

---

<sup>116</sup> *Coolgardie Miner*, 12 December 1896.

<sup>117</sup> *Coolgardie Miner*, 10 July 1897.

<sup>118</sup> *Coolgardie Miner*, 13 April. 1897.

<sup>119</sup> See list of events in [AusStage.edu.au/venues/Tivoli Theatre](http://AusStage.edu.au/venues/TivoliTheatre).

<sup>120</sup> *Kalgoorlie Western Argus*, 5 March 1896.

This performance of Cinderella by Wilkinson’s Gaiety Pantomime Company on Monday, 2 March 1896 was reported incorrectly as the first visit by a theatrical company to Kalgoorlie.<sup>121</sup> Wilkinson’s Gaiety had already performed in Kalgoorlie in 1895 prior to publication of the Kalgoorlie newspapers and a group called Heller’s Rosicrucian Somnomists<sup>122</sup> and their Bonza Coterie appeared in McDonalds building in August 1895.<sup>123</sup> This latter performance, consisting of songs, a ventriloquist, and a thought transference exhibition, was well received.

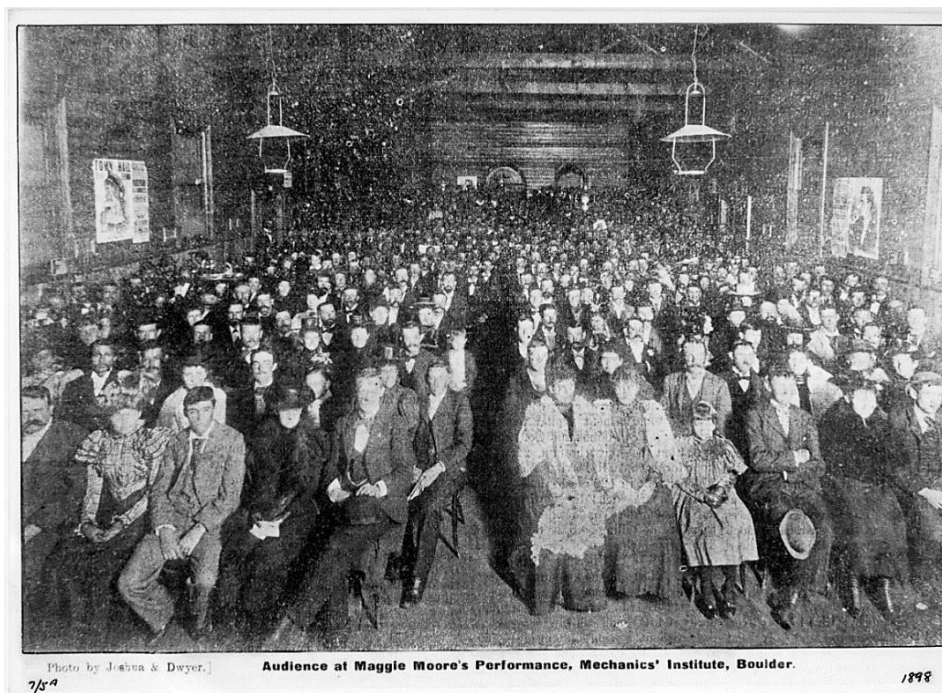


Fig. 36 Audience at Maggie Moore’s performance, Mechanics’ institute, Boulder, 1898.

Photo by Joshua and Dwyer. Eastern Goldfields Historical Society.

In the absence of a theatre, the Kalgoorlie Miners’ Institute Hall, opened on 12th August 1896 with a grand concert,<sup>124</sup> was for many years Kalgoorlie’s largest indoor venue. With a name change to the Kalgoorlie Mechanics Institute in 1904, it was built for the ‘amusement and improvement of the people’<sup>125</sup>. Mechanics’ Institutes, with their origins in Britain were educational establishments, originally formed to provide adult education to working men, particularly in technical subjects. They frequently held free libraries and were intended as an alternative to

<sup>121</sup> *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 3 June 1896.

<sup>122</sup> Somnomists in this context refer to people known as mystics, or psychics.

<sup>123</sup> [www.ausstage.edu.au/pages/event/89459](http://www.ausstage.edu.au/pages/event/89459).

<sup>124</sup> *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 13 August 1896

<sup>125</sup> *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 12 August 1896.

drinking and gambling. The number of activities held at the hall was extensive and would range from a Rational<sup>126</sup> concert on a Sunday to a display of Edison's Cinematograph on a Tuesday, to performances by a travelling theatre company at the weekend. A similar Mechanics' Institute built in Boulder in 1897 was also used for performances but to a lesser extent.

The Tivoli Gardens opened in Kalgoorlie in July 1897, some three months after a similar theatre opened in Coolgardie. Owned by Harry Rickards<sup>127</sup> and managed by Phil Stuart, it was the first purpose-built centre for entertainment. Located on the southern side of Dugan Street, it covered the whole of a quarter acre block. There was room for approximately 2000 people and seating for 700. The space nearest the stage enclosed by a neat picket fence was reserved for ladies. At the Dugan Street end were two bars opening out to a spacious gentlemen's reserve, while the ladies were provided with a cosy tea-room. The stage, measuring 24ft x 25ft was enclosed on either side by the performers' dressing rooms. A two-column spread in the local paper described the decorations in detail and gave the price of admission as galleries and promenade 1 shilling and reserve 2 shillings. The Garden was opened on 10<sup>th</sup> July with moonlight entertainment given by local performers. The programme commenced with a short comedietta, followed by local songsters and a burlesque selection: the following evening a Sunday Rational Concert entertained the patrons<sup>128</sup>.

This outdoor venue was not without some problems; log fires were lit in the grounds in the winter to warm the patrons and the dust was a problem in the summer months. An experiment to keep the dust down by pouring on water from the local brewery nearly flooded the audience with the smell and had to be

---

<sup>126</sup> Rational Concerts always held on a Sunday took the place of a church service for some.

<sup>127</sup> Harry Rickards, a comedian, singer and entrepreneur established himself in London's prestigious music halls during the late 1860's. Between 1871 and 1889 he spent his time touring the colonies and performing in the United Kingdom. In December 1892 he took the first steps towards establishing himself in Australia by taking up the lease of the Opera House in Sydney. In the following decade he expanded his business interests to either, own, manage or lease theatres in Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide, Perth, Brisbane, and Kalgoorlie as well as sending troupes on tour through regional Australia and New Zealand.

[www.austlit.edu.au/Harry](http://www.austlit.edu.au/Harry) . Rutledge, Martha. "Rickards, Harry (1843-1911)", *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Volume 11, (MUP), 1988. National Centre of Biography, Australian National University.

<sup>128</sup> *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 12 July 1897.

remedied by pouring on a mixture of lime, salt-water and permanganate of potash<sup>129</sup>.

In April 1900, the theatre entrepreneurs Cosgrove and Hunter advertised that they had taken over the management of the newly renovated and renamed Tivoli Theatre. Now called Her Majesty's Theatre, the theatre, complete with a new gallery, a new family circle, a new front stalls, and a soon to be installed, sliding roof and new electric light plant, would have a grand opening on April 15 with a performance by Ye Olde Englishe Faye Co. Unfortunately, due to the additional cost of the renovations, the price of admission would be increased to 4 shillings, 3 shillings, and 2 shillings<sup>130</sup>. However, the level of sophistication aimed for might not have been as successful as hoped for, as the local newspaper reported:

Time after time grave annoyance has been caused to visitors to public entertainments in this town by the presence of dogs in the concert or lecture hall. It is disconcerting to performers and listeners alike for dogs to climb on to the stage during entertainments or for canines to be careering round the place in pursuit of each other or in evasion of kicks aimed at them by angry folks. <sup>131</sup>

Tivoli continued as a live venue, used by travelling companies for vaudeville, musical comedy and dramatic productions and by local amateurs for dramatic and dancing performances. In later years it was occasionally used for films. The Tivoli was closed after the opening of the Kalgoorlie Town Hall in 1908.



Fig 37. Interior of Tivoli Theatre, ca 1900. J.J. Dwyer Collection; 5816B/30. State Library of W.A.

Over the years there were numerous attempts to build a purpose-built indoor theatre, including the printing of a prospectus in July 1898 by the Kalgoorlie Theatre Company to raise 20,000 pounds in one pound shares<sup>132</sup>.

The float was unsuccessful, as was an attempt to float the company in London. Other attempts, in November of the same year to site a theatre at the top end of Hannan Street and, in March 1900, on a site at the east end of the street, also came to nought. Finally, it was not until, after considerable pressure from the general public, who argued that all important towns had a town hall,<sup>133</sup> that the city councils of Boulder and Kalgoorlie took it upon themselves to provide suitable venues. The town halls of Kalgoorlie and Boulder were built and became the main entertainment venues of the Goldfields in 1908.

Recognition and support for a theatre for the performing arts had taken place much earlier in the capital city than in the Eastern Goldfields. Perth had benefitted greatly from the gold rush with profits from mining and land speculation creating an air of confidence and a demand for entertainment and entertainers.<sup>134</sup> It was difficult for the miners already on the fields to travel to Perth for entertainment until the railway was built. However, in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, there was a continual stream of diggers and their families, passing through the city on their way to the goldfields to try their luck.

The first theatre in Perth, the Cremorne Gardens, was originally an open-air venue at the back of a hotel known as the Horse and Groom. In 1895, under the proprietorship of Mrs A. Oliver, it was a popular outdoor entertainment area used mainly in summer. Four months after its opening in December 1895, an enclosed theatre was built on the site. Seating 800 persons, it was described by the *West Australian* as “a pretty little place.”<sup>135</sup> The theatre was leased and managed by

---

<sup>132</sup> *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 2 July 1898.

<sup>133</sup> *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 12 July 1905.

<sup>134</sup> Geoffrey Bolton, Richard Rossiter, and Jan Ryan, eds. *farewell cinderella: creating arts and identity in Western Australia*, 21.

<sup>135</sup> *West Australian*, 25 June 1896, 2.

several well-known entrepreneurs including Harry Rickards,<sup>136</sup> and presented a wide range of entertainments, including vaudeville, pantomime, operetta and even cinematography until it closed in 1914.<sup>137</sup>

In 1897 the Theatre Royal opened, the first purpose-built theatre in the city, it had a seating capacity of 1,200, a proscenium stage, three tier auditorium, and a sliding roof for ventilation. This theatre was designed for drama, and, on Easter Monday in 1897, it opened with a performance of *The Silver King* one of the most popular melodramas of its time. It too came under the management of a number of theatre entrepreneurs presenting a range of entertainment including drama, opera, burlesques, musical comedies, and even boxing before eventually being converted into a permanent cinema.<sup>138</sup>

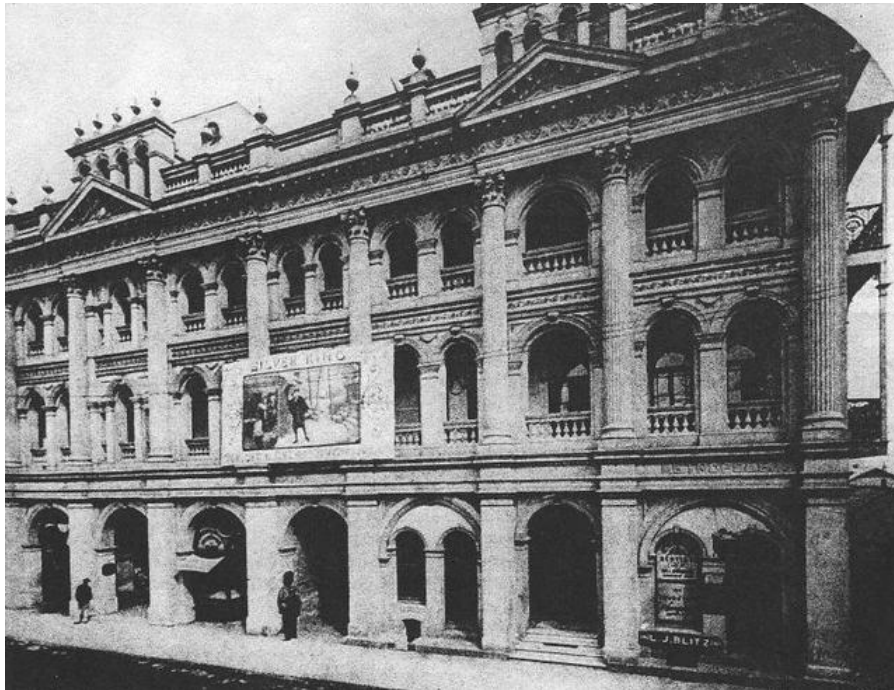


Fig. 38. Theatre Royal Perth, photo from Cinema Treasures.org. 114755.

---

<sup>136</sup> Harry Rickards (1843-1911). English born actor, showman and theatre owner. He built a highly successful business in Australia by leasing theatres and importing the cream of variety artists such as Harry Houdini and Marie Lloyd.

<sup>137</sup> Australian Variety Theatre Archive. <http://ozvta.com/theatres-wa/>

<sup>138</sup> Australian Variety Theatre Archive, <http://ozvta.com/theatres-wa/>



Fig. 39. His Majesty's Theatre, Perth. Photo -The theatre dominates the surrounding streetscape, Michael Lewi, 13 May 2004.

His Majesty's Theatre, opened in December 1904, and was considered ahead of its time. It boasted the largest stage in the southern hemisphere and had a fly tower 20 metres high and 29 metres deep.<sup>139</sup> The first production, *The Forty Thieves*, was attended by the Governor, his wife and Lord and Lady Forrest and was loudly acclaimed, setting an example for the future.<sup>140</sup>

In the late nineteenth century, a considerable number of highly professional theatre companies were touring in rural Australia. Of course, there were poor shows too, companies that, unable to find bookings in the city, ventured into the bush hoping to find more gullible and less critical audiences. The goldfields attracted both kinds. Richard Waterhouse<sup>141</sup> describes two types of specialised outfits; the first, consisting of large drama, circus, minstrel and variety companies,

---

<sup>139</sup> *Perth Morning Herald*, 20 December 1904.

<sup>140</sup> Over the years the theatre has been host to national and international artists and companies as well as hosting local amateurs. Extensively renovated in 1980 it is now home to the West Australian Ballet and West Australian Opera Companies.

<sup>141</sup> Richard Waterhouse, "Travelling shows in rural Australia 1850-1914," *Australasian Drama Studies* 35, (October 1999) 19-30.

some organised locally and others visiting from overseas, who performed in the capital cities and in rural centres where transport was available. The second type of company consisted of those that confined their operations to the bush and were forced to play in remote locations because they could not compete with the larger operations in the more lucrative locations. Very often these companies consisted of one or two professionals supplemented by amateurs, some even recruited locally. It is possible to recognise this pattern in the Eastern Goldfields with the smaller and less well-known companies arriving first, followed by the larger companies as the settlements grew and the infrastructure developed.

The St George Variety Company arrived in Coolgardie in September 1894, playing in a canvas tent below the town<sup>142</sup>. Included in the programme were two very popular musical comedies of the era. *The Brook*,<sup>143</sup> first produced by the Salisbury Troubadours in America in 1876,<sup>144</sup> had a minimalistic plot involving going on a picnic via a boat ride. The picnic baskets produced costumes and props for the specialist turns, so that it became a vaudeville style procession of acts. The cast consisted of three men and two women. The second production, *Our Boys*, a comedy in three acts, was first performed at the Vaudeville Theatre in London in January 1875 and ran for 1,362 performances until April 1879. A cast of six males and three females was required to play all the parts. A review of the production in the local paper does not detail the actors in the company except to say that Tom Cannae, the well-known actor would perform and Mrs Benstead<sup>145</sup>, a local lady, had agreed to augment the company and take the role of Aunt Clarissa, an elderly spinster.

The arrival of eminent actor James Wilkinson from Wilkinson's Gaiety Pantomime Company in Coolgardie in October 1894 was heralded with great fanfare by the local paper.

---

<sup>142</sup> *Coolgardie Miner*, 12 September 1894.

<sup>143</sup> Cecil Smith, *Musical Comedy in America* (New York: Theatre Art Books, 1950). 56-57. The play, considered by many as the 'germinal cell' out of which musical comedy grew, toured the United States, Great Britain and Australia with great success.

<sup>144</sup> See *Education Theatre Journal*, Vol. 27, No 3, October 1975.

<sup>145</sup> Wife of Bill Benstead, a prominent local businessman in Coolgardie.



Mr James Wilkinson so well known among theatregoers throughout Australia left Melbourne by the steamer Bullara accompanied by a powerful company of dramatic and variety favourites last Tuesday afternoon and will arrive in Coolgardie in a few days. "Jim Wilkinson" to use the words of a Melbourne exchange "is as clever an all-round performer as the colonies possess" which is saying a good deal and Coolgardians may calculate on having some first class shows staged<sup>146</sup>.

The shows, a mixture of minstrel entertainment and burlesque, were indeed a great success and the company continued to tour throughout the goldfields on a regular basis over the next three years.

The trickle of companies became a flood as it became known that the discomfort of long- distance travel and poor performance venues were more than compensated for by the good financial returns. The Ada Delroy Company performing in September 1896 at the Theatre Royal in Coolgardie and the Miners Institute in Kalgoorlie, reported that they had 'struck it rich', their takings for one night being one hundred and seventy pounds<sup>147</sup>. The star attraction was considered the performance by Miss Ada Delroy, of her 'cobra de capello' dance and the limelight photographs of well- known people reflected on her whirling skirts.<sup>148</sup>

Australian companies, such as the Ettie Williams Happy Hours Company, Ye Olde Englyshe Fayre Company, and the Harry Rickards touring companies, made regular visits, following an Eastern Goldfields' circuit, with performances in Coolgardie, Kalgoorlie, and Boulder and, depending on the size of the company, sometimes venturing out to Kanowna and Menzies.<sup>149</sup>

The arrival on the fields of the major theatre companies was a great source of pride for the local citizens, appearing to seal the importance of the region to the colony. The visit, in June 1898, of Williamson and Musgrove's Royal Comic Opera Company was the occasion for a citizen's welcome. The company of 40 people arrived by special train from Perth and was welcomed by the Mayor and prominent private citizens in the Municipal Chambers. The Mayor in his speech declared:

---

<sup>146</sup> *Coolgardie Miner*, 20 October 1894.

<sup>147</sup> *Coolgardie Miner*, 16 September 1896.

<sup>148</sup> *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 14 September 1896.

<sup>149</sup> The companies would have been assisted in this endeavour when the Menzies railway was completed in 1898.

The presence of the Royal Comic Opera Co indicated an epoch in the history of the place, inasmuch as it showed that such shrewd business people as Messrs Williamson and Musgrove deemed these fields of an importance justifying the sending of the company here for a season. The mere fact of the company making the round trip was a great advertisement and would represent volumes to the outside world<sup>150</sup>.

Unfortunately, in the following year the *Kalgoorlie Miner* reported that the Royal Comic Opera Company would be unable to visit Kalgoorlie due to the absence of a sufficiently large and properly appointed theatre. It noted however a special train at cheap rates had been organised to transport patrons from Coolgardie and Kalgoorlie to Perth to attend their performances<sup>151</sup>. The following day an article appeared in the local newspaper calling for a theatre and bemoaning the fact that residents had to travel 760 miles to attend a show of merit<sup>152</sup>.

Despite the lack of a well-equipped theatre in Kalgoorlie or Boulder, the touring artists kept on coming, with Australian variety and minstrel groups being the most frequent visitors and probably the most profitable.



Fig 140. Orpheus McAdoo's Georgia Minstrels and Alabama Cakewalkers in Australia in January 1900. Photo State Library of New South Wales.

---

<sup>150</sup> *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 21 June 1898.

<sup>151</sup> *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 26. July 1899.

<sup>152</sup> *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 27 July 1899.

The repertoire was, however, varied on occasions by the arrival of performers in a different mould. In September 1898,<sup>153</sup> the *Kalgoorlie Miner* announced the imminent arrival of Mr Orphaus M. McAdoo's Jubilee Singers and Virginia Concert Company. This African American minstrel troupe performed plantation songs to packed houses in the Mechanics' Institute and according to the *Kalgoorlie Miner* 'the financial success of their mission is already assured'.<sup>154</sup>

A different form of entertainment was presented by the Ovide Musin Company, a talented musical trio consisting of Ovide Musin, an international violinist of renown, his wife Madame Annie Louise Musin, a talented soprano, and their pianist Herr Eduard Scharf who presented a programme of well-known ballads and popular musical classics in the Goldfields in July 1896. In his biography Ovide Musin recounts how the manager of the Opera House in Coolgardie met him in Perth and persuaded him to tour the State.<sup>155</sup>

We then left for the goldfields, where our living expenses were big, but as the prices charged for tickets were proportionally large the matter evened up<sup>156</sup>.

The price of tickets was a pound, ten shillings and five shillings, far in excess of the normal price of admission of five shillings and three shillings. According to the *Coolgardie Miner*<sup>157</sup> and the *Kalgoorlie Miner*<sup>158</sup> the concerts were a great financial and artistic success, with the Kalgoorlie section of the tour being underwritten by an 'enterprising gentleman who gave a written guarantee'.<sup>159</sup> Farrant,<sup>160</sup> in her notes on the Ovide concerts, comments on the incongruous juxtaposition of the musical sophistication and the crude frontier-like setting of the performances, especially when an audience member who was singing along with the performers had to be assisted out of the theatre by a burly attendant.<sup>161</sup> The Ovide Musin Company gave eight concerts on the Goldfields and, in his biography, Musin<sup>162</sup>

---

<sup>153</sup> *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 22 September 1898.

<sup>154</sup> *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 27 September 1898.

<sup>155</sup> Ovide Musin, *Ovide Musin, My Memories* (New York: Musin Publishing Company, 1920), 244.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.* 245.

<sup>157</sup> *Coolgardie Miner*, 29. July 1896.

<sup>158</sup> *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 31 July 1896.

<sup>159</sup> *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 30 July 1896.

<sup>160</sup> Farrant, "A Social History of Music," 53.

<sup>161</sup> *Hannans Herald*, 31 July 1895.

<sup>162</sup> Musin, *Ovide Musin, My Memories*, 246.

records how the chairs were cleared away in the Opera House after the last performance and a reception was given in their honour. In her blog on the life and career of Ovide Musin, Sarah Plum<sup>163</sup> comments on the fact that although he could have easily have made a career out of playing in the cultural centres of Paris, London and New York, he chose to undertake long voyages to remote and dangerous places and to perform before less sophisticated audiences. Musin himself explained that the reason he came to Western Australia in July 1896 was ‘to gratify his curiosity regarding the development of the Western Australian Goldfields.’<sup>164</sup> It may be that Ovide Musin, along with others, was drawn to the Goldfields not only for material gain but through curiosity and a desire for knowledge.

A visit by the “Tasmanian Nightingale”, Madame Amy Sherwin<sup>165</sup> and her concert company did not receive a rapturous reception on the occasion of their first Goldfields concert in June 1898. The local reporter put this down to the surfeit of entertainment available on that Saturday evening, or to a memory of the overcrowding and overbooking on the previous Saturday. This may have been the case,<sup>166</sup> but was more likely have been due to the change of programme from the style of Williamson and Musgrove’s Comic Opera Company of the previous week to the pure concert music of Madame Sherwin’s Company. A concert given in Boulder on the Sunday by Madame Sherwin was well received as were her two remaining concerts.

Musicians were not the only visitors. The American illusionist, Oscar Eliason<sup>167</sup> also known as ‘Dante the Great’, arrived in the goldfields in July 1899<sup>168</sup> and played to full houses, astounding the audience with his range of magic tricks. He was closely followed in August 1899 by the George Darrell Dramatic Company. George

---

<sup>163</sup> Sarah Plum, “Ovide Music and Virtuosity,” Interactive Studio (blog).

<http://sarahplumviolinist.com/interactive.studio>

<sup>164</sup> *Coolgardie Miner*, 9 July 1896.

<sup>165</sup> For details of the life of Francis Amy Lillian Sherwin see Australian Dictionary of Biography, Volume 6, (MUP), 1976.

<sup>166</sup> *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 27 June 1898.

<sup>167</sup> Kent Blackmore, *Oscar Eliason: the original “Dante the Great” his life and travels in Australia and New Zealand 1898-1899* (Sydney: K. Blackmore, 1987).

<sup>168</sup> *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 28 July 1899.



