

## Fitchett's Fallacy and Music at the New Zealand and South Seas Exhibition, Dunedin, 1889–1890



'THERE IS NO MUSIC IN NEW ZEALAND', claimed Alfred Fitchett, Anglican Dean of Dunedin, in the July 1895 Australasian *Review of Reviews*.<sup>1</sup> Fitchett, a man known for his opinionated writings on diverse subjects, complained of 'low' taste and 'scanty' musical knowledge and argued that except in two or three centres the 'best' music could not be produced or even understood by locals. He acknowledged that there was a 'piano in every other house, and a teacher for it in every street', but lamented the lack of music in its 'highest forms', such as oratorio and grand opera.<sup>2</sup> His claims were dismissive and élitist, but were they justified? Moreover, should we perpetuate them today? Examination of at least one large-scale musical event of the late nineteenth century suggests otherwise. Events at the New Zealand and South Seas Exhibition, held at Dunedin from November 1889 to April 1890, encapsulated many aspects of musical life in the colony and demonstrated that New Zealand was home to a rich and diverse musical culture, a culture all the more remarkable given New Zealand's small scale and geographical isolation.

Exhibitions provide a useful way into the cultures of their period and have been used by historians of New Zealand to explore a variety of themes and topics. The Centennial Exhibition, held at Wellington in 1940, is the subject of a book edited by William Renwick which includes a chapter on music by Allan Thomas.<sup>3</sup> The New Zealand and South Seas International Exhibition held at Dunedin in 1925–1926, an event of similar scale, has received less critical attention, although it has been the subject of articles and dissertations. The most comprehensive coverage of music at this event can be found in articles Walter Sinton wrote for the *Evening Star* in the 1970s.<sup>4</sup> A collection of essays on the country's third largest exhibition, the New Zealand International Exhibition held at Christchurch in 1906–1907, was published in 1998. The book includes a chapter on music by John Thomson.<sup>5</sup> Thomson has also written a brief survey of music at all of New Zealand's major exhibitions, including the small but pioneering event held at Dunedin in 1865.<sup>6</sup> The present article is the first detailed examination of music at the fourth largest of the New Zealand exhibitions, the New Zealand and South Seas Exhibition of 1889–1890.<sup>7</sup>

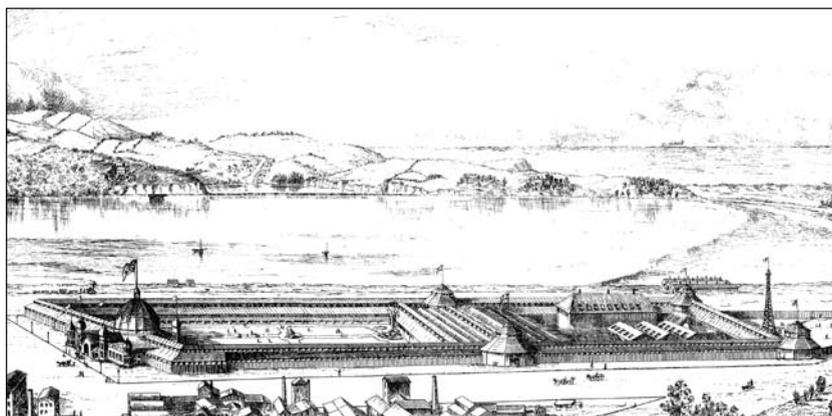
In 1889 Dunedin was a bustling commercial and industrial centre of 46,000 residents. It had grown rapidly over 40 years of organized European settlement but badly needed injections of money and confidence to combat economic depression. The New Zealand and South Seas Exhibition was an attempt to provide this boost, as well as a way to mark the 50th jubilee of the colony's foundation. The exhibition was the largest event of its kind mounted in New Zealand during the Victorian period, and like most exhibitions it

combined elements of the trade fair, funfair and festival.<sup>8</sup> Visitors could view numerous display courts promoting trade and industry, and visit a large art gallery featuring overseas and local works, as well as gardens, an aviary and numerous sideshow attractions, including a roller coaster, performing fleas and human freaks.<sup>9</sup> Places of refreshment included ‘oriental tearooms’ where it was claimed ‘a real live Hindu in native costume and in native style’ served the tea. Special events included the appearances of ‘Professor Jackson, the Aerial King’, who ascended 300 metres in his mammoth balloon and descended from the clouds in his ‘Patent Adjusting Parachute’.<sup>10</sup>

The exhibition’s buildings covered 5 hectares of reclaimed Harbour Board land and included a striking Moorish-style entrance on Jervois Street. The buildings were trifles compared to the structures at the contemporaneous Paris Exhibition, which covered 96 hectares and included the Eiffel Tower, but they were extensive by local standards. A scaled-down version of the Eiffel Tower, demonstrating the latest in lift equipment, was constructed at the southern end



**Figure 1:** The Moorish-style entrance to the exhibition buildings, designed by James Hislop. The concert hall can be seen in the background, to the left of the ‘Eiffel Tower’. Burton Brothers (photographers), Hardwicke Knight, *Dunedin: Early Photographs*, 1984.



**Figure 2:** Walter Leslie’s illustration of the exhibition buildings. The concert hall is the largest structure at the right-hand (southern) end of the complex. *Otago Witness*, 17 October 1889, supplement, National Library of New Zealand, Papers Past.

of the complex. In terms of physical scale and visitor numbers the exhibition remained unsurpassed in New Zealand until the Christchurch event of 1906–1907. The attendance total of 625,000 was greater than the entire European population of New Zealand and compared favourably with the 2 million who attended the far larger and more costly Melbourne Exhibition of 1888.<sup>11</sup>

