

Dame Nellie Melba: Celebrity and the Portrait

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At her death on 23 February 1931, the outpouring of grief in Australia and around the world provided an insight into the depth of regard felt for Dame Nellie Melba, 'Australia's most gifted daughter.'¹ This was no more evident than in the full-page collage of photographs in *The Argus*, just one of the newspapers that commemorated her passing. This suggests that her visual image and her celebrity were linked both during her lifetime, and into the twenty-first century.² This relationship between image and celebrity manifested itself both in how she was perceived as a celebrity in the early twentieth century and in the way image-making helped create that celebrity in the first place. A link between visual representation and celebrity is not new in the twentieth century, but certainly accelerated rapidly through the nineteenth century, during which 'the commodification of art, the mass-production (and reproduction) of texts and images, [and] an increasingly de-personalised relationship between musician and audience' all took place, as audience numbers grew in the transition from salon to opera house.³

¹ Melba was often referred to as 'Australia's Gifted Daughter.' For example, upon her return to Lilydale at the height of her fame in 1902, she was greeted with a banner printed with these words. An image of the procession and the banner can be viewed online: 'The Arrival of Dame Nellie Melba in Processional Drive at Lilydale,' *National Library of Australia Digital Collections*, accessed 25 Mar. 2016, <www.nla.gov.au/nla.obj-140628127>.

² 'Glimpses of Melba,' *Argus*, 24 Feb. 1931, 5.

³ Alan Davison, 'Images of Idols and the Emergence of Musical Celebrity: Printed Portraits of Musicians in the Romantic Era,' paper presented at the Association of Art Historians Annual Conference, Milton Keynes, Mar. 2012, [10], <www.academia.edu/4078526/>.

Moreover, audiences began to have a fascination with the person behind the art, a phenomenon which Tom Mole traces back to Byron.⁴ By using Nellie Melba, who bridged the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as a case study, we can engage with images to explore the relationship between celebrity and the visual representation of musicians and composers. By analysing images of Melba through the lens of the dynamics and mechanisms of celebrity, we see that she acted as a 'patron' of her own legacy through astute management of her visual image. Further, her focus on classical ways of capturing her image, such as marble busts and traditional oil paintings, suggests a desire to use disseminated images to enhance this celebrity and achieve an enduring legacy.

Through applying an interdisciplinary methodology to illustrate and examine this link, it will be shown that portraiture of musicians and composers can be used as a legitimate primary source in reception studies.⁵ Further, it is hoped that it will lead to a greater understanding of the role of images in celebritisation, a concept currently being explored in the fields of cultural and social sciences.

Defining 'celebrity' in historical terms is difficult given that there is much variation in the way celebrity manifests in society, and theorists have only begun to deconstruct the academic idea of celebrity in recent years.⁶ Further, it is important to note that the approach taken here is that 'celebrity' itself is very much a liminal concept. Daniel Boorstin gives (ironically) a 'famous' definition: 'a person known for his well known-ness.'⁷ Simon Morgan, in his article, 'Celebrity: Academic Pseudo-Event or a Useful Concept for Historians?', elaborates further: a 'celebrity is a known individual who has become a marketable commodity,' though he goes on to acknowledge that it is more fruitful to understand celebrity as a semiotic system with a multiplicity of sometimes conflicting signs and signifiers.⁸

The print culture of the nineteenth century and the Victorian fascination with the pseudo-sciences of phrenology and physiognomy are important precursors to our modern system of celebrity and, as Morgan explains, 'by using the insights of modern theory we can identify particular historical moments where an identifiable celebrity culture existed.'⁹ Despite this, few attempts have been made to historicise celebrity, though the notion of celebrity intersects with other fields of research, both in the modern and historical sense.¹⁰ While there are other contrary and conflicting approaches to theorising celebrity, Chris Rojek's classification of three 'types' of celebrity—*ascribed*, *achieved* or *attributed*—is useful for the purposes of this article.¹¹ Using the Rojek paradigm, composers and musicians are usually first *achieved* then *attributed* celebrities, and as is seen in the case of Melba, her status as an *achieved* celebrity leads to the less personal notion of an *attributed* celebrity; that is, she was first 'known' for her singing, but came to be known for her 'known-ness.' This is also due to the extension and transformation

⁴ Tom Mole, *Byron's Romantic Celebrity: Industrial Culture and the Hermeneutic of Intimacy* (Hampshire: Palgrave, 2007).

⁵ Davison, 'Images of Idols,' [2].

