

Horace Poussard and *Dead Heroes*: A Musical Tribute to Burke and Wills

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Horace Poussard was a French-born violinist who first toured Australia in the 1860s and later returned to become a permanent resident of Sydney. He was highly regarded as a performer both in Australia and overseas during the latter half of the nineteenth century and press coverage in the Australian newspapers of the time suggests that he was a violinist of the highest merit who did much to further the musical culture of this country. Little, however, is known about him. This article provides information about Horace Poussard, collated from secondary and primary sources in France and Australia. Since so little is known about Poussard's life, this article begins with an extended biographical sketch, followed by a discussion of the repertoire performed by Poussard on his early tour of Australia, focussing in particular on his South Australian tour of 1862. The article culminates with a consideration of Poussard's musical poems, *Dead Heroes* and their predecessor *The Expiring Explorers*, that celebrated the Burke and Wills' expedition. Having arrived in the country as the events of the expedition were unfolding, Poussard drew on these local events and the strong sentiments in the community, composing and performing the two topical works over a period of approximately ten months.

Horace Poussard was born in Chateau-Gontier, Mayenne, France in 1829. His father, Charles Poussard, was a prominent music teacher and conductor at colleges in the towns of Saint Servan and Saint Malo. As a teacher, Charles Poussard had a reputation for being both competent and authoritarian. Past students of the music college in Saint Malo remembered his exceptional ear and how even a slightly off-pitch sound would make him shiver. He was also remembered for his ability to impart to his pupils 'a desire for musical practice.'¹

¹ This information comes from a number of sources including Marie-Laure Guezingar, 'La Vie musicale et culturelle à Saint-Malo de 1839 à 1870: Musique. Théâtres. Casino,' memoir, Université de Haute-Bretagne, 1993; H. Herpin, et al., *Histoire du College de Saint-Malo* (St Ives: Ploërmel, 1902); Horrie Poussard Collection, Centre for Studies in Australian Music (hereafter CSAM), Parkville, Melbourne (Horrie Poussard, a current resident of Melbourne, is the great-grandson of Horace Poussard).

As a boy, Horace Poussard displayed an unusual aptitude for the violin. 'His father ... made him study music at an early age and at ten years entrusted him to François Antoine Habeneck, pupil of Baillot and founder of the Conservatoire Concert Society.'² From Habeneck's instruction Horace Poussard entered the Paris Conservatoire where he won two prizes for solfège, including first prize in 1847, and first prize for violin in 1849.³ A review of this performance was printed in *La Vigie de l'Ouest*:

With what verve and what discipline he tackled the proud and simple passages of Lecieux's fantasia. He enchanted the auditorium by the grace and sad sweetness of his rendition of the souvenirs de Bellini and here he was up against other recent and also delicious souvenirs. We noticed that the top string of this young violinist is more brilliant than the last time we heard him play. The notes of the fourth string could have been stronger but he will acquire strength and besides his instrument probably couldn't cope with much more. Horace Poussard is not only already a violinist of the highest order but he is also a talented pianist and teacher. He leaves the other pupils at the conservatoire far behind him, which is to say that he is privileged in his abilities and with work he could do anything.⁴

After graduating from the Paris Conservatoire, Poussard began his career as a professional violinist. In the 1850s he performed at numerous venues in Paris including the concert rooms of Herz and Pleyel.⁵ In 1852 he gave concerts in Vienna and Istanbul.⁶ He also travelled through Hungary, Greece and Romania.⁷ The repertoire at these concerts was primarily operatic fantasias, many written by Poussard himself. Most popular were his operatic fantasias on *Norma*, *Lucia di Lammermoor*, *La Sonnambula* and his *Souvenirs d'Amérique*.