The *Otago Witness* described the musical attractions at Dunedin as ‘undoubtedly the most ambitious, as well as the most difficult and risky, undertaking connected with the entire show’.<sup>12</sup> Music had been a feature of the Melbourne Exhibition, which served as a model and resource (of both talent and materials) for the Dunedin event.<sup>13</sup> A sum of £4500, representing 9% of the total exhibition budget, was spent on music.<sup>14</sup> This figure was dwarfed by the £28,000 allocated to music at Melbourne, but nevertheless demonstrated that cultural matters were valued by Dunedin’s community leaders, who had already overseen the establishment of a museum (1868), a university (1869) and a public art gallery (1884).<sup>15</sup> The exhibition’s seven-man music committee was made up mostly of local notables and businessmen, with a professional musician employed to provide artistic direction.<sup>16</sup> Competition for the post of musical director was invited from throughout Australia and New Zealand, and the successful applicant was Dunedin musician Arthur Towsey. Born in Oxfordshire, Towsey studied organ under the famous church musicians John Stainer and Gore Ouseley. He settled in Dunedin in 1865, when at the age of 19 he was appointed organist and choirmaster at St Paul’s Anglican Church (later Cathedral). In 1878 Towsey returned to England for further study, and for some time he was the organist at the weekday services of St Paul’s Cathedral in London. He arrived back in New Zealand in 1880, worked in Christchurch as an organist, teacher and conductor, and in 1888 was an organ recitalist at the Melbourne Exhibition. He was reappointed to his old position at St Paul’s, Dunedin, in 1889.<sup>17</sup> Other New Zealand centres had musicians of comparable qualifications and experience to Towsey. Wellington, for example, had Englishman Robert Parker, while the German Carl Schmitt was active in Auckland. One of Towsey’s competitors for the post of musical director was Frank Wallace, the conductor of the Christchurch Musical Society and a former leader of the Philharmonic and Crystal Palace orchestras in London. Men such as Towsey and Wallace would probably never have achieved prominence in Europe, but they were accomplished musicians whose influence was felt widely in their adopted homes.

The principal performing ensemble under Towsey’s direction was an orchestra of 30 professional members. They performed most afternoons and evenings during the exhibition. The leader (or principal violinist) was Raffaello Squarise, an Italian musician who had been a leading violinist, teacher and bandmaster in Adelaide for the previous six years. Other players from abroad were Eugene Winckelmann, a German cellist based in Sydney; Alfred Pleyer, an Austrian-born bassist from Melbourne; Fred Mumford, a violinist from Melbourne; and two members of a disbanded Spanish troupe from Madrid, violinist Joaquin Gazambide and cellist Julian Fernandez. The remaining performers included nine players from northern New Zealand centres and at least 14 local instrumentalists. Occasionally local amateurs increased the

orchestra's numbers to 45. Three women who played regularly in the violin section were not paid, instead receiving gifts and preserving their amateur status.<sup>18</sup>

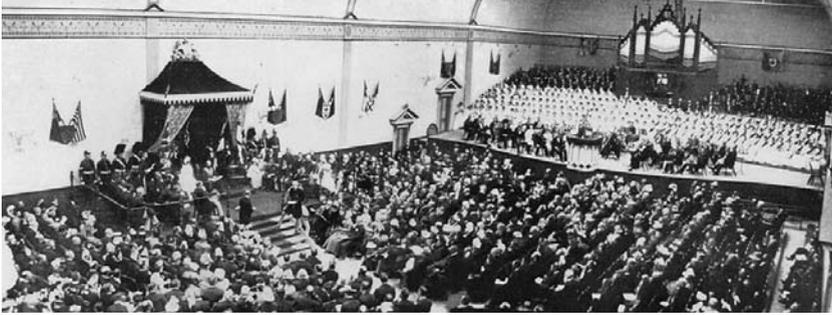


**Figure 3:** The New Zealand and South Seas Exhibition Orchestra with conductor Arthur Towsey standing at the centre of the photograph. The orchestra leader, Raffaello Squarise, is seated in front of him. Burton Brothers (photographers), Hocken Collections, E 1816/1.

New Zealand's first amateur orchestras had emerged in the 1860s, at which time they were often attached to choral societies. Due to the players and resources available these early groups were usually small and unbalanced, but during the 1870s and 1880s purely orchestral societies of up to 40 players emerged in the main centres.<sup>19</sup> The early establishment of the long-lived Dunedin Orchestral Society (1888–1939) was a particularly notable achievement given that permanent amateur groups were yet to be established in the larger Australian centres of Brisbane and Adelaide. Large professional orchestras were not found in New Zealand, but small professional groups were found in theatres. Despite some amateur involvement, the exhibition orchestra can claim to be New Zealand's first professional concert orchestra, pre-dating the larger and more frequently cited orchestra of the New Zealand International Exhibition at Christchurch by 17 years.<sup>20</sup>

When it came to forming a choir the exhibition's music committee was said to have been 'fairly embarrassed' by offers of assistance from the members of various Dunedin choirs. Choral societies were easier to organize than their orchestral counterparts (largely due to the diversity of instruments required by an orchestra) and were the most common form of musical society in New Zealand. The large Dunedin Choral Society had recently collapsed, but a male choir, a suburban choral society and numerous church choirs were active. Each applicant for the exhibition choir was auditioned and 400 singers (almost

double the number anticipated) were enrolled.<sup>21</sup> They sang on a weekly or fortnightly basis throughout the exhibition.



**Figure 4:** A scene inside the exhibition concert hall during the opening ceremony, 26 November 1889. The Governor, Lord Onslow, and the official party can be seen on the platform to the left. The choir and orchestra are seated on stage. D.A. de Maus (photographer), *Otago Witness*, 17 November 1925, p.49, Hocken Collections, E 6832/19A.

The choir and orchestra performed in a specially built concert hall, with a seating capacity of 3000. The hall's interior was colourfully decorated with Indian red on the lower walls, a straw colour above this height and a two-toned grey ceiling. With a touch of Victorian etiquette, ladies entered the stage from the right-hand side, gentlemen from the left.<sup>22</sup> The hall featured a two-manual pipe organ. The organist was Arthur Barth, who had been the organist at Dunedin's Knox Church since 1884 and was a leading teacher, recitalist and conductor in the city.<sup>23</sup> Another example of New Zealand's best musical talent, Barth was the composer of more than a dozen published songs and piano works and had performed as a piano concerto soloist at London's Royal Albert Hall in 1873. During the exhibition he assisted at the larger concerts and gave weekly recitals. Other talented local organists who performed at the exhibition included Thomas Faulkner, the blind organist of Trinity Wesleyan Church, and Albert Vallis, the organist at St Matthew's Anglican Church. Vallis also acted as the exhibition's official pianist.

The most prominent musical performers, however, were vocal soloists. These included the famous English baritone Charles Santley, then touring New Zealand, and at least five Australian singers: the sopranos Ellen Atkins, Fanny Bristow, Minna Schrader and Bertha Rossow, and the contralto Frederica Mitchell. By far the majority of soloists, though, were New Zealand residents, including at least a dozen from northern centres.<sup>24</sup> The quality of vocal talent in New Zealand was reflected in the success of Dunedin singers abroad, some of whom faced critical audiences in Europe and studied in famous European academies. A local journal claimed that 'the efforts of their colonial instructors ... called forth the warmest acknowledgment from experts'.<sup>25</sup> A conspicuous example of such success was Philip Newbury, who was born in Jersey but grew up in Dunedin and became an internationally renowned touring artist. Numerous Dunedin soloists appeared at the exhibition, and the *New Zealand Musical Monthly* placed Dunedin's Harry Stockwell first among all the tenors,

while the public voted for Harry Smith as their preferred male vocalist for a concert given towards the close of the show.<sup>26</sup> The pages of the *Musical Monthly* are a rich source of information relating to the exhibition, and the existence of this dedicated musical periodical provides further evidence of the country's rich musical culture. The journal was edited by James Stewart Algie and published out of Balclutha between January 1888 and December 1890.<sup>27</sup> It focused on brass band music, but also canvassed opera, choral music and general concert activities, and demonstrated various networks of musicians active in New Zealand as well as an engagement with the musical world in Australia, Europe and America. Similar content afterwards found wider circulation in C.N. Baeyertz's *Triad* magazine published in Dunedin from 1893.