Fig 41 Fitzgerald Brothers Circus Poster, 1901  
Tasmanian Archive & Heritage Office

Darrell,<sup>169</sup> author, and actor, was one of Australia's most successful playwrights of the nineteenth century. His most acclaimed work 'The Sunny South' set in Australia was presented to a goldfields' audience complete with 'ENTIRELY NEW SCENERY, painted expressly and Staged in a Perfect manner never before Witnessed on the Goldfields'.<sup>170</sup>

### **The circus in the West.**

The lack of a venue did not deter the largest show of all from arriving in town. The Fitzgerald Circus was transported to

Coolgardie from Perth on a special train composed of 22 carriages, ten of which were devoted to animals, and, with a company of 100, it arrived on the 15<sup>th</sup> March 1897 with its own marquee<sup>171</sup>. It was then Australia's largest circus, was the first to rely solely on rail and shipping for transport and came from Adelaide directly to Perth and on to the Eastern Goldfields. An audience of over 2,000 filled the tent on the first night<sup>172</sup> with subsequent performances in Kalgoorlie, Boulder and Coolgardie just as popular. For its tour around the goldfields the troupe made use of camels.

Fitzgerald was delighted with the reception that the circus received from their goldfields' patrons declaring:

Without a doubt, this he says, is going to be the greatest gold-producing country in all Australia. He saw stacks of gold in the Boulder and other mines which must positively last and keep the field going for at least 30 years. Perth is now the Melbourne, Coolgardie the Ballarat and Kalgoorlie the Bendigo of the fifties. <sup>173</sup>

<sup>169</sup> Van Der Poorten, Helen M. Australian Dictionary of Biography, Vol. 4, (MUP), 1972.

<sup>170</sup> Advertisement, *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 31 July 1899.

<sup>171</sup> *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 9. March 1897.

<sup>172</sup> *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 16 March 1897.

<sup>173</sup> *West Australian*, 3 April 1897.

As well as presenting first class entertainment, the Fitzgerald Circus had a reputation for being 'Australian' as opposed to the American and Continental circuses that visited the continent. In an era when the Federation movement was the dominant political concern, this fact alone would endear them to the politically charged miners of the West.<sup>174</sup>

Their success led to the circus wintering in Albany in preparation for another tour in the spring and encouraged the other major touring circus, Wirths, to return to Australia from its seven-year global tour.<sup>175</sup> Wirth's toured Western Australia every second year and was joined in the goldfields by many of the smaller companies, such as Hyland's, who eventually became West Australia's *de facto* circus, touring the goldfields and remote regional centres.<sup>176</sup>

Gillian Arrighi noted two factors that contributed to the popularity of the circus in the Eastern Colonies in a time of depression, the escapist nature of a circus and the quality of the equestrian events. It could reasonably be argued that the same factors would appeal to the miners of the West where conditions were harsh and sporting attractions, especially horse racing,<sup>177</sup> were very popular.

### **Advertising and the Critics**

Advertising in Australia throughout the nineteenth century, as was the case globally, was based primarily in newspapers and magazines, and for the entertainment industry, with additional assistance from posters placed in prominent positions throughout the town. As noted in the Ballarat chapter, the large circuses also sent their bands to parade through the town to advertise their arrival. In the late nineteenth century the citizens of the Eastern Goldfields of Western Australia received their news by means of the print media but the addition

---

<sup>174</sup> Gillian Arrighi, "Negotiating National Identity at the Circus: the Fitzgerald Brothers Circus in Melbourne 1892," *Australasian Drama Studies* 54 (April 2009): 68-86. Arrighi describes how the Fitzgeralds deliberately promoted their Australian character, calling on the population to support Australian talent.

<sup>175</sup> Wirth's circus left Australia in 1893 when the Eastern States was in depression and its large size prohibited a tour of the goldfields before the construction of rail.

<sup>176</sup> Mark Valentine St. Leon, "To the golden west," *Early Days: Journal of the Royal Western Australia Historical Society* 13, no. 4 (2010): 389-410.

<sup>177</sup> One of the first capital works in the settlement was the building of a racecourse. The first official race meeting was held in 1896. At the height of popularity there were three racecourses in Kalgoorlie-Boulder and going to the races was the major social event on the calendar.

of a new genre of entertainment would also open up other avenues of communication to compete with the old.



Fig. 42. Cremorne Gardens Theatre advertising billboard, undated. Mr Gerald. WAM, GM001318.

Information and reviews about the entertainment on offer in the goldfields was communicated daily to the citizenry by means of the local newspapers and posters spread around the town. The Goldfields did not want for newspapers, with four in Kalgoorlie<sup>178</sup> and seven in Coolgardie.<sup>179</sup> With so much competition the speed of reporting was high; a show could finish at midnight and journalists would have the review published in the first edition the following morning. News from overseas and the Eastern Colonies, that was telegraphed daily to the fields' newspapers, included society and theatre gossip, all encouraging locals to imagine themselves part of the international circuit and the fashionable trends in the entertainment industry. The benefit to the newspapers of this comprehensive coverage was two-fold, they received the advertising revenue from local and touring shows and, as

<sup>178</sup> *The Kalgoorlie Miner, The Western Argus, The Boulder Star, The Sun.*

<sup>179</sup> *The Goldfields Morning Chronicle, The Coolgardie Miner, Coolgardie Pioneer, Golden Age, Mining Review Courier, Hannans Herald, T'Othersiders.*

tickets for performances were purchased at their offices, they also received a booking fee.

Newspapers, of course, do not present an unbiased point of view but they are informative, in that, not only do they record the range of entertainments on offer, but also provide insights into the views and concerns of the ordinary citizens. For example, the reporter's comments, and the letters to the editor from the audience, commenting on happenings at the theatre, appear to reflect a growing need for 'respectability', and a requirement for the local community to conform with more general theatrical conventions.

The following letter is an interesting example, coming as it does from an audience member seated at the rear of the theatre:

To the Editor, Sir, I was at the theatre last night to witness the performance of the Wilkinson Gaiety Company. I was disgusted at the action of one of our local police during singing of Tosti's "Goodbye". He had evidently purchased a new pair of boots and in the middle of the song took occasion to walk right across the floor of the room to converse with the Superintendent, thus completely spoiling the harmony of the music for us poor fellows in the back seats. Might I suggest that if the police must be admitted as "dead-heads" to all entertainments they should at least have the decency to sit or stand still during the singing of a song. Yours, etc- MUSIC. <sup>180</sup>

On the same day that article was published it was followed by another<sup>181</sup> in the *Coolgardie Miner* from 'Theatregoer', complaining about young men in the audience who had the reputation of being the sons of well to do parents but who were continually smoking, spitting and talking during the performance and suggesting that they be barred until they learnt better manners.

Audience interaction was a key feature in late- nineteenth century popular theatre and, as Bellanta<sup>182</sup> suggests, rowdy calls from the gallery amounted to a kind of audience vote as the people decided whom they wanted to see and whom they did not, as they critiqued the performances of the actors. Seated in the cheapest seats

---

<sup>180</sup> *Coolgardie Miner*, 6 December 1894.

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>182</sup> Melissa Bellanta, "Voting for Pleasure, Or a View from a Victorian Theatre Gallery." *M/C Journal* 11, no. 1 (2008): 1-9.



the 'larrikins'<sup>183</sup> often drew more laughs by their interjections than did the comics on stage. "We went there not as spectators but as performers".<sup>184</sup> A series of letters to the Editor in the *Kalgoorlie Miner* in June 1897<sup>185</sup> presented a variety of views on the practice.

It is interesting to note too that one of the writers commented that the majority of the audiences in the goldfields consisted of the 'rough element', an implication being that theatre was not only viewed by the elite or cultured citizens but by all classes of society.

However, according to the *Kalgoorlie Miner*,<sup>186</sup> audiences were discerning, for it congratulated the 'Flying Jordans Company'<sup>187</sup> on bringing a first class show to the fields when other promoters had made the mistake of bringing mediocre talent to play before a critical and cosmopolitan audience.

In addition to the usual advertising, travelling shows frequently sent agents in advance, to display the posters and feed stories to the local press. Their publicity was imaginative, intended to amuse as well as inform.

### **Mining in Performance**

As noted in the chapter on Ballarat, plays and pantomimes that included prospectors and miners as their subjects were first written and produced in the 1850s at the time of the Victorian gold rush. This section, commenting on plays and pantomimes that were written about prospectors, miners and gold discoveries, in the period between the decline of gold mining in the Eastern Colonies, through to the gold rush in the West, and into the twentieth century, continues that narrative. It takes a national perspective on the work written by Australian playwrights and others about mining, rather than a regional one, and places the image of the

---

<sup>183</sup> Larrikins an Australian slang term popular in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, used to describe young hooligans or persons with comical or outlandish behaviour. See Mellissa Bellanta, *Larrikins: A History* (Sydney: Penguin, 2012).

<sup>184</sup> Peter Bailey, *Leisure and Class in Victorian England: Rational Recreation and the Contest for Control, 1830-1885* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul 1978).

<sup>185</sup> *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 23 June 1897, 24 June 1897, 26 June 1897.

<sup>186</sup> *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 21 January 1898.

<sup>187</sup> The Flying Jordans, an American acrobatic troupe was part of the last complete American circus troupe to visit Australia; they toured extensively from 1897 to 1900.

'digger' and the 'goldfields' in drama, over the complete period to the commencement of the first World War.

The most popular genre of plays written by Australians from the 1870s to the end of the century was melodrama. Some plays were original, others were Australian versions of plays written by overseas writers, mainly British. What developed was 'a hybrid form that appealed to large audiences',<sup>188</sup> with many of the productions including mining or miners as a subject or a feature. Melodrama and its musical counterpart pantomime was largely overlooked in studies of theatre and drama until recently, when cultural historians became aware of 'its mythic narratives and volatile signifying capacities.'<sup>189</sup> It is therefore pertinent to consider how mining and miners fit into this national narrative and how those narratives might have been expressed in representative plays.

Melodrama is always about a conflict between good and evil and will include a group of stock characters - the hero, the heroine, and the villain. In the contemporary Australian plays, the backdrop was invariably, the bush, the diggings, or a familiar local city, and, for Australian audiences, it was likely to feature, a bushman, bushranger, a digger or any combination of these. The bushranger may be the villain, but the bushman and the digger are rarely the heroes, instead, they are included in the cast of minor comic characters, along with the Aboriginal and the larrikin. Comic characters they may be, but it was generally accepted by audiences that these were the true Australians, as opposed to the hero and heroine with their English manners and frequent lack of common sense and fortitude.

In 1870 W.H. Cooper<sup>190</sup> presented his first melodrama, *Sun and Shadow; or Mark Stornway's Nephews* at the Royal Victoria Theatre, Sydney, and, later that year, at the Melbourne Theatre Royal. Both shows were a great success, due in part to the sensational stage settings which included the Mopark Gully on the Stringer's Creek

---

<sup>188</sup> Gabrielle Wolf, "Innocent Convicts and Respectable Bushrangers: History and the Nation in Melbourne Melodrama, 1890-1914," *Journal of Australian Studies* No 81, (2004): 73.

<sup>189</sup> Veronika Kelly, "Melodrama, an Australian Pantomime, and the Theatrical Construction of Colonial History," *Journal of Australian Studies* 17:38 (1993): 51.

<sup>190</sup> Walter Hampson Copper, (1842-1880), born and died in Sydney, New South Wales. During his lifetime he had a career as a barrister, journalist, Member of the Lower House, and a political writer as well as a playwright and director.

diggings. The colonial character of Dick Nuggets, although not the hero, was reviewed by the *Age*<sup>191</sup> who declared:

The leading part in the play, as already stated, is Dick Nuggets, and in this Mr. G. Leopold made a decided success. A more complete portrait of a digger, both on his sprees and at work, could hardly be imagined. There are, however, some gross improbabilities about the character, as drawn by Mr. Cooper. Nuggets is supposed to be a digger of the year '70, but he comports himself after the fashion of a very exceptionally reckless one of '52.

The theatre review in the *Herald*<sup>192</sup> declared "Dick Nuggets was the life and soul of the piece," and the *Argus*<sup>193</sup> "The most popular part was that of Dick Nuggets, a jolly digger of the type which is rapidly fading from remembrance." Both papers went on to criticise the representation as being 'too stagey,' which suggests that, in the mind of the general public, a digger has a fixed set of characteristics which must be portrayed on the stage, a distinct colonial identity that must be preserved.

In March 1883 George Darrell<sup>194</sup> presented his play *Sunny South* in Melbourne and then throughout Australia, with later performances in London in 1884 and 1894. The play, generally regarded as typical of the Anglo-Australian melodramas of the period, opens in a stately house in England, home of Worthy Chester, who has squandered the family fortune and is soon to forfeit the estate. The daughter of the house, Clarice, is about to sacrifice herself, and save the family fortune by marrying the villain Eli Gru, when enters -Matt Morley, the long lost black sheep and heir to the family fortune, who has just returned from Australia, and presents as the typical Australian bushman. When Matt receives a cable from his mate, Ben Brewer the digger, informing him of a strike on his lease, he persuades the family to return with him to the goldfields with these words:

---

<sup>191</sup> *Age*, 3 October 1870, 3.

<sup>192</sup> *Herald*, 3 October 1870, 2.

<sup>193</sup> *Argus*, 3 October 1870, 5.

<sup>194</sup> George Frederick Price Darrell, (1851-1921), born in England died in Sydney, New South Wales. He moved to the goldfields of New Zealand in 1865 and then with his actress wife Fanny Heir, toured extensively in New Zealand and Australia. In 1877 he formed 'Darrell's Dramatic Company for the production of Australian Plays.' Darrell continued to write plays based on Australian themes throughout his life even when living in England.

There's a chance out there for everyone with pluck and determination and there's a scope for brains as well as muscle – there's freedom of opinion, liberty of the subject and a reverence for the grand old flag that waves over us all.<sup>195</sup>

Acts three, four and five are set in Australia, in a mining camp, at the tavern, Diggers' Rest, and around the railway line transporting the gold. As in typical melodramas, after many twists and turns, a fortune is made, and the family return to England, wealthy and secure.

Serle's comments on the play, which are appended to the text, reinforce the perception that Australian nineteenth century melodrama tells us much about the attitudes and prejudices of the day:<sup>196</sup>

And Darrell's finale-having made a "pile", back to England to live it up with "lots of grog and lots of girls" - is the essence of the gold rush migrant's dream.<sup>197</sup>

In this instance too, the 'noble digger' is honest, loyal and respectable, unlike the Californian miners who were lawless and dissolute. The play includes other iconic characters, such as the plucky Australian girl, the faithful Aboriginal tracker, the incompetent bushranger and the naïve new chum, all emerging from a background of the diggings, and, as referred to previously, emphasis is placed on the attraction of migrating to the "Sunny South" where not only will one make a fortune but the place will make a man of you.

In an article written about Australian melodramas from 1890 to 1914, Wolf<sup>198</sup> makes a very convincing argument regarding the use of the Australian melodrama stereotypes, including successful gold and silver miners and 'the Eureka stockade', to build a national identity and idealised history around the period of Federation. In particular, she argues that the gold rush plays 'portrayed the richness, in both the material and the spiritual sense, of the gold rush era'.<sup>199</sup> Indeed Alfred Dampier,<sup>200</sup>

---

<sup>195</sup> George Darrell, *The Sunny South* (Sydney: Currency Press: 1975) 23.

<sup>196</sup> Geoffrey Serle, in George Darrell, *The Sunny South*, 73.

<sup>197</sup> Geoffrey Serle, *The Sunny South*, 73.

<sup>198</sup> Gabrielle Wolf, "Innocent Convicts and Respectable Bushrangers," 73-81.

<sup>199</sup> Gabrielle Wolf "Innocent Convicts," 78.

<sup>200</sup> Alfred Dampier (1843-1908). Born in Horesham, England and died in Paddington, Sydney. With a career as an actor-manager and playwright he was distinguished as a promotor of Australian drama. His most successful plays being the adaptations, *For the Term of His Natural Life*, and *Robbery under Arms*.

who, with Kenneth Mackay,<sup>201</sup> wrote *To the West*, (1896), set in the goldfields of Western Australia, and *The Miner's Right* (1891), co-written with Garnet Walsh,<sup>202</sup> declared:

At a time when men's minds are filled with the subject of Federation, it is well to recall the scenes of a past from which the Great Australia of the Future takes its rise. The National Spirit now being so freely evoked had its inception in the days of the 'roaring fifties' when the men who were thrown together by circumstance were bound to one another by the growth of a common interest.<sup>203</sup>

Wolf references other melodramas, such as *The Lady of the Pluckup; or The Days of Eighty-Four* (1911) by Randolph Bedford<sup>204</sup> with 'bold and tenacious' silver miners and the Eureka stockade play, *The Southern Cross* (1908) by Edmund Duggan<sup>205</sup> which depicted the miners' fight against imperial authority. The latter play had many reincarnations, produced first as *The Democrat* in Sydney (1891), the *Eureka Stockade; or Fight for the Standard* (1897) and reimagined as *The Eureka Rebellion* by E. W. Sullivan. All these plays continued the theme of the noble digger expressing the independence and strength of the national character in an emerging Australia.

Melodrama in the nineteenth century in Australia was not only characterised by stock characters but also as visual spectacle, and more that it was spectacular and representative of the Australia landscape, the greater the appreciation of the audience. Smyth notes:

---

<sup>201</sup> Major-General James Alexander Kenneth Mackay (1859-1935). Born and died in New South Wales. Had a distinguished career as a soldier and politician but also wrote several short stories and composed poetry.

<sup>202</sup> Garnet Walch (1843-1914). Born in Van Diemen's Land, died in Melbourne, Victoria had a varied career as a journalist, newspaper owner, playwright, and poet. Walch wrote over thirty pantomimes, burlesques, and comedies. Renowned for introducing a stock of Australian characters to his plays.

<sup>203</sup> *Argus*, 7 March 1891, p7.

<sup>204</sup> Randolph Bedford (1868-1941). Born in Sydney, died in Tasmania with a career as a journalist, politician, author, and mining speculator, investing in White Feather, (Kanowna) and many other prospects.

<sup>205</sup> Edmund Duggan (1862-1938) was born in Lismore, Ireland, and died in Melbourne. Had a career as an actor, and playwright who co-authored many melodramas.

The landscapes of melodrama emerge as part of a wider debate in which Australians considered the question of how to acknowledge the distinctive features of their environment, one of which was its potential for harshness and yet to present it in a manner that suggested a forward looking- nation.<sup>206</sup>

Two plays with unique histories that relate directly to the Eastern Goldfields of Western Australia are worthy of mention for their distinctive landscapes and for the role they played in displaying the national character- *The Duchess of Coolgardie* by Euston Leigh and Cyril Clare, and *The Great Rescue* by Bland Holt.

By 1896, the Goldfields of Western Australia were changing. Previously the increases in gold output were brought about by successive discoveries in new fields, and new reserves by prospectors and small syndicates. The second phase was characterised by the exploitation of known reserves by mining companies. However, to develop a mine required capital, and the miners of Western Australia looked first to Melbourne and Adelaide and then to London to supply it. The London Stock Exchange was ready for a mining boom, and the London investors and company promoters were looking for companies in which to invest.

When, in 1896, the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane was left without its autumn spectacular melodrama, a play, *The Duchess of Coolgardie*, was hurriedly devised. Requiring a capital investment of \$6,000, a syndicate containing Lord Fingall, T.H. Myring and Francis Hart was formed.<sup>207</sup> The backers were largely West Australians, with the whole project backed by Perth millionaire, Herbert Love. The purpose of the play being to attract investors to the goldfields by making the landscape look as hospitable as the English countryside and the chances of discovering gold a distinct possibility. A review in the *British Australasian* of September 7<sup>th</sup> 1896 states 'One wonders why it has never occurred to somebody to dramatise the infinite possibilities of the West Australian goldfields ...when West Australia is in everyone's mouth and West Australian gold (or some of it) is in everyone's pocket.'

---

<sup>206</sup> Patricia Smyth, "Landscape and Identity in Australian Melodrama," *Journal of Victorian Culture* Volume 21, Issue 3, (2016), 363-386, <http://doi-org.dbgw.lis.curtin.edu.au/10.1080/13555502.2016.1197687>.

<sup>207</sup> Hart wrote *The Miner's Handbook and Investor's Guide to Western Australia* that was published in 1894. Myring was variously involved with Fingall and others in mine promotion and speculation in WA. Clearly, they all had an interest in promoting the goldfield in more ways than on the Stock Exchange.

The play, set in the West Australian goldfields, as seen romantically through the eyes of an English barrister turned gold-digger, was a long running success. Leading West Australians, including the Mayor of Kalgoorlie, government officials and the directors of the leading mines were present in the theatre on opening night. Every act and every scene was vociferously cheered, to the joy of the producer John Coleman and the capitalists who backed him.

British critics, who had no experience of the West, were lavish in their praise of the stage settings<sup>208</sup> However, some press reports of the production back in Australia commented on the lack of “verdancy and general details”<sup>209</sup> in the settings, suggesting it was more like an Irish village than the Coolgardie landscape. Other critics such as the *West Australian*<sup>210</sup> were more forgiving, recognising that it would be impossible to replicate conditions in Coolgardie on stage and that the backers needed to present the gold mining town in the best possible light. Smythe notes too, the conspiracy and amusement that existed between those who had had experience of the Coolgardie landscape against the ignorant English audiences ‘who had not’,<sup>211</sup> by referring to a conversation held between Lord Fingall and Emily Soldene of the *London Evening News*. When asked by Lord Fingall what she thought of the play Soldene replied ‘[w]ell...it’s none so dusty [as] Coolgardie’ and Fingalls’ response ‘we couldn’t tell a baker from a sweep there’. <sup>212</sup> As Smythe comments, this exchange referring to the limitations of the stage spectacle, between two interlocutors who had knowledge of the goldfields landscape, drew a distinction between the Soldene’s Australian readers and the British public who were duped.<sup>213</sup> At a time when Australian mining investors were trying to portray the West in as favourable a light as possible, the unrepresentative stage settings would be viewed as an aid.

---

<sup>208</sup> *Standard*, 23 September 1896, 4.

<sup>209</sup> Emily Soldene, “London Week by Week,” *Evening News*, 31 October 1896, 3.

<sup>210</sup> *West Australian*, 7 November 1896, 12.

<sup>211</sup> Soldene, “London Week by Week,” 31 October 1896, 15.

<sup>212</sup> Soldene, 3.

<sup>213</sup> Smythe, “Landscape and Identity,” 15.

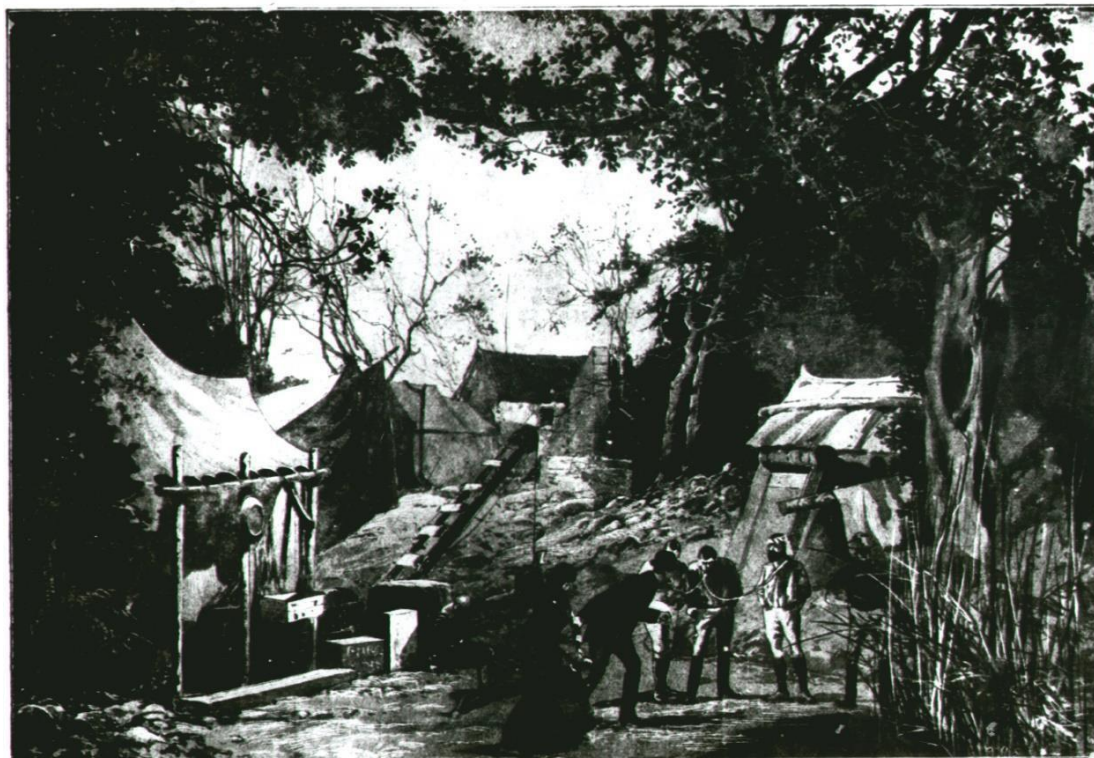


Fig. 43. Poster 1896, *The Duchess of Coolgardie*, the new Drama at Drury Lane Theatre.

