

Performers

Merlyn Quaife is an internationally-renowned soprano of great versatility, performing regularly in opera, oratorio, chamber music, lieder and contemporary music. She is a champion of new music and has had many works composed for her. Quaife appears on CD with Naxos, ABC Classics, Tall Poppies, and Move Records. She is currently Associate Professor and Coordinator of Voice at Sir Zelman Cowen School of Music, Monash University.

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Creative Fellow acknowledgments

Johanna Selleck would like to express her deep appreciation to State Library Victoria for the opportunity to undertake a Creative Fellowship in the inspiring surrounds of the Library.

Selleck's thanks are extended to Suzie Gasper, Gail Schmidt, Rebecca Anthony, and Dermot McCaul from State Library Victoria, and to performers Merlyn Quaife and Jacinta Dennett for their dedication and support for the project and their insightful and creative input into the performance.

Front cover image
I. Bacon, Miss Florrie Forde, c. 1880-1930, State Library Victoria Pictures
Collection H8355

CREATIVE VICTORIA



STATE LIBRARY
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What's your story?

Buried treasure

The colonial woman composer

Thursday 4 August 2016, 1pm
La Trobe Reading Room
State Library Victoria



328 Swanston Street
Melbourne

Open 10am-5pm daily
And until 9pm Thursdays.

slv.vic.gov.au



Concert 1

Folk music and popular song

Merlyn Quaife, soprano
Jacinta Dennett, harp
Johanna Selleck, flute

Repertoire has been researched, compiled, and arranged by Johanna Selleck as part of a Creative Fellowship at State Library Victoria.

Program

Folk song:

Female transport

The red barn; She dressed in a man's array

A sister's love

The female rambling sailor

Emily Patton (1831–1912):

The last rose of summer

The departure

Florrie Forde (1875–1940):

O Georgie, why don't you try to behave (by Jack Foley)

The 'Buried treasure' concert series challenges and broadens contemporary understandings of the notion of a composer.

This series celebrates the creativity of women musicians as performers, composers, and educators. Drawing on music from colonial Australia to the early-20th century, the first concert focuses on folk song, the second on art song, and the third on children's songs and Australiana.

The music highlights some of the ways women were able to avoid social restrictions and find outlets for their creativity. Through composing original music and re-composing through creative interpretation, they created a rich and powerful legacy for those who came after.

Program notes

Folk song

Folk song is a truly remarkable art form. Classically-trained composers have recognised this for centuries past, valuing it in its own right and paying tribute by incorporating it into their music.

Folk song is also an exceptionally good vehicle for the art of interpretation (or re-composing). It responds to different times, places, and people by undergoing continual change as the new is grafted onto the old. One of the earliest examples in Australia's colonial history comes from a group of women convicts in Hobart in 1842, who taunted their captors with spontaneous, bawdy songs. Their songs did not survive, but others have, such as the song 'Female transport', which tells the story of the convict, Sarah Collins.

Sally Sloane (1894–1982) is one of the most documented singers in the history of Australian traditional music. From recordings and research by eminent Australian scholars such as John Meredith and Jennifer Gall, we know that Sloane's repertoire of songs was passed down to her across three generations of her maternal predecessors dating back to 1838.

Her songs extended from folk to music hall to art song and were made more convincing by her ability to adopt different stage voices. 'The red barn' belongs to a genre known as murder ballads. In this case, the murder of a young woman by her lover. A short improvisation links this to a bushranger ballad, 'She dressed in a man's array'.

The next song, 'A sister's love', expresses Kate Kelly's grief over the death of her brother Dan in the siege at Glenrowan. The poem appeared in the *Gundagai Times* in 1881. For the purposes of today's performance (and on the expert advice of folklorist Mark Gregory), it has been set to the tune of 'Farewell to Greta'.

The final song, 'The female rambling sailor', is a street ballad dating from the 1830s belonging to a genre known as female warrior ballads. Research by Dianne Dugaw has shown how these songs depict women as conquering heroes, often masquerading as men and defying convention by becoming soldiers and sailors. The song narrates the real-life tale of the sailor Rebecca Young, who died after falling from her ship's rigging.

Emily Patton

Without upsetting the conventional views on acceptable behaviour during the 19th century, women, including Emily Patton, found ingenious ways to develop their musical skills. Patton's book *Harmony simplified for popular use* (1880) has been described by musicologist John Whiteoak in his book *Playing ad lib* as 'possibly the first colonial publication to deal specifically with improvisation. . . It may well represent a modest watershed in colonial thinking'.

In her role as a teacher, with her creative abilities hidden under the veil of 'interpreter and arranger' rather than 'originator and composer', Patton fitted with social expectations regarding female etiquette, the moral role of music, and women's role as nurturers. Her book instructs students on harmony and how to accompany 'by ear' with elegant arrangements that bridge the gap between folk, popular, and art song. The two chosen for today are 'The last rose of summer' and 'The departure'.