One of the *Musical Monthly*'s critics lamented that while there were many splendid instrumentalists in the exhibition orchestra, only five violin and four cello solos were performed during the entire course of the exhibition, with 'an occasional show for the other instrumentalists and a few trios and quartets'.<sup>28</sup> The most prominent instrumental soloist was the violinist Raffaello Squarise who, according to the *Evening Star*, 'made his mark on the first opportunity' and was 'thereafter recognized as a conscientious and talented player fully deserving the high reputation that preceded him from South Australia'.<sup>29</sup> On one occasion appreciation of Squarise's playing was displayed by 'the beating of time with the feet by many in the gallery and back portion of the house'. This particularly annoyed Louisa Baker, an *Otago Witness* columnist, who remarked: 'when Signor Squarise was playing divinely, and one listened almost afraid to breathe for fear of losing a note, great lumbering men were driving half the audience wild with their boots. It is enough to unnerve the performers by the irritation it must cause. It is bad enough in the orchestral pieces, but in the solos it is simply abominable. Such a practice does not indicate an ear for music, and there is no music in "size 10's" full of nails.'<sup>30</sup> The enthusiasm of this audience might have been explained by the attendance of many who were not regular concert goers, although instances of foot-stamping were recorded at other performances in New Zealand. Judith May notes that when the local pianist Gertrude Cadzow performed Chopin's *Valse in A flat* at a West Coast concert in 1896 she did so to the accompaniment of 'rude Reeftonian boots'.<sup>31</sup> Baker remarked that exhibition visitors were complaining loudly of this nuisance and observed that while these visitors were accustomed to strict silence in their own concert halls and theatres, in Dunedin people 'blunder in and out, changing their seats and holding audible conversations with one another at the very moment when there should be a dead silence'.<sup>32</sup> But Dunedin audiences did not have exclusive claims to gaucherie. Similar complaints were aired in the pages of London's *Musical Times*, and Thérèse Radic records disruption at orchestral concerts in Melbourne during the 1890s, where one observer suggested that the orchestra 'might as well play to a poultry yard'.<sup>33</sup> Such behaviour was a reflection of time rather than the place, and should not be read as support for Fitchett's assertion that musical knowledge and appreciation were more or less non-existent in New Zealand.

Attendance at exhibition concerts was initially disappointing, but it improved

markedly as the exhibition wore on. By January 1890 the *Otago Daily Times* noted that the afternoon concerts were ‘evidently becoming more and more popular’.<sup>34</sup> An *Evening Star* commentator, however, remarked that the majority of works performed at exhibition concerts were ‘commonplace’ and did little to challenge orchestra or audience, while the *Otago Witness* columnist ‘Civis’ (possibly Fitchett) claimed that ‘at many a French and German restaurant you can *dine* to the same sort of thing’.<sup>35</sup> Concerts held on Saturday evenings provided music of an ‘especially popular character, rendered doubly attractive by the ballads and concerted music of the vocal artists’.<sup>36</sup> Most of the other concerts were similarly varied in nature and repertoire and could include almost anything, from ballads and operatic selections through to orchestral overtures and instrumental solos. This was the format followed at most public concerts throughout Australasia. The homogeneous programming favoured by later generations was unusual, even in London, where the ‘miscellaneous concert’ format was criticized during the 1880s and 1890s, notably by Bernard Shaw.<sup>37</sup>

The most frequent performances at the exhibition were afternoon orchestral concerts which took place most days. Here Italian operatic compositions proved popular, particularly overtures and ‘selections’ featuring the principal melodies of a particular opera. Dance pieces and the works of contemporary English composers such as Frederic Cowen and Arthur Sullivan were also favoured. Only a handful of complete symphonies were performed, these being Beethoven’s no. 5, Mendelssohn’s no. 5 (the ‘Reformation’), and Haydn’s nos 5, 45 (the ‘Farewell’) and 94 (the ‘Surprise’). Of the composers performed, Handel was almost the only representative of the baroque period, but this was in keeping with practice in London and throughout Europe where the revival of baroque music (particularly instrumental music) was still a growing phenomenon.<sup>38</sup> Of the classical composers Beethoven and Haydn were frequently performed, and Mendelssohn was heard so often that there were complaints.<sup>39</sup> This was safe repertoire, firmly in the nineteenth-century canon, and a disappointment to Fitchett, who felt it failed to live up to the promise that ‘good music was to do much for the exhibition and the exhibition was to do something for good music’.<sup>40</sup> At the Melbourne Exhibition similar works had been performed, but major works by romantic composers had a more significant role. The 35 symphonies performed there included works by Berlioz, Brahms and Schumann, compositions well beyond the numerical resources, if not the interpretative skills, of the Dunedin orchestra.<sup>41</sup> In Dunedin, ‘classical concerts’ were held on Saturday afternoons ‘to cater to the *dilettanti* by performing the choicest of chamber music’.<sup>42</sup> They included German lieder, Italian arias and classical string quartets, but the concerts were discontinued after four weeks due to a lack of support.

The lacklustre response to such innovations invited some public comment suggesting that audiences lacked discernment.<sup>43</sup> Charles Santley was the most famous baritone of the day, but Fitchett remarked that he was ‘in some places compared, to his disadvantage, with the local baritones’.<sup>44</sup> Fitchett also complained that the exhibition audiences preferred ‘chiefly pieces with simple dance rhythms’, and noted that ‘amongst the dead failures’ was Beethoven’s

fifth symphony. ‘This’, he wrote, ‘whilst it put the orchestra into a sweat, left the audience cold, not to say mystified’.<sup>45</sup> The repertoire for a plebiscite concert (a concert at which most of the repertoire and performers were selected by public vote) found the most popular orchestral selection to be Michaelis’s march, *Turkish Patrol*, with the other popular items being Emile Dunkler’s *Au Bord de la Mer*, Rossini’s *William Tell* and a selection from Wagner’s *Rienzi*. Two movements from Haydn’s ‘Farewell’ symphony were also performed at the concert.<sup>46</sup> The selection at a similar plebiscite concert at the Melbourne Exhibition had consisted of Beethoven’s ‘Pastoral’ symphony, the *Tannhäuser* and *Rienzi* overtures by Wagner, the famous *Largo* by Handel, and *Hungarian Rhapsody no. 1* by Liszt.<sup>47</sup> This indicates some disparity between the taste of Melbourne and Dunedin audiences, although not conclusively given that the selections came from larger lists of repertoire selected by the respective music committees. The differences were more indicative of these committees’ assessments of local tastes and the resources at their disposal than of the audiences themselves.

