

‘Turning the Wilderness into Flowers:’ Music as Triumph at Australia’s International Exhibitions, 1879–1888

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In 1872, travel writer and English novelist Anthony Trollope recorded in his notes how struck he was by the grandeur and dimensions of Melbourne, which he believed possessed ‘all the pride of youthful power.’ According to Trollope, so compelled were Melbourne residents to tell him the story of their city that the writer became overwhelmed by their enthusiasm, or as he put it, their fondness for the colonial art of ‘blowing:’

They ‘blow’ a good deal in Queensland;—a good deal in South Australia. They blow even in poor Tasmania. They blow loudly in New South Wales, and very loudly in New Zealand. But the blast of the trumpet as heard in Victoria is louder than all the blasts,—and the Melbourne blast beats all the other blowing of that proud colony. My first, my constant, my parting advice to my Australian cousins is contained in two words—‘Don’t Blow.’¹

While Trollope was, I suspect, prone to more than a little exaggeration, the essence of his comments, that Australians enjoyed telling the story of colonial progress, was never more justified than in the years of Australia’s International Exhibitions held between 1879 and 1888. Australia had already shown a steady commitment to the competitive and educative principals of the International Exhibition, having participated in most of the world exhibitions since 1851. Indeed, the objectives outlined in 1851 by Prince Albert that the International Exhibition would provide ‘a new starting point from which all nations will be able to direct their further exertions,’ seems to have been particularly attractive to colonial countries trying to establish themselves in world markets.² From 1851 the Australian colonies sent representatives and products for display to major overseas exhibitions including London (1862, 1871), Paris (1855, 1867), Vienna (1873) and Philadelphia in 1876. Not content with sending such displays off-shore to overseas exhibitions, the colonies soon began emulating the exhibition model for local and intercolonial audiences. So struck with the exhibition concept, indeed, that by 1854 Melbourne had its own exhibition building, which was in every way, according to one contemporary, ‘a minute model of the Crystal Palace.’³

¹ Anthony Trollope, *Australia and New Zealand*, 2nd ed. (1873; London: Dawsons of Pall Mall, 1968) vol. 1, 387.

² *Official Descriptive and Illustrated Catalogue of the Great Exhibition* (London: Spicer Bros., 1851) vol. 1, 4.

³ Capt. H. Butler Stoney, *Victoria with a Description of its Principal Cities, Melbourne and Geelong* (London: Smith, Elder & Co, 1856) 27.

Several large intercolonial exhibitions were produced in the following decades; 1861 (Melbourne), 1866 (Melbourne), 1870 (Sydney), 1872 (Melbourne), 1873 (Sydney), 1875 (Melbourne), 1876 (Brisbane). Attendance was part of every colonist's duty, argued educationalist George Rusden in 1854, on the subject of Melbourne's first colonial exhibition:

Each of us who aids in setting foot in those institutions which support science is lending a hand to the amelioration of the condition of the whole human race. The individual effort may seem trifling; the individual subscription small, but like the grateful shower in time of drought, every drop has its effect in increasing the general influence. If a large number of persons act in this way in a young country, the spirit of legislation is imbued with the healthy principle—schools are munificently maintained, universities are founded, mechanic's institutes abound, museums are built, annual exhibitions of various kinds take place, and finally a national exhibition reveals not alone what we have done and can do, but what we have yet to do, in order to take rank in the scale of nations.⁴

Clearly Rusden's idea of the future exhibition involved more than displaying gold nuggets, iron ore and wool. Although for overseas exhibitions the Australian colonies were most impressive in their raw materials, the Australian exhibitions broadened the purpose to include the demonstration of civilisation and general progress of the people. As each exhibition appeared, progress could be monitored by comparison to past exhibitions, the number of participants, the number of exhibits, the space in the buildings, the various classes of products, the awards given, the level of admissions, etc.⁵ These comparisons sought to tell the story of civilisation in Australia, a story that was pronounced as beginning at the point of European settlement, a story that was especially glorified in official announcements and ceremonies of Australia's international exhibitions.

Sydney began the era of Australia's international exhibitions in 1879, building the ill-fated Garden Palace which burnt down only three years later. Still, the 1879 exhibition was considered a success, being the biggest yet held in the colonies and visited by over one million people.⁶ Following only a few months later was the 1880 Melbourne International Exhibition held at the purpose-built Melbourne Exhibition Building.⁷ The decade also saw the Adelaide Jubilee

⁴ George W Rusden, *Gathering Together for the Good of Work and Learning, A Lecture on the Occasion of Opening the Exhibition Building in Melbourne, October 1854* (Melbourne: George Robertson, J. J. Blundell & Co., W. Fairfax, 1857) 21–22.