⁶ Simon Morgan, 'Celebrity: Academic Pseudo-Event or a Useful Concept for Historians?' *Cultural and Social History* 8.1 (2011): 95–114.

⁷ Daniel J. Boorstin, *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America* (New York: Harper and Row, 1961), 57.

⁸ Morgan, 'Celebrity,' 98.

⁹ Morgan, 'Celebrity,' 98.

¹⁰ Morgan, 'Celebrity,' 101.

¹¹ Chris Rojek, *Celebrity* (London: Reaktion Books, 2001), 18.

of the print culture in the nineteenth century, where images were disseminated through a mass market made possible by the advent of the printing press and the accessibility of this technology, 'generating conditions in which control over the means of mass communication is decentralized.'¹²

With the celebrity seen as the product and its consumer the fan, cultural elites in society (publishers, editors, and managers) become the arbiters and commodifiers of this ascribed status of celebrity.¹³ Though prints of the famous had been a saleable commodity since at least the 1750s, the development of a print culture centred around, and driven by, the public's need for information and by a sense of proximity to their celebrity target, meant that the collection of ephemera and other artefacts became widespread.¹⁴ This print-focused market in the nineteenth century, and the development of cheaper technologies such as lithography, woodblock, and then photolithography, provided the opportunity for fame to be both transnational and lasting. In the case of Melba, it is likely that many had not heard her sing (despite her prolific concert-giving), but the 'highly developed commodity culture ... wide range of technologies for the large-scale reproduction of images of the famous ... burgeoning print culture, and an increasingly large pool of literate consumers' meant that her fame became quite separate from her music.¹⁵ Thus, for many of her fans, her fame was not *achieved* as they had never heard her sing, but simply *attributed*, both as a result of, and experienced through, her visual representation. The most prolific and accessible images of Melba were on theatre postcards, which were photographs of her dressed in costume portraying her most iconic roles: Juliet, Marguerite, Lucia and Violetta. This presentation of Melba not as herself, but in character, relates to Beatrice Farwell's observation that,

Unlike painted portraits, which were unique and might be commissioned by anyone, prints imply by their multiplicity a market for the likeness among people who did not know the sitter personally. Thus printed portraits declare the fame of the person represented. The new mass market of the nineteenth century gave rise to new patterns in fame, most of them prophetic of what was to come in the era of the photographic portrait.¹⁶

Tom Mole, in *Byron's Romantic Celebrity*, explains that modern celebrity has roots in the eighteenth century:

Celebrity is a cultural apparatus consisting of three elements: an individual, an industry and an audience. Modern celebrity culture begins when these three components routinely work together to render an individual personally fascinating. This kind of fascination is unlike the pre-modern interest with an individual's public role, and its genesis is historically specific. I argue that we've had celebrities since the late eighteenth century and a celebrity culture since the beginning of the nineteenth.¹⁷

¹² Morgan, 'Celebrity,' 98.

¹³ Morgan, 'Celebrity,' 99.

¹⁴ Morgan, 'Celebrity,' 103.

¹⁵ Morgan, 'Celebrity,' 106.

¹⁶ Beatrice Farwell, *Portraits and Types: French Popular Lithographic Imagery, 1815–1870*, vol. 2 (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1997), 1; cited in Alan Davison, *Studies in the Iconography of Franz Liszt* (PhD thesis, University of Melbourne, 2001), 137.

¹⁷ Mole, *Byron's Romantic Celebrity*, 1.

Further, in this seminal work which explores the historical roots of celebrity, Mole argues through a close reading of historical sources and events that the 'romance' of the life of Byron was of equal interest to the readers as the poetry itself; it is this notion upon which he builds his historicised view of celebrity. Although cultural theorists have begun to deconstruct the origins and functions of celebrity, an exploration of visual culture and its relationship to celebrity has not been undertaken.

The fact that the Australian public did not know Melba personally, but could feel as if they knew her through a perceived intimacy, can be explained as the 'hermeneutic of intimacy',¹⁸ which 'worked by suggesting that [Byron's] poems could only be understood fully by referring to their author's personality, that reading them was entering a kind of relationship with the author and that that relationship resembled an intimate connection between individuals.'¹⁹ Of course, this intimacy is ultimately paradoxical: through visual representations of the celebrity target, only a *perceived* intimacy is present, analogous to that created by modern systems of social media. In reality, although the fan perceives intimacy through attachment to, and interest in, portraits and other ephemera, what ultimately exists is distance: the celebrity's interaction with fans is always mediated via print technologies. The images of Nellie Melba disseminated actively by the diva herself, which were also reprinted in newspapers throughout Australia and the world, contained 'the imagined relationship between the public figure and the individual members of their audience, mediated through images, [which] separates print culture from more centralised manifestations of fame and authority.'²⁰ These audience members were not necessarily the patrons of her concerts or soirees, but the 'ordinary' society who met her trains and frequented receptions and parades, such as the Lilydale reception of 1902.²¹

