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Music by the Few for the Many: Chamber Music in Colonial Queensland

Peter Roenfeldt

The early development of Queensland's musical culture has only been partly documented. Despite a number of general surveys and a few specialist publications in recent decades, the largest body of research, dating mostly from the 1970s and 1980s in the form of academic dissertations, remains unpublished.¹ As I demonstrated in a recent article for this journal, the narrative of Queensland's music can be traced in various ways, including focusing either on a specific organisation or 'cause' – phenomena that in turn interface with the efforts of countless individuals.² An alternative strategy is to survey a specific genre of music-making, where likewise a diverse range of performers, repertoire, venues and events are part of the mix. This article endeavours to trace the development of chamber music in colonial Queensland as an important subset of an active concert life that included numerous popular entertainers, touring artists and musical-theatrical troupes. Support of chamber music, a so-called 'high-class' genre, was also viewed by some colonists as an emblem or barometer of increasing cultural self-worth, particularly in the two decades leading up to Federation.

At the time of separation from New South Wales in 1859, the newly formed colony of Queensland had a population of around 23,500 and its capital Brisbane only 5000, which one could argue was hardly sufficient to sustain a diverse range of artistic endeavours. Nevertheless, a growing schedule of concerts by both resident and visiting artists – including various choral-orchestral societies and theatrical-operatic troupes – made for a lively menu of public entertainment. This was increasingly so as the population expanded rapidly over the next four decades to half a million, a quarter of whom resided in the capital.

A typical concert of the 1860s followed a formula that would persist at least until the end of the century, namely a mixed program featuring one or several professional performers, who were assisted by unnamed 'lady and gentleman amateurs', and commencing with an 'overture' by the full ensemble of available instrumentalists. Virtuoso settings of popular airs and operatic excerpts also featured prominently, alongside vocal solos, quartets and choruses, all written by living or recent European composers, including many whose names rarely grace today's concert programs. In most senses, a public concert of the late 1800s would have

been highly ‘contemporary’, if somewhat ephemeral in terms of repertoire choices. For example, the ‘Vocal and Instrumental Concert’ on 28 October 1867 consisted of arrangements of operatic overtures by Paer and Rossini, which opened each half of the program; songs, duets and trios by composers such as Balfe and Wallace; choruses by Bishop and Bellini; a violin rendition of Beethoven’s Lied *Adelaide*; and pianistic fantasias on *Mosé in Egitto* and *Lucia di Lammermoor* by Thalberg and Prudent respectively. Fewer than half of these composers are regularly performed today.³

The development of a chamber music tradition, whereby extended multi-movement instrumental works by greater or lesser ‘masters’ were presented as a serious endeavour, emerged gradually from within this audience-pleasing formula. It was frequently admitted that this more complex repertoire tested the capacities and stamina of both performers and listeners alike, but it was also asserted that the artistic and educational rewards to be gained thereby were an essential attribute of a community desirous of deeper aesthetic sophistication. How this phenomenon occurred, and the nature of the human and physical resources that supported it, provide valuable insights into the musical aspirations of colonial Queensland as a whole. Tracking the terminology then in use, however, requires some adjustment, as ‘classical’ and ‘popular’ were not necessarily mutually exclusive terms when used to describe music and concerts. Furthermore, the term ‘chamber music’ itself only gradually achieved acceptance in public discourse and the print media. The first instances appeared in print possibly only in 1880, but by the turn of the century it had become a virtual drawcard, intended to attract the attention of musical connoisseurs.⁴