In 1860 Poussard appeared in London with a 'cellist and French compatriot, René Douay. The duo performed variations on 'God Save the Queen' before Queen Victoria. In July 1860, they appeared in a *matinée musicale* at Collard's Concert Rooms with two other string players, Otto Bernard and Schreurs, where they performed a Beethoven quartet in what was otherwise a concert 'of [the] non-classical kind.'⁸ Despite Poussard's growing reputation, he never forgot his roots. According to Marie-Laure Guezingar, he performed regularly at his home town of Saint Malo and was always willing to give concerts there whenever asked.⁹

² Auguste Wiegand, *The Largest Organ in the World and the Musical Artists of Sydney* (Sydney: William Maddock, 1892) vi.

³ Constant Pierre, *Le Conservatoire national de musique et de déclamation* (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1900) 833.

⁴ *La Vigie de l'Ouest* 124, 14 September 1849, quoted in Guezingar, 'La Vie musicale et culturelle à Saint-Malo' 140. Horrie Poussard Collection, CSAM: '... avec quelle verve et quelle fermeté il aborde les notes fières et simples dans la fantaisie de LECIEUX. Il a enchanté l'auditoire par la grâce et douce tristesse de son jeu dans les Souvenirs de BELLINI et cependant, ici, il luttait contre d'autres souvenirs bien récents et bien délicieux aussi. Nous avons remarqué que la chanterelle du jeune violiniste avait beaucoup plus d'éclat que la dernière fois que nous l'avons entendue. Les notes de la quatrième corde pourraient avoir plus de force, mais il l'acquerra et d'ailleurs son instrument n'en comporte peut-être pas beaucoup plus. Horace Poussard est non seulement déjà un violiniste d'un ordre élevé mais il a beaucoup de talent comme pianiste et comme lecteur, il laissait loin derrière lui les autres élèves du Conservatoire, c'est-à-dire, qu'il a une organisation toute privilégiée et qu'avec du travail, il peut prétendre à tout.'

⁵ *Revue et Gazette Musicale de Paris* 50 (16 December 1855) 391-92; 17 (27 April 1856) 131.

⁶ *Revue et Gazette Musicale de Paris* 15 (11 April 1852) 119; 20 (16 May 1852) 158; 51 (19 December 1852) 471.

⁷ Wiegand, *The Largest Organ in the World* vi.

⁸ *Musical World* 38.30 (28 July 1860) 480.

⁹ Guezingar, 'La Vie musicale et culturelle à Saint-Malo' 141. Horrie Poussard Collection, CSAM.

After a decade of concerts in Europe, Horace Poussard embarked on a world trip that was to span four continents and last approximately eight years. Along with the cellist Douay, his first destination was Australia. Soon after their arrival in Melbourne on 15 August 1861, the pair performed concerts at the Theatre Royal, the Mechanic's Institute, the Vestibule, and also at a number of private concerts.¹⁰ A brief tour of Tasmania and the Victorian goldfields followed before an extensive tour, lasting approximately ten months, of South Australia.

In Adelaide, Poussard and Douay were celebrated for their skill and musicianship, attracting large audiences and much attention from the press. Within two months of their arrival in South Australia they were reported to have given 'no less than forty concerts, fifteen of which [were] in Adelaide.'¹¹ The other twenty-five were performed at various rural townships such as Tanunda, Kapunda, Kooringa, Auburn, Gawler, Salisbury, Burra and Clare.¹² For most of these concerts, Poussard and Douay performed alongside singers such as Amelia Bailey, Armes Beaumont, Wilkinson and Madame Stutaford.

In 1864 Poussard, together with Robert Sparrow Smythe and two singers, Amelia Bailey and Florence Calzado (with whom Poussard formed a romantic attachment and, according to various reports, later married),¹³ formed the Poussard-Bailey Company. For the next five years this group, managed by Smythe, toured India, Mauritius, Ceylon and South Africa.