With this historical and contextual framework in place, it is not enough, however, to now begin to deconstruct these images in a haphazard or essentialist way, for as Marian Quartly and Richard Scully have noted, though 'historians have learnt to read written documents as complex texts whose meaning is rarely self-evident ... cartoons and other visual sources still escape critical analysis.'²² In order to ensure that portraiture study as reception history is rigorous and critically analysed, this short case study of images from around 1902 will use as its basis a new methodology developed by Alan Davison, which is deeply rooted in art-historical and iconographical methods.²³

The methodology uses three main 'pillars' as a way to systematically and thoroughly appraise portraits as a primary source. These pillars are:

1. Iconological nominalism;
2. synaesthetic awareness; and
3. the 'physiognomic paradox' of portraits

¹⁸ Mole, *Byron's Romantic Celebrity*, 28.

¹⁹ Mole, *Byron's Romantic Celebrity*, 28.

²⁰ Morgan, 'Celebrity,' 109.

²¹ Melba returned to Lilydale in 1902 and was received in a huge reception—crowds lined the streets as she was driven from the train station to Lilydale, through a huge arch of foliage and flowers that held a sign that read *Australia's gifted daughter*. A ceremonial address was given and accepted by David Mitchell (Melba's father) before the party retired to his property at Cave Hill. See 'Melba at Lilydale,' *Age*, Nov. 10, 1902.

²² Marian Quartly and Richard Scully, *Drawing the Line: Using Cartoons As Historical Evidence* (Victoria: Monash University ePress, 2009).

²³ Davison, 'Images of Idols.'

Iconological nominalism is a general research paradigm which is situated within Erwin Panofsky's (1892–1968) notions of iconology and Karl Popper's (1902–1992) anti-historicist and anti-essentialist theories,²⁴ and 'reconstruct[s] a likely sphere of influence and significance' without 'privileg[ing] a visual object with a fixed or essentialist meaning.'²⁵ Synaesthetic awareness, or 'beyond the paratext,' involves more than simply approaching images as a form of text. Rather, portraits are considered as being situated within a context and as being able to both reflect and influence ideas. Thus the viewer engages with both the image and its context. Finally, the 'physiognomic paradox' of portraits reflects upon portraiture as a genre, and posits that within a historical context, the physiognomy and phrenology depicted in a portrait can be understood as offering insight into the character or morality of the subject or society.²⁶ My aim in the remainder of this article is to apply these three tenets to major artworks depicting Melba: *Madame Melba* by Rupert Bunny, *Portrait Sketch of Dame Nellie Melba* by Hugh Ramsay and *Melba* by Bertram MacKenna.

On a biographical level, sources who knew Melba from her days at the Presbyterian Ladies College in Melbourne report that she was an accomplished painter, which perhaps explains her fascination with capturing her own likeness in the 'perfect' oil portrait.²⁷ She commissioned a number of portraits throughout her career from important Australian artists, such as Hugh Ramsay, Rupert Bunny, John Longstaff and Bertram Mackenna, as well as from photographers Spencer Shier and Harold Cazneau. A definite dichotomy in approach is shown between the portraits and photographs taken of her during the same period, where portraits subscribe to traditional aesthetics and photographs serve a marketable purpose. Though it is unlikely that early portraits were commissioned by Melba herself, works such as Mary Livingston's *Nellie Melba* of 1880 and H.P. Gill's portrait of 1893 depict her simply, with a youthful promise in her features. The Livingston shows her looking slightly beyond the observer with chin slightly raised, and the portrait is larger than life-size, which gives it a sense of gravitas: Melba appears literally larger than life.²⁸ The Gill is shown from behind: Melba poses with one arm raised, and despite the angle of the body the portrait is not at all coquettish.²⁹

In what could be characterised as self-motivated pre-mythologising, Melba commissioned a bust by Bertram Mackenna (see Fig. 1), which, on its completion in 1899, she promptly gave to the National Gallery of Victoria where it remains to this day. She wrote:

[F]rom a daughter of the city, as a tribute of her unfailing remembrance and affection, may I express the hope that I am not wholly forgotten in our beloved country, and that the very cordial greetings which I venture to send through you to my brother and sister Australians will not be without a kindly response?³⁰

²⁴ Erwin Panofsky, *Studies in Iconology: Humanistic Themes in the Art of the Renaissance* (New York: Harper & Row, 1962) and Karl Popper, *The Open Society and its Enemies* (London: Routledge & Sons, 1947).