⁵ For example, see preface to the *Guide to the Intercolonial Exhibition of 1866* (Melbourne), which states that 'the varied products, the display of scientific, artistic, and mechanical skill, prove in a most striking manner not only the general existence of a highly-cultivated intelligence amongst the people of these colonies, but show a strongly marked progress of refinement since the last local Exhibition of 1861' (Melbourne: Exhibition Trustees, 1866) 3–11.

⁶ The 'Report of the Executive Commissioner' gave the final figure of admissions as 1,022,000, adding that 'considering the sparse population of this great colony, the attendance is certainly unprecedented, and is by far the largest proportionately that has ever been recorded at any great International Exhibition held in any part of the world.' Published in *Official Record of the Sydney International Exhibition, 1879* (Sydney: Thomas Richards, Government Printer, 1881) ci.

⁷ Designed by the Melbourne architectural firm Reed and Barnes, the Melbourne Exhibition Building covered over seventeen acres with annexes, galleries and pavilions that have long since been removed. Of particular interest to visitors was the building's dome which, for an additional fee, could be used as a viewing platform. According to one published guide, 'the aspect from these terraces is grand in the extreme, and no one can form any idea of the vastness of the City of Melbourne and its surroundings without having seen it thence.' See Robert Whitworth, *Massina's Popular Guide to the Melbourne International Exhibition of 1880–81* (Melbourne: A. H. Massina & Co., 1880) 13. Also, David Dunstan, *Victorian Icon: The Royal Exhibition Building, Melbourne* (Kew, Vic.: The Exhibition Trustees in association with Australian Scholarly Publishing, 1996) 58.

International Exhibition in 1887, an exhibition that marked the fiftieth anniversary of South Australia and also the fiftieth year of Queen Victoria's reign. The last major exhibition, and also the biggest, was the Melbourne Centennial International Exhibition of 1888, celebrating the centenary of European settlement in Australia.⁸

All four exhibitions were promoted as beginning a new era in national development. Commentators and speech-makers were keen to convey the extent of civilisation that had occurred over a remarkably short period of time. According to a report for the 1879 Sydney International Exhibition, those arriving to New South Wales in the 1850s

could have little foreseen that in less than a generation the colony of New South Wales should issue invitations to all nations of the earth to participate in an International Exhibition ... not even the most far seeing could have had a pre-vision of the glories of the Garden Palace, and the most hopeful and adequate conception of the enormous strides in wealth and prosperity which the Australian colonies was destined to achieve.⁹

Similar views prevailed in Melbourne. At a foundation stone ceremony in 1879, the President of the Melbourne International Exhibition, William Clarke, and the Victorian Governor exchanged speeches before a crowd ranging between ten and fifteen thousand people. The speeches proclaimed the anticipated exhibition as a symbol of continuous progress, placing heavy emphasis on Victoria's steep population growth and settlement. Summarising this achievement, Clarke pronounced:

The place where your Excellency will today lay the foundation stone of a palace of industry was within a generation part of an unknown forest, in an almost unknown land. It is now the site of a populous and well-built city, presenting all the evidences of wealth and civilization, taking rank with the foremost cities of the world, and surpassing in many respects the capitals of ancient and powerful states. The rapid progress of Australasia is one of the marvels of modern times. But yesterday it was colonised by a few enterprising men, while to-day it possesses an extensive trade and a population of millions.¹⁰

'Past to present' descriptions of colonial progress identified the exhibition as part of an ongoing process towards complete civilisation. The exhibitions encouraged a linear path where past and recent history was subsumed and categorised as typifying various stages in national development. Just what terms defined the finite stage of this process remained vague, however this was hardly as important as the forward movement towards it. This onward momentum for showing progress was also correlated to the cultural and moral character of the population. While the exhibitions were best able to promote progress of the nation in terms of wealth, industrial growth and products, aspects of artistic appreciation and the development of 'taste' became proof of a developing Australian character. 'Let the young aspirant in the higher walks

⁸ The Centennial International Exhibition was considerably larger than the previous 1880 exhibition, covering some 45 acres (approx. 2,000,000 square feet) including outside pavilions and grounds. Admissions were also higher, the *Official Record* totalling the receipts for over two million visitors. See *Official Record of the Centennial International Exhibition, 1888-9* (Melbourne: Executive Commissioners, 1890) 134, 299.

