

'Pleasure of a High Order:' Paolo Giorza and Music at Sydney's 1879 International Exhibition

Roslyn Maguire

As Sydney's mighty Exhibition building took shape, looking to the harbour from an elevated site above the Botanic Gardens, anxiety and excitement mounted. This was to be the first International Exhibition held outside Europe or America and musical entertainment was to be its greatest attraction.¹ An average of three thousand people would attend each week day and as recent studies have shown, Sydney's International Exhibition helped initiate reforms to education, town planning, technologies, photography, manufacturing and patronage of the arts, music and literature.²

Although under construction since January 1879, it was mid May before the Exhibition's influential Executive Commissioner Patrick Jennings³ announced the appointment of his friend, Milanese composer Paolo Giorza⁴ as musical director:

[H]is credentials are of such a nature both as a conductor, composer and artist, that I could not justly pass them over. I think that he should also be authorised to compose a march and cantata for the opening ceremony ... Signor Giorza offers to give his exclusive services as composer and director and performer on the organ and to organise a competent orchestra of local artists for promenade concerts, and to conduct the same.⁵

The extent of Jennings's personal interest in Exhibition music is evident in this report publicising Giorza's appointment. It amounts to one of the colony's most interesting cultural documents for the ideas, attitudes and objectives it reveals, including consideration of whether an 'Australian School of Music, as distinguished from any of the well-defined schools' existed.

¹ See Roslyn Maguire, 'Paolo Giorza, Director of Music—The Most Accessible Art', *Colonial City, Global City, Sydney's International Exhibition 1879*, ed. Peter Proudfoot, Roslyn Maguire, Robert Freestone (Sydney: Crossing Press, 2000) 129–47.

² See various chapters in *Colonial City*.

³ A.H. Cahill, 'Patrick Alfred Jennings 1831–1897', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol. 4 (Carlton: Melbourne UP, 1972) 477–79.

⁴ C. Sartori, 'Paolo Giorza', *Enciclopedia dello Spettacolo*, ed. Silvio D'Amico (Roma: Casa Editrice Le Maschere, 1954–62) 1320–22; and Roslyn Maguire, 'Paolo Giorza', *Oxford Companion to Australian Music*, ed. Warren Bebbington (Melbourne: Oxford UP, 1997) 239.

⁵ *Town and Country Journal* 17 May 1879: 930.

The city's small population had to visit over and over again if the event were to prove successful, Jennings insisted, while education and entertainment were regarded as among its chief guiding principles. It was said that for 'colonial workmen of every grade and every kind the Garden Palace is a great school,'⁶ and, like the visual arts, music was believed to be 'of unquestionable value as a refining and educational agency, as well as giving pleasure of a high order.'⁷ Inside this school, or theatre of education, Giorza held control of programming recitals of organ and piano, while he himself continued to demonstrate a talent for improvisation based on a clear preference for a 'popular' operatic repertoire, respected by audiences familiar with his performances.⁸

While exhibition rhetoric continually underlined the goals of education and improvement, the public had already become accustomed to free concerts at Intercolonial or New South Wales Agricultural Society exhibitions in the 1870s.⁹ But this grander seven-month undertaking required higher standards over a far longer period and, as one of few colonials who had actually experienced an International Exhibition—representing three Australian colonies at Philadelphia in 1876—Jennings knew of their musical highlight, a commissioned work by Wagner. He suggested privately, if not publicly, that none other than Giuseppe Verdi or Charles Gounod might be approached for a special opening ceremony work.¹⁰ Jennings's favourite composers were Rossini and Verdi, he was said to possess a deep understanding of Italian music¹¹ and he had often acted as patron of performances of Giorza's compositions. It is worth noting that it was Giorza who 'introduced Verdi's Requiem Mass to the Sydney public [and] by his means ... "Aida" was produced in Melbourne.'¹²

Well known as a pianist and opera conductor whilst living in Melbourne from 1872 to 1874, Paolo Giorza had formed close musical connections there as organist and choirmaster at St Francis's Church. In Sydney in 1875, following his successful fulfilment of the role of Intercolonial Exhibition musical director, on his own initiative Giorza presented a series of free suburban concerts. He also took on the role of organist and choirmaster at St Patrick's Church, which happened to house a Gray and Davison organ, the same make as the unfortunate second-hand purchase later installed in the northern nave of the 1879 Exhibition building.¹³

By 1877, when he moved to Adelaide, Giorza had been away from Italy for ten years, having spent time in Mexico and the United States before arriving in Australia in 1871. If we

⁶ *Sydney Morning Herald* 26 September 1879: 4.