²⁵ Davison, 'Images of Idols,' [4].

²⁶ Davison, 'Images of Idols,' [4].

²⁷ Jim Davison, 'Dame Nellie Melba,' *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, accessed 12 May 2015, <adb.anu.edu.au/biography/melba-dame-nellie-7551>.

²⁸ An image of the portrait is available online: 'M.H. Livingston, Portrait of Dame Nellie Melba,' *National Library of Australia Digital Collections*, accessed 12 May 2015, <www.nla.gov.au/nla.pic-an5527239>.

²⁹ An image of the portrait is available online: 'H.P. Gill, Portrait of Dame Nellie Melba,' *National Library of Australia Digital Collections*, accessed 12 May 2015, <www.nla.gov.au/nla.pic-an7021867>.

³⁰ Agnes G. Murphy, *Melba: A Biography* (London: Chatto & Windus London, 1909), 152–3.

Figure 1. Bertram Mackennal, *Melba*, 1899, marble, National Gallery of Victoria, Gift of Madame Melba, 1900 (photo: Rachel M. Campbell)



Interestingly, she did not tell the National Gallery of Victoria that she was bestowing this gift upon them until it was finished. We can only assume that this was strategic, so she could ensure that she was happy with the final product, before commending it to the canon of images. Melba's hope that she is not 'wholly forgotten'³¹ in Australia suggests that there was a deep-seated concern surrounding her own longevity, and this concern was central to her motivation to capture the 'perfect' portrait, though what exactly Melba was looking for is unclear. The bust is especially meaningful as Melba herself commissioned it from the most significant Australian sculptor of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

While Mackennal did not always subscribe to a traditional aesthetic, the Melba bust is classical in its approach, with one significant difference: the small wooden base supporting the large marble plinth raises the bust to a height such that the viewer looks slightly up to the subject. This hardly seems an accident when viewed as an early indication of an emerging paradigm throughout her other commissions. In 1925 she would present a copy of this bust to the Royal Opera House in London, where it is still on display, again suggesting that she was happy with the final result. Reconstructing a likely sphere of influence and significance as per Davison's methodology, this gesture and the accompanying words give the impression of a gracious star acknowledging her biological and musical roots. In addition to this, there appears to be an underlying motivation of Melba ensuring her image, and thus her 'celebrity' more generally (separate to her music), is solidified in the Australian operatic world. In the bust, Melba's bosom is swathed in a creamy marble cloth, her hair is captured in a traditional Edwardian *chignon*, and her fixed downward gaze has been described as 'imperiously

³¹ Murphy, *Melba: A Biography*, 152–3.

survey[ing] a presumed audience.³² Melba's choice of a traditional, sculpted bust as a gift to the National Gallery of Victoria can be interpreted as strategic and symbolic; the gesture of the lasting nature of marble and references to the busts of classical historic figures is hard to ignore.

Around 1900, Melba commissioned a portrait from Australian artist Rupert Charles Wulston Bunny (1864–1947), which is painted in the Grand Manner, sometimes referred to as a Swagger Portrait. In this portrait, entitled simply *Madame Melba* (see Fig. 2), the diva stands in a stylised landscape in Bunny's signature palette of pastel blues and pinks shot with black. To a twenty-first-century observer, this style seems very unrealistic and difficult to understand. Stemming from a style pioneered by the early seventeenth-century Flemish artists Anthony Van Dyck (1599–1641) and Peter Paul Rubens (1577–1640), portraits in the Grand Manner used gesture, settings and accessories to infer noble qualities through symbolism and metaphor. Further, this staple style of the Edwardian age was developed and promulgated in the eighteenth century by English artists Thomas Gainsborough (1727–1788) and Joshua Reynolds (1723–1792); portraits were almost always full-length portraits in at least life-size.

Figure 2. Rupert Bunny, *Madame Melba*, 1902, oil on canvas, National Gallery of Victoria



³² Artwork label for Bertram Mackennal, *Melba*, 1899, at National Gallery of Victoria.