⁹ *Official Record of the Sydney International Exhibition, 1879* 7.

¹⁰ Extract from speech delivered by Hon. William. J. Clarke, President of the Commission, 19 February 1879. Published in *Official Record for the Melbourne International Exhibition* (Melbourne: Published by authority of the Commission, 1880-81) xlv.

of art' declared the New South Wales Governor at the closing of the Sydney International Exhibition 'cherish in his inner-most soul the bright lessons of form and colour on which his eyes have feasted. By these means of assiduous attention and inspired effort a rich fruitage will be garnered from the seed which has been so abundantly sown.'¹¹ Music, as with the visual arts, was made part of this story of the progressive Australian identity, and the demonstration of musical advancement increasingly became an important objective of exhibition organisers.

The principal musical event of the exhibitions, especially in terms of local demonstration, was the performance of a cantata during the opening ceremony. The opening cantatas were performed inside the Exhibition buildings as part of a formal program that included procession, speeches, prayers, addresses, presentations, declarations and finally a telegram sent to the Queen and the Prince of Wales.¹² The cantatas were inherently linked to the celebration through their texts, all of which were written especially for the opening ceremony and designed principally to commemorate the occasion. That the cantata needed to be seen as a unique creation, and altogether Australian, is evident by the process in which the text was selected. Poems to be set to music were requested from the Australian public several months before the opening of each exhibition, with the intent, it seems, of choosing something reflective of the Australian landscape, the people, and the exhibition itself. The competitive process for selecting the poem was advertised as anonymous and without bias, however those with experience in writing commemorative works were clearly advantaged. Henry Kendall's poem was selected for the 1879 Sydney Exhibition, a decision perhaps indicative of his long reputation as Australia's 'true poet.' According to the literary critic 'Evelyn' as early as 1867, only Kendall came close to a distinctive Australian poetry, the character of which should

have none of the similes drawn from older climes...it should be, like the climate, soft, peaceful, summery, the faint swell and murmur of the dozy ocean on a tranquil day. The flashing shells that bejewel a deep sea, lit up by blooming clouds that reflect the spots where lie our mineral treasures, the glorious beauties of the southern skies, the calm sadness which overhangs our forests, the bustling life of our population, all these, together with everything that is Australian solely, are admissible.¹³

Such themes could be easily adapted into the rhetoric of exhibitions. Kendall's exhibition poem proved to be a medley of picturesque and historical narrative, a form that remained

¹¹ Speech of the New South Wales Governor, Lord Augustus Loftus, during the closing ceremony of the Sydney International Exhibition, 20 April 1880. Published in the *Official Record of the Sydney International Exhibition, 1879*, ciii.

¹² The telegram was sent from the dais in view of the audience, a novelty first performed for the 1880 for the Melbourne International Exhibition. The message read as follows: 'To the Queen, Buckingham Palace, London. The Marquis of Normanby presents his humble duty to the Queen, and has much pleasure in informing Her Majesty that he has just opened in Her Majesty's name the Melbourne International Exhibition—the last of the series of great enterprises inaugurated by the Prince Consort. The attendance was very large and enthusiastic, and the success of the undertaking far exceeds the most sanguine anticipations.' 1 October 1880. The Queen's response, sent from Balmoral, arrived a day later and was published in the press: 'I thank you sincerely for your most satisfactory telegram, and wish all possible success to the Exhibition.' The Prince of Wales also sent a short message: 'Many thanks for telegram. Am very glad to hear opening of Exhibition went off so well, and that everything was such a great success.' See *Official Record of the Melbourne International Exhibition 1880–1* lvii–lviii.

¹³ Evelyn, 'National Poetry,' *Australian Monthly Review* 4 (August 1867): 467.

popular for the subsequent exhibition poems. Referring to the exhibition itself as a scene of jubilation—'Lo, they come, the lords unknown, / Sons of Peace, from every zone!' and 'Shining nations! let them see / How like England we can be.'¹⁴—the poem narrates the colony's onward path to current glories by contrasting the poetic themes of light and darkness, the dark, 'one hundred years ago,' used to describe the pre-history of the colony before European settlement, and light showing the future way of the nation.