⁷ P.A. Jennings, introduction, *Official Record of the Sydney International Exhibition, 1879* (Sydney: Government Printer, 1881) xxxiii.

⁸ For a review of Giorza's April 1879 concert, see *Town and Country Journal* 3 May 1879: 857.

⁹ See Diary of Catherine Deakin, entries November 1872, recording about twelve visits to Melbourne's Intercolonial Exhibition [Deakin Papers MS4913, National Library of Australia]. The Diary of Agnes Stephen, September 1879 to 1 January 1880, records no less than fourteen visits [MS 777 / 4 Mitchell Library, State Library of NSW].

¹⁰ W.B. Dalley, letter to Thomas Butler, 15 February 1879, Document 3383, Mitchell Library, State Library of NSW.

¹¹ See Cahill, 'P.A. Jennings', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*; P.A. Jennings, letter to W.B. Dalley, 11 June [1879], Document 3384, Mitchell Library, State Library of NSW.

¹² *The Australian: A Monthly Magazine* 1 (1878): 441. *Aida* premiered in Melbourne in 1877 and Verdi's *Requiem* was performed at a Good Friday concert, at the Victoria Theatre, Sydney, in 1875. See *Sydney Morning Herald* 26 March 1875: 2.

¹³ Purchased in England it was in need of urgent, costly repairs before it could be installed just in time for the opening; see Maguire, 'Paolo Giorza' 136, and Graeme D. Rushworth, *Historic Organs of New South Wales, the Instruments, their Makers and Players 1791–1940* (Sydney: Hale & Iremonger, 1988) 95–6.

look at his productive Italian career we find compositions for more than thirty Grand Ballets performed at La Scala from 1853 (when he was 21 years of age). He soon became La Scala's most respected composer in the genre, but admired too in all the northern Italian opera houses—Genoa, Parma, Bologna, Florence, Venice and Trieste—as well as at the Teatro San Carlo in Naples.¹⁴ Nationalism and/or patriotism came naturally to the middle-aged Giorza who until the age of 35 composed numerous marches for piano, or in parts for military bands, to celebrate Garibaldian victories throughout Italy's struggle for independence and unity.¹⁵ To this day the Milanese sing his patriotic *La Bella Gigogin*, composed and taken up in 1859.¹⁶ An earlier work known to relate to an exhibition was Giorza's *La prima Esposizione Italiana Album* published around 1862 by F. Lucca of Milan.¹⁷

As soon as it was decided to hold an International Exhibition in Sydney, Giorza's Mass No. 3¹⁸ was presented at the Victoria Theatre on Christmas night 1878, with Jennings as patron. Prior to the announcement of his appointment as Exhibition musical director a free public concert was arranged in April 1879 by a group of influential Giorza supporters including acting Governor Sir Alfred Stephen. Among the popular operatic pieces that made up the programme, he featured a fully orchestrated version of his new *Sydney International Exhibition March*.¹⁹ Rehearsal time had been brief for the forty-two musicians selected to form an orchestra, yet critics enthusiastically predicted a new musical 'epoch.'²⁰ As part of the city's pre-Exhibition festive mood, Sydney audiences could attend their first production of a Wagner opera in a W.S. Lyster season that also gave them premieres of *Carmen* and *Aida*.