In India, according to *Bell's Life in Victoria and Sporting Chronicle*, they travelled further north than any other musicians.¹⁴ In South Africa, too, the members of the Poussard-Bailey Company were noted by *The Natal Mercury* to have been the first professional musicians to visit the Orange Free State:

Other professional companies that have visited the South African colonies have not ventured beyond the seaports, or, at most, the principal city of each colony or province; but the entertainments of the Poussard Bailey Company in Capetown and Grahamstown seem to have excited so much enthusiasm that they found it worth their while to travel right through the colony and even went as far as Bloemfontein.¹⁵

The final leg of this extraordinary world trip incorporated a tour of the coastal and interior regions of South Africa where between March and October 1868 the company performed a total of 172 concerts. In 1869 the Poussard-Bailey Company split and Poussard returned to Europe where he resided for the next thirteen years.¹⁶

During the years preceding the Franco-Prussian War (1869–1870), Poussard performed regularly in Paris. 'Great as was the admiration for his talents during his former stay in that city, his success was on this occasion still more pronounced ... In the course of his travels he

¹⁰ *Illustrated Melbourne Post* 24 May 1862: 38. *Argus* 19 August 1861: 5; 27 August 1861: 5; 2 September 1861: 5; 23 September 1861: 5; 10 October 1861: 5; 15 April 1862: 5; 19 April 1862: 4.

¹¹ *South Australian Advertiser* (hereafter SAA) 23 July 1862: 2.

¹² See the SAA advertisement columns from June 1862 to March 1863 for a list of venues visited.

¹³ A wedding certificate is yet to be traced. According to K.J. Gibney and Ann. G. Smith's, 'A Biographical Register: 1788-1939' in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography* vol.2 (Canberra: ADB, 1987), the couple married, yet Johannesburg Broadcasting's, *The South African Music Encyclopedia* (Capetown: OUP, 1986) claims that 'Madame Poussard' was Florence Calzado's stage name.

¹⁴ *Bell's Life in Victoria and Sporting Chronicle* 1 July 1865: 2.

¹⁵ Notes by Pam Barnes from *The Natal Mercury* 31 December 1867, Horrie Poussard Collection, CSAM.

¹⁶ *Cape Argus* 3 November 1868. Supplied by Allister Hardiman.

had gathered a collection of foreign melodies which were absolutely new to his audiences, and which imparted to them, owing to his artistic rendering, wholly fresh sensations.¹⁷ In 1870, he appeared in concert with the celebrated double-bass player Bottesini where, in addition to performing a duet, he performed his *Fantaisie Indienne*.¹⁸ Following this particular concert, a cartoon was published in the Paris press depicting the spirit of Paganini rising to greet his successor. On Poussard's return to Melbourne in 1883, the cartoon was re-published in the *Melbourne Bulletin* (see Figure 1) with an article that anticipated the commencement of a series of popular concerts to be held at the Town Hall.¹⁹



Figure 1. "The Ghost of Paganini revisiting the earth to inspire his brilliant successor." Reproduced from the Paris "Charivari." *Melbourne Bulletin* 24 August 1883: 1.

In 1874, Poussard married a singer, Louise Felicie Augustine Jean, in Chelsea, London.²⁰ During the next seven years, he was active in various musical roles. From 1876-1879 he conducted the orchestra at Boulogne Casino²¹ and in 1878 was a member of the teaching staff at the Music College of Saint Malo, alongside his father.²²

¹⁷ *Town and Country Journal* 11 August 1888: 290.

¹⁸ *Revue et Gazette Musicale de Paris* 15 (10 April 1870) 116.

¹⁹ *Melbourne Bulletin* 24 August 1883: 1.

²⁰ Certified Copy (2 May 2002) of an Entry of Marriage, application No. C600496, General Register Office, England. Supplied by Horrie Poussard.

²¹ Wiegand, *The Largest Organ in the World* vi.

²² Collège de Saint Malo, 'Distribution Solennelle Des Prix sous la Présidence de Monseigneur de Forges: 25 July 1878,' 42. Horrie Poussard Collection. CSAM, Parkville, Melbourne.