Oratorio, the pinnacle of musical achievement to Fitchett and so many Victorians, was present at the exhibition, demonstrating its significant place in New Zealand culture and the strength of the choral movement in the colony. It also reflected the significance of Christianity and the tradition of public worship, and the philosophy that music could influence morals and be a tool for public education. Oratorio was represented at the exhibition by three major but long-established works: *Messiah* (Handel), *Elijah* (Mendelssohn) and *Creation* (Haydn). Two thousand people packed the exhibition’s concert hall to hear the Christmas Day performance of *Messiah*, and a repeat performance took place on Boxing Day.<sup>48</sup> In 1894 a newspaper commentator described performances of *Messiah* as ‘given here so frequently that there is now at hand what may be regarded as a permanent chorus’.<sup>49</sup> The city’s first complete performance of *Messiah* had taken place on Christmas Eve 1863, and subsequent performances often took place around that time of year (as they did in other New Zealand centres). In this respect New Zealand transplanted a tradition long-established in England, and the oratorio’s performance provides a further example of the many English traditions Alison Clarke identifies as characteristic of the Christmas season in nineteenth-century New Zealand.<sup>50</sup>

The choir and soloists of *Messiah* were highly complimented in the press, though the orchestra was criticized for its ‘happy-go-lucky’ approach and a substituted cornet solo in ‘The Trumpet Shall Sound’ was considered so unsatisfactory that the number was left out at a second performance.<sup>51</sup> On other occasions the orchestra was well received, and it was frequently compared to that of the Melbourne Exhibition in 1888. This was a comparison that at least the *Otago Witness* found ‘absurd’, though they thought the music ‘very good indeed’.<sup>52</sup> The Melbourne orchestra had numbered 73 performers (including 16 brought out from England) and was conducted by Frederic Cowen, one of the foremost English musicians of the day.<sup>53</sup> A correspondent to one of the Sydney dailies felt that, in Dunedin, ‘the execution was often good, sometimes excellent’ but the performances lacked soul, rather like a ‘beautiful landscape on a dull, foggy day’.<sup>54</sup> Even though the orchestra played to a professional

standard and could be subjected to professional standards of criticism, it was not of the same scale or ability as the best international or even colonial orchestras.

New Zealand compositions (at least, those by immigrant composers) were not a feature of the exhibition music. For the Melbourne Exhibition a special *Exhibition Cantata* had been composed and performed, but a general policy not to allow any colonial works to be performed was implemented in order to avoid local jealousies. A special exception was made for one concert of works by local composers.<sup>55</sup> No such policy was announced at Dunedin, and there is no known record of the issue having been discussed. Occasionally local compositions appeared but they attracted little press attention. They included *From Austral Shores*, an orchestral gavotte by Dunedin-educated George Clutsam and Thomas Faulkner's *Exhibition March*, which the composer performed at several of his organ recitals. New Zealand-composed choral works included Frederick Leech's *All Hail! Zealandia*, M. Bunny's *Zealandia! Home of the True and Brave* and the visiting Christchurch Liedertafel sang Arthur Towsey's 'melodious little gem', *Parting Song*. The most familiar local work was *God Defend New Zealand*, and Arthur Barth set another of Thomas Bracken's texts to music as the *Exhibition Anthem*. This was performed on several occasions in the concert hall for the Otago Sunday School Union's Choral and Floral Festival. Although Raffaello Squarise's *Symphony in C Minor* was not composed locally, the composer's residence in Dunedin gave it local interest. Squarise conducted the work at a popular concert in December and it was warmly received, a reviewer remarking: 'the composition is tuneful — occasionally pretty — and there is much of originality about it'.<sup>56</sup> The symphony was repeated by popular request at a concert in March. A 'devoted Irishwoman' wrote to Squarise: 'Your symphony on Saturday evening was *grand*, and your conducting was a treat to look at.... What shall I do when you go, I shall indeed be a sad girl.'<sup>57</sup>

Some compositions were entered for competition as exhibits: Dunedin music teacher George Moore exhibited one of his pieces, for which he was highly commended.<sup>58</sup> First awards were given to Egideus Pfeiffer, a draughtsman from Hokitika, for his 'songs', and to Walter Leslie of Dunedin for his *South Seas Valse*, which was performed at the exhibition by a string band and published in a piano arrangement.<sup>59</sup> Dance music was particularly popular with publishers. Balls were held frequently in Dunedin, particularly during the six months of the exhibition, and one of the largest events accommodated an estimated 2000 guests.<sup>60</sup> F.W. Jones published his *Exhibition Waltz* in association with the show, while the previously mentioned works of Leech and Barth were also published, indicating that there was an active music-publishing industry in New Zealand, though one restricted to short, saleable works.<sup>61</sup>

New Zealand music publishers included the three large retailers who had display bays in the exhibition buildings. These were the Dunedin companies Charles Begg & Co. and the Dresden Piano Co., and the Christchurch firm Milner & Thompson.<sup>62</sup> The main features of their displays were pianos, organs and other instruments, and recitals were held demonstrating them. 'The Dresden' had its own string band, and among the more unusual performances were

zither and whistling recitals. Novelties ranged from musical toys through to original autographs and letters from famous composers such as Mendelssohn.<sup>63</sup> The Princes Street premises of the Dunedin firms were extensive, with sheet music salons, instrument showrooms, manufacturing workshops and concert rooms. By the turn of the century the Dresden would claim to have agencies in 50 New Zealand towns, while Begg's also had agencies throughout the country. The Dresden advertised 'Accordeons [*sic*], Bagpipes, Chanter Reeds, Brass Instruments in great variety, Violins, Flutes, Piccolos, Concertinas, Metronomes, Music Stools, Music Chairs, Music Canterburies [for music storage], 'Cellos, Double Basses, &c.'<sup>64</sup> Their most significant trade, however, was in pianos, and in the mid-1890s the company claimed that their Dunedin warehouses alone never held fewer than 200 large instruments, such as pianos, organs and harmoniums.<sup>65</sup> This reflected the central role of the piano in New Zealand music-making and the instrument's international rise in popularity as the standard of living increased and the prices of instruments and printed music dropped.<sup>66</sup> Between 1878 and 1914 nearly 100,000 pianos were imported to New Zealand and annual imports increased from 1228 in 1878 to a peak of 5696 in 1912.<sup>67</sup> Fitchett wrote of 'a piano in every other house'.<sup>68</sup> Given the population of the colony, the large size of families, and allowing that a piano should give several decades of use, this may have been close to the truth.