The baseline requirement for chamber music, then as always, was the availability of at least two suitably skilled and equally matched instrumentalists who were willing to collaborate in the study and presentation of larger works. As personnel became available, this would extend organically into trios, quartets, quintets and even larger combinations at times. Despite the evidence that a number of accomplished musicians resided in Brisbane during the 1860s, a regular series of concerts was not established until the 1870s. Soon after her arrival from England in 1864, Madame Henrietta Mallalieu was introduced as being ‘from the London concerts’.⁵ Almost immediately, her reputation as the colony’s premier pianist was confirmed: according to one reviewer, ‘this lady is one of the most accomplished *pianistes* it has been our good fortune to listen to, and it is really a treat to hear her’.⁶ Initially, her repertoire reflected contemporary local taste, with operatic paraphrases and virtuoso pieces such as Mendelssohn’s *Rondo and capriccio*, presented ‘in her accustomed brilliant style’.⁷

Various musical colleagues, such as the German flautist Herr Cramer or a ‘gentleman amateur’ violinist, partnered with Mallalieu. Here, too, ‘the brilliant execution’ of the performers was noted by reviewers in variations on ‘Hungarian and Tyrolean airs’ and *Thème Italien de Carafa* respectively.⁸ Another German musician to arrive was a Herr von Kosa, introduced as ‘First Clarionet Player, late of the Royal Opera House, Berlin’,⁹ whose duet with Mallalieu the following year ‘was a treat of no ordinary kind’.¹⁰ Also by then, another newcomer, the Italian violinist Signor Benvenuti, was becoming well known, with one concert announcement asserting ‘those who want a treat, or who, having previously heard him, wish to recall the wonderful strains of his instrument, should not let the present opportunity slip’.¹¹

R.T. Jefferies and the Monday Popular Concerts

Mallalieu would continue to collaborate with these and other musicians over the coming years. Her most enduring musical partnership was, however, formed with the man who can be rightly claimed as the founder of a chamber music tradition in Queensland: Richard Thomas Jefferies. He arrived in the colony in September 1871, and their first joint concert the following February clearly set the tone for what would soon result from their collaboration. Although still presented as a standard variety program, the 'Evening Concert' in the old Town Hall in Queen Street was significant in its inclusion of two Beethoven duo sonatas (including the *Kreutzer*) alongside the Mendelssohn concerto, not to mention various songs and virtuoso solo pieces either for piano or violin.¹²

It was then announced that a series of 'Popular Concerts' would be instituted forthwith. This was welcomed by at least one 'Lover of Good Music', on account of Jefferies' acquaintance with recent trends in London. It was hoped that the Brisbane programs would similarly afford 'intellectual amusement to the music-loving people of this city' and also the promotion of 'friendly intercourse with our resident artistes [sic] that is so desirable to exist'.¹³ The implication was that an established subscription series, rather than merely occasional 'special' concerts, had the potential to showcase the growing array of local talent and broaden audiences' horizons. This is precisely what evolved during the next few years, when the Monday Popular Concerts were promoted by Jefferies and ably assisted by Mallalieu. As was customary in colonial times, validation by reference to the 'old country' was inevitable – in this instance, the proud tradition of 'Monday Pops' as presented in St James's Hall London. As Bernard Shaw commented, that venue and its premier series were renowned for fine chamber music performances, and by extension had performed an educational role for London music lovers.¹⁴ A similar role would also now be credited to its Queensland equivalent.

Two series of Monday Popular Concerts were presented in Brisbane in the early 1870s, the first comprising twelve events spaced two or three weeks apart during 1872 in the old School of Arts, Queen Street. The repertoire consisted of violin sonatas (including the *Kreutzer*), duos with clarinet by Weber, trios by Mozart and Beethoven, and string quartets by Spohr, Haydn and Beethoven. The players identified were Jefferies, Benvenuti and Kosa, which does not account for the viola and cello parts; these were either played by an unnamed 'amateur' or arranged for another instrument. The Beethoven trio performed by Mallalieu, Jefferies and Kosa in May was probably one such example, while on the final program in December, Mozart's 'Clarinet sonata No. 10' was probably a violin work in disguise, though its 'admirable performance' was duly noted.¹⁵ Kosa had also composed for this concert a *Farewell to Brisbane* in the style of a waltz, a work that was praised as being 'entitled to take a much higher rank'.¹⁶ As such, it was possibly the first serious chamber work to be written in the colony.