After an absence of almost twenty years, Horace Poussard returned to Australia. He lived in Melbourne for a period of approximately three years before finally settling in Sydney in 1886. Until his death in 1898, he contributed to the development of music in Sydney as a teacher, conductor and, most notably, as a violinist. Poussard did much to promote and further the developments of high-art chamber music in Sydney; he involved himself in various societies, established chamber-music groups of his own, and attempted, as many others did at the time, to establish a permanent chamber-music group that could supply Sydney with a staple diet of 'the best works of the best masters,' works such as string quartets by Mozart and Beethoven.²³

In contrast to his work in later life, Poussard's repertoire during his 1860s tour of Australia was generally more popular in nature. While he was willing to, and indeed did, perform serious art music, including performances of chamber music,²⁴ Australian audiences during the 1860s were perhaps not so receptive. A critic for *The Argus* observed that it was soon:

evident that variations upon and eccentric embellishments of the 'Perfect Cure,' or the 'British Grenadiers,' [were] more warmly appreciated ... than a pure melody by a classical composer; and that while the execution ... of compositions which called forth the highest powers of the executants ... excited little or no enthusiasm, some *à-propos* which [included] an imitation of the bagpipes, the human voice, and the Jew's harp, [was] applauded to the echo and redemanded.²⁵

Poussard's popular repertoire included operatic fantasias on *Il Trovatore* and *Martha*, fantasias on national airs, patriotic songs and popular tunes. Such works as *Scottish Bouquet*, Variations on 'God Save the Queen,'²⁶ Fantasia on Popular English airs,²⁷ and *Souvenirs of Hungary*²⁸ always stood Poussard on good ground with Australian audiences and made him popular, even in the later years in Sydney when he was committed to promoting high art chamber music.

Poussard and Douay also wrote and sang their own comic songs, sentimental duets and arrangements such as 'The Two Serenaders' and 'The Toad and Miss Froggy' from Offenbach's *Les Deux Avengiers* and *Les Deux Pêcheurs*.²⁹ These songs 'appeared to take well' with their Adelaide audience, prompting the *South Australian Advertiser* to remark that 'as Messrs. Poussard and Douay have a stock of the kind at their command, it is probable they will have quite a run here.'³⁰ They also played the harmonium and piano, performing on these

²³ *Sydney Morning Herald* (hereafter *SMH*) 7 July 1887: 2. Poussard's contribution to chamber music in Sydney included the establishment of the Beethoven String Quartet in 1887 and the Sydney Quintette Society in 1893. He also took part in The Orpheus Club, performing in many of their monthly meetings, and in Huenerbein's Chamber Matinée Concerts in 1891.

²⁴ Amongst works performed by Poussard and Douay in Melbourne were two Beethoven trios and two quartets by Beethoven and Mozart respectively while on 23 September 1862 a string quartet by Mozart was performed in Adelaide for the first time with René Douay as cellist. *Argus* 23 September 1861: 5; 10 October 1861: 5; *SAA* 23 September 1862: 1.

²⁵ *Argus* 3 April 1862: 5. 'The Perfect Cure' was, consequently, performed by Douay in Adelaide in August 1862. See *SAA* 4 August 1862: 1; 5 August 1862: 2.

²⁶ *SAA* 10 June 1862: 1.

²⁷ *SAA* 1 July 1862: 1.

²⁸ *SAA* 17 October 1862: 1.

²⁹ *SAA* 2 September 1862: 2.