The judges of the musical instruments exhibited at the show were Arthur Towsey, Raffaello Squarise, Alfred Pleyer, and local teacher, conductor, and former music retailer George West. The great majority of pianos in New Zealand were imported, but the exhibits showed that there was something of an instrument-building industry in New Zealand. Among the locally built instruments were two iron-framed 'colonial pianos' built by Frederick Howell, who had produced over 60 instruments over the previous five years.<sup>69</sup> Begg's also had an 'Exhibition Model', which was at least partially constructed in New Zealand, and was the latest from a firm which had manufactured pianos in Dunedin since the 1860s. John Shearer of Dunedin exhibited two violins made of native wood, for which he won first and third prize awards. Other New Zealand-built instruments included a further four violins, a viola, a set of Highland bagpipes made of Southland materials, a 'reed parlour organ' cased in New Zealand timber, and a chancel or chamber organ by the Christchurch firm Sandford & Parson, the same firm responsible for the organ in the concert hall.<sup>70</sup> Unfortunately the organ in the hall proved to be a poor one. A critic from the *Musical Monthly* declared it half a tone out of tune, and impossible for the orchestra to tune to. Further, it possessed so resistant an action that in the words of visiting organist Frank Bradley, it 'would have had his arms off before an evening was through'.<sup>71</sup>

Brass and military bands provided the principal musical activity that took place outside the concert hall. The exhibition commissioner, Richard Twopeny, had insisted there be free music which everyone could hear as they walked about, and although he did not obtain the British military band he wanted, various city and suburban bands performed most evenings.<sup>72</sup> By the 1880s brass and military bands flourished in New Zealand, and at the time of the exhibition important Dunedin bands included the Ordinance, Garrison, Engineers',

Kaikorai and Caversham bands. The band movement followed a similar, if delayed, pattern of expansion to the one Jeffrey Richards identifies in Britain. Key contributing factors in this expansion included increased instrument manufacture, cheaper sheet music, the development of music education and a rise in the number of professional musicians.<sup>73</sup>

In March 1890 a 'Grand Band Contest' was held in conjunction with the exhibition. Advertised as 'the greatest band competition ever organized in the Southern Hemisphere', its significance has since been highlighted by S.P. Newcomb, who identifies it as the most 'ambitious and spectacular' contest staged in the antipodes during the nineteenth century, and as the first New Zealand contest to feature a quickstep event.<sup>74</sup> As in Britain, band contests were held regularly and some bands travelled hundreds of kilometres to participate. The exhibition contest featured 14 South Island and two North Island bands, competing for a prize of £200.<sup>75</sup> The principal judge was Charles Mackintosh, a prominent and versatile Wellington musician. The other judges were Raffaello Squarise, who had conducted bands in Italy and South Australia, and the orchestra's bassist, Alfred Pleyer, who was a former conductor of bands in the Austrian and Russian armies.<sup>76</sup>

Controversy was not unusual at the British or the colonial band competitions of this period, and was usually sparked by claims that the judges or other bandsmen had perpetrated some injustice, with indignant feeling often exacerbated by wounded pride.<sup>77</sup> So it was not surprising that there was a 'boil over' at the Dunedin contest. Difficulties had begun well before the contest started, when the English publishers Hawkes & Son provided as the test selection (to be played by all competing bands) an arrangement by Jules Rivièrè from Rossini's opera *Le Comte Ory*. Operatic pot-pourris were used as contest pieces in England as early as the 1840s and 1850s, and they were standard fare at competitive events, but New Zealand bandsmen considered Rivièrè's arrangement too simple, and *Le Comte Ory* was described as having 'long ago passed out of the list of performable operas'.<sup>78</sup> Further discontent was expressed when it emerged that the arrangement had already been used at a contest in England. Evidently the publishers underestimated the standards of band musicians in New Zealand.

The contest itself ran smoothly but trouble surfaced again when the results were announced; the decisions of the judges caused a stir that would not go away for many months. To begin with, the grand prize was awarded to the relatively unknown Oamaru Naval Artillery Band.<sup>79</sup> This band had formed five years earlier following a split in the Oamaru Garrison Band, and was generally seen as a youthful newcomer, though it had shown gradual improvement at competitions over a period of several years and many of its players had previous experience in contests.<sup>80</sup> Most of the rival bandsmen took the result 'quietly and good-humouredly' at first, but on the publication of the point-tables a tremendous row broke out.<sup>81</sup> The debate centred less on who had won and more on the distribution of points and the relative rankings. One bandsman was incensed when Mackintosh suggested it was 'no disgrace' to be beaten by the Burnham Industrial School Band. 'No disgrace!' wrote the bandsman, 'Perhaps he thought Christchurch and Taranaki would consider it an honour

to be on the same level as reformatory boys!’<sup>82</sup> There was also argument over the judges’ alteration of the marking system, which shifted the weighting of the marks away from the unpopular *Le Comte Ory* selection and towards the items in the ‘own selection’ section.<sup>83</sup> The judges became the targets of much criticism, and it was remarked in the *Witness* that ‘there is a general agreement amongst musicians that they, poor souls, were simply reduced to imbecility. Conclusive evidence of the fact is afforded by their awards. By the time that the sixteenth repetition was reached they could not have told a drum from a bass fiddle or the band of the Horse Guards from the melancholy tooters of the Salvation Army’.<sup>84</sup> Letters of protest circulated and at the presentation of the awards the second- and third-placed bands were given a pointedly enthusiastic reception. When Mackintosh appeared on stage to perform a clarinet solo some hissed at him.<sup>85</sup> The competition itself had taken only three days, but heated letters to the editor of the *Musical Monthly* were still being published five months after the competition had finished.