The Garden Palace dome brought architectural status to the colonial city—in size it warranted comparison only with the world's greatest domes like St Pauls in London and St Sophia in Constantinople. This international comparison lent lustre to the reception of Giorza's *Cantata* written for the opening of the exhibition. Yet ten days before the opening when a general choir of about 350 voices, plus a children's choir of 300, held a full rehearsal,²¹ only fourteen or fifteen violins and wind instruments were up to standard, far short of the thousand voices and two hundred instruments at the Philadelphia opening.²² By way of contrast, La Scala's orchestra numbered 'ninety six of the best musicians.'²³ Sydney and its suburbs were said to have at least thirty brass bands,²⁴ but unlike Melbourne where a Philharmonic Society

¹⁴ Titles and premiere dates of Paolo Giorza's ballets are listed in 'Paolo Giorza', *Enciclopedia dello Spettacolo*; and a shorter version in *The Australian: A Monthly Magazine* 3 (November 1865): 297–301.

¹⁵ For example, *L'Italia riconoscente* Dedicata all'Imperatore Napoleone III, Op. 61 and *Va la vilan coi bocu*, Op. 62, both in parts for military bands. ['Catalogo delle Opere di Paolo Giorza, Publicate da Francesco Lucca di Milano,' back cover, *Esposizione Internazionale di Sydney Marcia* (Milan: F. Lucca) 34943 for piano 2 hands, 34944 for piano 4 hands, collection Conservatorio di Milano].

¹⁶ Raffaello Monterosso, *La Musica Nel Risorgimento* (Milan: Dottor Francesco Vallardi, 1948); Orietta Berti, 'La Bella Gigogin', *Le Piu' Belle Canzoni Popolari*, CD, Polydor 519 249–2, 1972; Giuseppe Barigazzi, *La Scala Racconta*, 2nd ed. (Milan: Biblioteca Universale Rizzoli, 1994) 238.

¹⁷ The Italian *Esposizione* probably displayed exhibits destined for London's International Exhibition of 1862.

¹⁸ Published by F. Lucca of Milan, dated 1870. Copy with page bearing dedication to Archbishop Polding, held in the National Library of Australia.

¹⁹ See all Sydney newspapers, 28 April 1879.

²⁰ *Echo* 28 April 1879: 3.

²¹ *Sydney Morning Herald* 8 September 1879: 5.

²² *Town and Country Journal* 5 August 1876: 224.

²³ *The Australian: A Monthly Magazine* 3 (1879): 297–301.

²⁴ *Sydney Morning Herald* 27 August 1879: 7 states that the bands accounted for 'about 440 performers, kept up at an annual expense of 1200 pounds.'

had been in existence for twenty-five years or more, no established society of comparable size had survived. In order to form an Exhibition choir, which became known as the Sacred Choral Society, various local groups had to be hastily gathered together by choirmaster J. Churchill Fisher.

As centrepiece of the impressive ceremonials—after a procession had wended its way down Macquarie Street—the *Cantata* was heard by formally dressed guests on opening day. Four pianos occupying the dais seemed to signify the vital importance of that instrument in Exhibition entertainment; of the eight female pianists (performing as four hands at each) the principal was the composer's wife, Luigia Giorza, a talented teacher from Milan who had recently been reunited with her husband in Adelaide.²⁵ Although Henry Parkes's favourite poet, Henry Kendall,²⁶ received lukewarm praise at the time for his verses, a quarter of a century later one anthologist thought them 'perhaps the finest prize poem written in the English language'.²⁷ Thirty thousand people who thronged to the Exhibition on the second Saturday were treated to their own performance of the *Cantata* and, when eventually published with the help of subscribers, it would become one of the Exhibition's most popular souvenirs.²⁸

With musical debate in Europe, Britain and America preoccupied with what was broadly termed the German school, Giorza insisted that for the *Cantata* he had been deliberately un-Wagnerian.²⁹ Its most comprehensive critical review—probably by H.N. Montagu who acted as Giorza's secretary³⁰—mentioned a likeness to works by Britain's most notable composer in the genre Sterndale Bennett.³¹ The fact that a Giorza cantata had been performed in Milan in February 1861 'dedicated to and performed in the presence of' Victor Emmanuel',³² proved a persuasive point of defence against locals objecting to Jennings's 'foreign' appointment,³³ but many guests attending the 1879 opening ceremony would have remembered the *Cantata* Jennings commissioned in honour of Irish patriot Daniel O'Connell in 1875, for which Prof. Charles Badham D.D. wrote the words and Giorza the music—an unusual honour for a resident Italian.³⁴

²⁵ Luigia Giorza arrived in Adelaide on 10 December 1878 on board the 'Aconcagua' from Plymouth. A photographic portrait of her is held in La Scala Archives, Milan.