In retrospect, mixed views regarding the repertoire choices for the inaugural series were expressed by various commentators, who in general lauded this innovation in Brisbane's concert life. Constructive criticism was offered that the presenters 'are, of course, educating the public to an appreciation of the highest class of music, but a somewhat larger infusion of more familiar strains would doubtless ensure them better audiences, and by this means further their exertions'.¹⁷

Despite these cautionary comments, the inaugural season was apparently an artistic and popular success; however, its sequel evidently experienced some logistical challenges. The prior sale of subscriptions for 1 guinea (ca \$1500 in 2012 values) ethically required that the promised number of 12 programs would be presented, but after the first two concerts in May and June 1873, it appears that there was a significant hiatus. By September, ‘A Subscriber’ complained in a ‘Letter to the Editor’ that ‘the public are beginning to get hungry for classical music especially’.¹⁸ In response, Jefferies stated that the School of Arts had been ‘pre-engaged by various artistes’, and Brisbane as yet had no ‘well-constructed or commodious music hall devoted to music alone’.¹⁹ To placate his supporters, Jefferies proceeded to present the next two concerts on consecutive Monday evenings in October at the Temperance Hall, another in December and finally the balance of the series in rapid succession in the early months of 1874, when the School of Arts was again available during the summer recess.

As in the case of the first Monday Popular Concert series, the second season’s finale featured a newly composed work, this time by Jefferies himself. His *Quartet in A* was ‘splendidly executed in the opinion of musical connoisseurs, and is a composition which reflects high credit upon its author’.²⁰ The occasion also elicited the observation that audiences were ‘becoming more critical, and consequently better capable of appreciating music of a high order of excellence’, though the vocal component was ‘always necessarily the weakest’, since it devolved mostly to amateurs. Mallalieu and Jefferies also welcomed two young string players, the nineteen-year-old cellist Frederick Quin and his fifteen-year-old violinist brother Alfred. Within a month of their arrival in the colony, they appeared with Jefferies and a ‘gentleman amateur’ violist, presenting as a string quartet the ‘pièce de résistance’ on the December 1 program. Frederick Quin’s solo also ‘proved him [to be] a perfect master of his instrument’.²¹ The emergence of a more stable ensemble, which Jefferies could himself mentor, now enabled the presentation of Mendelssohn’s Piano Trio in D minor, and at least two Haydn quartets, including the *Emperor*, which became a regular feature in his concerts.

International Visitors and Other Newcomers

Whether it was because of recent difficulties in securing appropriate venues, or perhaps the financial viability of the Popular Concerts as a business proposition – or more likely due to Jefferies’ increasing involvement as conductor of the Brisbane Musical Union through the 1870s – the venture ended in 1874. The latter part of the decade saw chamber music performances being presented mostly within the context of ‘benefit’ concerts or other special events. One prominent example is the ‘Grand Musical Combination consisting of Madame Arabella Goddard, the Christian Concert Company, and the Musical Profession of Brisbane’, in which Jefferies’ ensemble performed a movement from Beethoven’s Quintet Opus 4.²² Trios by Mendelssohn, Mozart, Beethoven and the lesser known Mayseder were also heard during 1875, when it was noted that since the cessation of the Monday Popular Concerts, ‘too little music of this class has been heard, and it is to be feared that the appreciation, which was growing amongst all classes of concert-goers has somewhat receded’.²³

Another triumph was a well-received reprise of the *Emperor* Quartet, which would have pleased Jefferies' performers, who 'frequently had to submit to a cool recognition of their efforts'.²⁴ Similarly, after the rendition of Reissiger's Piano Quintet Opus 191, which was 'the gem of the evening' in September 1877, it was reported that many in the audience hoped 'opportunities of hearing such music so rendered would be more frequently afforded'.²⁵ The occasion was the 'Complimentary Benefit Concert to Mr Silvester Diggles', another of Brisbane's pioneering musicians. That particular work had already been played the previous year, during a public matinee presentation by the music retail firm of Paling, Kaye and Jefferies, attended by some 300 people.²⁶ The inclusion in the ensemble by Jefferies' business partner Kaye, the younger Quin brother and the well-known Benvenuti indicated how extensive the local professional musical networks had become – and indeed how they had been enhanced significantly through the collegial medium of chamber music.