The behaviour of the exhibition orchestra also proved boisterous at times. The *Musical Monthly* reported:

Unfortunately, if rumour be correct, the orchestra is not always a happy family, but then whoever did hear of thirty musicians, each being accustomed to crow on his own particular dunghill, remaining for any length of time in amity and accord? As long as they do not settle their differences publicly, I suppose it is no business of outsiders; and we will therefore dismiss the subject of the rumours of the big burly man’s attempt to throttle a superior officer, of the ill-feeling that has intervened between two prominent members to throw them out of speaking terms, of the drunkenness that brought about the dismissal of one performer, and that has caused another to be cautioned respecting his future behaviour, and of the remissness of others who have taken ‘French leave’ from entertainments, and have been mulct in stiff penalties for doing so.<sup>86</sup>

A serious disagreement also took place between Towsey and Barth, the exhibition’s organist. The trouble arose after Towsey accompanied the vocalist Julia Knight on the organ, apparently with the intention of demonstrating that the instrument was better than some had suggested. Barth found this an ‘unwarrantable interference’ and immediately resigned. The *Musical Monthly* remarked that, if it was any consolation to Barth, Towsey had drowned out the vocalist and Miss Knight had refused to undergo the ordeal of another solo under similar circumstances.<sup>87</sup>

Barth was quickly replaced by Albert Vallis, but Towsey’s relationship with his orchestra remained uneasy. At one time there was talk of the exhibition orchestra touring the country, but one commentator rightly doubted that this would eventuate, remarking that relations existing between a number of the members were somewhat ‘strained’ and that Towsey did ‘not pull particularly well with them’.<sup>88</sup> Towsey’s conducting received ‘sneering comment’ from some, although this was attributed to local jealousies. His appointment had ruffled the feathers of some other Dunedin musicians, a feeling that was said to have ‘if anything, intensified during the progress of the exhibition’.<sup>89</sup> Most were enthusiastic about his work, however, and one columnist considered that Towsey had ‘stuck to his choir and orchestra like a Briton, and licked them

into shape and whipped the music out of them in first-rate style'.<sup>90</sup> He was described in the *Otago Witness* as 'almost great' in his musical stature, and his relations with the orchestra were good enough to warrant the gift of a clock from the players towards the end of the exhibition.<sup>91</sup>

The exhibition had marked a coming-of-age in New Zealand as the colony demonstrated its newfound capabilities in industry, science and culture. As expected, it posted a small loss, but attracted many visitors to Dunedin and was credited with providing indirect profits to the Otago region. The musical events showed a final deficit of £2625, but this was not surprising, as most concerts were free and intended as part of the overall attraction.<sup>92</sup> Writing about the musical activities at the smaller Tasmanian exhibition of 1895, Anne-Marie Forbes refers to the 'moral profit in the face of unsatisfactory financial return'; a similar claim could be made about Dunedin.<sup>93</sup> The legacy of the South Seas Exhibition included the subsequent careers of several overseas musicians who had come to participate in the event and were afterwards encouraged to stay. Chief among them was Raffaello Squarise, who settled in Dunedin and was well known as a violinist, music teacher, conductor and composer until his retirement in 1933.<sup>94</sup> The orchestra's principal cellist, Eugene Wincklemann, also chose to remain, and was briefly prominent as a teacher and performer until his departure in 1892. More significantly, the exhibition provided lasting memories of many musical events, and gave bold expression to the musical culture of New Zealand. It showed off vocal and instrumental soloists, orchestras, brass and military bands, organists, chamber groups, dance music, parlour pianos, local composition, music retailing and more. The colony was shown to be home to skilled professional musicians who brought experience from overseas and maintained their international links. Amateurs, too, had proved capable and talented. Some other features of the colony's musical culture received little representation at the exhibition. These included Maori music, piping, the folk music of migrant communities, church music, vaudeville and opera.

In light of events at the exhibition, it was unreasonable for Fitchett to claim there was 'no music in New Zealand'. It was true that certain activities were frustrated by limited resources and small demand, but there was a broad appreciation of music and an active and continued fostering of the art in the colony. Fitchett was criticized immediately after writing his article by some of those who knew better, notably by C.N. Baeyertz, the outspoken music critic and founder-editor of the *Triad* magazine. In a rebutting article, Baeyertz claimed 'music in New Zealand flourishes and grows apace, certain of a brilliant future' and suggested that Fitchett should receive 'grave censure for an article which is neither more nor less than a slander upon our nation'.<sup>95</sup> Fitchett subsequently changed his position. In 1901 he used his Trinity College prize-giving speech to make 'public recantation' for his article, saying he had 'written in ignorance'.<sup>96</sup>

Modern historians should not perpetuate Fitchett's original fallacy. Twentieth-century dismissal of New Zealand's late-colonial culture is already being re-examined, as in Jane Stafford and Mark Williams's recent exploration of the literature of the 'Maoriland' period (1872–1914).<sup>97</sup> Late-colonial music

is the subject of a very small body of research and has been dismissed more through neglect than through derogatory comment, though even in the *Oxford History of New Zealand* there are references to communities which ‘could mount “concerts”, at which amateurs of little skill recited maudlin verse or sang trivial songs’, and to brass bands which ‘produced sounds of reasonable quality’.<sup>98</sup> In some discussion, growth and innovation are emphasized to an extent that implies late-colonial music was merely a worthy precursor to something better.<sup>99</sup> Increasingly researchers are examining this music more in its own terms, and authors such as John Thomson, Adrienne Simpson and Allan Thomas have drawn attention to examples of industry and diversity in colonial music and to the many cultural influences that contributed to it.<sup>100</sup> Such research should now be incorporated into a broader cultural view. Colonial life was saturated with musical activity and it should be acknowledged that music was not less meaningful or significant then than it is today, nor were its practitioners less musical than those who perform today. Music not only reflected New Zealand’s colonial society, it contributed to shaping it as well.

DAVID MURRAY

*Dunedin*

## NOTES

1 A.R. Fitchett, 'Musicians and Musical Taste in Australasia', *Review of Reviews* (Australasian edition), 7, 7 (1895), pp.29–36. Quotation on p.29. Alfred Robertson Fitchett was Vicar of All Saints Church, Dunedin, from 1879 and Dean of St Paul's Cathedral from 1894. For many years he wrote as 'Civis' for the *Otago Daily Times*. He was also an amateur composer. See A.E.J. Fitchett, 'Fitchett, Alfred Robertson', in Jane Thomson, ed., *Southern People: A Dictionary of Otago Southland Biography*, Dunedin, 1998, pp.162–3.

2 Fitchett, 'Musicians and Musical Taste in Australasia', p.30.

3 Allan Thomas, 'Centennial Music', in William Renwick, ed., *Creating a National Spirit: Celebrating New Zealand's Centennial*, Wellington, 2004, pp.232–45.