²⁶ Henry Parkes commissioned Henry Kendall to write elegaic verses for his son Robert Parkes, printed in *Town and Country Journal* 14 February 1879.

²⁷ *A Century of Australian Song*, ed. Douglas B.W. Sladen (London, Melbourne: Walter Scott Publishing, [1900?]) 17.

²⁸ With the help of more than 60 subscribers Giorza supervised the publication, advertised by W.H. Paling as 'The Best Souvenir Extant of the great event.' *Sydney Morning Herald* 22 April 1880: 2. See also sheet music as sought after Exhibition souvenirs in Graeme Davison 'Exhibitions,' *Australian Cultural History* 2 (1982/3): 11–13. A leather-bound presentation copy of the *Cantata* sent to the Prince of Wales is in the Royal Collection of the British Library; cloth bound copies are held in National Library of Australia.

²⁹ Giorza wrote to Giulio Ricordi on 'Sydney International Exhibition, 1879' letterhead: 'Non e un lovoro alla Wagner per certo, e non ci pretendo ne pretendero vrai di essere un profondo etc.' P. Giorza, letter to Giulio Ricordi, 24 April 1880, author's collection.

³⁰ Presentation copy of *Cantata* inscribed by Giorza to H.N. Montagu, National Library of Australia.

³¹ *Town and Country Journal* 27 September 1879: 617.

³² The listing on the back cover of *Esposizione Internazionale di Sydney Marcia* includes a *Cantata a S.M. il Re d'Italia* (Op. 107) and a national hymn to S.M. il Re Vittorio Emanuele II, words by G. Della Noce. Giorza also wrote a *Cantata eseguita al R. Teatro alla Scala la sera del 18 Marzo 1860* (no 12292).

³³ A number of local musicians expressed anger at Giorza's appointment, see Maguire, 'Paolo Giorza' 131–32; *Sydney Morning Herald* 5 April 1879: 5; 9 April 1879: 5; Geoffrey Eagar's letter of reply, *Sydney Morning Herald* 23 May 1879: 7; and *Echo* 28 April 1879: 3.

³⁴ Celebration held 6 August 1875 described in Sydney press.

During what proved to be a music festival lasting from September 1879 to April 1880, recitals on the boldly positioned organ were required of Giorza each day, with assorted orchestral, piano and vocal concerts held every afternoon on the official platform or dais. A striving for high European standards sat oddly alongside the government's allocation of a meagre budget—Giorza earned a modest salary of £25 a week and if the £1,000 allocated for an oratorio series seems an apparently hefty figure, it was to cover only expenses for books and hire of rehearsal space. Sydney's other most respected musicians were appointed conductors of one of six oratorios which not only provided a necessary structure and formality to the Exhibition calendar, but drew audiences into every available space; for example, ten thousand heard five hundred choristers sing Handel's *Messiah*. The series as a whole was regarded as a milestone in Sydney music, and by some 'the most successful of all the attractions'.³⁵

So abundant was music, one visitor complained that the Garden Palace interior—a veritable temple to trade with a ground floor measuring almost five acres—seemed more like a concert hall than an exhibition, a reference to the prevalence of piano and vocal performances as well as American cabinet organs and German mechanical instruments. But it was the piano that dominated in this vast space, divided into courts of different nationalities or colonies, for apart from the musical director's own recitals, at least three other European pianists performed daily. For the people of Sydney such accessibility to free performances of high standard was unprecedented, the total effect among crowded exhibits sometimes bewildering.³⁶ A compelling factor was that the dazzling array of models of pianos and cabinet organs on display was not merely to entertain visitors but to woo local retailers and impress judges who would award medals. International trade and commerce were dynamic forces behind such exhibitions and Jennings sensibly and willingly approved demonstration performances of exhibited instruments providing they did 'not conflict' with the official programme.³⁷

As representatives in the British, German, Belgian, French and American courts grasped the opportunity to demonstrate each and every piano on show, they aroused a growing public interest in an instrument already firmly associated with comfortable middle-class colonial domestic life.³⁸ Turns were taken to occupy the official platform for demonstration concerts; individual instrumentalists and singers might hardly be heard—even the orchestra proved difficult—and visitors might find access along the adjacent aisles congested, but such shortcomings were tolerated by representatives eager for maximum public attention.