³⁰ *SAA* 2 September 1862: 2.

instruments in a production of Handel's *Messiah* with the Philharmonic Society on Christmas Eve 1862³¹ and, in general, accompanying the singers who performed with them.³²

Poussard adapted his repertoire wherever he travelled to suit what he saw as the needs of his audience. One of the ways he did this was by composing and performing works that drew on local themes. During his time spent in India, for example, he composed his *Fantaisie Indienne*, a work based on Hindustani melodies.³³ On their tour of Australia, Douay and Poussard responded to local events through the performance of their musical poems, *The Expiring Explorers* and *Dead Heroes* (which will be discussed at greater length later in this article), while in Adelaide they composed and sang a sentimental duet, 'Souvenirs of Australia.'³⁴ Individually, Douay composed his own works on local themes including a harmonium solo on the theme of exploration, *Welcome in Honor of McKinlay and Party*, and *Elegy on the Death of H. Armstrong, a Youth Drowned at Sea by Falling Overboard From the Wellesley, on the Passage from London to Melbourne*. The latter work was sung by Armes Beaumont on 12 January 1863.³⁵

In Adelaide, Poussard and Douay appealed to the city's large German population by performing in conjunction with singers Wilkinson, Beaumont and Stutaford, selections of German opera including a Grand Selection from *Der Freischütz*. These selections were well received although some felt that the music would have fared better had it been sung in its original language.³⁶ In their first concert at the Adelaide Assembly Rooms on 26 May 1862, Douay performed a 'cello solo on the popular German song, 'Du liegst mir im Herzen' with imitations of guitar, horn, bagpipes and flageolet, which was considered to be the highlight of a successful program,³⁷ while early in 1863 Poussard and Douay, in conjunction once more with Wilkinson and Beaumont, produced their own drinking song with chorus, the words written by Douay (translated by Egremeont Gee, Esq.) and the music by Poussard.³⁸

Poussard also performed many of his own compositions. These included, to name just a few, his *Toll the Bell*, *Hungarian Dance*, *Meditation*, *Ronde de Nuit* and *Night March*.³⁹ His published works comprise principally small salon pieces for violin and/or piano and sentimental songs. Most of these works were published from the 1870s through to the 1890s in Paris and London by companies such as Wickins and Co. and C. Jefferys. It is not known how many of Poussard's works were actually published but a number of them, such as a double quartet performed in Melbourne in 1902, must have existed in manuscript form at one time and have since been lost.⁴⁰

The centrepiece of Poussard and Douay's Australian tour was their musical poem *The Expiring Explorers*, soon replaced by *Dead Heroes*. *The Expiring Explorers* and *Dead Heroes* were

³¹ SAA 24 December 1862: 1.

³² SAA 18 October 1862: 1.

³³ *Revue et Gazette Musicale de Paris* 15 (10 April 1870) 116.

³⁴ SAA 6 September 1862: 2.

³⁵ SAA 12 January 1863: 1.

³⁶ SAA 28 October 1862: 2.

³⁷ SAA 27 May 1862: 2.

³⁸ SAA 12 January 1863: 1.

³⁹ SAA 20 October 1862: 1; *SMH* 10 January 1889: 8; *SMH* 14 November 1891: 2; *SMH* 14 November 1891: 2; *Argus* 27 August 1883: 8.

⁴⁰ 'Programme: Mdme. Charbonnet-Kellermann's and Master Maurice Kellermann's Private Audit of Pupils, Glen's Concert Hall April 24th, 1902,' Theatre Program Collection, State Library of Victoria.

essentially improvised music that aimed, with the aid of a synopsis, to describe the events of Burke, Wills and Kings' recent ill-fated expedition.⁴¹

The first performance of *The Expiring Explorers* (or *The Expiring Explorer* — it is advertised with both titles in *The Argus*) took place on 2 April 1862 at Hockin's Assembly Rooms in Melbourne. The synopsis consisted of five sections:

Adieu! Farewell to the Metropolis.
The Departure.
The Trials of the Route.
The Prayer.
Death of the Australian Heroes.⁴²

This performance received a mixed response from the Melbourne press. Though Poussard and Douay were uniformly recognised for their professional ability, opinions varied in response to their rendition of the Burke and Wills story. While praised by some for being 'extremely impressive,'⁴³ others felt that the subject matter of the work was not fully realised and that the music was not of a 'sufficiently descriptive character to forcibly illustrate the incidents of the ill-fated expedition, and maintain the title of the composition.'⁴⁴