Alfred Dampier's production in Sydney two years later was, according to the *Sydney Herald* on 7<sup>th</sup> November 1898, closer to reality than the original, noting too that 'the theatre was filled with people who had been to the West, and could think of nothing romantic in life as they found it there.'<sup>214</sup> The season lasted for two weeks, thanks largely to the villain 'one of the most picturesque scoundrels imaginable'.

In March 1907, an accident occurred at the Bonnie Vale mine just to the north of Coolgardie. A miner, Modesto Varischetti was trapped underground by rising floodwaters. Ten days later he was rescued after the heroic efforts of two divers working in the darkness of the flooded mine.<sup>215</sup>

Bland Holt was quick to pick up on the drama of the incident and, by October 1907, had incorporated the underground rescue scene in his melodrama, *The Great Rescue*, based on the novel *Bedford's Hope* by Lincoln J. Carter.<sup>216</sup> The rescue scene, in which an actor dressed in diving gear walks along the flooded mine, was

---

<sup>214</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 7 November 1898, 3.

<sup>215</sup> For more information see *Report of the Department of Mines 1907*, Government Printer, Perth. 85-86.

<sup>216</sup> Lincoln J. Carter, (1865-1926), an American playwright who wrote scores of melodramas and was noted for his realistic staging of dramatic events.



described by *Table Talk* as the outstanding attraction of the piece. The publication also reported how Diver Hughes, a modest man, would have been confounded by seeing his achievements on stage.<sup>217</sup> This scene proved so popular it was included in William Anderson's production of *The Land of Gold* at the Criterion, Sydney in December 1907.<sup>218</sup>

The most popular forms of theatre from the middle of the nineteenth century until well past Federation were melodrama and pantomime, both of which could be written and produced in ways to generate emotional responses, carry messages of subversion and nationalism, and to build and reinforce myths. Mining and the images it produces, real or imagined, were a large part of theatre at this time. The hero digger, the prospect of instant wealth which could so easily be lost, and scenes of heroism and endurance, combined to make gold rush history the ideal topic for playwrights and theatre managers.

### **The start of the new**

The audiences of the goldfields were observers and recipients of a change that was unfolding in the performing arts. A foretaste of what was to come could be seen in the new Limelight Exhibitions, where photographs and displays were shown with the aid of this new form of coloured lighting. An advertisement placed by the Salvation Army in the *Coolgardie Miner*<sup>219</sup> in October 1894, describes a Music Story and Song by Limelight with displays and 'that thrilling story of love and murder - A DAUGHTER OF ISHMAEL'. The Salvation Army were again at the forefront of technology in July 1898 when they presented an exhibition including kinematographe,<sup>220</sup> the gramophone, phonograph, and limelight,<sup>221</sup> to the great delight of an audience that included children.

---

<sup>217</sup> *Table Talk*, 3 October 1907, 18.

<sup>218</sup> *Sunday Times*, 1 December 1907, 2.

<sup>219</sup> *Coolgardie Miner*, 25 October 1894.

<sup>220</sup> Edison first patented the motion-picture camera the Kinetograph in 1891. It utilised celluloid roll film which had been devised for still photography by George Eastman. The first public viewing of motion pictures was in 1893 by means of a peep-show device called the Kinetoscope in which an electronically driven 50-foot loop of film moved horizontally. The Kinetoscope was demonstrated for the first time in Sydney and Melbourne in 1895. Details from *Entertaining Australia, an illustrated history*, ed. Katharine Brisbane, Currency Press, 1991

<sup>221</sup> *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 18 July 1898.

On the 14<sup>th</sup> of January 1897, the *Kalgoorlie Miner*<sup>222</sup> advertised the arrival of 'Edison's Cinematographe (including all the Famous Pictures which caused such a furore in the Eastern Colonies)'. The paper, commenting on the showing on the following Saturday described the programme as follows:

The first representation was that of Carmeneita, a dancer, her graceful revolutions being reproduced on the screen in the most realistic manner. The famous entertainer Chirgwin, otherwise known as the "one-eyed kaffir" came next and as he went through his antics to the piano accompaniment it was difficult to understand that he was not totally present. Enjoyable views were those of Buffalo Bill and Annie Oakley, the famous markswoman. In their shooting exhibition it was interesting to watch them carefully take aim and observe the smoke from their rifles. What however gave the audience as much pleasure to the audience as anything else was the representation of the eighth round of a prize fight, in which the movements of the two combatants and the gestures of the referee and the audience were faithfully depicted. The audience was a most appreciative one, and they were generous in their applause.<sup>223</sup>

The Cinematographe combined a camera and a projector and had its first public performance in Paris in 1895. Interestingly, the person credited with projecting the first motion pictures in Australia in September 1896 in Sydney, the American magician named Carl Hertz, travelled to the WA Goldfields in September 1897 to perform his famous

<sup>222</sup> *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 14 January 1897.

<sup>223</sup> *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 23 January 1897.

musements

**M**INER'S INSTITUTION.  
Under the Direction of L. J. Lehr.  
Complete  
CHANGE OF PROGRAMME  
CHANGE OF PROGRAMME  
CHANGE OF PROGRAMME

TO - NIGHT. TO - NIGHT  
Everything New. Everything New.  
Everything New. Everything New.

**CARL HERTZ,**

Assisted by the Charming and Graceful  
MIDLE D'ALTON.

NEW TRICKS NEW TRICKS  
Including the Latest, Greatest, and Most  
Sensational Illusion of Modern Times,  
entitled.

NOAH'S ARK, or AFTER THE FLOOD.  
AFTER THE FLOOD } Which nightly created  
AFTER THE FLOOD } an unprecedented  
AFTER THE FLOOD } furore in Perth, the  
AFTER THE FLOOD } police stopping  
AFTER THE FLOOD } sale of tickets at each  
AFTER THE FLOOD } performance.

Universally pronounced!  
"A Mysterious Marvel Without Equal."  
MIDLE D'ALTON NEW SONGS  
with sing NEW SONGS  
"The Little Yellow Oon" NEW SONGS  
and "Sweet Dreams" NEW SONGS  
(London's Latest Successes.) NEW SONGS  
New Pictures. New Pictures.  
New Pictures. New Pictures.

SEE TO-NIGHT

The Second Edition of the Marvellous  
**CINEMATOGAPHE.**

**20** New subjects—For the First Time **20**  
including the World's Greatest star Picture,  
**THE CARNIVAL OF VENICE,**  
being the Largest Picture ever shown by the  
Cinematographe, consisting of 6000 photo-  
graphs, a quarter of a mile of photographic  
film, and lasting four minutes upon the  
screen, which cannot fail to create a  
**PROFOUND IMPRESSION**  
upon the public, and in addition the follow-  
ing Fascinating and Popular Subjects will be  
produced—

NEW Trilby! Trilby!  
NEW New York Police Drill.  
NEW Robbery Under Arms.  
NEW The Paris Express.  
NEW Tommy Atkins and his Girl.  
NEW Boulevards of Paris.  
NEW The Angry Waves.  
NEW Rescued from Drowning.  
NEW Feeding the Elephants.  
NEW Molly Riley in the Café.  
NEW Dance of the Minuet.  
NEW Children Paddling.

And the Great Sensational Picture,  
**OVERTHROW OF A CHIMNEY STACK**  
(shown in three sections),  
1st The Chimney Stack 300ft high  
2nd Loosening the Foundations  
3rd Tremendous Fall— Clouds of Dust.  
The whole forming the Most Attractive Bill  
ever presented to a local audience.  
Prices: 6s and 3s.  
Secure Seats at the MINER Office.  
Day Tickets at Abrahams' Fancy Shop.

Fig. 44. *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 19th September 1897

conjuring show and included in the programme a showing of the latest Cinematographe.

As noted by Waterhouse,<sup>224</sup> when 'cinematography' was introduced into Australia in 1896 it was seen as a novelty providing a cheap supplement to live entertainment. So it was on the Goldfields, with travelling companies such as the Olde English Fayre Company<sup>225</sup>, the Harry Rickards Tivoli Company<sup>226</sup>, and the Ada Delroy Company<sup>227</sup> all adding a cinematography item to their programmes.

It was not until a decade later that specific theatres dedicated to showing films were erected in the fields. This did not spell the end of live theatre, but it did reduce the number of shows travelling to the goldfields.

### **Maintaining the Performing Arts**

Similar to the previous chapter on Ballarat, there is sufficient evidence to support the theory that the performing arts were a part of the lives of the prospectors, miners and their families on the Eastern Goldfields of Western Australia in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. From songs sung around the camp-fires to the arrival by train of the largest show in Australia, the Fitzgerald circus, the performing arts played a role in entertaining and providing comfort to the early settlers. However, whether this role contributed to the development and maintenance of the Australian, and therefore global, performing arts industry is an arguable proposition.

The lure of the goldfields for the Flying Jordans, and for the majority of the other performing artists in the 1890s, was the prospect of large audiences and a substantial profit, overcoming the difficulties and inconvenience of having to travel great distances, and the lack of dedicated performing arts spaces. Whether the companies would have travelled to the West in such great numbers if there had not been a depression in the Eastern Colonies is a debatable question. An American showman writing to the *New York Clipper* gives the mood of the time.

---

<sup>224</sup> Richard Waterhouse, *The Vision Splendid: A Social and Cultural History of Rural Australia* (Fremantle: Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 2005), 153.

<sup>225</sup> *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 6 March 1897.

<sup>226</sup> *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 5 May 1897.

<sup>227</sup> *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 11 November 1897.

...After the great boom in variety business in Australia the calm has come and left many good people to hustle for a cold winter. The Palace Theatre, Sydney, one of the finest in modern times, closed up Saturday, and stranded specialty companies are reported in many of the colonies.....All who linger get stuck.<sup>228</sup>

However, the artists did come to the West, making the goldfields' towns part of a Pacific and global circuit. Thereby, the towns assisted in maintaining the performing arts industry in Australia during a period when it was struggling to survive. The artists provided the citizens of the goldfields with entertainment, and at the same time, boosted the citizens' sense of importance and civic pride by including them in the global arts industry while they established their settlements in the Eastern Goldfields.

### **PART 3: ESTABLISHING TOWNS AND BUILDING COMMUNITIES**

Previous sections in this chapter have considered the ways in which the miners and prospectors used the performing arts for entertainment and comfort, and how they were entertained by the artists who made the long journey to the fields. The focus in this part is on how and why the citizens used the performing arts to assist them as they strived to establish communities in the gold rush settlements of Coolgardie, Kalgoorlie, and Boulder.

The first subsection looks at the various ways in which the performing arts used to assist in building institutions and supporting charitable causes. The second subsection will consider the role the performing arts played in transporting and maintaining a selection of cultures in the region. The third subsection considers how the citizens themselves participated in the performing arts to amuse, build social networks and develop their own talents. However, before examining the community roles that the performing arts played in the new settlements, it is pertinent to give a brief description of the townships themselves, remembering that, especially in the instances of Kalgoorlie and Boulder, the construction of the townships became a necessity when the dwellings on the leases had to be moved to make way for the expansion of the mines.

---

<sup>228</sup> *New York Clipper*, 12 June 1897.

### **Three townships, Coolgardie, Kalgoorlie and Boulder.**

Each township has its own history but all three followed a similar pattern of growth from a collection of tents and ramshackle huts to well laid-out townships run by a town council, the population and prosperity of each being influenced by the economic success of the mines on their adjoining leases.

The history of mining in the three towns has been covered extensively in other publications so for the purpose of this study only a brief outline of the major municipal facts will be given. Coolgardie, the site of the first discovery in 1892, was laid out in 1893 and became a municipality in 1894. By 1898 it was the third largest town in Western Australia and was the supply base for the region as well as hosting its own mines. The railway arrived in 1896 and the water pipeline in 1903. The population peaked in 1900 and was followed by a slow steady decline in subsequent years up to the outbreak of the First World War, due to the lack of local payable ore.

The township of Kalgoorlie laid out in September 1894 and registered as a municipality in February 1895 was envisaged as the centre of trade and commerce for the region. Boulder, laid out in December 1896 and registered in August 1897, was the home of the miners. However, a census taken in 1903 revealed that there were more people living on the periphery of the town sites than in the towns themselves. It was cheaper and more convenient for the miners to live on the edge of the leases than to travel into town after a shift.

**Table 4: Resident Population Kalgoorlie-Boulder and Suburbs, 1903.**

Place	Males	Females	Total
Kalgoorlie	3,904	2,876	6,780
Boulder	3,090	2,568	5,658
Periphery	9,127	6,128	15,255
Total	16,121	11,572	27,693

*Western Australian Yearbook for 1902-4*, Government Printer, Perth, 291.

The railway reached Kalgoorlie in 1896 and town lighting systems were installed in 1897.

In all the townships, following the period of tent and ramshackle huts, came the construction of more substantial wooden or galvanised iron buildings, and then a third phase, which lasted approximately ten years, commencing in 1897, characterised by the building of brick and stone structures, mainly commercial, including hotels, and government institutions. Many of these buildings were replacements for others that had been destroyed by fire but, from these rebuilds came a distinctive West Australian style of architecture that can still be seen today in the main streets of Coolgardie, Kalgoorlie and Boulder. <sup>229</sup>

### **Concerts with a cause**

The construction of institutional buildings on the goldfields did not always go smoothly. As Anne Partion, in her article on the life of John Waters Kirwan,<sup>230</sup> notes. One of the main grievances of the goldfields residents at the time was the reluctance of the Colonial government to spend money to build or upgrade local public facilities such as schools and hospitals. The residents argued that, because the goldfields contributed so much to the economy of the colony, they should receive more financial support, rather than other districts benefiting at the goldfields' expense, an obvious example being the Bunbury jetty which was built, to please State Premier John Forrest and his constituents. <sup>231</sup> In the meantime, while this debate raged on in the political sphere, the residents of the goldfields were using their own talents to provide for their fellow citizens and improve their communities.

All manner of musical events and performances were organised to raise money; for the local hospitals, for sporting clubs, for church and school building funds, for musical instruments, for the Fire Brigade, assistance for the many individuals in need, and for patriotic and political causes.

---

<sup>229</sup> Martyn Webb and Audrey Webb, *Golden Destiny: The Centenary History of Kalgoorlie-Boulder and the Eastern Goldfields of Western Australia* (Kalgoorlie-Boulder: 1993), 540.

<sup>230</sup> Anne Partion, "Champion of the Goldfields," *Studies in West Australian History Journal: The Irish in Western Australia* no. 20, (2000): 94-116.

John Kirwan was the editor of the Kalgoorlie Miner from December 1895 until he took up a political career and became a member of the Federal Government in 1900.

<sup>231</sup> Martyn Webb and Audrey Webb, *Golden Destiny*, 541.

The first concert of this kind was held in Coolgardie in May 1895 as a means of raising money for the Coolgardie Hospital,<sup>232</sup> A similar series of concerts was organised by Phil Stuart in January 1897,<sup>233</sup> and they became a regular feature on the calendar. Sunday was the day for the Rational Concerts, with programmes that were designed to be uplifting and educational. The performers were mostly local. However, in order to ingratiate themselves with the local communities, touring companies would frequently put on a Rational Concert as a benefit performance. Admission was free, but a collection was taken during the evening and, as advertised, those sitting on the front seats were expected to contribute not less than 3 shillings and those sitting at the back 2 shillings.<sup>234</sup>

Information on the purpose and origins of rational concerts in the goldfields is sparse. However I think it is safe to assume that they had their origins in the 'rational amusements' that emerged in Britain in the 17<sup>th</sup> century and in Sydney in the 1830s.<sup>235</sup> In Victorian England, reformers considered leisure to be a means of educating and edifying the masses; it became an important element on the road to 'social progress'.<sup>236</sup> Proponents argued that leisure activities required a moral and intellectual purpose and condemned traditional recreations as promoting drunkenness and immorality.<sup>237</sup>

Programmes in Kalgoorlie were chosen carefully so as not to offend the public on the Sabbath and audiences were expected to behave with decorum. It was not possible to please everyone, however, and public opinion was divided as to the merit of holding public entertainment on a Sunday. One of the most vociferous opponents, the Reverend H Wilkinson from the Wesley Church, regularly expressed his opinion on the concerts in the local paper and the pulpit.<sup>238</sup> It appears that the

---

<sup>232</sup> *Coolgardie Miner*, 12 May 1895.

<sup>233</sup> *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 18 January 1897.

<sup>234</sup> *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 3 October 1896.

<sup>235</sup> See Bailey, *Leisure and Class in Victorian England: Rational Recreation and the Contest for Control, 1830 – 1885*, and Catriona M. Parratt, "Making Leisure Work Women's Rational Recreation in Late Victorian and Edwardian England," *Journal of Sport History* 26, no. 3 (1999): 471-487.

<sup>236</sup> Catriona M. Parratt, "Making Leisure Work."

<sup>237</sup> Richard Waterhouse, *Minstrel Show to Vaudeville: The Australian Popular Stage, 1788-1914* (Sydney: N.S.W. University Press), 24.

<sup>238</sup> *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 19 February 1897, *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 3 May 1897.

'larrikins' could not be contained either and they continued to be vocal and to express their opinions of the performances on a Sunday.<sup>239</sup>

Benefit concerts, including smoke concerts, were one of the primary sources of funding for local and national causes. Events such as the Mount Charlotte disaster on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of April 1897, in which five miners died, galvanised the district into action. Donations for the widows and orphans came pouring in from the general public and the unions, while the arts community organised their contribution.

Arrangements have been made between the dramatic section of the Kalgoorlie Men's Social Club and the Committee of the Miners' Institute, whereby the proceeds of the performance of "Caste" on Friday evening next will be devoted to the relief funds, instead of for the benefit of the Institute Library Fund.<sup>240</sup>

Mr Phil Stuart will not give his usual Rational Entertainment next Sunday evening, but on Easter Monday night a Benefit Concert, at which a number of artists will appear, including Mr Wallace Brownlow, will be given, when the proceeds will be devoted to the fund for the relief of the Mount Charlotte Disaster.<sup>241</sup>

**Concerts to raise money for the victims of mine accidents were well supported, even for tragedies as far away as New Zealand.**

As announced by us yesterday morning an enormous crowd assembled to hear the grand open-air concert tendered by Mr Edwards, the well-known American salesman, on Wednesday evening in aid of those rendered destitute by the unfortunate disaster in the Brunner Mine, New Zealand, it being estimated that fully 2000 persons were present<sup>242</sup>.

The success of these concerts culminated in 1905, in the formation of the Boulder Charity Concerts Society, formed specifically to raise funds for charitable purposes through concerts or other performances.<sup>243</sup> The minutes of the Society record that a variety of performing arts groups participated over the years with funds from the

---

<sup>239</sup> *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 29 March 1897.

<sup>240</sup> *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 3 April 1897.

<sup>241</sup> *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 15 April 1897.

<sup>242</sup> *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 10 April 1896. The Brunner Mine Accident occurred at Brunner on the West Coast of New Zealand on 26 March 1896. 65 miners were killed.

<sup>243</sup> From Minutes of Boulder Charity Concerts Society 1905 held by the Eastern Historical Society, Kalgoorlie.



first concert distributed by the committee to the Goldfields Seaside Excursion Association (Fresh Air League).<sup>244</sup>

As well as raising funds for institutions and good causes, there was also a need in these new communities for citizens to develop a network of friends and acquaintances who could assist in promoting personal and business interests. Some businessmen needed to raise money, some to form partnerships, others wanted to advance their status in the community, and to build and maintain the institutions and infrastructure necessary for communities to thrive. All these functions were assisted in various ways by the performing arts, including through smoke concerts.

Smoke concerts were first established in early Victorian England and were originally exclusively male clubs started as private social gatherings, for the entertainment of the moneyed and aristocratic classes. Initially offered by aristocratic amateur musical societies, their format placed them in the marketplace between public concerts and private musical gatherings. Writing on the relationship between smoking and music, Mantourani,<sup>245</sup> traces the development of three types of smoke concerts: the type given by private or aristocratic societies where the patrons were 'select, elite and aristocratic,<sup>246</sup> a broader category with lighter programmes enjoyed by the professional classes, and concerts available for the lower-middle classes of a more modest socio-economic status, with lighter mixed concerts, and audience participation, accompanied by smoking and considerable drinking.

Smoke concerts on the Goldfields certainly appear to fall in the latter category with a great deal of audience participation, smoking and drinking, but also with a sense that they were used to strengthen relationships, in both the personal and professional spheres.

---

<sup>244</sup> An Association set up to provide holiday accommodation at the seaside for the children of the Eastern Goldfields

<sup>245</sup> Eva Mantourani, "The Aroma of the Music and the Fragrance of the Weed: music and Smoking in Victorian England," *Lietuvos Muzikologija*, t.13(2012): 118.

<sup>246</sup> Marcia J. Citron, *Gender and the Musical Canon* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 104.

A members' invitation smoke concert and athletic entertainment takes place at the Athletic Club rooms this evening at 8.30.<sup>247</sup>

A complimentary smoke concert held this evening was given to Mr W. J. Vance, Chairman of the Stock Exchange, on his departure for London.<sup>248</sup>

The Eight Hours Sports Committee have decided to hold a smoke night at the Grand Hotel on Thursday evening next, at 8 o'clock, to entertain those gentlemen who held honorary positions on the day, and as a finale to one of the most successful sports meetings ever held on the goldfields.<sup>249</sup>

On Wednesday night the Kalgoorlie Liedertafel gave a "smoke concert" at the Caledonian Hall, Brookman-street. It was in the nature of a first venture in that direction, but was a most enjoyable affair, and all who attended were induced to hope that they would be able to be present at further such concerts in connection with the Liedertafel. There were numerous attendances of gentleman friends, besides a big muster of members..... The guests of the Liedertafel found themselves excellently provided for, not only as regards suitable refreshments but also in the matter of high-class music.<sup>250</sup>

### **Transporting and Maintaining Culture**

The mines of the Eastern Goldfields are situated far from the major centres of occupation in Australia, so the majority of migrants to the region would be without the support of traditional family networks, even those who, as the townships developed were joined by their wives and children. Therefore, social contact with others of a familiar background and with similar interests was essential for support and to maintain a stable lifestyle. In her study,<sup>251</sup> examining the lives of the new settlers to the Eastern Goldfields, Jane Davies recognised the importance of social networks and connections in developing a sense of belonging, concluding that it is possible for Europeans to live in a harsh and inhospitable environment and that family ties, values and community associations were central to developing an attachment to place. This view is reinforced by J.M. Powell<sup>252</sup> who also noted the importance of cultural factors to settlers in the process of adapting to new environments.

---

<sup>247</sup> *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 9 April 1896.

<sup>248</sup> *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 9 April 1896.

<sup>249</sup> *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 5 April 1899.

<sup>250</sup> *Kalgoorlie Western Argus*, 21 December 1899.

<sup>251</sup> Jane Davis, "Longing or Belonging? Finding Home on the Eastern Goldfields, Western Australia. 1895-1907," *Studies in Western Australian History* 27 (2011): 63-70.

<sup>252</sup> J.M. Powell, *Mirrors of the New World* (Folkstone: Wm Dawson & Son Ltd, 1977), 24.

Malcolm Prentis,<sup>253</sup> identifies culture in the following way:

‘Culture’ can mean the whole pattern of values and behaviour in a community or it can mean the specific specialised artistic and literary creations of a community. Culture, in both senses, is carried by immigrants to their new country .....Increasingly, as culture in the former sense becomes adapted to the majority or host culture and the group loses its distinctiveness, the preservation of distinctive aspects of homeland culture in the first sense falls to family, possibly schools and churches but increasingly to associations set up for the purpose.<sup>254</sup>

The vast majority of migrants to the Eastern Goldfields, even those who came from the Eastern States, laid claim to coming from British or Irish stock. They also distinguished themselves from each other by claiming an affinity with a particular region or country within the British Isles. Even the miner’s camps in Boulder were differentiated by ethnic groupings, such as the Cornish or Welsh camps and new chums would tend to gravitate to the one with which they could identify. However, there were other groupings that stood outside the dominant culture of the region: the Aboriginal people and the Afghans. All these groups had very distinctive cultural traditions that they continued to practise during the early years of settlement.

For identifiable groups in the Eastern Goldfields, as was the case in the Victorian goldfields, one of the easiest ways to form networks was to set up associations, both formal and informal, and, by so doing, display and preserve their inherited cultures. The performing arts were still a large part of these individual cultures and were practised in the groups themselves but were also on display, flagging their identities to the wider community.