Where now a radiant city stands,
The dark oak used to wave,
The Elfin harp of lonely lands
Above the wildman's grave,
Through windless woods, one clear, sweet stream,
(Sing soft and very low)
Stole like the river of a dream
A hundred years ago.¹⁵

The winning poem selected for the Melbourne International Exhibition of 1880 also took readers on a journey from the mysterious unknown of pre-civilisation to the celebration of the exhibition, enjoining all to 'Wave, wave your silken banners, your silver trumpets blow.' Written by John Meaden, a temperance poet living in Collingwood, the poem describes a female 'Victoria,' who is found slumbering amongst fern trees and reeds under a crescent moon.¹⁶ 'Victoria' is awakened by merry voices and told 'of the speedy discovery and settlement of the country' and soon hears the 'songs of the mariners [making their way] across the ocean to the, as yet, undiscovered land.'¹⁷ Part II depicts an industrious and busy Victoria, as a company of nymphs approach representing the various nations of the earth. Victoria sings a song of Welcome, and presents a sumptuous banquet, concluding that 'This day is born a Nation, 'neath England's banner free / That, like a constellation, flames o'er the Southern Sea.'

The cantata texts for the Adelaide Jubilee Exhibition and the Melbourne Centennial International Exhibition continued to provide a past to present synopsis, most directly in 1888 when the Rev. William Allen, a congregational minister from Carlton, devoted most of his winning exhibition poem to the history of colonisation. Allen's poem is episodic in structure, and divided into various stages in national development. Australian pre-settlement is described as hard, solitary, a place where Nature has complete control: 'O'er all perpetual solitude doth brood / Save where the savage stalks in search of food: / A land by civilisation's step untrod / —Alone with Nature, and with Nature's God.'¹⁸ This 'reign of solitude,' as Allen describes it, is finally interrupted by the pastoral pioneers. Celebrated as 'Sturdy sons of Britain,' the pioneers are seen 'grappling hard with natural powers, [turning] the wilderness into flowers.'

¹⁴ Text of the 1879 Sydney International Exhibition *Cantata*, as printed in *Sydney Mail* 20 September 1879: 466.

¹⁵ Text taken from *Sydney Daily Telegraph* 18 September 1879: 7.

¹⁶ John Meaden (1840–99) a draper in Collingwood from the early 1860s, wrote numerous temperance works, and also won various poetry prizes including best opening poem for the 1879 Industrial and Juvenile Exhibition in Geelong. His *Victoria* poem of 1880, for which he was awarded 50 guineas and a gold medal, was described as his literary 'crowning triumph.' See his biography in J.W. Meaden, *Poetical Works of J.W. Meaden. Edited, and with Biographical Sketch by John Vale* (Melbourne: The Victorian Alliance, 1899) 9–24.

¹⁷ Text taken from *Argus* Exh. Supp. 2 October 1880: 5.

¹⁸ Text taken from *Argus* Exh. Supp. 2 August 1888: 4.

After the discovery of gold, and the dispossessing of solitude, the Present and the Future round off the narrative, reflecting on the past emptiness in order to marvel at what had been built in its place, and in particular, the Exhibition: 'Where [once] the warrigal whimpered and bayed, / Where the feet of the dark hunter strayed, / See the wealth of the world is arrayed.'

A focus on industrial development gave the poems an Australian tone, perhaps not so much in style but in content and function. Guiding the nation to new cultural heights was, after all, a process that was considered still in its infancy. According to one paper in response to the opening of the 1888 Centennial Exhibition, artistic endeavours were subject to

the law of history and of evolution. The tree must come to a certain age before it can carry the full burden of its fruit: the man must establish himself in life before he has time for mental culture; and so the nation must come to some maturity before it can develop an art of literature that is distinctively its own.¹⁹

Critical and public opinion towards the opening cantata may also have been tempered by prevailing theories of cultural evolution, its performance being seen as exhibiting a stage in musical appreciation rather than attainment of a final goal. Most effective in providing a sense of musical triumph, of showing how far musical culture had prospered in the colonies, was the performance itself, with much of the public's attention directed to the progress of rehearsals, the unique size of the choir, the standard of the singing, and the visual impact of the performance setting. Bringing several existing choral organisations together for the performance was an accomplishment in itself, with exhibition choirs consisting of up to 900 choristers, a mandatory requirement, wrote one Sydney newspaper, in order 'to produce an effect commensurate with the importance of the occasion.'²⁰ In 1879, Signor Paolo Giorza, who composed the music for the Sydney Exhibition Cantata, directed a choir of 700 which included members of the Sacred Choral Association, the Civil Service Musical Society and a large childrens' choir. Some of the complexities in directing this gathering can be gleaned by numerous complaints in the press, with one soprano 'Nellie' writing to the *Daily Telegraph* claiming that

the arrangements in the choir seem all a jumble ... we were assigned a place by Signor Giorza, and soon after we were told to move back by Mr Fisher, then we were told to move again by Mr Mowle, all of which caused great dissatisfaction, and mixed sopranos and altos together in anything but a nice way.²¹