In Adelaide, two months later, Poussard and Douay produced an extended version of *The Expiring Explorers*, naming it *Dead Heroes*. They had learnt from their experience in Melbourne and had made considerable adjustments to the original work. The new 'Grand Musical Drama' had a more elaborate synopsis of seventeen sections:

Preparations for Departure of the Expedition—Adieu—The Start—Songs of the Birds—Evening—Recollections of Home—The Route—The Hot Wind—The Work Accomplished—Leaving Carpentaria—Sufferings of the Explorers—Hope: Cooper's Creek—The Deserted Depot: Despair—Approach of Death—The Heavenly Music—The Prayer—The Closed Eyes.⁴⁵

Poussard and Douay assured the local press that *Dead Heroes* was written and composed in Adelaide: 'All that [was] played in Melbourne was a short piece descriptive of the death of Burke and Wills,' reads the *South Australian Advertiser*, 'but that produced on Wednesday evening was a most elaborate composition ... and has been we are assured composed and arranged in Adelaide.'⁴⁶ In a final display of ingratiation with their new audience, Poussard and Douay dedicated the work to Adelaide's own explorer, McDouall Stuart.

With *Dead Heroes*, Poussard and Douay had chosen a subject that was currently in vogue. The death of Burke and Wills was deeply felt in the community. The bravery and sacrifice of the explorers was eulogised in the papers and there was also a general mood of patriotism surrounding the events, a feeling that the experience was one that had profoundly changed the way Australians saw themselves.

⁴¹ Unfortunately, there are no known manuscripts of the music or text to have survived the period and the only available source is the contemporary press. While newspaper reviews and advertisements of *The Expiring Explorers* and *Dead Heroes* reveal much about the nature of the works, how they were constructed, and who performed them, the information is sketchy.

⁴² *Argus* 31 March 1862: 8.

⁴³ *Argus* 3 April 1862: 5.

⁴⁴ *Age* 3 April 1862: 5.

⁴⁵ *SAA* 10 June 1862: 1.

⁴⁶ *SAA* 12 June 1862: 2.

According to Tim Bonyhady, this was an era in which Australians were preoccupied with heroes.⁴⁷ 'Colonists were only too conscious that they had no William Tell or George Washington because they had not won their independence ... With the news from Cooper's Creek, settlers immediately recognized their opportunity to make up for this deficiency.'⁴⁸ Sarah Murgatroyd observes the mood from a Victorian perspective. When news reached Melbourne of the explorers' fate in November 1861, the public responded with an outpouring of grief yet, 'in the midst of [this] grief,' she notes, 'Victoria was strangely exultant ... there was nothing the public celebrated more than a dead hero.'⁴⁹

Poussard and Douay were not the only artists to 'cash in' on the Burke and Wills tragedy. In December 1861, a Christmas pantomime, *Valentine and Orson*, performed at the Theatre Royal in Melbourne, incorporated a scene titled 'The Apotheosis of the Victorian Explorers,'⁵⁰ while a wax works display toured South Australia from the month of July 1862 exhibiting life-size figurines of Burke, Wills and King. Two 'Grand Life-like Spectacles' were displayed at the Norfolk Arms, Rundle-Street.⁵¹ The first was 'RETURN to COOPER'S CREEK,' representing 'Burke, Wills, and King on their return from Carpentaria to the deserted depot at Cooper's Creek.'⁵² The second 'Grand Life-like Spectacle' shared the same title as Poussard and Douay's musical drama, 'DEAD HEROES.' This display, representing 'the DEATH of BURKE in the arms of KING' and 'WILLS DYING in solitude,'⁵³ was, for a portion of the tour at least, hidden from view behind a screen out of consideration for sensitive viewers.⁵⁴