For the purpose of this topic, three identifiable groups, the Scots, the Afghans and the Aboriginal people, are discussed here in the context of the use of the performing arts to maintain or transfer a culture. The Scots were selected as a highly visible example of the mainstream culture, and the Afghans as an example of a group of people outside the mainstream. What the two groups had in common, was their desire to transfer and maintain their culture in an alien landscape. The third group, the Indigenous local people, were already living in the area, so had no

---

<sup>253</sup> Malcolm Prentis, *The Scots in Australia* (Sydney: University of N.S.W. Press, 2008)

<sup>254</sup> Prentis,197.

requirement to import their culture. Rather, a consideration of whether or to what extent they were able to maintain it in the face of over whelming odds is provided.

### **The Scots**

We are glad to report that our isolated town was enlivened on Tuesday night by the strains of the Highland Pibroch, excellently rendered by one of a party which arrived here on Monday evening. Celtic blood as often demonstrated, runs warmly through a Celt heart, and the response to the sound of the Pibroch's first advent was highly appreciated by the inhabitants.<sup>255</sup>

The *Coolgardie Miner* in September 1894<sup>256</sup> printed an advertisement for a meeting of the Coolgardie Caledonian Society<sup>257</sup> stating:

The evening will be enlivened with Scotch songs, recitations, dances and two Pipers are expected to be present.

This was followed on 29<sup>th</sup> December 1894 by an advertisement for 'A Grand Vocal and Instrumental Concert 'to take place on New Years' Night at the Theatre Royal in Coolgardie. The programme included a selection of Scottish airs, comic impersonations, songs and dances.

The Caledonian Society in Kalgoorlie, said to be the largest in the colony, was founded in 1896 with objectives that included charity and advice for Scots immigrants. Educational, patriotic, sporting and cultural activities were included.

A grand Scottish Concert will be held in the Miners' Institute on Friday evening, 11<sup>th</sup> inst, under the auspices of the Kalgoorlie Caledonian Society, and in the presence and under the patronage of His Excellency the Governor and Lady Smith, Sir John Forrest (Chief of the Caledonian Society) and Lady Forrest ..... Madame Belle Buck, the highly talented English soprano, will make her first appearance in this colony at the concert, and the leading professional talent available has been secured for the occasion.<sup>258</sup>

This concert was the culmination of a week of events celebrating the opening of the railway line to Kalgoorlie. The concert was no doubt scheduled to please Sir John Forrest, the Chief of the Caledonian Society in Western Australia. As per

---

<sup>255</sup> *Coolgardie Miner*, 26. May 1894.

<sup>256</sup> *Coolgardie Miner*, 22 September 1894.

<sup>257</sup> The Coolgardie Caledonian Society appears to be the first ethnic society on the Eastern Goldfields. Malcolm Prentis, in *The Scots in Australia*, 201, awards this honour to the Kalgoorlie Caledonian Society founded in 1896 however this must be incorrect if the Coolgardie branch was operating in 1894.

<sup>258</sup> *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 4 September 1896.

Scottish tradition, however, the New Year's Celebrations and the annual Burns gathering<sup>259</sup> were the most significant cultural events for the Society and became an important part of the goldfields calendar.

Other immigrants of Celtic background also retained culturally based performance as parts of their practice on the Eastern Goldfields. For the Irish, St Patrick's Day on the 17<sup>th</sup> March was the day to celebrate. They did so with sporting contests on the recreation grounds, followed by a concert in the evening and a ball to midnight.<sup>260</sup>

The Welsh Cambrian Society, as per tradition, established a male voice choir, and, in 1899, was instrumental in forming a Goldfields Eisteddfod Society with branches in Coolgardie, Kalgoorlie, and Boulder, with other districts invited to attend.<sup>261</sup>

Music also figured prominently in social gatherings after meetings of organisations with a specific Celtic focus, such as the Hibernian Australasian Catholic Benefit Society,

The society is fortunate in having amongst its members gentlemen possessed of considerable entertaining abilities and their exertions helped to make the evening an exceedingly pleasant one. Songs were contributed by Messrs Madden, Kennedy and Davis, while Mr Fay gave a very humorous recitation.<sup>262</sup>

The Anglo Celts were not alone in transporting their music to the Goldfields. It was commonplace to hear the strains of Italian operas in the camps and the pubs,

Occasionally the evening in De Braun's would be enlivened by the music of harp and violin, played by an Italian father and son. One night the clicking of the billiard balls and the hum of conversation and merriment suddenly ceased. Order had been called for a song. An afterwards well-known and prominent legislator stepped forth and sang to the accompaniment of the harp and violin that delightful solo from "The Bohemian Girl" "The Heart Bowed Down." He sang it well and with fine expression, causing. I'm sure, most of us who heard it in the Eastern States theatres a long-remembered thrill in view of the extraordinary and exceptional surroundings of the goldfields.<sup>263</sup>

Nor was it unusual to listen to German bands playing in the street, raising feelings of nostalgia and memories of home:

---

<sup>259</sup> *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 25 January 1897.

<sup>260</sup> *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 18 March 1896.

<sup>261</sup> *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 19 July 1899.

<sup>262</sup> *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 22 July 1896.

<sup>263</sup> J. Stoddert, "The Early Days of Coolgardie: Being the Short Experience of an Amateur Prospector," *Royal Western Australian Historical Society Journal and Proceedings* vol 1 (1930): 59.

As the German band, which discourses sweet music in the town, was playing outside of the Victoria Hotel last night, an individual evidently thinking that there were not sufficient instruments in the band to play the music, accompanied them with four silver spoons *a la boner*. The new instrumentalist proved himself to be an artist of no mean calibre, and delighted the crowd, which soon gathered around, with his artistic manipulations, and the manner in which he played the various National Anthems and other pieces. Australia v Germany.<sup>264</sup>

There were occasions however when the sound of the bands playing got a bit too much, especially when the musicians where not of the highest calibre:

For weeks past Coolgardie has been surfeited with street music and go where one will within the main thoroughfares the mingled strains of oppositions bands throw out a discordance that is positively awful.....<sup>265</sup>

The reporter then went on to request the Council to regulate, if not abate, the band playing, contending that if excitement was required, earthquakes and volcanic eruptions were preferable.

Generally though, it appears that all the musicians were tolerated, and it is worth noting, that, although many of the performers were allied to distinct ethnic groupings or interests, the audiences at the various cultural events came from a multitude of backgrounds, making the performing arts one of the threads that bound a multi- ethnic society together.

### **The Afghans**

One group of people stands out as being outside the dominant culture of the region once the prospectors and miners moved in, the Afghan cameleers. They had very distinctive cultural traditions that they continued to practise during the early years of settlement. Given the then prevailing attitudes to race and ethnicity, the general responses to their performances was very mixed.

---

<sup>264</sup> *Coolgardie Miner*, 3 October 1896.

<sup>265</sup> *Coolgardie Miner*, 21 July 1896.

The Afghan's history in Australia and how they came to be on the goldfields is interesting and worth recording. Camels had been used successfully by the Burke and Wells Expedition in 1860 and their use led to later imports. The first commercial shipment of camels and their handlers took place on New Year's Day in 1866 at Port Augusta in South Australia. A local pastoralist Thomas Elder recognised the superiority of the camels to horses and bullocks in the arid lands of Australia and the ability of their handlers to endure the harsh conditions.<sup>266</sup> The cameleers came from a wide range of Muslim origins but mostly from Bealochistan, the Punjab, Kashmir and the Sindh province. They were just as likely to have come from British India as Afghanistan but were generally all named as 'Afghans', which classified them as Asiatics under the law.<sup>267</sup>



Fig. 45. Afghan cameleers, photo Eastern Goldfields Historical Society

In South Australia and the eastern colonies, they adhered to their religion, building mosques wherever they settled.

<sup>266</sup> *Australian Geographic*, Issue 20, Oct-Dec 1990.

<sup>267</sup> Regina Ganter, *Muslim Australians: the deep history of contact* (Brisbane: Griffith University, 2008).

No women came with them although some later married European or Aboriginal women. For the next 50 years cameleers with their charges ranged over the outback of Australia, carting supplies, materials, tools and equipment, the mail, and even water. Their reception was not always cordial, with violent clashes between the cameleers and the Australian horse and bullock drivers a frequent event.

Cameleers arrived in Coolgardie soon after gold was discovered there.

In March that year a caravan of six Afghans, forty-seven camels and eleven calves, set out across the desert from Marree to the goldfield. It arrived in July with the camels, carrying between 135 and 270 kilograms each, in good condition.<sup>268</sup>

By 1898, the Afghan community in Coolgardie numbered 300 with 80 on average attending Friday prayer. A Magisterial List of the same year gives the number of camels in the camp as 1,649. At that time, Coolgardie held the main Muslim community in the colony. Their camp, located at the east end of the town, had two mosques, and five other public buildings used for public worship. One Imam was recorded with three prayer leaders.<sup>269</sup>

The Afghans held a unique position on the Goldfields. They were, because of their distinctive appearance, religious and social practices very removed from the dominant culture but were, also, because of the transport service they provided, a necessary part of the local community. Their relative social acceptance was boosted by their participation in other events in the wider community, such as giving assistance in extinguishing the great fire in Coolgardie in October 1895<sup>270</sup> and raising funds for charity.<sup>271</sup>

The first report of a musical performance given by the cameleers was reported in the *Coolgardie Miner* in April 1894, at a time when the town consisted of tents, and wooden humpies and the first of the town lots were up for sale.

On Sunday evening at the camel camp, the Afghans held a concert, which was attentively listened to. The group gathered round the camp fire looked very picturesque and the dirges were pleasantly

---

<sup>268</sup> Bilal Cleland, *A History of Islam in Australia* (Islam Australia Network, [islam.ii.net/channel/islam\\_australia.html](http://islam.ii.net/channel/islam_australia.html)). Accessed January 2018.

<sup>269</sup> *ibid*

<sup>270</sup> *South Australian Register*, 11 October 1895.

<sup>271</sup> National Trust of W.A. *Gold and Water, Life on the Goldfields*. <http://valuingheritage.com.au>. Accessed January 2018.



peculiar. Well known burly figure of Yesop filled the chair, and the vice-chair was occupied by the equally well known camel man Ammer. The group appeared to enjoy themselves greatly, though their musical strains mingled incongruously with the music of the Salvation Army which was wafted over the flat during the early portion of the proceedings.<sup>272</sup>

Muslims hold two major religious feasts in year, the Festival of Sacrifice, 'Idul-Adha', held to commemorate the occasion when Abraham was willing to sacrifice his son to God and 'Idul-Fitr', the Feast of Breaking the Fast, held after Ramadan. Both of which were celebrated in Coolgardie in the 1890's when the cameleers had their mosque and camp on the hill. This account of a festival held in June 1895 was recorded when the Afghan religious institutions were well developed in the town of Coolgardie.

Quite a large number of people attended the Afghan camp on Tuesday evening to witness the fantasia performed there in honour of their yearly sacrificial feast. The Afghans themselves, in their gold-embroidered caftaux and showy nether garments, made a brave show, and as there was a bright moon, the scene was very picturesque one. Tagh Mahomet and Gunay Khan presided over the entertainment which consisted of native dances varied with short pantomimic performances. The energy of the gentleman who presided over the tum-tum elicited frequent applause and it really seemed as though it were impossible to tire him out. The Afghans received their guests most courteously, providing seats and refreshments for the ladies, of whom a large number were present.<sup>273</sup>

On Monday March 8<sup>th</sup>, 1897 the local paper reported in great detail events that occurred during the previous week at the Mahomedan Festival- including mention of the amusements that were held.

During the day and far away into the night there was a continual string of amusements, consisting of Afghan dancing, theatricals, wrestling and lifting weights. Mr Faiz Mohomet provided seats for over gentlemen.<sup>274</sup>

What makes this report interesting is that a whole column was devoted to explaining to the readers the significance of the Festival to the Afghans, providing details of the religious ceremony and the rituals that were performed, all with an account given in a laudatory tone about the devotion of the congregation and the eloquence of the priests. Relations between the Western audience and their hosts

---

<sup>272</sup> *Coolgardie Miner*, 28. April 1894.

<sup>273</sup> *Coolgardie Miner*, 6 June 1895.

<sup>274</sup> *Coolgardie Miner*, 8 March 1897.

were portrayed as friendly, as the Afghans distributed lemonade and fruit to their guests. Reports of other festivals were published in later years and again explanations about their significance were given to the readers with a note that provision would be made for European visitors who may wish to witness the entertainments.<sup>275</sup>

The most intriguing performance given by the Afghan community was an Afghani version of Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves performed at the Coolgardie Tivoli Theatre on 20<sup>th</sup> July 1898.<sup>276</sup> The event was billed as a performance by the New Indian and Theatrical Company. However, as reported in the review the next day,<sup>277</sup> all the characters were taken by Afghans with the story told in Hindi. The story of Ali Baba had its origins in medieval Arabic literature but was adapted in the West to be told as a children's story and a theatrical pantomime. The version presented in Coolgardie as relayed by the reporter appears to be a combination of traditional Arabic elements, such as the music played on a tom and bagpipes, with elements of Western pantomime farce.

From an Indian standpoint the performance was a good one, and the Afghans seemed to thoroughly enjoy it. The Europeans however looked at it in a different light, not understanding the language and many of them not being able to follow the situations in the pigeon English in which they were described in the programme. The audience were, however provided with plenty of amusement, and were convulsed with laughter at the absurd and unusual antics of the aliens.<sup>278</sup>

The reporter then comments on the poor singing but good acting of the performers and goes on to say:

The majority of the audience long before the finish, wished the performance over and we noticed several Europeans asleep after half time<sup>279</sup>

The production did not attract a large audience and it was noted that the audience was segregated with coloured men on the right and Europeans on the left, women and children occupied the front rows.

---

<sup>275</sup> *Coolgardie Miner*, 14 May 1897.

<sup>276</sup> *Coolgardie Miner*, 19 July 1898.

<sup>277</sup> *Coolgardie Miner*, 20 July 1898.

<sup>278</sup> *Coolgardie Miner*, 20 July 1898.

<sup>279</sup> *Coolgardie Miner*, 20 July 1898.

The West Australian Exhibition in Coolgardie in 1899, featured three days of Afghan entertainment. The Afghan concert programme on the 28<sup>th</sup> June 1899, even viewed with Western eyes, must have been spectacular, with a choir of a hundred voices and an opera with 200 performers in regalia.<sup>280</sup>

### **The Aboriginal people**

Although Aboriginals did perform in public and were given food and money handouts for doing so, unlike the experiences of Indigenous people on the goldfields of Victoria, there does not appear to be any record of them as motivated participants in the professional entertainment industry. Thus, the Aboriginal performers of the Eastern Goldfields are included in this section about the identity and maintenance of their culture, rather than their activities as entertainers.

The number of Indigenous people living in the Eastern Goldfields in the late nineteenth century is difficult to determine, because the only Aborigines counted in the *Aborigines Department Annual Report* for the year ending 30<sup>th</sup> June 1899,<sup>281</sup> were either in employment or supported by the Government. Those living in the bush or referred to as being in a 'wild state' were not counted.<sup>282</sup> The number registered was 826. However as noted by Webb and Webb,<sup>283</sup> their ability to assemble hundreds at a time must have meant there were many more living in the local area.<sup>284</sup> The history of the relationship between the miners, mining, and the original inhabitants is a complex one that has been well documented.<sup>285</sup> A review of the historical literature of the area has to date, uncovered very little information concerning the cultural activities of the indigenous people with regard to the performing arts during this period. Relevant papers and newspapers do however, reveal some interest and mixed responses on the part of the newcomers.

---

<sup>280</sup> *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 26 June 1899.

<sup>281</sup> Aborigines Department. *Annual Report for the Year ending 30<sup>th</sup> June 1899*, W.A.V.P, 1899: 9.

<sup>282</sup> Malcolm A. C. Fraser, *Western Australian Yearbook for 1902-04* (Perth: Government Printer, 1906): 341.

<sup>283</sup> Webb, *Golden Destiny*, 188.

<sup>284</sup> Possibly these assemblies would have been at times of collective ceremonial gatherings.

<sup>285</sup> For example, see Webb, 218, re conflict between prospectors and the Indigenous people, and the Mines Department files, 777/89 and 1633/95 re the issue of Miner's Rights to Aborigines

As I am writing this 10 p.m. Sunday there is going on the wild songs of the blacks around the camp fires, about an eighth of a mile distant – most interesting is it to go and see them<sup>286</sup>

On Monday night a party of residents paid a visit to the aborigines' camp for the purpose of witnessing the natives hold a corroboree. None of the visitors seemed to know where the camp lay, and it was only after a rough roundabout walk that the area was reached, where to the disgust of the would-be sightseers, it was found that there was 'nothing corroboree' on. However the never failing bribe of the 'white-fellah' once more prevailed and soon fires were lit, and in a short time about twenty of our dusky brethren were seated around a small fire squatting on their hams, and the quiet that had prevailed gave place to peculiar, metallic, monotonous music, accompanied by dull sounds produced by beating the ground with short sticks, At intervals the performers left their places in couples and performed a peculiar backward movement. Then the younger ones glided around uttering at the same time a sharp sound, giving one the impression that they were trying to frighten something. The final dance consisted of a short hard trot round; producing a dull noise by the force their feet struck the ground. The performers appeared to thoroughly enjoy themselves in their grotesque performance but beyond it being novel it has very little to recommend it as a spectacle.<sup>287</sup>

The reception of the audience of diggers to the strange sounds and unfamiliar choreography of an Aboriginal corroboree was varied and echoes the response that the Ballarat miners in the Victorian goldfields gave to the performance of the Chinese Opera in their camps.<sup>288</sup> It was not unexpected however, given the lack of exposure to the unfamiliar sounds and dance performances of a corroboree and the ethnic origins of the audience.

Despite this, the Aboriginal people were invited to perform their dances on other occasions.

Being a sub-committee appointed by the Benevolent Society for the purpose of making arrangements for providing a Xmas treat for the blacks,..... A dinner is to be provided at the Miners' Institute Kalgoorlie, and afterwards, if possible, to get the blacks to proceed to the Recreation Reserve, and there give an exhibition of native dancing, spear throwing, etc.<sup>289</sup>

They were also invited to provide entertainment at the Coolgardie Exhibition.<sup>290</sup>

---

<sup>286</sup> Will, Harry and Norman Berry letters to family and friends in Victoria. *Papers of the Berry Family 1893-1896*, Battye Library, M.N. 878, ACC 3050A.

<sup>287</sup> *Coolgardie Miner*. 26 May 1894.

<sup>288</sup> Love, "Chinese Theatre on the Victorian Goldfields 1858 - 1870," 47-86.

<sup>289</sup> *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 10 December 1898.

<sup>290</sup> From March to 1<sup>st</sup> July 1899, Coolgardie hosted Western Australia's International Mining and Industrial Exhibition. It required the construction of a massive exhibition building and extensive planning. It was derided in many centres as being inappropriate in such a small community (*West*

In addition to the flower show and a popular concert in the evening, there will be at night a blackfellas' corroboree, in which over 100 aboriginals are to take part and show their weird war and festival marches.<sup>291</sup>

There were other occasions when corroborees in the Eastern Goldfields were witnessed by non- indigenous spectators<sup>292</sup> and in some instances, payments, either in the form of goods or money were made. However, unlike the corroborees in the Victorian Goldfields, no evidence has emerged that would confirm them as a 'cultural product jointly negotiated between two cultures',<sup>293</sup> or that the Aboriginal people were supporting themselves through performing corroborees.<sup>294</sup>

The Christmas dinner prepared for the Indigenous citizens became an annual event at which the recipients were invited to perform dances and exhibitions of spear throwing for a non- indigenous audience. Was this inclusion a form of paternalism, a novelty requirement, the kernel of a curiosity about a culture other than the familiar, or a mixture of all three? Certainly, self-education and improvement was very popular in the Goldfields, with a number of lecture series on a variety of topics held regularly at local venues.<sup>295</sup> However, I cannot find in this period any that included the local indigenous people as a topic. Thus, it is reasonable to assume therefore that novelty was the major attraction of the performances, with, in the case of the Benevolent Society, a sense of paternalistic charity.

---

*Australia Sunday Times*, 2 April 1899). Although it failed to get much support from other colonies it was well supported locally.

<sup>291</sup> *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 27 May 1899.

<sup>292</sup> See reports in the local newspapers for example the *Coolgardie Miner* 23 March 1896 and the *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 25 November 1896, 30 December 1898, and 27 May 1899.

<sup>293</sup> M. Parsons, "The tourist corroborees in South Australia". 46-69. The closest examples of collaboration were the Continental Concerts performed on the Kalgoorlie Recreation Ground in February and March 1906, when the local Indigenous people performed corroborees in a program with an orchestra and local singers. *Kalgoorlie Miner* 5 February 1906.

<sup>294</sup> *Corowa Free Press*, 1876, Date and month unknown, no title n.p.

<sup>295</sup> *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 7 April 1900.

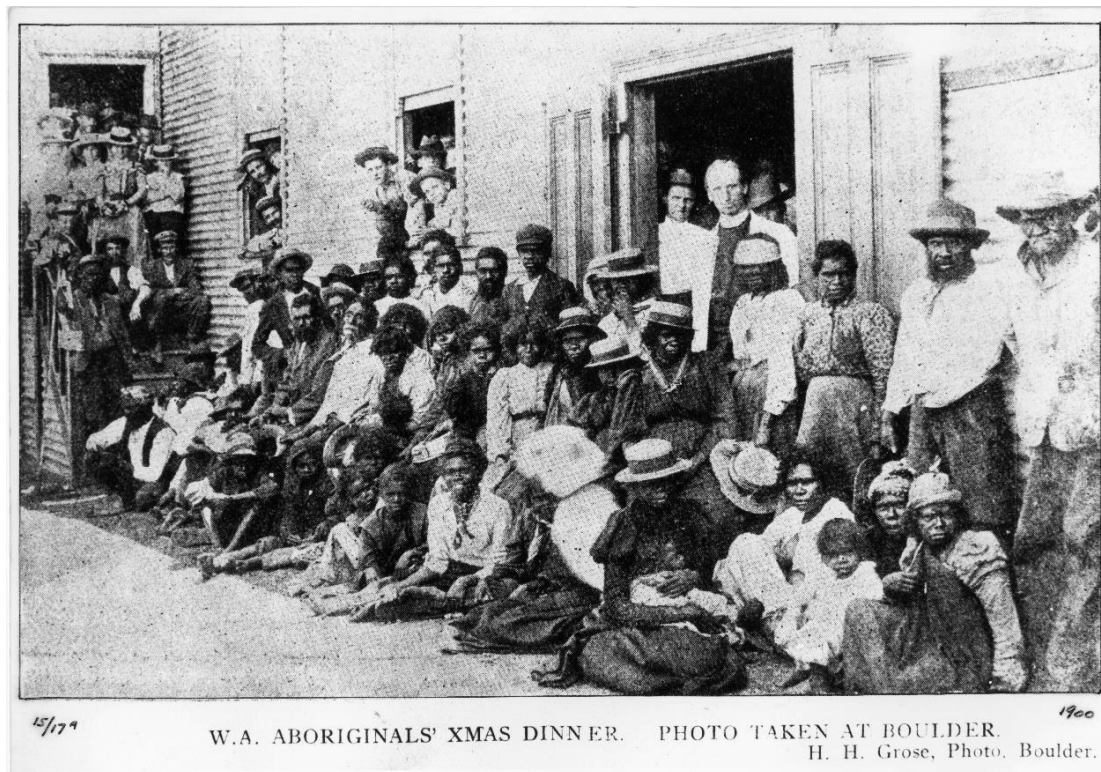


Fig. 46. W.A. Aboriginals Xmas Dinner, Boulder. H.H. Grose, Boulder, 1900.

Eastern Goldfields Historical Society.

It is difficult to determine whether the public displays of corroborees, as opposed to their private performances, were altered in any way by the Indigenous performers, to make them more appealing to the new settlers, or whether the corroborees still contained some cultural value for the performers themselves as they performed for non-Aboriginal audiences.

As reported in the newspapers, comparison between the reception of the two kinds of alien performances, the Indigenous and the Afghan, appears to highlight the status of differentiation between these groups in the goldfields' community more generally. Both forms of performing arts would have been outside the terms of reference of a Western audience and yet the reporting of the Afghan performances, especially during the festivals, gives the impression that they were received in a more open and harmonious manner and with less condescension. The performance of Ali Baba, falling as it did between two cultures, would have bemused an audience who had expectations of a knockabout pantomime, yet they could still appreciate humour in a different guise. In the reporter's explanations of festival events, there is an acknowledgement of a rich and complex culture behind the performances of

the Afghans, but corroborates were not reported in any great detail or with any background information.

It is of note that the editor of the *Coolgardie Miner* from 1894 to 1897 was Fredrick Vosper, the dominant figure in the Anti-Asiatic League<sup>296</sup> in Coolgardie. His oratory at public gatherings and persuasive articles<sup>297</sup> in the newspaper contributed to the existing anti- Asiatic racism sentiments but apparently did not extend to excluding positive reporting of Afghan cultural life.