Florrie Forde

The iconic star of music hall, Florrie Forde, provides a resounding note to conclude today's concert. From humble beginnings in Fitzroy, she made her first appearance on the Sydney stage at age 16, and five years later travelled to London, where she became an overnight sensation. She made over 700 recordings on wax cylinders and some of the earliest gramophone recordings.

According to Paul St Claire in *A portrait of the artist as Australian*, her legacy can be traced through to contemporary artists such as Barry Humphries, whose roots lie in the distinctive brand of Australian music hall.

'Oh Georgie' allows considerable scope for dramatisation drawing on the influence of both art song and popular song. Singers such as Florrie Forde and Sally Sloane show, through their imaginative and personalised approaches, an ability to grasp the essence of a particular style and expound on it highly original ways. This ability to bring together diverse influences and meld them into something uniquely personal is in itself a highly creative (compositional) act.

Performers

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Front cover image
Mrs Florence Ewart, 1907, courtesy of Grainger Museum Collection,
University of Melbourne

CREATIVE VICTORIA



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What's your story?

Buried treasure

The colonial woman composer

Thursday 11 August 2016, 1pm
Cowen Gallery
State Library Victoria



Program

Florence Maud Ewart (1864–1949):
I love thee (1907)

Bessie Delves (1894–1926):
Ave Maria (1900)

Henry Handel Richardson (1870–1946):
**Die Strassburger Münster-Engelchen
(circa 1890s)**

Mona McBurney (1862–1932):
**A Persian song (published 1925)
Chansonnette (published 1925)**

Dame Nellie Melba (1861–1931):
**Queen Marguerite's aria, 'O beau
pays de la Touraine', from Meyerbeer's
Les Huguenots (1836) featuring
cadenzas written especially for Nellie
Melba by Mathilda Marchesi in 1901.**

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Concert 2 Art song

Merlyn Quaife, soprano
Jacinta Dennett, harp
Johanna Selleck, flute

Repertoire has been researched, compiled, and arranged by Johanna Selleck as part of a Creative Fellowship at State Library Victoria.

Program notes

Florence Maud Ewart

The rich and productive lives of Australian women musicians were showcased at the Australian Exhibition of Women's Work held at Melbourne's Exhibition Buildings in 1907.

A women's choir and orchestra performed and competitions in essay writing and music composition were held. The orchestra was conducted by Ewart, who also performed on violin, gave lectures, and composed a choral piece, which was awarded first prize in the exhibition's composers' competition.

Over the course of her life, Ewart was dedicated to her music. She composed six operas, five works for voice and orchestra, numerous chamber works, and 46 songs. Today, we will hear her song 'I love thee', which was also awarded a prize at the Women's Work Exhibition.

Henry Handel Richardson

Ethel Florence Richardson (Henry Handel) was as talented a musician as she was a writer. Her teachers at Presbyterian Ladies' College in Burwood recognised her potential and encouraged her to take up a career in music. Following graduation, she studied music at the prestigious Königliches Conservatorium in Leipzig. Music was a theme in many of her novels, and she continued to play piano and compose throughout her life.

The song chosen for today's program, 'Die Strassburger Münster-Engelchen', is from volume four of the 'Music Australis' series published by the Marshall-Hall Trust. The poem by Otto Julius Bierbaum (1865–1910) is a narration of a man talking to his son about the pillar of angels in the Strasbourg Cathedral, advising him to 'give yourself no further trouble, my son . . . The little foolish angels at Strasbourg Cathedral are a lot smarter than you'.

Bessie Delves

The papers of Bessie Delves in State Library Victoria bring to light an accomplished and highly-respected performer and composer. Press cuttings from 1899 to 1890 comment on her excellent gift of melody and describe her as a very clever young composer.

The premiere of her setting of 'Ave Maria' was highly praised – 'Bessie Delves, organist at St. Mary's in West Melbourne, has just written

a beautiful 'Ave Maria'. Miss Ida Cox, the contralto, sang it at morning service at St. Patrick's Cathedral on Sunday'.

Mona McBurney

Mona McBurney was the fourth student to graduate with a bachelor music degree from the University of Melbourne in 1896, and the first female music graduate from an Australian university. Excerpts from her opera *The dalmation* were performed in 1910, making it the first opera by a woman performed on Australian soil.

McBurney was also a participant in the 1907 Women's Work Exhibition, conducting the orchestra in a performance of her 'Northern ballad'. She composed a piano concerto, a string quartet, works for solo piano, and around 30 songs. The calibre of her compositions was recognised with an honourable mention by the Societa Dante in Rome in 1902. 'A Persian song' is a setting of a 14th century text by the Sufi poet Hafez. The poem celebrates the coming of spring. 'Chansonnette' is a setting of an anonymous 16th-century text. It expresses the joy of being in the garden when the roses are blooming.