When compared with other portraits by the artist from around the same time, a clear departure can be seen in the Melba portrait—Bunny's whimsical *fin de siècle* style carries over into his other portraits such as *Mrs Bunny (On a Green Sofa)* from 1902 and *Portrait of the Artist's Wife* (circa 1895). In contrast, *Madame Melba* appears heavy with tension, awkwardly staged and feels laboured in its realisation. Indeed Ann Blainey, author of *I am Melba*, reports that Melba told her friends that no one, save Bunny himself, liked the portrait when it was completed.³³

The author was privileged to see the portrait on display at Government House in Melbourne, and using Ludmilla Jordanova's notion of 'context of display'³⁴ and Davison's 'synaesthetic awareness,' we can propose some conclusions about the symbolism of the location without suggesting an essentialist view, or ascribing meaning by way of intention. That is, although selected for display at Government House by staff from the National Gallery of Victoria, and probably not as a 'billboard' for Melba's fame, the fact remains that this portrait hangs in the state dining room where the Governor and Premier of Victoria host both Australian and international guests, including royalty. In the grand context of this state dining room, the portrait is striking. Vast at over two metres tall, and set off the ground to make it appear even bigger, the angle of Melba's body and her downturned chin communicate an air of distance to the viewer. Further, in order to understand this portrait, the symbolism of the choice of style cannot be overlooked when beginning to analyse and appreciate the portrait in its fullness. Reflecting on the portrait further, though Melba is not pictured in character per se, she is still playing a role—that of an entertainer, captured in the style of an aristocrat. The portrait, then, is not a reflection, but a construct, adding a layer of complexity to Melba's myth-making and her quest for visual longevity.

Sarah Engeldow, historian and curator at the National Portrait Gallery of Australia, acknowledges that, 'the National Portrait Gallery does not rank its portrait subjects in order of greatness. That said, there is a small group of individuals of whom virtually any portrait representation, be it however small, slight or faint, is desirable—and Melba is a member of that group.'³⁵ This statement from an eminent historian and expert in portraiture, speaks of the value placed on visual representation, as well as the interconnection between longevity (lasting celebrity), portraits, and Dame Nellie Melba. Hugh Ramsay's portrait sketch of Melba, which the National Portrait Gallery obtained in 2000, clearly falls into this category (see Fig. 3). Upon receiving Melba's commission to paint her portrait, he wrote, 'I am quite excited over this, and intend to put all my energy into it.'³⁶ It is a portrait sketch, not ever designed to be a final product, but Hugh Ramsay would die of tuberculosis before he was able to paint a final version. Nevertheless, this sketch provides great insight into the character of Melba, as it was completed in only thirty minutes on the occasion of their first meeting, and though Ramsay was 'a bit flabbergasted and too nervous to do a *chef d'oeuvre*,' the portrait is imbued with an air of the diva, rather than an exact likeness.³⁷ She sits almost in profile, with a large

³³ Ann Blainey, *I Am Melba: A Biography* (Melbourne: Black Inc., 2008), 201.

³⁴ Ludmilla Jordanova, *The Look of the Past: Visual and Material Evidence in Historical Practice* (Cambridge: CUP, 2012), 174.

³⁵ Sarah Engeldow, 'Doodles of a Diva,' *Portrait Magazine*, accessed 1 June 2015, <www.portrait.gov.au/magazines/36/doodles-of-the-diva>.

³⁶ Hugh Ramsay, 'Letter to Aunt Melba,' *Hugh Ramsay Painter*, accessed 1 June 2015, <www.hughramsypainter.com.au/letter-to-aunt-melba/>.

³⁷ Ramsay, 'Letter to Aunt Melba.'

Figure 3. Hugh Ramsay, *Portrait Sketch of Nellie Melba*, 1902, oil on canvas, National Portrait Gallery, Canberra. Gift of the Mitchell Family and the Fullerton Family 2000. Reproduced with permission.



hat and simple clothes in black and white. Ramsay made a further sketch of Melba whilst in Paris in 1902, and it is this sketch that gives an insight into Ramsay's vision for the completed portrait: Melba stands in a ball gown in front of an ornate screen, and Ramsay hints at a luxurious palette of red and gold upon which to depict Melba. Was this the depiction that would have finally satisfied Melba's desire for the 'perfect' portrait?³⁸

In stark contrast to the paintings, there is a vast collection of photographs, many of Melba in costume in her most famous roles, some of which were included in the commemorative collage in the *Argus*. She signed many of these to give away, very much in line with the culture of the *carte de visite* or cabinet card in the nineteenth century. Such cards were indeed evidence of 'proximity' to the famous, as they were originally simply visiting cards, to be left at the home or office of a person to indicate a visitor had been (and possibly missed). They became important indicators of one's presence in society, and were traded as desirable commodities. Possession of a *carte de visite* of an idol could be an indicator of status, even if the person in question had never actually met the celebrity—after all, who was to know? Melba's signed postcards sometimes functioned as an endorsement of a product or person, or served as an introduction for an emerging singer or business person.³⁹ These postcards

³⁸ An image of the portrait is available online: 'Sketch Nellie Melba 1902,' *Hugh Ramsay Painter*, accessed 13 Dec. 2015, <www.hughramsypainter.com.au/works-gallery/>.