Another reason for the success of *Dead Heroes* was that Poussard and Douay appealed to popular taste by improvising on familiar tunes. They represented various sections of their synopsis with variations on popular tunes of the day. Thus, for 'Preparations for Departure,' variations of 'The Last Rose of Summer' were played. 'The Start' was represented by 'Cheer Boys, Cheer,' the tune played by a volunteer band of musicians as Burke and Wills departed Melbourne on 20 August 1860. 'Recollections of Home' was represented by Bishop's 'Home Sweet Home' while "'The Work Accomplished'" gave the opportunity for the introduction of "Rule Britannia".⁵⁵

Poussard and Douay's choice of 'Rule Britannia' mirrors the strong patriotic sentiment surrounding the explorers' accomplishments. In February, 1861, Burke and Wills had reached the northern coast of Australia. According to Tim Bonyhady, 'they almost certainly intended to mark their achievement with some ceremony.'⁵⁶ McDouall Stuart, on his first attempt to cross the continent twenty years earlier, had planted a Union Jack at Mount Sturt. 'There he had buried a bottle containing the names of his party, built a large cairn of stones ... erected the Union Jack and led his two companions in giving "three cheers for the Flag, the emblem of civil and religious liberty".'⁵⁷ The final popular tune incorporated into Poussard and Douay's

⁴⁷ Tim Bonyhady, *Burke and Wills: From Melbourne to Myth* (Balmain: David Ell Press, 1991)186.

⁴⁸ Bonyhady, *Burke and Wills* 186.

⁴⁹ Sarah Murgatroyd, *The Dig Tree: The Story of Burke and Wills* (Melbourne: Text Publishing Company, 2002) 297.

⁵⁰ *Illustrated Australian Mail* 20 December 1861: 19.

⁵¹ SAA 31 July 1862: 1.

⁵² SAA 11 August 1862: 3.

⁵³ SAA 1 August 1862: 1.

⁵⁴ SAA 31 July 1862: 1.

⁵⁵ SAA 12 June 1862.

⁵⁶ Bonyhady, *Burke and Wills* 128.

⁵⁷ Bonyhady, *Burke and Wills* 130.

musical poem, 'See the Conquering Hero Comes,' used to portray the section of the synopsis entitled 'On Leaving Carpentaria,' celebrates the explorers' success at being the first men to cross the continent from south to north.⁵⁸

The majority of the Adelaide public felt that the 'introduction of various airs' enhanced Poussard's and Douay's *Dead Heroes* favourably by presenting the work 'as a united and intelligible whole.'⁵⁹ One reviewer even went so far as to suggest how the performers might take the concept further:

One desideratum is that every fresh passage in the composition should be introduced by a few notes from some well-known hymn or song, that would instantly serve as a key to the synopsis. To some extent this is done ... To carry out this idea, 'The approach of Death' might be ushered in with a few notes from the well-known piece—'Vital Spark.' If we might suggest an addition to the synopsis, it would be—'Sabbath in the Bush'—introducing 'The Evening Hymn' or 'The Vespers.' In this way the different parts of the composition would be so distinguished that even persons without musical discrimination would be at no loss to follow the *idea* of the piece, step by step, from the opening to the close.⁶⁰

In addition to the use of popular tunes, Poussard and Douay also used poetry to describe the events of their synopsis. The *South Australian Register* published part of the poem that accompanied the section of the synopsis entitled 'The Heavenly Music—the prayer—the closed eye:'

The seraph's golden lyre,
With chords of light and tones of fire;

And then:

So fades a summer cloud away;
So sinks the breeze when storms are o'er;
So gently shuts the eye of day;
So dies a wave along the shore.⁶¹

For one performance at least, taking place at the Tanunda Hotel in July 1862, this portion of the poem was sung by Amelia Bailey in an adjoining room, delighting all who were present. 'What can give greater pleasure than to listen to such a masterpiece?' reads the *South Australian Advertiser's* review of the concert. '... and the "Heavenly Music"—what can I say of it to express the impression it made on the audience—when Miss Bailey in the next room was blending her lovely voice with the sweet notes of the violin and violoncello the effect was magic.'⁶²

The *South Australian Register* praised Poussard and Douay's decision to portray the events of *Dead Heroes* through a combination of music and text, claiming that 'Musical sounds alone could never have suggested, or even have recalled, the ideas embodied in the ... synopsis of their "Poem".'⁶³

⁵⁸ SAA 12 June 1862.