Difficulties arose in the first weeks after the Exhibition opening once the full extent of acoustic problems was realised, added to which Giorza was roundly criticised for the orchestra's ineptitude and limited repertoire, for selecting inexperienced vocalists, often his young pupils, as well as for showing a tendency to favour his own compositions. Since many of his published

³⁵ *Sydney Daily Telegraph* 12 April 1880: 1.

³⁶ See comments in Martha Adams, *The Diary of Patty Adams on the Occasion of her Visit to the Sydney Exhibition 1879* (Christchurch, NZ: Caxton Press, 1980) 25.

³⁷ *Town and Country Journal* 17 May 1879: 930.

³⁸ See 'New Music Establishment of Mr. W.H. Paling, George Street, Sydney,' *Illustrated Sydney News* 7 July 1883: 3 commenting on music as 'a marked feature of Australian social life' and the piano as 'the pinnacle of working-class aspirations' in Humphrey McQueen, *A New Britannia* (Ringwood, Vic: Penguin Books, 1986) 116. See also Deborah Crisp, 'The Piano in Australia, 1770 to 1900: Some Literary Sources,' *Musicology Australia* 18 (1995): 25–38.

works prior to leaving Italy in 1867 were piano pieces on various *balli teatrali* or annual albums of *balli da sala*, his virtuosity began to appear more limited than that of an equally talented pianist like Cecilia Summerhayes who arrived fresh from London playing works by Chopin, Liszt, Beethoven and Rubinstein, and to whom critics responded warmly.

In early December 1879, just over two months after the Exhibition opened, Henry Parkes insisted Jennings reduce entertainment expenses, and Jennings confirmed that 'no further engagements of musicians for orchestral or other concerts at the expense of the Commission are to be entered into'.³⁹ Focus on the piano increased, however, as keyboard performances were shifted into courts where their conspicuous size enhanced the appeal of the Exhibition as a whole. Within their own display areas exhibitors erected small platforms on which demonstration recitals were given to small audiences for whom chairs were set up for comfortable listening. First to erect a stand was British firm John Brinsmead & Son,⁴⁰ who had hired Cecilia Summerhayes to perform exclusively for them, then Prosper Lamal in the Belgian court whose wife played each day on pianofortes by Bord, Campo, Gunther or others. Friendly exchanges into different courts occurred frequently while unattached pianists like Jules Meilhan⁴¹ or violinist Ercole Ortori—enticed from W.S. Lyster's opera orchestra—shared themselves among many. The French court's Erard and Pleyel pianos were in constant use, as were American grands and uprights by Chickering and the famous Steinway—Louis Gottschalk's compositions were the favourite source of tributes to America. American cabinet organs caught a large share of public attention and reference was made to a 'never-weary German organ pour[ing] forth in full forte tones'.⁴²

Appreciation of musical performances proved virtually impossible when crowds as large as thirty thousand attended on holidays like Boxing Day or Anniversary Day (the Exhibition was closed at night). Yet on a typical afternoon piano music must have penetrated every corner and corridor, indicating how completely the Exhibition's ideals of education and entertainment, seeing and listening, could combine; one report tells how confusion reigned as pianos could be heard 'simultaneously in motion on the platform in front of the organ, in Brinsmead's space, and in the German and Belgian courts'.⁴³ So tight was the performance schedule on the last Saturday in October that we find, at two o'clock, Cecilia Summerhayes playing a Brinsmead semi grand in front of the organ; Jules Meilhan in the American court playing a Steinway at three; in the gallery above the French court Giorza's pupils Miss Hyam and Emelie North, the former performing at an Erard grand; and at four o'clock Jules Meilhan playing on a Bechstein Grand. Madam Lamal performed in the Belgian court and a Grand Orchestral and Vocal concert was held on the official platform featuring Paolo and Luigia Giorza.⁴⁴ In the basement Herr Kopff's brass band played as it did every day.