³⁹ For an example of Melba's signed postcards, see 'Madame Melba,' *National Library of Australia Digital Collections*, accessed 25 Feb. 2015, <www.nla.gov.au/nla.pic-an22931738>. The inscription reads, 'I welcome the Morell Singing Method—it contains an unusual store of valuable Information, Most Capably & Clearly Expressed. Nellie Melba.'

were a commodity within nineteenth-century society, with collections of them now being housed in museums and libraries. Collecting images of Melba in costume is a revealing instance of Davison's notion of the paradox of mass market intimacy and visual distance whereby there is a perceived attachment by the fan or follower to the subject through these images, which in turn drives the market for the images.⁴⁰ In this way, the visual image of the subject, in this case Dame Nellie Melba, is clearly linked to the way in which she is perceived and admired as a celebrity.

In what we can only assume would have thrilled Melba, her image appears on the Australian polymer \$100 note, introduced in 1996.⁴¹ This image of her is a close-up of a photograph by H. Walter Barnett (1862–1934), the original of which is owned by the National Portrait Gallery in London. It is forthright in its message: Melba faces the camera straight-on, with her chin raised slightly in a stare straight into the eyes of the viewer. Despite this, there is a softness, and a calm assertiveness, that is striking. In addition to this close-up image of her face, there are also images taken from a 1902 concert program, including her signature and monogram. The fact that she appears in this way on Australian currency is clear evidence for the link between the significance of her legacy (that is, the way she is seen as a celebrity) and her visual image. Comparing the original image with the image that appears on the currency, one is struck by the shift in style from photograph to Bruce Stewart's faux-engraved version. Stewart's version is rendered in this manner more as a way of harking back to the history of engraved portraits on paper money, than being due to any technological determinism. She is slimmer and more statuesque in the Stewart version than in the rather pudgy, middle-aged photographic portrait. Further, the firm lines of the engraving give the image on the currency a sense of permanence.

Clearly, there is a large canon of images of Nellie Melba that encompasses the curious dichotomy of both traditional portraiture and commercialised studio photographs. This aligns with Rojeck's methodology: the traditional portraiture fuels mechanisms surrounding Melba's *achieved* celebrity, and the photographs are related to her *attributed* celebrity. That is, her fame appears, and perhaps is validated through the traditional media (oil paintings and the marble bust), while her celebrity, which needs the added aspect of *commodity*, is manifested through the commercialisation of her image in the *cartes de visite* and other highly commodified print media. The far-reaching dissemination of the image of Melba in the late nineteenth century provides musicologists and music iconographers with an opportunity to explore the correlation between her image and the way she was seen as a celebrity. She is both unique as an Australian with transnational fame, and indicative of some broader paradigms: just as in today's society, the visual image depicted through portraiture and media such as newspapers both reflects and shapes society's view of the object of scrutiny, that is, the celebrity. Further, Melba's interest in ensuring her own visual longevity through the commission of traditional portraits and the Mackennal bust suggests she was aware of the link between image and lasting celebrity. For the consumer, as seen in print media following her death, her visual image was central to society's understanding and appreciation of her as a celebrity.

⁴⁰ Davison, 'Images of Idols,' [2].

⁴¹ See '\$100 Banknote,' *Reserve Bank of Australia*, accessed 23 June 2015, <banknotes.rba.gov.au/australias-banknotes/banknotes-in-circulation/hundred-dollar/>.

Through exploring the symbolism of both the traditional portraits and the theatre postcards, musicologists and music iconographers can gain more insight into this link between celebrity and visual representation, and these primary sources can be further utilised in legitimate and meaningful ways to better understand both historical figures themselves and the society in which their celebrity was formed.

About the Author

Rachel Campbell is a PhD candidate at the University of New England, Armidale. Her research focuses on the images of celebrity in the nineteenth century, using portraits and their dissemination as central evidence.