⁵⁹ *South Australian Register* (hereafter SAR) 12 June 1862: 2.

⁶⁰ SAA 16 June 1862.

⁶¹ SAR 12 June 1862: 2.

⁶² SAA 1 August 1862: 2.

⁶³ SAR 12 June 1862: 2.

On the return of McKinlay and his party in October 1862, there was a renewed interest in the fate of Burke and Wills. McKinlay had been sent to Cooper's Creek with the task of finding the remains of the explorers. With the success of the expedition in 1862, McKinlay was hailed a hero in Adelaide. Poussard and Douay responded to the development of events with a revival of *Dead Heroes* in November 1862. Douay composed a harmonium solo, *Welcome in Honor of McKinlay and Party*, and a poem entitled 'Homage to McKinlay,' which was performed in the presence of McKinlay and party on 21 November.⁶⁴ The poem, originally written in French, was translated into English verse by Mr R.G. Wooldridge and recited by Mr G. Wood. Two verses of the translation were printed in the *South Australian Advertiser*:

But why should tears and sorrow cloud the joy experienced now,
As eagerly we place the laurel crown upon your brow,
And whilst that honour now we pay to whom that honour's due,
We cheer for your brave comrades—those comrades bold and true.

Yes, noble-hearted comrades, under McKinlay's rule,
Davis and Middleton and Wylde, and Hodgkinson and Poole;
And Kirby too—one ne'er forgot, though last not least I trow,
Oh! let our cheers assure you that we know your value now.⁶⁵

The final performance of *Dead Heroes* in South Australia was given on 22 January 1863, coinciding with McDouall Stuart's return to Adelaide.⁶⁶ *Dead Heroes* was in a continual state of revision and it is likely that no two performances of the work were the same. In August 1862, four months after the first performance of *The Expiring Explorers* in Melbourne, *Bell's Life in Victoria and Sporting Chronicle* reported with interest that 'the piece [had] been considerably augmented and improved by the composers ... so that it now [played for] more than half-an-hour.'⁶⁷ Improvements of the work did not stop there, however. On 13 November 1862, Poussard and Douay performed a modified version of *Dead Heroes* in which the final 'death scene,' the 'Heavenly music,' was accompanied by a chorus of voices instead of the usual harmonium.⁶⁸

Poussard and his companion, Douay, arrived in a country that was passing through a series of events that was shaping its identity. Australia was lamenting the loss of its 'first heroes.'⁶⁹ Seeing the mood and preoccupation of the Australian people, Poussard and Douay saw an opportunity to compose and perform a work that would appeal directly to the people's hearts. By the time of their departure from Adelaide in March 1863, they were widely known throughout the colony. Such was their reputation that one reviewer remarked: 'they have become familiar as "household words" ... everyone knows what perfect music is invariably discoursed by Poussard and Douay.'⁷⁰

⁶⁴ SAA 22 November 1862: 3.

⁶⁵ SAA 22 November 1862: 3.

⁶⁶ SAA 23 January 1863: 2.

⁶⁷ *Bell's Life in Victoria and Sporting Chronicle* 16 August 1862.

⁶⁸ SAA 14 November 1862: 2.

⁶⁹ Tim Bonyhady, *Burke and Wills: From Melbourne to Myth* (Canberra: National Library of Australia, 2002) 6.

⁷⁰ SAA 21 July 1862: 3.