Music, as recognised by Dreyfus and Crotty<sup>298</sup>, as well as being linked to memory and identity, has the ability to travel and transcend cultural boundaries. This certainly appears to be the case in the Goldfields of Western Australia where the migrants and Indigenous inhabitants shared their distinctive cultures with all who cared to listen and participate. However, it did not necessarily lead to appreciation of the deeper cultural significance of such music and performance especially from a mainstream audience.

### **A variety of talent**

As the townships of Coolgardie, Boulder and Kalgoorlie continued to grow so did participation in the performing arts, presenting itself in many guises, from entertainment in the home, to impromptu singsongs in the pub, to fully programmed variety concerts, with singers, musicians, comedians, jugglers, novelty acts, and the ever popular promenade concerts. The arts flourished and clubs and societies focusing on specific aspects such as orchestral and dramatic societies, grew apace. Churches and schools formed choirs and tuition was offered in vocal, instrumental and dance practice. An indication of the popularity and desirability of musical skills can be seen in the number of advertisements in the local papers offering musical instruments, particularly pianos for sale.

Most Anglo Celts in this period would have inherited the tradition of amateur music making. Transferred originally from Victorian Britain, it became a regular activity in

---

<sup>296</sup> The Anti-Asiatic League was formed in 1894 to exert pressure on the government and local councils to remove the Afghans and other Asians from employment.

<sup>297</sup> F. Vosper. "The Beginning of Trouble." *Coolgardie Miner*, 16. 6. 1894.

<sup>298</sup> K Dreyfus and J. Crotty, "Introduction Music, Migration and Multiculturalism," *Victorian Historical Journal* 78, no.2 (2007): 147-151.

Australian households and, as noted by Ronald Pearsall they had distinctive features.

The most prominent feature of the nineteenth century musical scene was that music was not departmentalised, and a man could go home one evening from a ballad concert, sniffing over 'Home, Sweet Home', to a promenade concert, revelling in a Beethoven symphony, on to a music hall, joining in the chorus of a ribald ditty and back to a musical evening at home.<sup>299</sup>

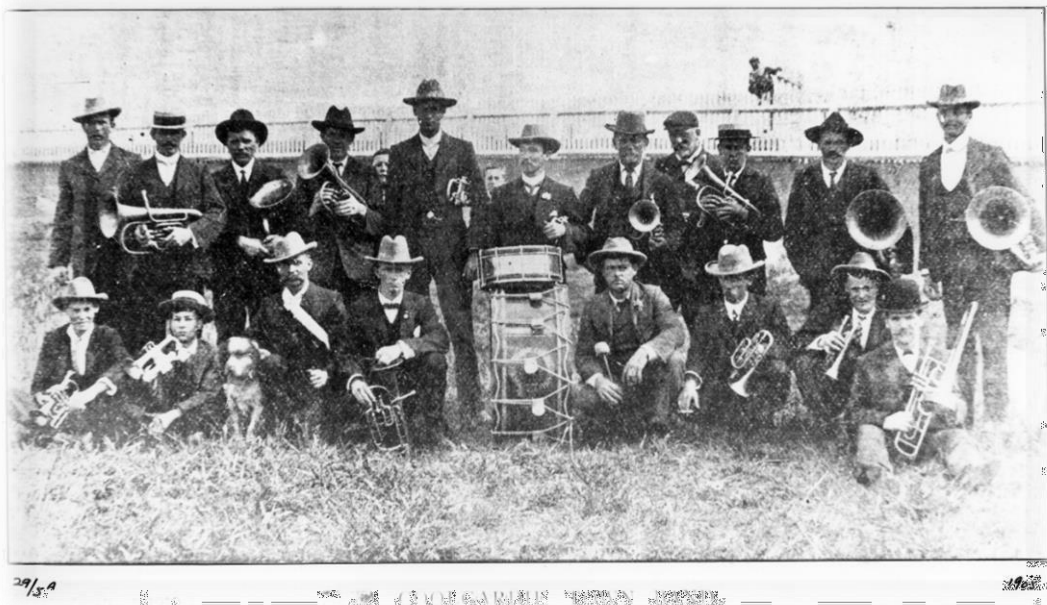


Fig. 47, 48. 1905. Photos from Eastern Goldfields Historical Society

<sup>299</sup> Ronald Pearsall, *Victorian Popular Music* (Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1973).



Playing a musical instrument, such as the piano, cello, flute or brass instrument, being able to sing, dance or tell a story, were skills highly prized in the isolated towns of the Eastern Goldfields, and were put to good use by its citizens.

One of the most popular forums in which to display your talent was in the local Brass Band. This musical tradition, imported from the industrial north of England, first to the Eastern Colonies and then to the West, was highly suited to an outdoor environment and a brass band, unlike a conventional orchestra of string, wind and brass, was able to carry inexperienced players, which suited the local miners, many of whom were self-taught.<sup>300</sup> Brass bands in the 1890s were also, according to the social norms of the period, 'emblematic of a progressive, prosperous, proud and socially cohesive community',<sup>301</sup> and 'a town without the socialising influence of a brass band was lacking in dignity and importance'.<sup>302</sup> Citizens of the Goldfields, anxious to present their communities as prosperous and stable, were fully supportive of the bands and encouraged their participation in local and interstate competitions.<sup>303</sup>

The first mention of a brass band was noted in the *Coolgardie Miner* during the reporting of the Afghan concert, the reporter noting that:

Though their musical strains mingled somewhat incongruously with the music of the Salvation Army<sup>304</sup>

The Salvation Army bands, all of which included brass instruments, preached the gospel by voice and music but were welcomed in parades and on the street corners as an additional form of entertainment and as a link with the past. Other brass bands must have been quickly formed as in 1895, the *Coolgardie Miner* reported that:

Saturday night was quite a gala one in the town owing to the presence of two brass bands which discoursed their sweet strains to most appreciative audiences. One band was stationed at Elliot's corner and the other close handy in front of Messrs Benstead & Co.'s butchering establishment and

---

<sup>300</sup> Farrant, *A Social History of Music*, 87.

<sup>301</sup> John Whiteoak, "Pity the Bandless Towns: Brass Banding in Australian Rural Communities before World War Two," *Rural Society*, vol. 13, no 3 (2003): 287-311.

<sup>302</sup> T.L. Hellings, "Reminiscences of band life," *Australian Band News*, Bairnsdale (January 1917): 12.

<sup>303</sup> The Boulder City band came second in the South Street Brass Band Competition in Ballarat in 1902 and 1903 and first in 1905. The A.W.A. Miners Band came third in 1903 and first in 1904.

<sup>304</sup> *Coolgardie Miner*, 28 May 1894.

the treat of listening to their playing was only equalled by the sight of the rush of the hearers from one band to the other. The bands courteously played their airs alternately and thus afforded a very ample night's pleasure to the hundreds who gathered to listen to them.<sup>305</sup>

A visit by a Coolgardie Brass Band to Kalgoorlie in November 1895 led the *Kalgoorlie Miner*<sup>306</sup> to call for the locals to form a similar body. Margaret Bull,<sup>307</sup> credits the formation of the first brass band in the district in 1895 to men from the Iron Bark and Eaglehawk camps, who found they had seven to nine brass instruments between them. Their first public engagement, for which they were paid 12/6d, was to play on the balcony of the Grand Hotel. Other bands soon began to form, and the call went out for more instrumentalists.

The town on Saturday night was enlivened by the strains of the Kanowna Brass Band. There are some half a dozen performers, and form, in all events, a nucleus of a much better band if the instrumentalists of the district would come in and assist.<sup>308</sup>

This call for musicians must have been successful because in the following years, at least two bands were formed in Kalgoorlie. They later amalgamated to form the Hannan's Pioneer Band (later called the Kalgoorlie Brass Band), and two in Boulder, the Boulder City Brass Band and the Boulder City Mines Band. All the bands were hired to provide entertainment from time to time. Frequently positioned on the balconies of the local hotels or at open air promenade concerts, they were extremely popular.<sup>309</sup> The enthusiasm and interest of all the band members was on display after the first local brass band contest held in August 1899. The results of the contest led to a spate of letters to 'The Editor of the *Kalgoorlie Miner*' where the adjudicators' verdict was vigorously debated. Such was the interest that all of the bands strove to improve their standard of performance, even to the extent of importing experienced conductors and players from interstate.

Mr H McMahon, the famous New South Wales bandsman made his debut with the Boulder City Band on Saturday night, with four of his brothers. The difference in the standard of the music was quickly noticed and after Mr McMahon had played the cornet solo parts a couple of times the large crowd

---

<sup>305</sup> *Coolgardie Miner*, 13 May 1895.

<sup>306</sup> *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 11 November 1895.

<sup>307</sup> *Goldfields Bands Early History*, Eastern Goldfields Historical Society, in a collection of information on the history of music in the goldfields collected by Margaret Bull, 1985. Battye Library.PR 12003/4.

<sup>308</sup> *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 12 May 1896.

<sup>309</sup> *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 22 October 1896, 28 December 1897, 1 June 1898, 22 October 1899.

which had collected soon guessed his identity and after each piece he was greeted with a round of applause. The Boulder City Band now numbers within its ranks five members of the well-known McMahon musicians, so it should soon attain a very prominent position amongst the brass bands of the colony.<sup>310</sup>

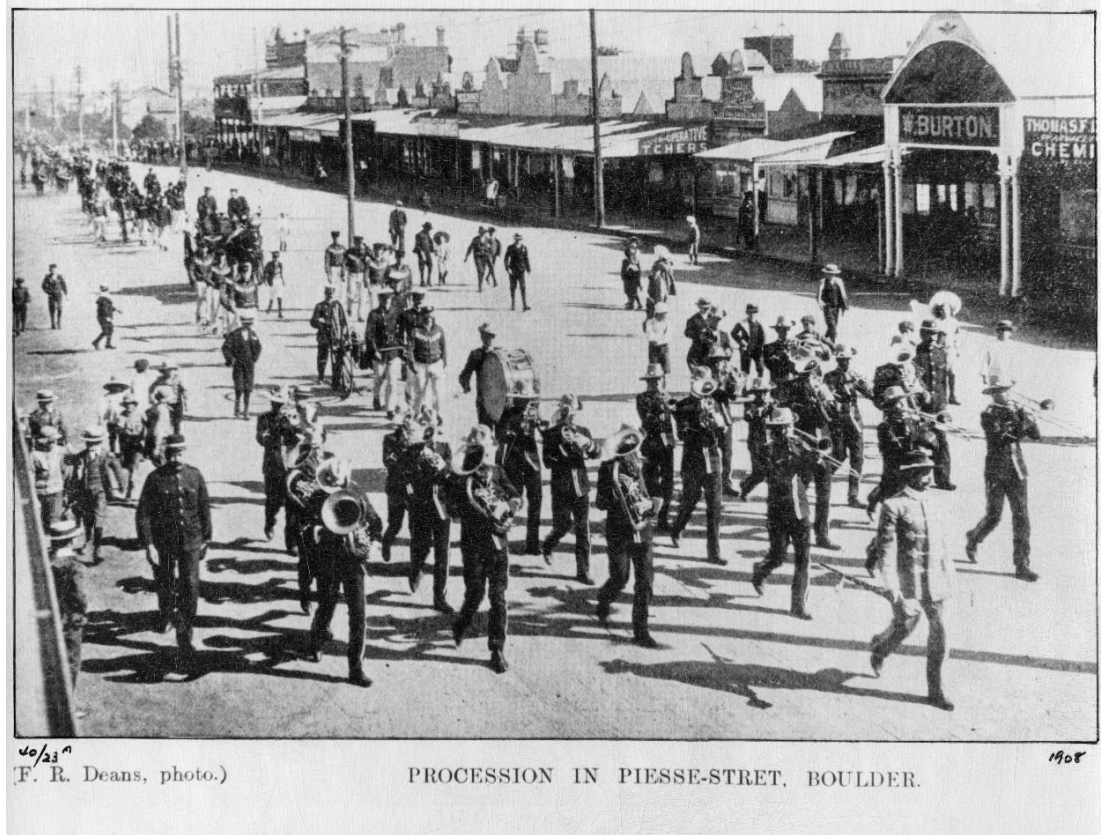


Fig. 49. Procession in Piesse -Street Boulder 1908. Photographer F.R. Deans.  
Eastern Goldfields Historical Society, 40/23A.

The influence of migrants such as MacMahon and those from all over the world with skills and experience in the arts was considerable. Many of these migrants, with no experience in mining, but with professional backgrounds on the stage, followed the rush, hoping to make a fortune using the talents they brought with them. This phenomenon was noted in the Victorian Gold rushes, but mainly in respect to the visual arts;<sup>311</sup> in Western Australia it appears to have been the performing arts that benefitted most.

<sup>310</sup> *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 26 March 1900.

<sup>311</sup> See Clark, "Art of the Goldfields." McCulloch, *Artists of the Australian Gold Rush*. McPhee, "Gold and Australian Decorative Arts".

The role of the bands extended beyond providing entertainment however, as noted by Jean Farrant.<sup>312</sup> They were also recruited to lead political processions such as during the years of protest against the 'ten-foot alluvial rule'<sup>313</sup>

One person who made a significant contribution to the music scene and the community generally on the goldfields was the operatic baritone Wallace Brownlow. Born in Nottingham in 1861, he joined the D'Oyley Carte Opera Company touring company in 1884, appearing in many Gilbert and Sullivan productions. He travelled to Australia to work for J. C. Williamson in the 1894 production of *Ma Mie Rosette*, with Nellie Stewart,<sup>314</sup> and in an 1895 revival of *H.M.S. Pinafore* in Sydney. Drawn by the lure of gold, he left the stage in 1896 to go prospecting in Victoria and later established a mine on the outskirts of Kalgoorlie. His first recorded performance in Kalgoorlie was at a social function held by the Amateur Athletic and Social Club on 21<sup>st</sup> July 1896.

The great draw of the evening was undoubtedly in the singing of Mr Wallace Brownlow, who is greatly appreciated in Kalgoorlie as in the places of his greatest successes. His rare natural qualities of voice and high artistic abilities were well manifested in his first selection, "When Bright Eyes Glance" J I (Hedgecock). The following applause was instantaneous and enthusiastic and could only be appeased by the popular operatic artist coming forward again.<sup>315</sup>

**An article on the opening of the Miners' Institute a few weeks later notes:**

The promoters of the concert have been fortunate in securing the assistance of Mr Wallace Brownlow, the famous operatic baritone, who is on a visit to the field.<sup>316</sup>

---

<sup>312</sup> Farrant, "*Music in Coolgardie, Kalgoorlie and Boulder 1892-1908*," 243.

<sup>313</sup> Alluvial or surface ore was known as 'poor man's gold' and provided a precarious living for the diggers. Under the 1895 Mining Regulation Act of Western Australia, a system of dual title prevailed whereby diggers and mining companies shared miner's rights to a claim. Diggers were permitted to work alluvial seams to any depth provided they remained fifty feet from a load or reef. A dispute arose between the Ivanhoe Venture Company and the diggers: the government supported the company and introduced the 'Ten Foot Regulation' which restricted the alluvial miners in their search for gold to a depth of ten feet (3 metres). Alluvial miners defied the legislation; some were arrested and sent to Fremantle Jail. Mining Minister Edward Wittenoom's effigy was paraded and in March 1898 Premier Forrest was mobbed in Kalgoorlie by several thousand angry diggers. Political meetings and protest marches were usually accompanied by the brass bands, with the bandmen frequently being called from work to take part in the activities: eventually the 'Ten Foot Regulation' was rescinded.

<sup>314</sup> Information from Music Australia (<http://www.musicaustralia.org/apps/MA.>)

<sup>315</sup> *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 22 July 1896.

<sup>316</sup> *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 12 August 1896.

The prospects in the district must have looked rosy because Wallace Brownlow stayed. In November 1896, he purchased the Exchange Hotel in Hannan Street for ten thousand pounds <sup>317</sup>and, from December 1897 to February 1899, he was the lessee and manager of the Palace Hotel, one of the most luxurious hotels in Western Australia according to Mr Douglas McCrae, the editor and proprietor of the *London Financial Times*<sup>318</sup>. In that same article the local reporter described Mr Brownlow thus:

Before his arrival in Kalgoorlie, which event took place about three years ago, Mr Brownlow had already been known both at Home and in Australia as a popular figure on the operatic stage. Possessed of a magnificent baritone voice and much dramatic talent, to theatre-goers and lovers of music his name had been familiar as their own. It will therefore be seen that when Mr Brownlow decided to cast in his lot with Kalgoorlie he was a distinct acquisition to the town. Ever since his first arrival Mr Brownlow has been prominently identified with public affairs in the metropolis of the goldfields and as a citizen the genial and generous temperament of the proprietor of the Palace Hotel has won him respect and friendship just as his singing previously delighted and captured the musical world..... Mr Brownlow's great musical and dramatic accomplishments have never been withheld when purposes of charity were concerned and the inhabitants of Kalgoorlie never fail to avail themselves in large numbers of the opportunity of hearing Mr Brownlow sing.<sup>319</sup>

Wallace Brownlow left Kalgoorlie with his family to move to the Eastern Colonies in February 1899 after a grand send off by the local citizens. Nellie Stewart, in her memoirs,<sup>320</sup> states that alcoholism contributed to his failure in managing a hotel in Western Australia. Presumably she was referring to the Palace Hotel. The accolades bestowed on him by the people, however, indicate that he was a well- respected community member.<sup>321</sup> Wallace Brownlow did return to the fields in November 1899 with the Hoyt-McKee Musical Comedy Co and again was honoured, this time by the local Fire Brigade and Salvage Corps,<sup>322</sup> a group he had once led.<sup>323</sup>

---

<sup>317</sup> Arthur Reid, *Those were the Days* (Carlisle: Hesperian Press, 1986). 218.

<sup>318</sup> *Kalgoorlie Western Argus*, 6 October 1898. 18,19,20.

<sup>319</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>320</sup> Nellie Stewart, *My Life's Story* (Sydney: John Sands, 1923).

<sup>321</sup> *Kalgoorlie Western Argus*, 23 February 1899. 10.

<sup>322</sup> *Kalgoorlie Western Argus*, 9 November 1899. 33.

<sup>323</sup> Wallace Brownlow penniless and depressed committed suicide in Melbourne on September 7 1919.

Many other performers can be recorded on the goldfields during this period including Albert Whelan,<sup>324</sup> the popular singer and entertainer. He was born in Melbourne in 1875 and arrived in the goldfields very early in his career in August 1895, and was promptly hired by W. Hansen, the owner of the Theatre Royal in Coolgardie. Gaining valuable experience and an accumulation of funds, he subsequently went on to a successful career in English music halls, appearing at the Palace Theatre in London on the same bill as Anna Pavlova and Michael Mordkin, the renowned Russian dancers. Other professional theatre folk such as Tom Cannam,<sup>325</sup> who assumed the management of the Kalgoorlie Tivoli Garden, J. G. Arnot from the London Gaiety Burlesque Company, and Fred Brewer, well known for his vocal abilities in the Eastern States,<sup>326</sup> were among many who honed their talents entertaining the miners while living in the Eastern Goldfields.

It is also pertinent to recognise the presence in the community of local personalities with influence, who had an interest in the arts. Margaret Bull,<sup>327</sup> writing about the history of the Coolgardie Lieder Tafel,<sup>328</sup> commented that the success of the society depended on its office bearers who included A. E. Morgans M.L.A., the member of the Legislative Assembly for Coolgardie from 1897 to 1904, Charles Sommers M.L.C., the member of the Legislative Council for the North East from 1897 to 1904, Warden Dowley, and the President, Warden Finnerty. In contrast there does not appear to be any record of direct financial support from the local mining companies to the arts. However, it may have been that support was given in kind to the arts, especially at events where the management and employees had a direct interest.

The Coolgardie International Mining and Industrial Exhibition, held between 21<sup>st</sup> March and 1<sup>st</sup> July 1899, had a galvanising effect on the local performing arts groups. Organised and supported by the Coolgardie Mine Managers' Institute, the Exhibition prospectus, distributed in 1898, promoted its objectives as being:

---

<sup>324</sup> Albert Whelan, Interview by Eamonn Andrews in *This is your Life*, a television show on 30<sup>th</sup> September 1957, ([http://www.bigredbook.info/albert\\_whelan.html](http://www.bigredbook.info/albert_whelan.html))

<sup>325</sup> *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 29 November 1897.

<sup>326</sup> *Coolgardie Pioneer*, 11 December 1897.

<sup>327</sup> Margaret Bull, *Music in Coolgardie*, papers at Eastern Goldfields Historical Society, Kalgoorlie.

<sup>328</sup> Lieder Tafel was a popular name given to male voiced part singing choirs. The Coolgardie Society was formed in 1898; with an inaugural concert held in the Tivoli Theatre Coolgardie in November 1898. Its offspring the Owl Club continued until 1919.

To test the suitability of (mining) machines to local requirements: to promote and foster Industry, Science and Art: to encourage invention; and to simulate commerce.<sup>329</sup>

As well as exhibition halls, plans for the purpose-built Exhibition Building contained a concert hall, to be used daily to entertain Western Australian, inter-colonial and overseas visitors. A ten-member entertainment committee was formed in April 1898<sup>330</sup> and, by November, a choir, under the direction of Mr Otto Linden,<sup>331</sup> a well-known conductor recruited from Melbourne, was in rehearsal. Eleven instrumentalists from the eastern colonies were engaged to supplement the local musicians to form the orchestra and two pianos, an upright and a grand, were made available for the duration of the Exhibition. The price of admission to the Exhibition of one shilling for adults and half price for children included free attendance at both the afternoon and evening concerts. The programme was largely classical mixed with popular operas, such as those by Gilbert and Sullivan. A Plebiscite Concert, with a programme representing the most popular music heard in the previous twelve weeks as chosen by public ballot concluded the season. Farrant,<sup>332</sup> quoting the *Coolgardie Pioneer*,<sup>333</sup> noted that the orchestra's contribution to the Exhibition had been a great success and that the season marked an epoch in the musical history of Coolgardie. A three-day Eisteddfod supported by local artists and an enthusiastic audience completed the performing arts' contribution to the Coolgardie Exhibition.

The programme of classical, rather than popular, music for the concerts appears to have been a deliberate choice of the Exhibition entertainment committee representing the Coolgardie Mine Managers. The programme was chosen to reflect the overall exhibition theme, of a celebration of the victory of the pioneer over the wilderness. Moreover and, as reported in the *Coolgardie Miner*<sup>334</sup> and noted by

---

<sup>329</sup> *Coolgardie Miner*, 4 September 1898. Prospectus of the Western Australian Mining and Industrial Exhibition, p 4.

<sup>330</sup> *Coolgardie Pioneer*, 30 April 1898.

<sup>331</sup> *Coolgardie Pioneer*, 30 April 1898.

<sup>332</sup> Farrant, *A Social History of Music*, 79.

<sup>333</sup> *Coolgardie Pioneer*, 17 June 1899.

<sup>334</sup> *Coolgardie Miner*, 3 July 1899

Stevenson,<sup>335</sup> it also celebrated the development of the goldfields, and the water scheme. The Exhibition was regarded as a lasting monument to the energy and superiority of the Anglo-Saxon race. It is interesting to note, however, that the popular choice selection in the final concert, mainly comprised European compositions written by Wagner, Rossini and Verdi, European rather than Anglo-Saxon composers.



Fig. 50. Exhibition Coolgardie W.A. opening day, 1899. E.L. Mitchell collection of photographs, BA533/262

### Towns in the Bush

The need to establish and develop a community that would attract and support miners and their families, was made more urgent in the Eastern Goldfields by the geographical isolation of the mines and the lack of physical infrastructure. The

<sup>335</sup> Lynne Stevenson, "The Coolgardie International Exhibition 1879," *Studies in Western Australian History*, no. 10 (1989): 106.



result of this was reflected in the number of benefit performances to obtain funds to build and establish community institutions. Also of significance was the perception that the arts were part of the ensemble of values necessary for respectability and self-improvement, coupled with a desire to build a civilised community that could accommodate women and children, even against the background of a rough male dominated landscape. Farrant<sup>336</sup> noted that the *Coolgardie Pioneer*, commenting on the first concert given by the Coolgardie Double Quartette Party in May 1897, described it as:

‘Another step in the advancement of Coolgardie which indicates the onward march of civilised life in the community. The importance of this movement cannot be overestimated and we rank it with other events such as the opening of the railway to Coolgardie, because anything which tends to elevate our social life also helps raise the moral tone of the community and assist its progress.’<sup>337</sup>

Cultural maintenance was a factor with the Anglo-Celts, and the Afghan cameleers, who used the performing arts to maintain and display their traditions. However, there was a marked contrast between the Aboriginal dancers of Victoria and those of Western Australia with the former able to capitalise on their performances for monetary gain, whereas in the goldfields, the Indigenous dancers appear to have gained little in the way of financial benefits.