4 *Evening Star* (ES), 8 March 1975, p.11; 22 March 1975, p.11. These articles belong to the series of articles by Walter Sinton entitled 'Entertainment in Dunedin: A History', which appeared in the paper between 1974 and 1979. See also Miriam E. Smith, 'The History of New Zealand Exhibitions with Particular Reference to the New Zealand and South Seas International Exhibition, Dunedin, 1925–6', MA research essay, The University of Auckland, 1974; Stephanie C. Lamond, '"The Merry Mix Up": A History of the New Zealand and South Seas International Exhibition, Dunedin, 1925–1926', BA (Hons) long essay, University of Otago, 1989.

5 John Mansfield Thomson, '"A Triumph for Instrumental Music of the Highest Type": From the Orchestra to the Besses o'th' Barn Band', in John Mansfield Thomson, ed., *Farewell Colonialism: The New Zealand International Exhibition, Christchurch, 1906–1907*, Palmerston North, 1998, pp.79–93.

6 John Mansfield Thomson, 'Sight and Sounds: Exhibitions and New Zealand Music 1865–1940', *Music in New Zealand*, 16 (1992), pp.34–39, 60.

7 David Murray, 'Raffaello Squarise: The Colonial Career of an Italian Maestro', PhD thesis, University of Otago, 2005.

8 The exhibition grew from an idea promoted by local journalist and entrepreneur Douglas Harris Hastings, who became exhibition secretary. Other figures instrumental in the planning and running of the exhibition included John Roberts (President), Richard Twopeny (Commissioner) and Jules Joubert (General Manager). Twopeny and Joubert came with considerable experience of Australian exhibitions.

9 D. Harris Hastings, 'The Second Exhibition', *Otago Witness* (OW), 17 November 1925, p.17. *New Zealand and South Seas Exhibition Gazette*, 26 February 1890, p.4. Other sideshow attractions included an orchestrion (a mechanical musical instrument), wax works, merry-go-round, shooting gallery, orrery (an astronomical model), phrenological bureau, gipsy tent and Punch and Judy show.

10 Edith Searle Grossman, 'New Zealand's Bygone Exhibitions', OW, 17 November 1925, p.8.

11 *ibid*; D. Harris Hastings, *Official Record of the New Zealand and South Seas Exhibition held at Dunedin 1889–90*, Wellington, 1891, p.345; K.C. McDonald, *City of Dunedin: A Century of Civic Enterprise*, Dunedin, 1965, p.324; Angus Tumble, 'Exhibitions', in Graeme Davison, John Hirst and Stuart Macintyre, eds, *The Oxford Companion to Australian History*, revised ed., Melbourne, 2001, pp.230–1.

12 OW, 20 March 1890, p.25.

13 John Thomson also identifies the Melbourne Exhibition as a model for the Christchurch Exhibition of 1906–1907.

14 *New Zealand Musical Monthly* (NZMM), 3, 5 (1890), p.73.

15 Thérèse Radic, 'Some Historical Aspects of Musical Associations in Melbourne 1888–1915', PhD thesis, University of Melbourne, 1979, p.45.

16 The members of the music committee were George Bell, Henry Mackenzie, Max Menderhausen, George Israel, Richard Oliver, Harry Smith and William Wills. Bell was the first chairman, followed by Mackenzie. Israel was secretary.

17 'Obituary: Mr. Arthur Towsey', *New Zealand Radio Record*, 19 June 1931, p.5.

18 Margaret Campbell, *Music in Dunedin*, Dunedin, 1945, p.50; OW, 28 November 1889, pp.19–20; Hastings, *Official Record*, p.7; NZMM, 2, 11 (1889), p.132. The women violinists were Blanche Joel, Nina Schlotel and Miss Packer. In the nineteenth century the title 'amateur' was often valued by those who wished to make a social distinction between themselves and career musicians.

19 The first purely orchestral societies to appear in the main centres were the Christchurch Orchestral Society (1871), the Wellington Orchestral Society (1882), the Dunedin Orchestral Society (1888) and the Auckland Orchestral Union (1889).

20 The claim that the Christchurch orchestra was New Zealand's 'first professional symphony orchestra' was made over 60 years ago in Maurice Hurst, *Music and the Stage in New Zealand: A Century of Entertainment, 1840–1943*, Auckland, 1944, p.48. Later sources have extended the claim and omitted the qualifying word 'symphony'. The *Bateman New Zealand Encyclopedia*, 6th ed., Auckland, 2005, p.457, states: 'the first signs of professional orchestral activity [in New Zealand] appeared in 1906'.

21 OW, 28 November 1889, p.19. By the opening of the exhibition this number was reduced to 367, with 150 sopranos, 85 altos, 60 tenors and 72 basses. The choir held two rehearsals weekly for several months leading up to the exhibition.

22 OW, 28 November 1889, p.16.

23 NZMM, 3, 3 (1890), p.36; Hastings, *Official Record*, p.3; *Cyclopedia of New Zealand, Vol. IV* (Otago and Southland Provincial Districts), Christchurch, 1905, p.221.

24 NZMM, 3, 5 (1890), pp.72–73. Singers from northern New Zealand centres included Julia Knight, Isa Spensley, Katherine Hardy, A.J. Chamberlain, William Izard, Maitland Gladden, Edwin J. Hill, Fred Hobbs, George Normanton, John Prouse and John Puschell.

25 *Triad*, 3, 6 (1895), p.7.

26 NZMM, 3, 5 (1890), p.77.

27 Algie discontinued the journal after three years as his printing and other business interests prevented him from devoting time to it. In the final issue he explained that, although he had covered expenses and made a small profit, the journal had been a philanthropic exercise on his part and was not intended as a money-making project.

28 NZMM, 3, 5 (1890), p.72.

29 Raffaello Squarise, *Scrapbooks*, I, VVw5 S, Hocken Collections, Dunedin.

30 OW, 9 January 1890, p.41.

31 Judith M. May, 'Thus Spake *The Triad*: A View of Music in New Zealand 1893–1915', MMus thesis, The University of Auckland, 1991, p.62.

32 OW, 9 January 1890, p.41.

33 Radic, p.88. Percy Scholes, *The Mirror of Music, 1844–1944: A Century of Musical Life in Britain as Reflected in the Pages of the 'Musical Times'*, London, 1947, pp.223–4.

34 *Otago Daily Times* (ODT), 4 January 1890, p.2.

35 OW, 9 January 1890, p.25.

36 OW, 28 November 1889, p.20.

37 William Weber, 'Miscellany vs. Homogeneity: Concert Programmes at the Royal Academy of Music and the Royal College of Music in the 1880s', in Christina Bashford and Leanne Langley, eds, *Music and British Culture 1785–1914: Essays in Honour of Cyril Ehrlich*, Oxford, 2000, p.301.