Dame Nellie Melba

The discovery of a manuscript of cadenzas in Melba's own handwriting was an exciting find in the archives of State Library Victoria. The famous cadenza performed by Melba in the mad scene from *Lucia di Lammermoor* is well documented.

In contrast, the cadenzas for *Les Huguenots* appear to be much less well-known. The cadenzas from both operas are thought to have been composed by Mathilda Marchesi (1821–1913), Melba's teacher in Paris, and both cadenzas were performed with flute obbligato. Melba is known to have possessed skill in improvising and ornamentation and also held a level of compositional craft that is evident in her singing tutor, *Melba Method*, from which a vocalise has been chosen as an example today.

Melba had a close association with flautists including John Amadio and later, Leslie Barklamb, who was a student of Amadio's. Representing a direct lineage back to Melba's time, Johanna was a student of Leslie Barklamb.

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Front cover image
Ida Rentoul Outhwaite, *The fairy on a bat*, 1916, pen, ink and watercolour on paper, gift of Joyce and Courtney Oldmeadow, 1978, Scholastic Dromkeen Children's Literature Collection, State Library Victoria, © V & S Martin, estate of Ida Rentoul Outhwaite

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The colonial woman composer

Sunday 21 August 2016, 1pm

Courtyard

State Library Victoria



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Melbourne

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slv.vic.gov.au



Program

Australian songs for young and old
(published 1907)

Music by Georgette Peterson (1863–1947)

Words by Annie Rentoul (1882–1978)

Illustrations by Ida Rentoul-Outhwaite
(1888–1960)*

1. Autumn wind
2. Gobble wobbles
3. Kangaroo song
4. The bell bird
5. The moon boat
6. As I went o'er the paddocks
7. Coo-ee
8. Possum
9. The ti-tree
10. Wattle
11. A strayed sunbeam
12. Mother sea
13. Kookaburra
14. Good night

Concert 3

Australiana: bush
songs for young
and old

Merlyn Quaife, soprano
Jacinta Dennett, harp
Johanna Selleck, flute

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Program notes

Georgette Peterson's bush songs were published in four books variously titled *Australian songs for young and old*, *Bush songs of Australia for young and old*, *Australian bush songs*, and *More bush songs of Australia for young and old*. The first of these appeared in 1907, only two years after Banjo Patterson's *Bush songs* was published. It is reasonable to assume that Peterson and Annie Rentoul (who wrote the lyrics) were influenced to some extent by their famous contemporary's bush ballads.

The last of Peterson's song books appears to have been re-published around 1934. The fact that these songs were re-published over a period of almost 30 years testifies to their popularity.

Peterson was born in Budapest and became known as a painter, composer, singer, and pianist. She immigrated to Australia in 1901 with her husband, Franklin Peterson, who took up the position of Ormond Professor of Music at the University of Melbourne.

Peterson was an active composer and conductor in the Exhibition of Women's Work held in Melbourne in 1907. During the exhibition, she became involved in some unpleasant rivalry with Florence Ewart, whose husband, Alfred Ewart, was professor of botany at the university. The disagreement arose over Ewart's composition having been awarded first prize instead of Peterson's. The situation was not helped by the women's husbands who became publically vocal in defence of their wives. At one stage the choir went on strike over a disagreement concerning a soloist.

Furthermore, a copyright dispute arose with the writer Annie Rentoul, with Peterson taking Rentoul's side, which was fortunate for their continued collaboration on the bush songs.

Some journalists pounced on the opportunity to discredit the Women's Work Exhibition, claiming the disputes were proof that women could not work together without a 'cat-fight'. Nevertheless, the exhibition was a huge success and ultimately the troubles did not undermine the incredible achievements of the women involved.

Annie Rentoul's sister, Ida Rentoul-Outhwaite, was the creator of the illustrations for Peterson's bush song series. Some of these illustrations are included in today's concert presentation; others shown today are from another collaboration between the two sisters, *Elves and fairies* (1916). This beautiful volume contains Annie's poems, however, the focus is on her sister's elaborate, full-page illustrations.

The list of subscribers to the book indicates support from the highest levels, including the Governor of Australia, Sir Ronald Ferguson, the governors of Victoria, South Australia, West Australia, and Tasmania, the Vice-Chancellor of Melbourne University, Dr MacFarland, the Archbishop of Melbourne, Rev. Lowther Clarke, the ex-Prime Minister of Australia, Alfred Deakin, and Madame Nellie Melba.

*Illustrations by Ida Rentoul-Outhwaite have been used with kind permission of the copyright holder, Stella Palmer.