Writing about the Eastern Goldfields of Western Australia, Geoffrey Blainey comments that:

Those goldfields had something noble in their crimson years. Reading through the old letters and writings of those who visited them, reading the brisk goldfields newspapers of that age, and hearing the talk of men who lived to remember, one glimpses in the life of the towns a strain of generosity and hope and zest such as the records of no other new Australian mining field of that decade of the nineteenth century quite evoke. This can neither be measured nor weighed; it is only an impression, but a strong one.<sup>338</sup>

Reflecting on the participation of the citizenry of Coolgardie, Kalgoorlie and Boulder, either as performers or spectators, in the performing arts from 1893 to 1914, what can be recognised is an enthusiasm for the arts and for the benefit that

---

<sup>336</sup> Farrant, *A Social History of Music*, 75.

<sup>337</sup> *Coolgardie Pioneer*, 29 March 1897.

<sup>338</sup> Blainey, *The Rush That Never Ended*, 192.

they bring; whether it was for the camaraderie it fosters, or to build social capital, or for mere entertainment, it was a vital component of their lives.

Fig. 51. Opening of the Boulder Town Hall. Photograph Eastern Goldfields Historical Society.



## CHAPTER 4

### CONCLUSION

The overarching object of this thesis has been to explore the relationships between mining and the performing arts in Australia in the second half of the nineteenth century. To address this aim, two communities, which owe their geneses to the discovery of gold in the nineteenth century, were selected as case studies, and it is within the context of these communities in their formative years, that the three research questions posed in the introduction were investigated. The questions considered the developmental relationships between mining, and the performing arts at two widely separated sites and over a period of half a century: the evolution of those arts and the uses made of the arts by the inhabitants of the areas under study; and the similarities and differences in these developments and relationships between the two sites researched in this thesis.

#### **Objectives and Research Questions**

The first question considered whether the development and nature of the performing arts in Australia was influenced by mining, and in particular by the goldrushes of the nineteenth century.

Prior to the discovery of gold in the colonies of New South Wales and Victoria, the performing arts practised by the non-indigenous inhabitants of Australia consisted mainly of a limited number of professional performances in the capital cities of Sydney, Adelaide and Hobart, and amateur performances in the home. Travelling entertainers were few, and they rarely moved away from the coast. However, as this thesis demonstrates, the migration of a cosmopolitan population of prospectors, miners and their families into the gold rush settlements, bringing with them their own cultures, changed, not only the demographic makeup of the country, but also its cultural landscape within which the performing arts were a significant component.

Other historians have noted the cultural changes that occurred in Australia as immigrants arrived, including Patrick O'Farrell who wrote:

Australia was for a very long time not so much a nation as an assemblage of assorted immigrants, living out of the cultural and psychological baggage they had brought with them.<sup>1</sup>

In their publication, Cardell and Cummings<sup>2</sup> brought together a collection of essays that focused directly on the cultural changes that took place on Australia's goldfields when the new immigrants arrived. They include discussions on the cultural changes wrought by the arrival of the Irish,<sup>3</sup> Welsh,<sup>4</sup> Scottish<sup>5</sup> and Cornish<sup>6</sup> miners in Victoria.

This study adds to these discussions by pointing to some of the ways in which the imported cultures also changed as they became parts of a more diversified community.

By studying a period from the early years of the gold rush in Ballarat, through the peak of development of Western Australia's Eastern Goldfields, to the beginning of the WWI, it has been possible to trace the evolving nature of the performing arts in Australia insofar as they were directly or indirectly influenced by mining. As both case study chapters demonstrate, the first prospectors looked for comfort, mateship, and entertainment in an alien environment. This they found, at least in part, in the music and songs from their homeland, sung in the company of their friends. Since large numbers of prospectors came from many nations, including China and America, the repertoire of music and song practised in Australia expanded rapidly as a result of their input. This thesis proposes, that it is at this juncture that the performing arts scene in Australia commenced its' evolutionary journey from being merely a replication of British culture into a multifaceted entity, more reflective of both the diversifying Australian population and the new environments in which this population found themselves.

---

<sup>1</sup> Patrick O'Farrell, *The Irish in Australia*, (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 1896) 14.

<sup>2</sup> Cardell and Cumming, *A World Turned Upside Down*.

<sup>3</sup> Dorothy Wickham, "Great are the Inconveniences," in *A World Turned Upside Down*, ed Kerry Cardell & Cliff Cumming (Canberra: Humanities Research Centre, The Australian National University, 2000. 9-24.

<sup>4</sup> Cardell and Cumming, "Welsh Identity on the Victorian Goldfields in the Nineteenth Century," in *A World Turned Upside Down*. 25-50.

<sup>5</sup> Cardell and Cumming, "Squatters, Diggers and National Culture: Scots and the Central Victorian Goldfields 1851-1861, in *A World Turned Upside Down*, 77-107.

<sup>6</sup> Jan Croggon, "Methodists and Miners: The Cornish in Ballarat 1851-1901," in *A World Turned Upside Down*. 61-75.

Among some early indicators of this transformation were the German bands and Italian musicians, who were popular in the prospector's camps, the minstrel shows imported from America, and the exotic cultural performances of the Indigenous people, the Chinese, and Afghans. This was also a period when songs, music and theatrical scripts, composed in Australia and reflecting Australia life, began to be more commonly written and performed.

As demonstrated in both the Ballarat and Kalgoorlie studies, amongst the prospectors and miners were talented writers who could compose their own ballads with local, social, and political themes. Often performed in makeshift theatres in Ballarat, as well as distributed in a published format, these proved to be extremely popular with contemporary audiences. In the Eastern Goldfields, these compositions were printed, mostly in local newspapers, making them available to all. Today, the ballads that have their origins in the goldfields, are studied by historians and music theorists<sup>7</sup> for the insights that they give into the mining and wider communities of nineteenth century Australia.

Furthermore, the demand for more sophisticated forms of entertainment from miners with money in their pockets led to an expansion of the professional performing arts industry in Australia over this period. Overseas companies and artists, from America and Europe, were drawn to Australia by the prospects of financial gain. The range of entertainment on offer during the goldrush years, from both local and overseas artists was wide. It included minstrel shows, pantomime, circus, dance, drama, concerts, opera, and Aboriginal corroborees. In the last decade of the nineteenth century, when the fortunes of the performing arts industry in Australia started to decline, due to a depression in the eastern colonies, the discovery of gold in the west boosted demand, ensuring that the industry continued to be supported at what became, with Federation in 1901, a national scale.

Travelling, not only to the goldfields, but also to the major centres in Australia that thrived due to the gold discoveries, provided the main impetus for the

---

<sup>7</sup> See Both and Fahey, "Songs from the Australian Goldfields" part 1 and 2. Fitzsimons, *Songs of the Goldfields*. Philip Butterss, "Longing for Harmony". Mark Gregory, "Australian Working Songs and Poems".

development of a Pacific circuit<sup>8</sup> for entertainers to follow in the 1850s and 1860s. Having moved from the East Coast of America to the Californian' goldfields the entertainers were lured across the Pacific by the prospect of financial gain in the goldfields of Australia. The circuit was widened to include other Pacific locations such as New Zealand and Honolulu, with artists from Europe also entering the mix. This would, a decade later, evolve into a global entertainment circuit in which Australia was, and still is, a major component.<sup>9</sup>

In the early 1850s, to cater for these performers, and their audiences, permanent theatrical structures were built in the mining settlements of Victoria, and in nearby centres such as Melbourne and Geelong, by theatrical entrepreneurs and developers. The mining towns of the Eastern Goldfields were slower to build permanent entertainment venues. It was not until a decade after the discovery of gold, that local Town Halls, fitted out as fully equipped theatres, were constructed in Kalgoorlie and Boulder. The capital city of Perth, riding on the gold rush boom, was less tardy, and began building theatres to cater for the influx of performing artists in 1895. Many of these theatres, in both states, are still in use as performing arts venues today.

Besides construction of performance spaces, a major legacy from the gold rush years was the establishment of an Australian performing arts industry, with artisans, technicians, promoters, and managers providing the basis on which this sector of the economy could build, and giving it the ability to adapt as tastes and technology changed.

Some participants in this industry originally came to Australia as migrants looking for gold. Others came with the required skills, recognising that there would be a demand for professional entertainment within the mining centres. The most influential, the managers and entrepreneurs, were able to take advantage not only of the demand, but also of the disposable income produced by the miners. In an industry not supported by government revenues, patrons who were able to pay, were the most important asset.

---

<sup>8</sup> Matthew W. Wittmann, "Empire of Culture" 290.

<sup>9</sup> Brisbane, *Entertaining Australia*, 10.

The Victorian gold rush saw the beginning of a new subject for the Australian stage. Performances with mining, or miners, as a topic, or background, became popular throughout Australia and Britain and continued to be so through the nineteenth and into the early twentieth century. Reflecting the concerns and opinions of the time, they acted as a barometer of the population's ambivalent relationship to mining. Concerns about the destabilising effect of sudden wealth, suspicions about corruption, and fears that the political and social order would be overturned were all mirrored in the content of these texts.

In March 2015 the mineral industry web site, *Mining.com*, produced a list of the top ten movies about mining, commenting:

Mining has all the elements that make for a good movie, long odds, adventure, conflict, danger, amazing natural scenery and heroes and villains.

Arguably, this is the reason that mining became a popular dramatic topic during the goldrush years and continues to be a popular topic in plays and films today, whilst at the same time conveying the anxieties of the audience about the activity itself.

During the Victorian and West Australian goldrushes, the demand for entertainment by populations with money to spend, attracted entertainers from all over the globe to Australia. Significantly, in Victoria, with the performers came theatrical entrepreneurs and managers who were able to build an industry. Performance venues were built, and opportunities for supporting crafts and trades opened up. Local artists, both amateur and professional, were encouraged, and mining became a distinctive topic on the stage and later in film.

On the basis of what was revealed in the two studies, I think it is reasonable to conclude that mining, in the form of these two gold rushes, was highly influential in the development and maintenance of the performing arts in Australia in the second half of the nineteenth century and beyond.

The second research question posed in this thesis concerns the use of the performing arts by the early inhabitants of the two settlements and whether this usage contributed to the social and economic development of the towns and their inhabitants.

In Ballarat and in the Eastern Goldfields of Western Australia, gold was discovered on naturally pristine sites with no physical infrastructure to house the miners and their families, and no social institutions to support them. There was also very limited access to transport. This lack was accentuated in Kalgoorlie by the much greater distances to the nearest major centres of population and services. As a result, both communities had to construct their townships and build their institutions from scratch. As both studies demonstrate, they were aided in this endeavour by the presence of the performing arts.

As these settlements transitioned from rough mining camps to more stable, and indeed sizable, townships, it was important for the citizens, especially in the context of the times, to assert their worth by displaying the values of respectability, a required quality for normal civic societies. Music, considered necessary for self-improvement and an alternative to less respectable forms of recreation, was an aid in this endeavour.

The Ballarat study demonstrates the use of music in churches and schools, and the Kalgoorlie study describes the Rational concerts that were organised on a Sunday to be both uplifting and educational. Both studies note the sale of pianos, and music lessons, for private use in the home. Pianos arrived in Australia with the First Fleet and as Trollope noted in 1873 when visiting Australia, “there is a piano in every house.”<sup>10</sup> However, for the settlers in the remote mining communities, it was more than a just a means of entertainment but also symbolised status and respectability in regions where class distinctions were, at least initially, blurred and fluid.

Brass banding, which had its origins in the working-class communities of the north of England, became a highly popular and respectable form of entertainment in both centres, and, as referred to in the Kalgoorlie study, was indeed instrumental in demonstrating to the wider community that the township was worthy of note. Bands also played a formal role, marching in funeral processions, playing at important civic celebrations and taking part in rallies and demonstrations.

---

<sup>10</sup> Anthony Trollope, *Australia* (Chapman and Hall, 1873): New edition ed P.D. Edwards and R.B. Joyce (St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1967), 448.



Concerts, in all their forms, became a valuable community resource that extended beyond respectability. They provided funds for charitable causes, and to build necessary infrastructure, like hospitals and schools. They were used to build social networks, to form business relationships, and assist the numerous ethnic groupings in maintaining their cultural identities.

The first study highlights the relationship of performance of three ethnic groupings, the Welsh, the Scots, and the Chinese, all of whom performed their distinctive musical activities in the Ballarat goldfields in the 1850s and 60s. The Eastern Goldfields' musical focus includes the Scots, the Afghans and the Aboriginal dancers. Although these were not the only nationalities that practised their ethnic music in the mining communities in each locale, they serve as examples of the rich cultures that were present and demonstrate how miners were able to maintain their unique cultural identities with the aid of music and dance. Moreover, as the research has shown the legacy of the early performances can be seen today in the National Eisteddfods, the Highland Games, the Aboriginal and Chinese dance troupes, and the Afghan concerts and events that are held both in the goldfield's regions and around the country.

Participation in the performing arts was a significant factor in the recreational activities of both townships. As well as singing in choirs, and playing musical instruments in a band, broader social and community participation included the formation of dramatic, operatic and philharmonic societies, with amateurs frequently supporting visiting artists. Dancing was popular, and, as demonstrated in the Ballarat study, could also be used as an indicator of status and respectability.

From the information presented in both studies it is possible to argue that the performing arts played a significant part in the lives of the prospectors, miners and their families in the goldrush years, contributing to their social and economic welfare as they established their communities in alien and challenging environments.

The third research question concerns the similarities and differences between the two sites, specifically in relation to the nature and development of their performing arts activities. In these aspects it is apparent from this research that there were not

only a considerable number of similarities in the use of the performing arts in both Ballarat and the Eastern Goldfields, but there were also differences, arising principally from their temporal and geographical contexts.

When gold was discovered in Victoria, the professional arts industry was given a tremendous boost, due mainly to the demand for entertainment by an increased population and the economic boom that occurred as a result of the gold rush.<sup>11</sup> It was also aided by political and economic events overseas. The United States was developing as a thriving export economy and this included the cultural industries. American artists (and miners) who had moved west to the California Gold Rush looked for additional opportunities across the Pacific and they were drawn to Australia by the prospect of profit in its newly discovered goldfields. British entertainers, aware of the lure of gold for prospectors and miners, were also attracted to (then colonial) Australia by the profit motive and many followed the Victorian rush. Opera singers came from China for profit, but also to escape a repressive home environment that limited their performance opportunities.

In the 1890s, when major gold discoveries were made in the Eastern Goldfields of WA, both the Eastern Colonies of Australia, and the United States of America, were in the grip of a depression, and, although some entertainments continued, this was often on a reduced scale, since the newly unemployed workers were unable to purchase entry to the performances. In Australia, many of these displaced workers moved West, to the newly discovered goldfields.

A new demand was thereby created. The entertainers followed the rush and came to the West, but not on the scale which had been the case in the Victorian goldfields. Even after the railway from Perth to Kalgoorlie was built in 1897, the transport of sets and other theatrical machinery was expensive and difficult, given the sheer distances involved. The lack of purpose-built venues was also a deterrent. Why it was not until over a decade after the discovery of gold that the Kalgoorlie and Boulder town halls were built, is an issue worthy of further consideration. It is likely that this lag reflected a lack of confidence on the part of the Colonial and local Governments who were hesitant to invest in infrastructure to service an industry

---

<sup>11</sup> Blainey, "The Momentous Gold Rushes."

and population that might be short-lived. As Peter Bell notes, “Mining settlements usually did not last long, and, more importantly, no one expected them to.”<sup>12</sup> The transitory history of many earlier mining settlements in Australia would have made most Eastern States citizens wary of investing in permanent, expensive infrastructure, especially in an isolated region like the Eastern Goldfields, which, unlike Ballarat, lacked alternative farming, or intensive pastoral industry potential.

The contribution of citizens with an interest in, and talent for the performing arts, such as McMahon, Brownlow, and Whelan, stand out in the remote settlements of the Eastern Goldfields. Lacking the competition that would be present in a metropolitan centre, they were able develop their skills and thrive whilst contributing to the cultural fabric of the local community.

### **New insights**

This research has increased the understanding of the relationship between mining and the performing arts in the nineteenth century using a combination of methods in this thesis. Firstly, by building on, and combining, previous research on, and knowledge of, the performing arts in Ballarat during the goldrush, and then by relating this to the social, and economic histories of mining in the same period, it has been possible to identify close correlations between the development of the performing arts and of mining at that time. While some previous researchers<sup>13</sup> have recognised or inferred some aspects of these connections, by considering all the elements of the performing arts in this thesis, the nature of these relationships has been clarified and the understanding of them extended. Thus, this thesis goes beyond the notation of the performing arts as a background to political and economic development of mining centres. Instead it directs attention to the performing arts as a principal focus in the historical development of mining in two centres set apart in space and time.

---

<sup>12</sup> Peter Bell, “The fabric and structure of Australian mining settlements,” 28.

<sup>13</sup> For example, Brisbane, *Entertaining Australia*, 46. Cardell and Cumming, *A World Turned Upside Down*, 5. Williams, *Australia*, 52. Wentzel, *The Rapid Development of Music*, 69-73. Wittman, *Empire of Culture*. E. Daniel Potts and Annette Potts, *Young America and Australian Gold*, 123. Mark St. Leon, *Circus: The Australian Story*.

Secondly, in the Eastern Goldfields' study, where considerably less general research has been undertaken to date, it was still possible to argue that the existence of a mining industry and the growth of major population centres around it assisted in the development of the performing arts in Western Australia. This was particularly so during a period of a widespread depression in the broader Australian colonial economies.

Thirdly, by noting both the personal and the community use of the full range of the performing arts in both centres, this thesis complements and extends the research carried out by Doggett,<sup>14</sup> and English<sup>15</sup> on the role of music in regional and remote colonial societies in Australia.

These two studies are similar in that they have as their subjects, mining communities in the nineteenth century, with large migrant populations that brought with them their own cultural practices including the performing arts.

Doggett,<sup>16</sup> in her thesis, focuses on music as it relates to the community of Ballarat in the twenty-year period after the discovery of gold and, like the current thesis, has considered the unique geographic, economic, and social conditions of the period. In so doing, she was able to argue in a variety of ways, for the significance and meaning of music in the lives of all classes of the community.

The coal mining settlement of Newcastle, from 1869 to 1879 during a period of expansion, is the focus of English's thesis. She also examines the importance of music in the lives of the settlers, arguing that, by a variety of means it became a resource for world-building. In this context English defines the term 'world' as:

Ways of being and doing in the everyday, individual and collective identity, place and meaning-making, memory gathering, fostering of aspirations and community achievements.<sup>17</sup>

including:

The formation of public life and its role in promoting the townships' reputations beyond their community boundaries to the wider colonial context and beyond that to the Anglophone world.<sup>18</sup>

---

<sup>14</sup> Doggett, *Musical Life in Ballarat*.

<sup>15</sup> English, *Music as a Resource*.

<sup>16</sup> Doggett, 302.

<sup>17</sup> English, 15.

In this study, the scope has been widened to include two mining communities that developed, in the second half of the nineteenth century, after the discovery of gold. It also focuses on the whole spectrum of the performing arts that influenced the lives of the inhabitants of these communities, rather than just on music. The major innovation however, is that this study, as well as exploring the use of the performing arts by the citizens in their own communities, also considers the broader picture and examines the ramifications that this produced in the Australian and global performing arts industry as a result of these relationships between the performing arts and mining at that time.

In her thesis, Doggett purposely excludes considering the music practised in Ballarat, in the context of the general state of music in Australia at that time.

Had the latter approach been adopted there was probably little to be said for the music of early Ballarat, and in terms of such an approach a vast amount of Ballarat's early music must be regarded as insignificant.<sup>19</sup>

I would argue that this genre of music was significant in the wider context, as it assisted in facilitating the development of a music industry in Australia and encouraged local and overseas artists to tour the mining regions and so expand the industry as a whole.

Finally, what this study demonstrates is that novel approaches to the study of mining history in Australia are possible, and indeed desirable, and that they can produce evidence of the influence, impacts and contributions of mining on and to Australian life beyond the political and economic spheres. David Killick, in his article,<sup>20</sup> argues for the use of mixed methods in studying mining communities, noting that the body of historical and anthropological research on mining communities is less than that on other groups of working people such as farmers and factory workers. He suggests that this may be due to the ephemeral nature of many mining communities. Although I agree with Killick in his call for additional research and for the role of mixed methods, I would suggest that the reason for the

---

<sup>18</sup> English, 15.

<sup>19</sup> Doggett, 302

<sup>20</sup> David Killick, "On the value of mixed methods in studying mining communities," in *Social Approaches to an Industrial Past*, 279-290.

limited nature of this type of research is only partially due to the ephemeral nature of some mining communities. In the case of the mining community of Kalgoorlie-Boulder this cannot apply, given the continuance of mining activity for well over a century. Clearly, the ongoing limited, social or cultural research, on the communities that enable the mines to operate has other explanations, some of which relate to Western Australian historiography and which certainly warrant further investigation.<sup>21</sup>

By taking a novel approach to the history of mining and the performing arts in nineteenth century Australia, this thesis makes a unique contribution to the corpus and scope of mining history.

#### **Avenues for further research.**

The findings of this thesis suggest four areas for future research. The first is the need for additional research into the history of the performing arts in the communities of the Eastern Goldfields, dating from World War 1 to the present. As mentioned in the Introduction, a considerable amount of research has been conducted on the economic, and industrial aspects of the region, but very little on the social and cultural lives of the miners and their families. The history of the performing arts in the Eastern Goldfields over the past century has remained largely undocumented and is a fertile field for additional research.

The second opportunity for further research relates to the relationship in Australia between major mining companies and the performing arts from the goldrush to the present day. In the research completed in this thesis, I could find no direct evidence that the arts were directly supported by the mining companies during the goldrushes of the nineteenth century, whereas today many of the major arts organisations, at state and national level, would not be able to survive without direct financial support from the mining industry. The changes in attitude and motivation leading to the growth in this support are subjects worth considerable future research.

---

<sup>21</sup> This is in contrast with North American research where there is a highly developed tradition of historical research into the social and cultural aspects of mining and mining communities.

Thirdly, there is the large topic of the representation of mining in the performing arts themselves. As demonstrated in this thesis, miners and mining became a popular subject on the stage during the Victorian goldrush and continued to be so until the early twentieth century. That relationship has continued until the present day, in films, television and on all the latest digital platforms.

Current productions about mining still contain topics that reflect society's political and social concerns about the activity. Some of the contemporary issues reflected in modern plays and films are - the effects of mining and its products on the environment<sup>22</sup>, mine safety,<sup>23</sup> social disruption due to current work practices such as fly-in and fly-out,<sup>24</sup> corruption,<sup>25</sup> and corporate exploitation.<sup>26</sup>

Research into why this is so and the nature of its relevance in the wider economic and political world of mining beyond the two studies provided here, is a topic well worth further consideration.

A final topic of research could be into the development of the infrastructure needed to support the performing arts, particularly in remote and regional communities such as mining towns.

This thesis was approached with a wide perspective in mind in order to enable the relationship between mining and the performing arts to be studied over time, and at different geographical locations. In so doing it has been possible to consider the work carried out by other historians of the nineteenth century in a variety of fields, including music, circus, theatre, society, economy and mining, resulting in a comprehensive overview of the relationship between them.

New insights have been gained, especially with regards to the development of the performing arts in Australia in the nineteenth century and the support it both gave and received from the results of the gold discoveries; it also opens up several topics for further research, as suggested above. This study will therefore add to the body

---

<sup>22</sup> *Black Hole* directed by Joao Dujon Pereira about coal mining and community in Australia.

<sup>23</sup> *The 33* directed by Patricia Riggen (2015) based on a mine disaster when 33 miners were trapped underground for two months,

<sup>24</sup> *Lucy Eyre, Three On, One Off* (Perth: Prickly Pear Playscripts, 2009).

<sup>25</sup> *Gold* directed by Stephen Gaghan (2016) based on a true mining scandal about gold deposits discovered in Indonesia.

<sup>26</sup> *Marmato* directed by Mark Grieco (2014)

of historical knowledge in the conventionally disparate fields of the performing arts and mining.



## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### 1. Newspapers and Journals

*Age.*

*Argus.*

*Australian Geographic.*

*Ballarat Star.*

*Coolgardie Miner.*

*Coolgardie Pioneer.*

*Corowa Free Press.*

*Education Theatre Journal.*

*Geelong Advertiser.*

*Golden Age.*

*Goldfields Courier.*

*Goldfields Morning Chronicle.*

*Hannans Herald.*

*Herald (Fremantle).*

*Inquirer.*

*Kalgoorlie Miner*

*Kalgoorlie Sun.*

*Kalgoorlie Western Argus*

*Melbourne Age.*

*Mining Review Courier.*

*New York Clipper.*

*Perth Gazette.*

*Perth Morning Herald.*

*Port Philip Gazette.*

*Port Philip Herald.*

*Port Philip Patriot.*

*San Francisco Daily Placer Times.*

*South Australian Register.*

*Standard.*

*Sunday Times.*

*Sydney Morning Herald.*

*Table Talk.*

*The Boulder Star.*

*The Inquirer and Commercial News.*

*The Perth Gazette and Western Australian Journal.*

*The Star.*

*The Sun.*

*The Sunday Times.*

*The Times.*

*The West Australian.*

*The West Australian Worker.*

*The Western Argus.*

*T'Othersiders.*

*Victorian Express (Geraldton).*

*Weekly Advertiser.*

## **2. Government reports and letters**

Aborigines Department. *Annual Report for the Year ending 30<sup>th</sup> June 1899*, W.A.V.P., 1899, Vol. 2, p.9.

Letters to the Colonial Secretary, 43/6965, AO NSW, containing *Life in Sydney*, written by an anonymous author calling themselves A.B.C.

*Museums in Australia 1975, Report of the Committee of Inquiry on Museums and National Collections including the Report of the Planning Committee on the Gallery of Aboriginal Australia*. Canberra.

*National Trust of W.A, Gold and Water, Life on the Goldfields*. <http://valuingheritage.com.au>.

Report of the Denominational School Board, 1856 & 1857, *Victoria Parliamentary Papers, 1857-1858*, vol.2.

*Report of the Department of Mines 1907*. Government Printer, Perth. 85-86.

State Records Office of Western Australia, Colonial Secretary's Office, inwards correspondence, 1833, 29, 157-9.

Victoria Government Gazette, on-line archive 1836-1997, State Library, Victoria.

West Australian Year- Book, 1902-4. Perth: Government Printer.

### **3. Exhibitions**

*Auriferous: The Gold Project, 2001*. Bathurst Regional Gallery, 12 April -11 June 2001.

*Gold and Civilisation*. National Museum of Australia, 11 March -24 June 2001.

*Victorian Gold: The Gold Rush and its impact on Cultural Life: 2001*. The University of Melbourne: The Ian Potter Museum of Art, 28 April – 24 June 2001.

### **4. Films**

*Black Hole*: produced and directed by Joao Dujon Pereira, 2015.

*Gold*: production Boles/Schiller Films, directed by Stephen Gagham, 2016.

*Marmato*: produced and directed by Mark Grieco, 2014.

*The 33*: produced by Robert Katz, Edward McGurn and Mike Medway, directed by Mark Grieco, 2014.

**5. Books, articles, dissertations, papers, plays.**

Annear, Robyn. *Nothing but gold: The diggers of 1852*. Melbourne: The Text Publishing Company, 1999.

Appleyard, R.T. "Western Australia: Economic and Demographic Growth, 1850-1914." In *A New History of Western Australia*, edited by C.T. Stannage, 235-236. Perth: University of Western Australian Press, 1981.

Arrighi, Gillian. "Negotiating National Identity at the Circus: the FitzGerald Brothers Circus in Melbourne 1892." *Australasian Drama Studies* 54 (April 2009): 68-86.

Atkinson, Alan, and Marian Aveling, eds. *Australians 1838*. Broadway NSW: Fairfax, Syme and Weldon, 1987.

Australian Dictionary of Biography. Canberra: National Centre for Biography, Australian National University.

Australian Variety Theatre Archive. <http://pozvta.com/1850s/1853>.

Bailey, Peter. *Leisure and Class in Victorian England: Rational Recreation and the Contest for Control, 1830 – 1885*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978.

Baily, John. "The Role of Music in the creation of an Afghan national identity." In *Ethnicity, Identity and Music: The Musical Construction of Place*, edited by M. Stokes, 45-60. Oxford: Berg, 1994.

Baily, John and Michael Collyer. "Introduction: Music and Migration." *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 32, Issue 2 (2006): 167-182, doi:10.1080/13691830500487266

Balharry, J.F. *Letters to G. Spencer Compton*. (written about the Eastern Goldfields in the 1890's), Batty Library, 2214A.

Baragwanath, Pam and Ken James. *These Walls speak Volumes: A History of Mechanics' Institutes in Victoria*. Ringwood North, Victoria, Pam Baragwanath and Ken James, 2015.

Bate, Weston. *Lucky City: The First Generation at Ballarat 1851-1901*. Melbourne: Wilkie and Company, 1978.

----- . *Victorian Gold Rushes*. Melbourne: McPhee Gribble/Penguin, 1988.

Bell, Peter. "The fabric and structure of Australian mining settlements." In *Social Approaches to an Industrial Past: The Archaeology and Anthropology of Mining*, edited by Knapp, Bernard, and Vincent C. Piggott and Eugenia W. Herbert, 27-38. London: Routledge, 1998.

Bell, Peter and Justin McCarthy. "The evolution of Early Copper Smelting Technology in Australia." *Journal of Australian Mining History* vol. 9, (September 2011): 20-35.

Bellanta, Melissa. "Australian Masculinities and Popular Song: The Songs of Sentimental Blokes 1900-1930s." *Australian Historical Studies* 43:3 (2012): 412 – 42.

----- . *Larrikins: A History*. Sydney: Penguin, 2012.

----- . "Voting for Pleasure, Or a View from a Victorian Theatre Gallery," *M/C Journal* 11, no. 1 (2008): 1-9.

Bennett, Arthur L. *Dryblower Murphy: his life and times*. Fremantle: Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 1982.

Berry, Will, Harry and Norman. *Papers of the Berry Family*, Battye Library, M.N.878, ACC 3050A.

Bertola, Patrick. "Kalgoorlie, Gold and the World Economy 1893-1973." PhD thesis, Curtin University of Technology, School of Social Science, Perth, 1993.

Blackmore, Kent. *Oscar Eliason, the original "Dante the Great" his life and travels in Australia and New Zealand 1898-1899*. Sydney: K. Blackmore, 1987.

Blainey, Geoffrey. *All for Australia*. North Ryde, NSW: Methuen Haynes, 1984.

\_\_\_\_\_. *A Shorter History of Australia*. Sydney: Random House, 1994.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Black Kettle and Full Moon*. Camberwell: Penguin Books, 2006.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Essence of Democracy Lies with the Voters." *The Australian*, 1st May 1987.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Our Side of the Country: The Story of Victoria*. North Ryde: Methuen Haynes, 1984.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Readers, Writers and Values." In *International Booksellers Federation 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Congress, Papers and Proceedings*." Melbourne, March 23-27, 1981.

\_\_\_\_\_. *The Golden Mile*. St. Leonards: Allen & Unwin Pty. Ltd 1993.

\_\_\_\_\_. *The Great Seesaw: A New View of the Western World, 1750-2000*. South Melbourne: Macmillan, 1988.

\_\_\_\_\_. "The Long Distance Blues-Australia needs a better long district transport system." *Australian Business Monthly*, December 1992, 154-156.

\_\_\_\_\_. "The Momentous Gold Rushes." *Australian Economic History Review* vol. 50, No.10 (2010): 209-216.

\_\_\_\_\_. "The Origins of Our Game." In *100 Years of Australian Football*.10-12. Ringwood, Victoria: Viking, 1996.

\_\_\_\_\_. *The Rush That Never Ended: A History of Australian Mining*. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1963.

\_\_\_\_\_. *The Story of Australia's People: The Rise and Rise of a New Australia*. Australia: Penguin Random House Australia, 2016.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Triumph of the Nomads: A History of Ancient Australia*. South Melbourne: Macmillan Press, 1975.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Tyranny of Distance: How Distance Shaped Australia's History*. Melbourne: Sun Books, 1966.

Blake, L. J. ed. *Vision and Realisation: A centenary history of State Education in Victoria*.vol.1. Melbourne: Education Department of Victoria, 1973.

Blunt, Bob. *Blunt, a biased history of Australian rock*. Northcote, Victoria: Prowling Tiger Press, 2001.

Bollen, Jonathan, and Julie Holledge. "Hidden Dramas: Cartographic Revelations in the World of Theatre Studies." *The Cartographic Journal* Volume 48, Issue 4 (2011): 226-236.

Bolton, Geoffrey, Richard Rossiter and Jan Ryan eds. *farewell Cinderella: creating arts and identity in Western Australia*. Perth: University of Western Australia, 2003.

Both, Anne. "A Goldfields Entertainer," paper presented at Australian Mining History Conference, Bendigo, 2005.

Both, Ross A. and Warren Fahey. "Songs from the Australian Goldfields. Part 1: Gold Mania." *Journal of Australasian Mining History* 13, (October 2015): 144-159.

Both, Ross A. and Warren Fahey. "Songs from the Australian Goldfields. Part 2: Life on the Goldfields." *Journal of Australasian Mining History* 14, (October 2016): 128-149.

Bourdieu, Pierre. *The Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field*. Trans. Susan Emanuel. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Distinction: a Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. Trans. Richard Nice. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1984.

\_\_\_\_\_. *The Logic of Practice*. Trans. Richard Nice. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990.

Bradfield, Raymond. *Lola Montez and Castlemaine: some early theatrical history*. Castlemaine, Victoria: Bradfield, 1980.

Brereton, Rosylyn. "Entertainment and Recreation on the Victorian Goldfields in the 1850's." B.A. hons. thesis, University of Melbourne, 1967.

Brisbane, Katherine, ed. *Entertaining Australia, an illustrated history*. Sydney: Currency Press, 1991.

- Brodsky, I. *Sydney Takes the Stage*. Sydney: Old Sydney Free Press, 1963.
- Brook, Peter. *The Empty Space*. London: MacGibbon & Kee, 1968.
- Bull, Margaret. *Music in Coolgardie*, papers in Eastern Goldfields Historical Society, Kalgoorlie.
- Burgmann, Verity and Jenny Lee, eds. *Constructing a Culture: A Peoples History of Australia since 1788*. Ringwood, Victoria: McPhee Gribble Penguin Books Australia Ltd, 1990.
- Bussell Betty. *Bussell Family Papers*. Held at the State Library of Western Australia, Battye Library, Perth MN 586.
- Butlin, N. G. *Australian Domestic Product, Investment and Foreign Borrowing, 1861-1938/39*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962.
- Butterss, Philip. "Longing for Harmony: The Resolution of Conflict and Contradiction in the Songs of the Victorian Goldfields." *Australian Folklore* 5, 1990.
- Cahir, David. "Black Gold. A History of the Role of Aboriginal People on the Goldfields of Victoria, 1850-70." PhD dissertation, University of Ballarat, 2006.
- Cahir, David 'Fred'. "The attraction of gold mining in Victoria for Aboriginal people." *Journal of Australasian Mining History*, Vol. 6, (September 2008): 46-69.
- Cahir, David, and Ian D. Clark. "'An edifying spectacle': A history of 'tourist corroborees' in Victoria, Australia, 1835-1870." *Tourism Management* 31, (2010): 412-420.
- Calvert, Albert F. *My Fourth Tour in Western Australia*. London: William Heinmann, 1897.
- Cammilleri, F.W.P. *Diary*. The State Library of Western Australia, Perth, WA. 12/BUS.b11425933.
- Candy, Philip C. and John Laurent, eds. *Pioneering Culture: Mechanics Institutes and Schools of Arts in Australia*. Adelaide: Auslib Press, 1994.



Cardell, Kerry, and Cliff Cumming, eds. *A World Turned Upside Down; Cultural Change on Australia's Goldfields 1851-2001*. Canberra: Australian National University, 2001.

Cardell, Kerry, and Cliff Cumming. "Squatters, Diggers and National Culture: Scots and the Central Victorian Goldfields 1851-61." In *A World Turned Upside Down; Cultural Change on Australia's Goldfields 1851-2001*, edited by Kerry Cardell and Cliff Cumming, 77-107. Canberra: Australian National University, 2001.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Welsh Identity on the Victorian Goldfields in the Nineteenth Century." In *A World Turned Upside Down; Cultural Change on Australia's Goldfields 1851-2001*, edited by Kerry Cardell and Cliff Cumming, 25-50. Canberra: Australian National University, 2001.

Cargher, John. *Bravo! Two hundred years of opera in Australia*. South Melbourne: Macmillan Australia in association with the ABC, 1988.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Opera and Ballet in Australia*. North Melbourne: Cassell Australia Ltd, 1977.

Carpenter, Lloyd and Lyndon Fraser. eds. *Rushing for Gold: Life and Commerce on the goldfields of New Zealand and Australia*. Dunedin: Otago University Press, 2016.

Carr, E. H. *What is History?* London: Penguin, 2008.

Casey, Maryrose. "Colonists, Settlers and Aboriginal Australian War Cries: Cultural performance and economic exchange." *Performance Research: A Journal of the Performing Arts* 18:2, (2013): 56-66.

-----". "Theatre or corroboree, what's in a name? Framing Indigenous Australian 19<sup>th</sup> century commercial performance practices." In *Creating White Australia*, edited by Jane Carey and Clare Mclisky, 123-139. Sydney: Sydney University Press, 2009.

Cavendish, Dominic. "The 10 Great Hamlets of our Time." *The Telegraph*, 28 February, 2017. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/theatre/what-to-see/ten-great-hamlets-of-our-time/>

Citron, Marcia J. *Gender and the Musical Canon*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.

City of Ballarat, *Main Road Precinct-SongWays Music Mapping*.  
<http://www.hulballarat.org.au/cb.pages/songways.main.road.precinct.php>

Clark, C.M.H. *A History of Australia, Volume V, 1888-1915*. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1981.

Clapp, Susannah. "The 10 best Hamlets." *The Guardian*, 22<sup>nd</sup> August, 2010.  
<http://www.theguardian.com/culture/2010/aug/22/10-best-hamlets-david-tennant>

Clark, Deborah. "Art of the Goldfields." In *Gold and Civilisation*. Canberra: National Museum of Australia, 2001. 63.

Clark, Manning. *A Short History of Australia*. Sydney: Mead and Beckett Publishing, 1981.

Clarke, Heather. *The History of Music and Dance in Australia 1788-1840*.  
<http://www.colonialdance.com.au>.

Cleland, Bilal. *History of Islam in Australia*. Islam Australia Network,  
[islam.ii.net/channel/islam\\_australia.html](http://islam.ii.net/channel/islam_australia.html).

Clifton, Edmund. "Music and the Stage in the Early Days." *The Western Australian Historical Society Journal and Proceedings* volume 1, part 8 (1930): 1-18.

----- "Music and the Stage in the Early Days. no.11" *The Western Australian Historical Society Journal and Proceedings* volume 1, part VIII, part 9 (1931): 1-18, 16-33.

Coachley, B. "1879: Must have a Beginning you know." In *Music and Drama in Western Australia*, vol. 1 (1995): unpublished manuscript, Battye Library, Perth.

Collini, Stefan, eds. *Culture, Anarchy and other writings*. Cambridge: University Press, 1993.

Comettant, Oscar. *In the land of kangaroos and gold mines*. First published as *Au pays des kangourouset des mines d'or*: Paris; Libraire Fischbacher; 1890. First English edition translated by Judith Armstrong, Adelaide: Rigby, 1980.

Coutney, J. *Off to the Diggings*. Lord Chamberlain's Plays manuscript (LPS ms), 529358-H (October), British Library, London.

Courtney, Victor. "Back to the Goldfields and the work of "Dryblower"," *Sunday Times*, 11<sup>th</sup> September 1938.

Coyne, J. Stirling. *Wanted, 1,000 Spirited Young Milliners for the Gold Diggins!* London: Lacy, 1852.

Crawford, Jerry L., Catherine Hurst, Michael Lungering, and Carol Wimmer. *Acting in person and in style*. North Ryde, N.S.W.: McGraw-Hill Australia, 2003.

Crisp, Deborah. "The piano in Australia, 1770 to 1900: some literary sources." *Musicology Australia*, volume XV111 (1995): 25-38.

Croggan, Jan. "Methodists and Miners." In *A World Turned Upside Down: Cultural Change on Australia's Goldfields 1851-2001*, ed. Kerry Cardell and Cliff Cumming, 61, Canberra: The Australian National University, 2001.

Crowley, Frank, Alan D. Gilbert, K.S. Inglis and Peter Spearritt, eds. *Australians A Historical Library*. Broadway, NSW: Fairfax, Syme & Weldon Associates, 1987.

Darrell, George. *The Sunny South*. Sydney: Currency Press, 1975.

Davison, Graeme. "Capital Cities." in *Australians 1888*, edited by Davison, Graeme, J.W. McCarty, and Ailsa McLeary, 189-228. Broadway, NSW: Fairfax, Syme and Weldon, 1987.

Davison, Graeme. "People Moving." in *Australians 1888*, edited by Davison, Graeme, J.W. McCarty, and Ailsa McLeary, 229-256. Broadway, NSW: Fairfax, Syme and Weldon, 1987.

Davison, Graeme, J.W. McCarty, and Ailsa McLeary, eds. *Australians 1888*. Broadway, NSW: Fairfax, Syme and Weldon, 1987.

Davies, Mel. *Bibliography of Australian Mining History*. Perth: Australian Mining History Association, 2002 (with additional material to 2010).

Davis, Jane. "Longing or Belonging? Finding Home on the Eastern Goldfields, Western Australia, 1895-1907." *Studies in Western Australian History*, 27(2011): 63-70.

de Garis, B.K. "Political Tutelage 1829-1870." In *A New History of Western Australia*, edited by C. T. Stannage, 297-325. Perth: University of Western Australia, 1981.

----- "Self-Government and the Evolution of Party Politics 1871-1911." In *A New History of Western Australia*, edited by C.T. Stannage, 326-351. Perth: University of Western Australia, 1981.

DeNora, Tia. *Music in Everyday Life*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

Dingle, Tony. "Miner's Cottages." *Australian Economic Review* 50, issue 2 (July 2010): 162-177.

Dingsdag, D. "Technological Change in the Coalmining Industry of New South Wales, Australia 1903-1982: The Economic, Social and Political Implications of Restructuring." In *Towards a Social History of Mining in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Century*, edited by Klaus Tenfelde. Germany: Verlag C.H. Beck Munchen, 1992.

Docker, John. "Popular Culture and Bourgeois Values." In *Constructing a Culture: A Peoples History of Australia since 1788*, edited by Verity Burgmann and Jenny Lee, 241, Ringwood: McPhee Gribble Penguin Books Australia Ltd, 1990.

Doggett, Anne. "'And for harmony most ardently we long' Musical Life in Ballarat, 1851-1871." PhD thesis, University of Ballarat, Ballarat, 2006.

----- "Harmony on the Goldfields: Music and Identity in Multicultural Ballarat." *Victorian Historical Journal*, vol. 75, no. 1 (2004): 49-69.

----- "' Strains from Flowery Land': responses to Chinese Musical Activity in Mid-nineteenth century Ballarat." *Context* 33, (2008): 107-120.

----- "The 'restless fascination of the unknown' fifteen years of opera in Ballarat's 'other' golden age." *Journal of Colonial History*, vol. 5, (2004): 73-99.

Dreyfus, K. and J. Crotty. "Introduction Music, Migration and Multiculturalism." *Victorian Historical Journal* 78, no. 2 (2007): 147-151.

Dunstan, Bill. "Imperialist Discourses: amateur theatrical performances in Perth to 1854." *Australasian Drama Studies* 23, (October 1993): 45-55.

Edwards, P.D., and R. B. Joyce, eds. *Anthony Trollope, Australia*. Brisbane: University of Queensland Press, 1967.

Eklund, Erik. *Mining Towns Making a Living, Making a Life*. Sydney: University of New South Wales Press Ltd, 2012.

Elliott, Jean Margaret. "A comparative study of the dramatic and narrative versions of Charles Reade's 'It is never too late to mend'." PhD. thesis, Holloway College, University of London, 1984. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing (1984) 10097592.

English, Helen. "Music as a Resource for World-Building in Newcastle, NSW and its Townships, 1869-1879." PhD thesis, University of Newcastle, 2016.

Eyre, Lucy. *Three On, One Off*. Perth: Prickly Pear Playscripts, 2009.

Fahey, Charles. "Peopling the Victorian Goldfields: From Boom to Bust, 1851-1901." *Australian Economic History Review* 50, no. 2 (2010): 148-161.

Fahey, Charles and Alan Mayne. "'All that Glitters...'", The Hidden History of Victoria's Central Goldfields Region." In *Forgotten Histories of Family and*

*Community on the central Victorian Goldfields*, edited by Charles Fahey and Alan Mayne, 148-161. Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing Pty Ltd, 2010.

Fahey, Charles, Heather Holst, Sara Martin, and Alan Mayne. "A miner's right: making homes and communities on the Victorian goldfields." In *Eureka: Reappraising an Australian Legend*, edited by Alan Mayne, 201-220. Perth: Network Books, 2006.

Fahey, Warren. *The World Turned Upside Down, The Australian Gold Rush told through Song, Story and Reminiscence*. Potts Point, NSW: Bogie Books, 2001.

Farrant, J.E." A Social History of Music in Coolgardie, Kalgoorlie and Boulder 1892 to 1908." Master's thesis, University of Western Australia, 1992.

-----". "Music in Coolgardie, Kalgoorlie and Boulder 1892-1908." *Journal of W.A. Royal Historical Society*, vol. 10, (1989 -1991): 243.

-----". "Playing in tune: music." In *Farewell Cinderella: creating arts and identity in Western Australia*, edited by Geoffrey Bolton, Richard Rossiter, and Jan Ryan, 91-128. Perth: University of Western Australia Press, 2003.

Fauchery, A. *Letters from a Miner in Australia*. Translated by A.R. Chisholm. Melbourne: Georgian House, 1965.

Ferguson, Charles D. *The Experiences of a Forty-niner during Thirty-four Years' residence in California and Australia*. Cleveland, Williams Publishing Co, 1888.

Fitzsimons, Terence. *Songs of the Goldfields*.  
[www.education.Sovereignhill.com.au](http://www.education.Sovereignhill.com.au) accessed 1/5/16.

Foley, Doris. *Divine Eccentric: Lola Montez and the newspapers*. Los Angeles: Westernlore press, 1969.

Fotheringham, Richard, ed. *Australian Plays for the Colonial Stage 1834-1899*. St. Lucia, Queensland: University of Queensland Press, 2006.

Fraser, Malcolm A. C. *Western Australian Yearbook for 1902-04*. Perth: Government Printer, 1906.

- Ganter, Regina. *Muslim Australians: the deep history of contact*. Brisbane: Griffith University, 2008.
- Geoghegan, Joseph Bryan. *Music for Down the Goldmine*. Author unknown.
- Gibson, James Jerome. *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception*. Hobokyn: Taylor and Francis, 1979.
- Gilbert, Alan D., K.S. Inglis, S. G. Foster, eds. *Australians a Historical Library*, Broadway, NSW: Fairfax, Syme and Weldon Association, 1987.
- Goacher, Philip William. <http://www.goacher.org/notables/phil>.
- Goldfields Bands Early History, Eastern Goldfields Historical Society*, in a collection of information on the history of music on the goldfields collected by Margaret Bull, 1985. Battye Library.PR 12003/4.
- Gome, Dianne. "Hymnody in the Australian Colonies, 1788-1901: A Preliminary Investigation of Sources and Functions of Hymns." *Australasian Music Research* 1, (1996): 141-166.
- Goodall, Peter. *High Culture, Popular Culture: the long debate*. St. Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1995.
- Goodman, David. "Gold Fields/golden fields: The language of agrarianism and the Victorian gold rush." *Australian Historical Studies*, 23:29, 19-41, DOI:10.1080/10314618808595776, downloaded 11 May 2017.
- Gould, Marty. *Nineteenth Century Theatre and the Imperial Encounter*. New York: Routledge, 2011.
- Green, Neville. "Aborigines and White Settlers in the Nineteenth Century." In *A New History of Western Australia*, edited by C. T. Stannage, 72-123. Perth: University of Western Australia Press, 1981.
- Gregory, Mark. "Australian working songs and poems-a rebel heritage". PhD. thesis, School of Humanities and Social Inquiry – History and Politics, University of Wollongong, 2014. <http://ro.uow.edu.au/theses/4293>
- Haebich, Anna. *Dancing in Shadows: Histories of Nyungar Performance*. Perth: U.W.A. Publishing, 2018.
- Harrison, Gillian. "Community Music in Australia." *International Journal of Community Music* vol. 3, (2010) 337-342.