Local brass bands such as the Young Australian Band regularly performed alfresco in the outer Domain around the machinery halls, sometimes joining bands on board German, French

³⁹ Reply from P.A. Jennings to Henry Parkes, the Colonial Secretary, 6 December 1879, Executive Commissioners Letter Book No. 3, State Records 7/404: 20–21.

⁴⁰ *Sydney Morning Herald* 4 October 1879: 3.

⁴¹ *Sydney Morning Herald* 15 October 1879: 2.

⁴² *Sydney Morning Herald* 3 November 1879: 3.

⁴³ *Sydney Mail* 18 October 1879: 666.

⁴⁴ *Sydney Morning Herald* 3 November 1879: 3.

and British ships moored in Farm Cove; the visiting bands responded with guest performances either inside the Garden Palace or in the grounds. In the Agricultural Hall amid potted ferns the Russian pianist Olga Duboin performed in national dress, and adding exotic South Pacific effects Fijians and Maoris danced to beaten sticks in their own architecturally authentic huts. In the fair ground tradition a hurdy-gurdy irritated residents of Macquarie Street's villas.

Intensive programming lasted well into the summer holidays as January judging commenced. Signs of critical ennui suggest a reduction in the number of piano recitals, the public preferring open-air entertainment or taking refreshment near the brass band and basement fountain. Exhibitors became preoccupied with impending awards for, in spite of an existing accord among nations, there was strenuous competition for the coveted medals. Rivalry was rife according to a diary kept from January to April 1880 by one representative in attendance, Mr Horace Brinsmead. It contains a fascinating account of frantic, almost obsessive, activity—polishing pianos, arranging recitals, writing biased reports for the press and pursuing influential individuals or judges like Charles Packer.⁴⁵

Until the closing ceremony at the end of April, music remained integral to Exhibition entertainment. The accumulation of a mass of newspaper criticism documenting title, composer, performer, piano maker and model used at almost every recital, has provided a valuable, concentrated source for investigation in this study. The public's major disappointment clearly lay in the second-hand organ. Although its bold domination of the northern nave contributed a theatrical effect to that space, effectively conveying appropriate sacred and secular messages, it was held in poor esteem. Apart from Giorza who was said to have been the only performer to get the best from it, the local musician W.G. Broadhurst seems to have been its only other regular performer.⁴⁶

There was only one substantial work by a colonial composer performed at the Sydney International Exhibition, Charles Packer's oratorio *The Crown of Thorns*.⁴⁷ Surviving musical souvenirs are otherwise commemorative pieces like *Land of the Sunny South All Hail*, distributed as a broadsheet at Giorza's April 1879 concert, sung at the opening ceremony and advertised widely as his *Australian Anthem*. A set of Exhibition quadrilles by prolific British composer Charles D'Albert was available from Sydney musicsellers well before the opening. Titles in *Giorza's Exhibition Album*—including *Belles of Australia Waltz*, *Italian Quadrille*, *Manly Beach Polka* and *Sydney Schottische*—helped capture the festive mood and over four thousand copies were printed. Resident pianist and teacher K.W. Goergs composed a *Garden Palace March*; rarely heard of as an Exhibition performer, as music critic for the *Illustrated Sydney News* in 1875 he had been a keen promoter of the German school of music.⁴⁸ An *Australian Exhibition Schottische* dedicated to P.A. Jennings by W.H. Smith went to a second edition by January 1880,⁴⁹ but Jules Meilhan's popular grand march *Advance Australia* apparently failed to find a publisher.

⁴⁵ *Diary of a Piano Salesman [English] 1880*, Ms 6588, Mitchell Library, State Library of NSW.

⁴⁶ *Sydney Morning Herald* 10 October 1879: 5.

⁴⁷ Charles S. Packer, *The Crown of Thorns: or, Despair, Penitence, and Parton: an Oratorio* (Sydney: Foster and Fairfax, 1880).

⁴⁸ Assorted articles by Goergs on Mozart and Beethoven, and reviews of Goergs's own compositions can be found in *Illustrated Sydney News* 7 May 1875: 2; 29 May 1875: 4; 26 June 1875: 14 and 20; 24 July 1875: 18–20.