38 Harry Haskell, 'Early Music', in Stanley Sadie, ed., *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, VII, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., London, 2001, pp.831–4.

39 NZMM, 3, 5 (1890), p.72; OW, 10 April 1890, p.25.

40 Fitchett, 'Musicians and Musical Taste in Australasia', p.29.

41 Radic, pp.264–8.

42 NZMM, 3, 2 (1890), pp.20, 72.

43 NZMM, 3, 2 (1890), p.20; 3, 5 (1890), p.72.

44 Fitchett, 'Musicians and Musical Taste in Australasia', p.30.

45 *ibid.*

46 NZMM, 3, 5 (1890), p.77.

47 Radic, p.20.

48 ODT, 27 December 1889, p.2.

49 ODT, 1 August 1894, p.3.

50 Margaret Campbell, *Music in Dunedin*, Dunedin, 1945, p.31; Alison Clarke, *Holiday Seasons: Christmas, New Year and Easter in Nineteenth-Century New Zealand*, Auckland, 2007, pp.23–72.

51 NZMM, 3, 1 (1890), p.5.

52 ODT, 20 March 1890, p.25.

53 Radic, pp.17, 40.

- 54 ODT, 21 April 1890, supplement.
- 55 Radic, pp.12, 107–8.
- 56 ODT, 23 December 1889, p.2.
- 57 Squarise, I (letter dated 22 March 1890).
- 58 Possibly *Dance Rustique*, published by the Dresden Piano Company.
- 59 D. Harris Hastings, *New Zealand and South Seas Exhibition Dunedin, 1889–90, Official Catalogue*, Dunedin, 1889, pp.51, 59, 77, 109; Hastings, *Official Record*, p.290.
- 60 Hastings, 'The Second Exhibition', p.7.
- 61 Jones's music, 'Composed for the N.Z. Exhibition, Dunedin, 1890', survives at the National Library of New Zealand. See also Yu Lee An, 'The Publishers of New Zealand Music, a Historical Survey from 1840 to 2002', MA thesis, University of Otago, 2003.
- 62 *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, IV, p.226.
- 63 OW, 7 November 1889, p.28. Many of these items belonged to local musician Annette Wilson.
- 64 Advertisement in Walter Leslie, *The South Seas Valse*, Dunedin, n.d.
- 65 *New Zealand Scenery & Public Buildings; Leading Business Establishments of Dunedin*, Dunedin, 1895, p.7.
- 66 F.M.L. Thompson, *The Rise of Respectable Society: A Social History of Victorian Britain, 1830–1900*, London, 1988, p.194.
- 67 Compiled from official annual trade and shipping statistics.
- 68 Fitchett, 'Musicians and Musical Taste in Australasia', p.30.
- 69 OW, 1 January 1890, supplement.
- 70 Hastings, *Official Record*, pp.290, 328; OW, 28 November 1899, p.20. The organ in the hall was originally built for the New Zealand Industrial Exhibition held in Wellington in 1885.
- 71 NZMM, 3, 5 (1890), p.76.
- 72 Jane Thomson, 'Twopeny, Richard Ernest Nowell', in Jane Thomson, ed., pp.523–4; OW, 19 December 1889, p.41.
- 73 Jeffrey Richards, *Imperialism and Music*, Manchester, 2001, p.434.
- 74 S.P. Newcomb, *Challenging Brass: 100 Years of Brass Band Contests in New Zealand 1880–1980*, Auckland, 1980, p.32.
- 75 NZMM, 3, 4 (1890), p.51. The competing bands were the Oamaru Naval Artillery, Invercargill Garrison, Christchurch Garrison, Oamaru Garrison, Dunedin Garrison, Dunedin Ordinance, Queenstown, Wellington Garrison, Addington Workshops, Napier Garrison, Kaikorai, Dunedin Engineers, Burnham Industrial School, Taranaki Rifles, Stanmore and Invercargill City.
- 76 *Cyclopedia of New Zealand, Vol. I* (Wellington Provincial Districts), Wellington, 1897, pp.443–4; NZMM, 3, 1 (1890), p.2.
- 77 Dave Russell, *Popular Music in England 1840–1915: A Social History*, 2nd ed., Manchester, 1997, pp.226–7.
- 78 *ibid.*, p.18.
- 79 NZMM, 3, 4 (1890), pp.56–57.
- 80 Squarise, I (clipping from ES, 27 November 1891).
- 81 NZMM, 3, 4 (1890), p.56.
- 82 *ibid.*, p.119.
- 83 *ibid.*, p.71.
- 84 OW, 20 March 1890, p.25.
- 85 ODT, 18 March 1890, p.3.
- 86 NZMM, 3, 1 (1890), p.4.
- 87 *ibid.*, p.21.
- 88 *ibid.*, p.57.
- 89 *ibid.*, pp.4, 72.
- 90 Squarise, I (undated clipping).
- 91 OW, 20 March 1890, p.25; NZMM, 3, 4 (1890), p.57.
- 92 NZMM, 3, 5 (1890), p.73. These expenses included £270 for band music, a further £181.11s for the band contest and £168.15s.6d for the 'rarely used' organ in the concert hall.
- 93 Anne-Marie Forbes, 'Music at an Exhibition: A Case Study of the Tasmanian International Exhibition, 1894–1895', *Context*, 19 (2000), pp.57–64. The planners of the Tasmanian event were not deterred by the Dunedin losses, and were told that music had been one of the chief attractions there.

94 For further details of Squarise's career see Murray, 'Raffaello Squarise'.

95 *Triad*, 3, 5 (1895), pp.6–7.

96 ODT, 21 September 1901, p.10.

97 Jane Stafford and Mark Williams, *Maoriland: New Zealand Literature, 1872–1914*, Wellington, 2006.

98 P.J. Gibbons, 'The Climate of Opinion', in Geoffrey W. Rice, ed., *The Oxford History of New Zealand*, 2nd ed., Auckland, 1992, p.316.

99 For example, Owen Jensen's article 'Music in New Zealand', *New Zealand's Heritage*, 99 (1973), p.2750, uses nineteenth-century activity as an introduction to developments after the Second World War, describing the formation of the National Orchestra in 1946 as 'the first significant step forward'.

100 For example, John Mansfield Thomson, *Oxford History of New Zealand Music*, Auckland, 1991; Adrienne Simpson, *Opera's Farthest Frontier: A History of Professional Opera in New Zealand*, Auckland, 1996; Allan Thomas, *Music is Where You Find It: Music in the Town of Hawera, 1946*, Wellington, 2004.