- Hartley, Richard. *Industry and Infrastructure in Western Australia 1829-1940*. Perth: Institution of Engineers, 1995.
- Haweis, H. R. *Music and Morals*. London: Strahan & Co. 1871.
- Hayward, Andree "Viator". *The Riot where no one was hurt*. April 1898.
- Hellings, T.L. "Reminiscences of band life." *Australian Band News* (Bairnsdale) (January 1917): 12.
- Henderson, Ian. "Jacky-Kalingaloonga: Aboriginality, Audience Reception and Charles Reade's *It is Never Too Late to Mend* (1865)." *Theatre Research International* vol. 29, no.2 (2004):95-110.
- Hertz, Carl. *A modern mystery merchant: the trials, tricks and travels of Carl Hertz, the famous American illusionist*. London: Hutchinson & Co, 1924.
- Hill, David. *The Fever that Forever Changed Australia: Gold!*. Sydney: William Heinemann, 2010.
- Hogan, Richard. *Class and Community in Frontier Colorado*. Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1990.
- Hough, David. "The Playmakers." In *farewell Cinderella*, edited by Geoffrey Bolton, Richard Rossiter, and Jan Ryan, 9-55. Perth: University of Western Australia Press, 2003.
- Jones, Bill. "Welsh identities in colonial Ballarat." *Journal of Australian Studies* 25, no. 68 (2001): 34-43.
- Jones, Henry Arthur and Henry Herman. *The Silver King: a drama in five acts*. New York: Samuel French, 1907
- Justin, Patrik N. and John Sloboda, eds. *Handbook of Music and Emotions, Theory, Research, Applications*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.
- Kelly, Veronika. "Melodrama, an Australian pantomime, and the theatrical construction of colonial history." *Journal of Australian Studies* 17:38 (1993): 51-61.
- Kelly, William. *Life in Victoria or Victoria in 1853 and Victoria in 1858*. London: Chapman & Hall, 1860.



Kerr, M. "The British Parliament and Transportation in the Eighteen-Fifties." *Historical Studies, Australia and New Zealand*, no 21 (1953): p29-44.

Kiddle, Margaret. *Men of Yesterday: a social history of the Western District of Victoria, 1834-1890*. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1983.

Killick, David. "On the value of mixed methods in studying mining communities." in *Social Approaches to an Industrial Past: The Archaeology and Anthropology of Mining*, edited by Knapp, Bernard, and Vincent C. Piggott and Eugenia W. Herbert, 279-290. London: Routledge, 1998.

Kimberley, W.B. *The History of Western Australia*. Melbourne: F.W. Niven & Co, 1897.

King, Andrew S. "A History of Popular Indigenous Music." In *A Companion Guide to Australian Aboriginal Literature*, edited by Belinda Wheeler, 187-201. New York: Camden House, 2013.

Kingston, Beverley. *The Oxford History of Australia. Volume 3, 1860-1900: Glad confident morning*. Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1988.

Kirkland, K. *Life in the Bush by a Lady*. Edinburgh: Chambers, 1845.

Knapp, Bernard, Vincent C. Piggott, and Eugenia W. Herbert eds. *Social Approaches to an Industrial Past: The Archaeology and Anthropology of Mining*. London: Routledge, 1998.

Kociumbas, Jan. *The Oxford History of Australia. Volume 2, 1770-1860: Possessions*. Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1992.

Kornweibel, A. H. *Apollo and the Pioneers*. Perth: The Music Council of Western Australia, 1973: VII.

Lake, Marilyn, and Henry Reynolds. *Drawing the Global Colour Line: White Men's Countries and the International Challenge of Racial Equality*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974.

Lancaster, Geoffrey. *First Fleet Piano: a musicians view: Volume 1*. Acton ACT: ANU Press, 2015.

Lawrence, Susan. "Gender and community structure on Australian colonial goldfields." In *Social Approaches to an Industrialised Past. The Archaeology and Anthropology of Mining*, edited by A. Bernard Knapp, Vincent C. Piggott, and Eugenia W. Herbert, 27-38. London: Routledge, 1998.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Poor Man's Diggings: Subsistence Mining in the Nineteenth Century." *Australasian Historical Archaeology* 13, (1995): 59-68.

Lei, Daphne. "The Production and Consumption of Chinese Theatre in Nineteenth-Century California." *Theatre Research International*, vol. 28, no. 3 (2003): 289-302.

Lesser, L. E. "'Show Business' A History of Theatre in Victoria 1835-1948." Master's thesis, University of Melbourne, 1949.

Lomax, A. "Folk Song Style." *American Anthropologist* 61, no. 6 (1959): 927-54.

Love, Harold. "Chinese Theatre in the Victorian Goldfields, 1858-1870," *Australasian Drama Studies*, 3, no. 2, (1985): 46-86.

----- . *The Golden Age of Australian Opera: W. S. Lyster and his company 1861-1880*. Sydney: Currency Press, 1981.

Mackinlay, Elizabeth, Denis Collins, and Samantha Owens. Eds. *Aesthetics and Experience in Music Performance*. Newcastle, UK: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2005.

MacAuley, Gay. *Space in Performance: Making Meaning in the Theatre*. Anne Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000.

McCrea, Hugh. ed. *Georgina's Journal; Melbourne a Hundred Years Ago*. Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1934.

McCulloch, Alan. *Artists of the Australian Gold Rush*. Melbourne: Lansdowne Editions, 1997.

McEwen, Ellen. "Community." In *Australians 1888*, edited by Davison, Graeme, J.W. McCarty, and Ailsa McLeary, 345-364. Broadway, NSW: Fairfax, Syme and Weldon, 1987.

McGowan, Rose May. *A Study of Social Life and Conditions in Early Melbourne Prior to Separation 1836-1851*. MA thesis. Melbourne: University of Melbourne, 1951.

McGuire, Paul, Betty Arnott, and Francis Margaret McGuire. *The Australian Theatre*. Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1948.

McHenry, Julie Anwar. "A Place for the Arts in Rural Revitalisation and the Social Wellbeing of Australian Rural Communities." *Rural Society* 19, no 1 (2009): 60-70.

McLachlan, Neil. "Pythagoras v Darwin: Interview with Neil McLachlan," by Andrew Ford, *The Music Show*, April 20<sup>th</sup> 2013, <http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/musicshow/2890176>.

McPhee, John. "Gold and Australian Decorative Arts". In *Gold and Civilisation*. Canberra: National Museum of Australia, 2001.

Mantourani, Eva. "The Aroma of the Music and the Fragrance of the Weed: Music and Smoking in Victorian England." *Lietuvos Muzikologija*, t. 13 (2012): 118-139.

Martin, C. H., A. J. Hargraves, R.J. Kininmonth, and S.M.C. Saywell. *History of Coal Mining in Australia*. Parkville, Victoria: The Australasian Institute of Mining and Metallurgy, 1993.

Mayes, Robyn. *Women and Mining in Contemporary Australia: An Exploratory Study*. Perth: John Curtin Institute of Public Policy, Curtin University, 2010.

Melville, Henry. *The Bushrangers; or, Norwood Vale*. This script only exists in the form it was published on pages 82-96, *Hobart Town Magazine*, 1834.

"Metropolitan Theatres." *Theatrical Journal: London* vol. 14, Iss. 696 (April 1853): 114-116.

Moloney, John. *The Penguin Bicentennial History of Australia*. Ringwood: King, 1987.

Moore, George Fletcher. *Diary of Ten Years Eventful Life of an Early Settler in Western Australia*. London: M. Walbrook, 1884.

Moran, Cardinal Patrick Francis. *The History of the Catholic Church in Australia*. Sydney: The Oceanic Publishing Company, 1895.

Morrison, J. Wendy. "Some aspects of the English influence on music in Ballarat during the establishment years." Honours thesis, University of Melbourne, 1984.

Mullen, C.C. "Brass Bands have played a Prominent Part in the History of Victoria." *Victorian Historical Magazine* vol. XXXV1, February 1965.

Murphy, E.G. "Holus Bolus." In *West Australian Bush Poets from the Past*. <http://wabushpoets.asn.au/pastpoets/Murphy/holusbolus.html>

Murphy, Edwin Greenslade. "Dryblower." *Ten Years Ago*. September 1910.

Musin, Ovide. *Ovide Musin, My Memories*. New York: Musin Publishing Company, 1920.

*Music and Memory, ABC, RN, Sunday, 8/11/15.*

*My Note Book*. Melbourne: Shaw, Harnett & Co.', 1857.

O'Farrell, Patrick. *The Irish in Australia*. Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 1896. 14.

O'Neill, Sally. "Coppin, George Seth (1819 -1906)." *Australian Dictionary of Biography*. Canberra: Australian National University, 1969. <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/coppin-george-seth-3260/text4935>.

O'Neill, Sally, and Theresa Radic. "Lyster, William Saurin (1828-1880)." *Australian Dictionary of Biography*. Canberra: Australian National University, 1969. <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/lyster-william-saurin-4053/text6451>.

Palmer, Beth. *Charles Reade*. Oxford Biographies, DOI: 10.1093/OBO/9780199799558-0046.

Park, Andrew, and Alfred Mullen. *I'm Off to the Diggings*. London: B. Williams, (between 1846 and 1860). National Library Australia, call number MUS N JAF mb 783.2421599 M958. <http://trove.nla.gov.au/version/27294649>. Accessed 15/11/15.

Parratt, Catriona M. "Making Leisure Work Women's Rational Recreation in Late Victorian and Edwardian England." *Journal of Sport History* 26, no. 3, (1999): 471-487.

Parsons, M. "The tourist corroborees in South Australia." *Aboriginal History*, 21(1), (1997):46-69.

Parsons, Michael. "' Ah that I could convey a proper idea of this interesting wild play of the natives': corroborees and the rise of indigenous Australian cultural tourism." *Australian Aboriginal Studies* 2, (2002): 14-26.

Parsons, Philip, and Victoria Chance eds. *Companion to Theatre in Australia*. Sydney: Currency Press, 1995.

Partion, Anne. "Champion of the Goldfields." *Studies in West Australian History Journal: The Irish in Western Australia*, no. 20 (2000): 94-116.

Pearce, C.R.C. *Early Ballarat. Glimpses in 1856*. In *Argus*, 10<sup>th</sup> October 1931.

Pearsall, Ronald. *Victorian Popular Music*. Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1973.

Phillips, Mrs Alfred. *Life in Australia from our own correspondent*. Lord Chamberlain's Plays ms. 52938-B (February). British Library, London.

Pickard, J. "Shepherding in Colonial Australia." *Rural History*, vol.19 (2008): 55-80.

Plum, Sarah. "Ovide Musin and Virtuosity." *Interactive Studio* (blog). [http://sarahplumviolinist.com/interactive\\_studio](http://sarahplumviolinist.com/interactive_studio).

Porter, Hal. *Stars of Australian Stage and Screen*. Adelaide: Rigby Ltd, 1965.

Potts, E. Daniel, and Annette Potts. *Young America and Australian Gold: Americans and the Gold Rush of the 1850's*. St. Lucia, Queensland: University of Queensland Press, 1974.

Powell, J.M. *Mirrors of the New World*. Folkstone: Wm Dawson & Son Ltd. 1977.

Prentis, Malcolm. *The Scots in Australia*. Sydney: University of NSW Press, 2008.

Reade, Charles. *It is Never Too Late to Mend*. 1865

Reece, Bob. "Writing about Convicts in Western Australia." *Studies in Western Australian History*, 24, (2006): 203-206.

Reid, Arthur. *Those were the Days*. Carlisle: Hesperian Press, 1986.

Rickard, John. "From pianos to panto: aspects of music and theatre in colonial Victoria." *Victorian Historical Journal*, 49, no.191, (1978): 66-75.

Rickard, John. *The Present and the Past: Australia a Cultural History*. Harlow: Longman Group UK Limited, 1988.

-----". "Writing Music in Australian History," *Musicology Australia*, 37:2, (2015): 271-279. DOI:10.1080/08145857.2015.1064556.

Righetti, Pauline Veronika. "The First Fifty Years of Music in Ballarat." Special Studies Thesis, University of Melbourne, n.d.

Rolls, Eric. *Sojourners: the epic story of the China's centuries-old relationship with Australia: flowers and the wide sea*. St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1992.

Rule, Charles Spandry. *From the Burra Mine to the Mount Alexandra Diggings*. State Library of South Australia, D7486(L).

Rutledge, Martha. "Rickards, Harry (1843-1911)", *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Volume 11, (MUP), 1988. National Centre of Biography, Australian National University.

Salmon, Mary. "An Old-Time Circus." *Australasian Town and Country Journal*, 3, 1904.

Saunders, Sara. *Notes from the Memories of Clara Saunders: One of the Pioneer Women on the Coolgardie Goldfields*. Perth: Batty Library, PR 7730.

Serle, Geoffrey. *The Golden Age: A History of the Colony of Victoria, 1851-1861*. London: Melbourne University Press, 1963.

----- . *The Golden Age: A History of the Colony of Victoria, 1851-1861*. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1977.

----- . In George Darrell, *The Sunny South*, 73. Sydney: Currency Press, 1975.

Seymour, Bruce. *Lola Montez: A Life*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996.

Shenton, Charlotte Elizabeth Vigors. "Reminiscences of Perth, 1830-1840." Compiled by Mrs Shenton from the reminiscences of the writer's mother Mrs F. Lochee. *Journal and Proceedings, the Western Australian Historical Society*. 1, part 1, (1927): 1-4.

Sherer, John. *The Gold-Finder of Australia*. Ringwood: Penguin, 1973.

Skinner, Graeme. "Towards a General History of Australian Musical Composition: First National Music 1788-1860." PhD. thesis, Sydney Conservatorium of Music, University of Sydney, 2011.

Small, Joe. *The New Zealand and Australian Songster*. Christchurch: Tribe, Mosley and Cargill, 1866.

Smith, Bernard. "Art in its Social Setting." In *Constructing a Culture: A Peoples History of Australia since 1788*. eds. Verity Burgmann and Jenny Lee. Ringwood, Victoria: McPhee Gribble Penguin Books Australia Ltd, 1990.

Smith, Cecil. *Musical Comedy in America*. New York: Theatre Art Books, 1950.

Smith, Graeme. *Singing Australia: a history of folk and song music*. North Melbourne: Pluto Press, 2005.

Smith, Sheila M. "Propaganda and hard facts in Charles Reade's didactic novels: A study of *It is never too late to mend* and *Hard Cash*." *Culture, Theory and Critique*, 4:1: 135-149. DOI: 10.1080/14735786009391435.

Smyth, Patricia. "Landscape and Identity in Australian Melodrama." *Journal of Victorian Culture* Vol. 21, Issue 3 (2016): 363-386.  
<http://doi-org.dbgw.lis.curtin.edu/10.1080/13555502.2016.1197687>.

Soldene, Emily. "London Week by Week," *Evening News*, 31st October 1896.

St Leon, Mark. "Circus and Nation: a critical inquiry into circus in its Australian Setting, 1847-2006, from the perspective of society, enterprise and culture." PhD diss., University of Sydney, 2006.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Circus: The Australian Story*. Melbourne: Melbourne Books, 2011.

\_\_\_\_\_. "To the golden west." *Early Days: Journal of the Royal Western Australian Historical Society* volume 13, no. 4 (2010):389-410.

Stannage, C.T. *The People of Perth – Social History of Western Australia's Capital*. Nedlands: Carrolls, 1979.

Stevens, Robin. "Music: A Humanising and Civilising Influence in Education." In *The Colonial Child*, edited by Guy Featherstone, 68. Melbourne: Royal Historical Society of Victoria, 1981.

Stevenson, Lynne. "The Coolgardie International Exhibition." *Studies in Western Australian History*, no. 10 (1989): 100-106.

Stewart, Nellie. *My Life's Story*, Sydney: John Sands, 1923.

Stoddart, J. "The Early Days of Coolgardie: Being the Short Experience of an Amateur Prospector." *Royal Western Australian Historical Society Journal and Proceedings*, Vol.1 (1930): 59.

Strange, A. W. *Ballarat the formative years*. Ballarat: B & B Strange, 1982.

Stratham, Pamela. "Why Convicts Part 2; The Decision to Introduce Convicts to Swan River." *Convictism in Western Australia, Studies in Western Australian History Journal*, no. 4 (1981): p11-18.

Stevens, Robin. "Music: A Humanising and Civilising Influence in Education." In *The Colonial Child*, edited by Guy Featherstone, 68. Melbourne: Royal Historical Society of Victoria, 1981.

Stevenson, Lynne. "The Coolgardie International Exhibition 1899." *Studies in Western Australian History*, no. 10 (1989).

Stubington, Jill. *Singing the land: The power of performances in aboriginal land*. Sydney: Currency House Inc., 2007.

Sutherland, Alexander and R.L.J. Ellery. *Victoria and its metropolis: past and present*. Melbourne: McCarron Bird, 1888.

Tenfelde, Klaus. "The Miners' Community and the Community of Mining Historians." In *Social Approaches to an Industrial Past: The Archaeology and Anthropology of Mining*, edited by Knapp, Bernard, Vincent C. Piggott, and Eugenia W. Herbert, 1201-1215. London: Routledge, 1998.

Teo, Hsu-Ming, and Richard White, eds. *Cultural History in Australia*. Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2003.

Terrell, John. *Golden Threads: Poetry from Western Australia's gold rush era* (Bateman, WA: John Terrell, 2018).

Thatcher, Charles. *Thatcher's colonial songs: forming a complete comic history of the early diggings*. Facsimile ed. Adelaide Libraries Board of South Australia. 1964.

*The Golden Nuggett: or, the Fatal Treasure*. (1853). Author unknown, Lord Chamberlain's plays ms. 52943-J (November). British Library, London.

*The Goldfields of Australia; or Off to the Diggings*. (1853). Lord Chamberlain's Plays ms. 52937-G (January). British Library, London.

Thomas, W. *Journal in Papers*. Unpublished MS 214/24, Mitchell Library, 1840.

Thorne, Ross. *Theatre Buildings in Australia to 1905: from the time of first settlement to the arrival of cinema*. Sydney: Architectural Research Foundation, University of Sydney, 1971.

Trollope, Anthony. *Australia*. New edition ed. P.D. Edwards and R.B. Joyce. St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1967.



----- . *Australia and New Zealand*. Authorised Australian edition. Melbourne: G. Robertson, 1873.

Trosset, Caroline. *Welshness Performed: Welsh Concepts of Persons and Society*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1993.

Tyler, Robert Llewellyn. "Occupational Mobility and Cultural Maintenance: The Welsh in a Nineteenth Century Australian Gold Town." *Historical Studies in Ethnicity, Migration and Diaspora* vol. 24, issue 3 (2006):277-299.

Vamp, Hugo. *In for a Dig: or Life at the Diggings* (1853). Lord Chamberlain's Plays Manuscripts, 52939-N (April), British Library, London.

Van Den Driesen, I.H. "Convicts and Migrants in Western Australia 1850-1886: their number, nature and ethnic origins." *Journal of the Royal Western Australian Historical Society*, vol. 72, pt. 1, (June 1986): p.50-9.

Van Der Poorten, Helen M. "Williamson, James Cassius (1845-1913)." *Australian Dictionary of Biography*. Canberra: Australian National University, 1976. <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/williamson-james-cassius-4859/text8117>.

*Victorian Gold: The Gold Rush and its Impact on Cultural Life, 2001*. The University of Melbourne: The Ian Potter Museum of Art, 28 April – 24 June 2001.

Vosper, F. "The Beginning of Trouble." *Coolgardie Miner*, 16 June 1894, p2.

Walker, William. *Poems Written in Youth*. Sydney: Turner and Henderson, 1884.

Wang, Zheng-Ting. *Chinese Music in Australia, Victoria 1850s to mid-1990s*. Melbourne: distributed by Lento: Australian Asia Foundation, 1997.

----- . "Chinese Music in Mid-Nineteenth Century Victoria." *Australasian Music Research* 2-5, (1997-1998): 23-38.

Wang, Zheng-Ting and Anne Doggett. "Chinese Music on the Victorian Goldfields." *Victorian Historical Journal*, vol. 78, no. 2 (2007): 170-186.  
Ward, Russell. *The Australian Legend*. Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1966.

Waterhouse, Richard. "Cultural Transmissions." In *Cultural History in Australia*, edited by Hsu-Ming Teo, and Richard White, 113- 126. Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2003.

\_\_\_\_\_. *From Minstrel Show to Vaudeville: The Australian Popular Stage, 1788-1914*. Sydney: N.S.W: University Press, 1990.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Minstrel Show and vaudeville house: The Australian popular stage, 1834-1914." *Australian Historical Studies*, 23:29, (2008). 366-385. Downloaded 30/4/2014. DOI: 10.1080/10314618908595819.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Private Pleasures, Public Leisure: a history of Australian popular culture since 1788*. South Melbourne: Longman, 1995.

\_\_\_\_\_. *The Vision Splendid: A Social and Cultural History of Rural Australia*. Fremantle: Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 2005.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Travelling shows in rural Australia 1850-1914," *Australasian Drama Studies* 35, (October 1999): 19-30.

Wattone, Mike. *Quest for Gold*. Scarborough: Contraland Press, Western Australia, 1985.

Webb, Martyn and Audrey Webb. *Golden Destiny: The Centenary History of Kalgoorlie-Boulder and the Eastern Goldfields of Western Australia*. City of Kalgoorlie-Boulder, 1993.

Weber, William. *Music and the Middle Classes: The Social Structure of Concert Life in London, Paris and Vienna between 1830 and 1848*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004.

Wentzel, Ann. "The Rapid Development of Music in Australia, 1851-1861." *Musicology Australia* 3:1 (1969). 69-73.  
DOI:10.1080/08145857.1969.10414987.

West, John. *Theatre in Australia*. Stanmore: Cassell Australia Ltd, 1978.

Whelan, Albert. Interview by Eamonn Andrews. *This is your Life*, 30 September 1957. [http://www.bigredbook.info/albert\\_whelan.html](http://www.bigredbook.info/albert_whelan.html).

Whiteoak, John. "'Pity the Bandless Towns': Brass Banding in Australian Rural Communities before World War Two." *Rural Society*, vol. 13, no. 3 (2003): 287-311.

----- "The development of Australian circus music." *Australasian Drama Studies* 35, (October 1999): 59-72.

----- "What were the so-called 'German Bands' of pre-world war 1 Australian street life." *Nineteenth Century Music Review*, Cambridge University Press, (2017): 1-15.

Wickham, Dorothy. "Great are the Inconveniences." In *A World Turned Upside Down*, edited by Kerry Cardell and Cliff Cumming, 9-24. Canberra: Humanities Research Centre, The Australian National University, 2000.

Will, Harry and Norman Berry in the Eastern Goldfields to family and friends in Victoria, 1893 – 1896, Battye Library 3050 A/1-6.

Williams, Margaret. *Australia on the Popular Stage 1829-1929: an historical entertainment in six acts*. Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1983.

Williams, Margaret. "Australia." In *The Cambridge Guide to World Theatre*, edited by Martin Banham, 52-60. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988.

Williams, Raymond. *Culture and Society 1780-1950*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1961.

Williams, Theos and J. B. Humffrey eds. *Ballarat Eisteddfod: Report of the Meetings held in Ballarat in 1885-1886 with Introductory and Historical Notes together with the Programme of the Eisteddfod to be held in 1887*. Ballarat: James Curtis, 1866.

Wilson, Charles. "A Tale of Two Histories." *Quadrant* 32, no. 9 (1988): 53-54.

Withers, W. B. "Our past and present." *M & W Star*, 12 September 1856, page 56.

Withers, William Bramwell. *The History of Ballarat from the First Pastoral Settlement to the Present*. Ballarat: The Ballarat Star Office, 1870.

Wittman, Matthew W. "Empire of Culture: U.S. Entertainers and the Making of the Pacific Circuit, 1850-1890." PhD diss., University of Michigan, 2010.

Wolf, Gabrielle. "Innocent Convicts and Respectable Bushrangers: History and the Nation in Melbourne Melodrama 1890-1914." *Journal of Australian Studies* no. 81 (2004): 73-81.

Wright, Clare. "A lover and a fighter: Clare Wright on the trouble with Lola Montez." *Overland* 195, (2009): 20-28.

Wyndham, Horace. *Magnificent Montez: From courtesan to convert*. New York: Stein and Day, 1972.

Zion, Lawrence. "Art in its Social Setting" In *Constructing a Culture*, edited by Verity Burgmann and Jenny Lee, 223-240. Ringwood, Victoria: McPhee Gribble Penguin Books Australia Ltd, 1990.

----- . "Popular Culture and Bourgeois Values" In *Constructing a Culture*, edited by Verity Burgmann and Jenny Lee, 241-256 Ringwood, Victoria: McPhee Gribble Penguin Books Australia Ltd, 1990.

----- . "The Sound of Australian Music." In *Constructing a Culture*, edited by Verity Burgmann and Jenny Lee, 209-222. Ringwood, Victoria: McPhee Gribble Penguin Books Australia Ltd, 1990.

Every reasonable effort has been made to acknowledge the owners of copyright material. I would be pleased to hear from any copyright owner who has been omitted or incorrectly acknowledged.