Several also complained about the lack of remuneration for their efforts. 'I am to sing' wrote Nellie 'and receive what—glory? honour? Rubbish, Sir. And the Commissioners will give others passes, but me they say, I must be prompt, obedient, and receive nothing.' Complainers were countered by those insisting that the choirs mostly consisted of those with 'a true love of music, and a desire to advance the study thereof; and the pleasure [the choristers] derive from taking part therein is a recompense in itself.'²² The issue of correct motivation for participating in the exhibition choirs was aired repeatedly for each exhibition, with the threat to the uniformity of the performance, either in standard or appearance, being particularly reproved. In 1888, for the Centennial Exhibition, concern was expressed that

¹⁹ *Argus* 2 August 1888: 7.

²⁰ *Sydney Mail* 26 July 1879: 147

²¹ *Sydney Daily Telegraph* 16 September 1879: 3.

²² *Sydney Daily Telegraph* 14 September 1879: 3.

some young ladies announce their deliberate intention of appearing in colours, materials, and ornaments conspicuously different from the regulation uniform... There are some ladies whose chief object seems to be to make themselves conspicuous to the public on the opening day, and in the vagaries in which they have been indulging during the rehearsals, the purpose for which they were enrolled has been partly lost sight of.²³

The desire for triumph in performance, the spectacle of all the combined performers enthusiastically achieving their musical purpose, was separate to perceptions of the composition itself. However this did not mean that the music had little role in projecting cultural value. Similar to the process of selecting the cantata text, the music was chosen through competition, with complete scores and parts requested from local and interstate composers. Of the cantatas selected for performance at Australia's exhibitions, three met a standard appropriate to the occasion and, while not being cited as 'high class music,' seemed to suggest that composition was positively developing in the colonies. Paolo Giorza's cantata for the 1879 Sydney Exhibition was considered of 'majestic beauty ... and seems thoroughly expressive of the sentiment of progress contained in the ode.'²⁴ Leon Caron also boosted his reputation as a composer with the performance of the *Victoria* cantata selected for the Melbourne International Exhibition in 1880. According to the *Age* critic, Caron's cantata demonstrated

an abundant knowledge and command of orchestral effect, and the whole containing ... vivid tone effects, obtained by the proper means ... The choruses were, as a whole, grandly effective, their tone colours being in most happy accordance with the poetic subject, and each number possessing a distinct individuality.²⁵

Even Henry John King's winning *Centennial Cantata*, the performance of which was hard-set against a work by the far more eminent composer and music director of the Centennial Exhibition, Frederick Cowen, was considered commendable, especially for a local effort.²⁶ According to the *Argus*, King's cantata displayed 'genuine aptitude on the part of the composer, and especially in the use of instruments.'²⁷

One cantata, however, clearly struggled to convince contemporaries of its compositional merits. The winning cantata for the Adelaide Jubilee Exhibition of 1887 by Edward R.G. Andrews, a composer and teacher living at Kangaroo Flats near Bendigo, was seen as a poor match for the progressive spirit of the day. The main criticism directed at the work was its frequent repetitions, which did nothing, according to the *South Australian Register*, to enliven the already dull text. While allowing that the music was more imaginative in the orchestral writing than vocal, the critic wrote that 'throughout the whole piece, too, there is a marked

²³ *Age* 21 July 1888: 9.

²⁴ *Sydney Morning Herald* 18 September 1879: 6.

²⁵ *Age* 2 October 1880: 6.

²⁶ Unlike other Australian exhibitions, the Centennial International Exhibition had two original works performed for the opening ceremony, one being the *Song of Thanksgiving* composed by Frederick Cowen and the *Centennial Cantata* by King. Although technically King's *Centennial Cantata* was performed directly after the exhibition was declared open, it was nonetheless performed after Cowen's work which had opened the ceremony. King believed that Cowen's work therefore took precedence over his, an issue that he complained about a day before the opening. See *Argus* 1 August 1888: 7.