⁴⁹ *Express* 24 January 1880: 1.

Five weeks before the closing ceremony, exhibited pianos were being advertised for sale at reduced prices—a Kirkman for instance could be had for just thirty-five guineas. Large consignments went to auction out of the German court,⁵⁰ Gunther pianos were included in the Belgian disposal of furniture and china, Elvy & Co. offered Bord and Lipp pianos and retailer W.M. Ezold offered some by Bechstein. American organs and harmoniums also appeared in auctioneers' advertisements, all part of a general dumping of goods over the coming weeks. Exhibitors clearly preferred new display models for the upcoming Melbourne Exhibition and as shipments of new stock arrived, returning tired exhibits to Europe became unthinkable.

Concerts by visiting performers like the virtuosic violinist Camilla Urso and singer Carlotta Patti added novelty to city theatres in the final months of the Exhibition, as had J.C. Williamson's first performances of Gilbert and Sullivan—with Giorza as conductor—but for piano enthusiasts it was Hungarian-born Henry Ketten whose 'wondrous performances ... exercised upon the musical mind of Sydney'⁵¹ and who would cast a less favourable light on the talents of the jaded Exhibition pianists.

In view of the sheer quantity and variety of pianofortes exhibited and demonstrated, public appreciation was so enlivened that the course of Sydney music was likely to remain under its influence for many years. A greater public enthusiasm seemed inevitable as the educational 'improvement' predicted by its organisers took effect, and they responded to a repertoire emphasising national airs or works by each nation's most illustrious composers—selected to underline cultural distinctiveness. Equally influential were repeated performances of each pianist's personal preferences.

The substantial rise in popularity of the piano for the concert hall and decline in the number of opera productions would appear to be the most significant alteration in entertainment and seems to have been a peculiarly post-Exhibition outcome. The steady stream of internationally recognised touring performers—Henry Ketten, Mark Hambourg, Paderewski—more or less coincided with a number of European pianists settling in Australian cities and towns as teachers: Kowalski, de Beaupuis, Lardelli to name a few.

As a result of the constant entertainment presented by talented performers, it was concluded that the Exhibition's achievement of cultural improvement augured well for the future. As one newspaper editorial claimed, 'numbers of our youth are already becoming proficient in music, singing, drawing, and in the inventive faculty they bid fair to rival the Americans'.⁵² Just as the organisers had hoped, musically the Garden Palace proved a great school. Wide enjoyment of piano music by 'colonial workmen of every grade' resulted in commercial expansion commensurate with the politicians' highest hopes, if not an equally gratifying outcome—the establishment of a permanent school of music for Sydney.

Notwithstanding commercial optimism and Exhibition hyperbole, in November 1879 a Brinsmead spokesman had observed that 'in Sydney alone the number of pianofortes in use is believed to be larger in proportion to the number of houses than in any European capital, yet the demand rarely slackens'.⁵³ And as the Exhibition came to a close Sydney's largest retailer W.H. Paling, who had shown as many as seventy different models of pianos in the upper

⁵⁰ *Sydney Morning Herald* 18 March 1880: 11 and 27 March 1880: 8.

⁵¹ *Express* 5 June 1880: 5.

⁵² *Express* 24 April 1880: 4.

⁵³ *Illustrated Sydney News* 1 November 1879: 6.

gallery, was in the process of enlarging his premises and warehouse space for 'the greatly increased stock of musical instruments and sheet music'.⁵⁴ His most recent expansion since arriving in the mid 1850s had occurred in 1875, when Paling managed to create a sort of unofficial club for musicians and composers.⁵⁵ Twenty years earlier he had personally formed a short-lived Academy of Music, the need for which was revived as a contentious topic of debate at the end of 1878.⁵⁶

One could search for no more appropriate metaphor of musical, educational and commercial improvement so closely aligned to the Exhibition's ideals than W.H. Paling's next enlargement of his commercial premises, due it was said to a

steadily increasing taste for music which forms a marked feature of Australian social life, and which possesses an undoubted tendency to refine and elevate the public taste ... The demand for pianofortes, organs ... has designated them being far in excess of anything of the kind in previous years.⁵⁷