²⁷ *Argus* Exhibition Supplement. 2 August 1888: 4.

repetition of the same phrases, which becomes at times monotonous.²⁸ Looking at opening phrases of each of the main numbers, the above observation seems fairly accurate, with three out of four main melodies beginning with a third descent (see Fig. 1).²⁹ Unfortunately for Andrews, the critic of the *South Australian Register* was not alone in his convictions that the

Figure 1. Edward Andrews, *Adelaide Jubilee International Exhibition Cantata*. No. 2, vocal trio, 'Queenly and Fair.'

Cantata Solo

Queen - ly and fair with ea - ger ear - nest

eyes Un - dimm'd by sor - row young Aus - tralia young Aus - tralia

stands . . . Set in the Sum - mer seas . . . each summer

²⁸'The Music Criticised', *South-Australian Register* 22 June 1887: 6.

²⁹See, for example, the opening vocal lines of no. 1, 'Under the Southern Cross,' no. 2, 'Queenly and Fair,' and no. 3, 'God Bless them Both.' Edward R.G.W. Andrews, *Adelaide Jubilee International Exhibition Cantata* (Adelaide: E. Spiller, Govn. Printer, 1887).

Figure 2. Edward Andrews, *Adelaide Jubilee International Exhibition Cantata*. No. 3, chorus, 'God Bless them Both.'

The image shows a page of musical notation for a chorus. It consists of six systems of staves. The first two systems are for the piano accompaniment. The third system is for the vocal line, with a soprano (S. a.) and baritone (B.) part. The lyrics are: "England and the new God keep them both far God bless them both Old England and the new we have hand in hand... Each helping each, each to the other true...". The piano accompaniment is highly rhythmic and repetitive, with many notes beamed together. The vocal line is more melodic and has some rests.

work was overly repetitive and lacking imagination. One of the most scathing reports came from the critic of the *South Australian Chronicle*, which opined that the cantata should never have been performed, but rather 'it would have been better to have given a really good performance of, say, Mendelssohn's *Lobgesang*, or some such work as would have done the chorus, orchestra and conductor credit. We may say in brief of the present performance that it was a better one than the cantata deserved.'³⁰ The lengthy chorus 'God Bless them Both,' which formed in repeat the finale to the work (see Fig. 2), prompted a scornful invective from the Adelaide-based paper that bordered on disloyalty. The chorus was, according to the critic,

³⁰ 'The Music', *South Australian Chronicle* 25 June 1887: 7.

commonplace throughout. There is nothing healthy or inspiring in the whole movement, from the introductory bars, with their striking resemblance to the old school round 'Three Blind Mice,' to the final commonplace coda. The frequent use of chromatic harmonies leaves an insipid after effect, and were it not that the number is heavily scored for the orchestra, it would be almost unsingable.³¹

If Andrews' intention was to create a chorus reflective of grandeur, arrival and dignity at this point he would surely have been perplexed by such an unsympathetic description in a major local publication.

The abject failure of Andrews' cantata to reinforce ideas of cultural progress highlights how these cantatas were expected to contribute to the overall story of Australian development. In text, the lineage of a progressive doctrine can be seen in the tendency to follow conventional narratives of colonial history, of the coming of civilisation and the subsequent development of industry. The performance of the opening cantata supported not only the ideas in the text, but also attempted to demonstrate the musical status of the hosting colony, an official record of cultural advancement that was as much a form of 'blowing' as any written speech. The official function of the cantatas was therefore grandly conceived, a grand rallying of high culture in live and tangible action. The cantata performance, however, as a rendition of music development and of cultural value, may only have been useful on a formal platform. As shown by the performance of the Adelaide exhibition cantata, the very idea of having special music for the exhibition opening—the visual magnificance of the choir, the promise of the best Australian composition and poem, the recruitment of the best music directors—was a necessary component of the opening ceremony, and could exist on an official level even if the music did not fulfill aesthetic pleasures. The result was something akin to the official speech, the procession or the declaration. The most successful cantatas were clearly those which exceeded such basic ceremonial requirements. For even at exhibitions, and at the opening of exhibitions, music was best when enjoyable, regardless of cultural pretensions. As one observer of the Jubilee cantata performance wrote:

For a long time the audience endured the cantata, with a fortitude thoroughly characteristic of a typical British assembly. Nearly everything that is sad in life has its pleasant variations, and fitful refreshment was given to the wearied hearers by some of the solo parts; and as all things have their end at last so the Cantata ended, and the people were relieved. But there: a high-class musical man might give a different judgement.³²

³¹ 'The Music', *South Australian Chronicle* 25 June 1887: 7.

³² *South Australian Register* 22 June 1887: 6