These new premises opened in July 1883, nine months after the Garden Palace was destroyed by fire and the very month Paolo Giorza left Australia to return to Italy. Paling's new building incorporated galleries to accommodate sixty pianos, a separate room displaying grands and semi grands and a large and lofty recital hall capable of seating six hundred people. A staff of fifty-one was employed, he retained three other Sydney stores 'filled with musical instruments, sufficient ... for the requirements of the whole of the colonies' and branches and agencies were operating in Queensland and Victoria. Of equal long term importance was Paling's expanded production and sale of printed piano music, including publication of annual albums and series specially graded for teaching purposes, in which local and international composers appeared.

Paling's provision of six sound proof teaching rooms 'already let to the some of the city's leading musical instructors' provided an important educational facility, a sort of quasi-conservatorium and by 1895 the Sydney College of Music's advertisements show Paling's premises as their headquarters.⁵⁸

The 1879 Exhibition cost the country 'about a quarter of a million sterling'⁵⁹ and over a million visits were paid, although neither the exact number of individual visitors nor the number of visitors from abroad were known. Similarly, no reliable statistic of piano sales or ownership is available.⁶⁰ The Garden Palace continued to be used occasionally for large choral works such as the Sydney Musical Union's performance of Costa's *Eli* in March 1881, British

⁵⁴ Eve Keane, *Music for a Hundred Years, The Story of the House of Palings*, (Sydney: Oswald Ziegler Publications, 1954): 32–36.

⁵⁵ Keane, *Music* 29.

⁵⁶ Jules Meilhan was one who called for a school of music or for music to be included in an Academy of Arts, see 'On Music', *Journal and Proceedings of the Royal Society of New South Wales 1878*, Vol. 12 (Sydney: Thomas Richards Government Printer, 1879) 291–92. Similar sentiments are expressed in 'Music and our Musicians', *The Australian: A Monthly Magazine* 1 (1878): 411.

⁵⁷ *Illustrated Sydney News* 7 July 1883: 3.

⁵⁸ The College had Hector R. Maclean as Warden, Montague Younger as Vice-Warden and J.A. Delany as Chairman of Board of Examiners.

⁵⁹ *Sydney Mail* 24 April 1880.

⁶⁰ It is interesting to note that French critic Oscar Comettant, who 'guessed' a figure of 700,000 pianos in Australia, acted as a judge at the Melbourne International Exhibition of 1888. Crisp, 'The piano' 26.

cultural ties remaining as tight as ever. The combined Sacred Choral Society disbanded into their original groups, yet the new Sydney University Musical Society would survive and for the commencement of the teaching year in 1884 Sydney Technical College introduced a Department of Music.⁶¹ The Exhibition orchestra disciplined by seven months of performance found few opportunities to continue but many members would have belonged to the firmly established Sydney Musical Union.

When the Musical Union foundered in 1885, Patrick Jennings—the person most likely to uphold Exhibition ideology—assisted in the formation of the Royal Philharmonic Society.⁶² It was another Milanese, ‘the prominent and alert Italian conductor’ Roberto Hazon, who ‘controlled, literally The Sydney Philharmonic Society and The Amateur Orchestral Society, both very thriving and prosperous organisations at that time’.⁶³ Jennings acted as president.

Notions of national benefit found in day-to-day reporting or weekly journals during the Sydney Exhibition continued, of course, to be fundamental to Melbourne’s International Exhibition lasting into 1881, and re-emerged even more strongly for the Centennial Exhibition of 1888 which again bolstered our international relevance. The sustained exposure and enthusiastic reception of music, particularly the piano, at these grand events and the effects that flowed from them, are to be seen as crucially relevant to the development in Australian music in the last quarter of the nineteenth century.

⁶¹ Notice of Board of Technical Education of NSW, Sydney Technical College, Summer Session, 14 January 1884, Powerhouse Museum.

⁶² *Royal Sydney Philharmonic Society Programme 100th Concert* 1903, Mitchell Library, State Library NSW.

⁶³ W. Arundel Orchard, *The Distant View* (Sydney: Currawong Publishing Company, 1943) 20–21.