Despite obvious successes during the previous six years, Jefferies inexplicably returned to England in early 1878, creating something of a musical vacuum over the next two seasons. In his absence, only limited chamber music contributions were made by Madame Mallalieu, such as Haydn's *Gypsy trio*, which 'secured prolonged and thoroughly deserved applause'.²⁷ This work was performed with the younger Quin and cellist Mr Frayling, who was apparently 'induced to visit us by Mr. Jefferies', possibly due to the indisposition of the other Quin brother. Also now appearing in concerts was a newly arrived violinist, Herr Rosendorff, who would quickly become a fixture in Brisbane's chamber and orchestral music-making. In June 1880 he appeared as the 'solo violinist' in a 'Chamber Concert' presented by Mr Atkinson. The promotional newspaper article for this event also gives possibly one of the earliest explicit usages locally of the term 'chamber music', further denoted by the inclusion of movements from a Mozart quartet and a Beethoven violin sonata on that program.²⁸

Meanwhile, during Jefferies' absence, it had been reported back 'home' in Brisbane by communications received by the journalist 'Euterpe' (Walter Horatio Wilson) that he had used his time well, by exposing himself and his family to the best that London could offer. The inspiration gained from hearing the string quartet comprising Joachim, Zerbini, Ries and Piatti gave him 'unalloyed pleasure', although Jefferies admitted that his sojourn 'must come to an end'. That comment would have comforted the 'numerous inquirers' as to Jefferies' intentions to return to Brisbane, where the columnist opined that 'perhaps the day is not far distant when we in Brisbane may be delighted by the ravishing strains of a really good quartette'.²⁹

With the return of Jefferies in 1880, the partnership with Mallalieu was reinstated as the leading local ensemble combination, first in a Haydn trio and then a Mozart piano quartet. The critic noted that the decision not to present the entirety of each work was unwarranted. It was suggested that 'the growing taste for classical music in the community' should have given confidence that 'the omitted movements of this beautiful composition would have been received with the same delight that was manifested in those played'.³⁰ A portent of things to come was evident in the 'Complimentary Concert' to Madame and Mlle Carandini in October 1881. On that occasion, Jefferies appeared alongside his two eldest daughters, Arena and Mary, aged nine and seven respectively, who, despite the 'disadvantage of playing

on small violins . . . acquitted themselves well, taking up their parts without the slightest hitch, and surmounting all the difficulties with the greatest ease'.³¹ On that occasion, the cello part in the Mozart quartet was provided by a Herr Patek, another recent arrival from Germany, but surely in Jefferies' mind was the eventual creation of a family quartet, since his brood would eventually expand to six, including four musician daughters. His concern for the future musical development of the community, which admittedly also influenced his own career prospects, was evident in the expansion of his teaching studio to include 'pianists for the practice of duets or trios'.³²

Possibly the most significant chamber music event of the new decade was not the obviously commendable efforts of resident artists, but rather the extended Queensland season of the Mendelssohn Quintette Club of Boston during October 1881. This famed ensemble had been in existence since 1849 and would remain together until 1895, their name being derived from that composer's String Quintet Opus 18, which was their trademark repertoire item. The ensemble was fortunate in having among its membership two viola players who respectively doubled on flute and clarinet, which enabled countless diversely scored works to be performed without the need for augmentation, alongside orchestral arrangements and the customary 'brilliant' instrumental solos. A solo singer completed the party. In Brisbane, the 'large audience [was] quite taken by storm' with such perfect ensemble 'that could only be reached by great artists studying together with long and unremitting care'.³³ Their fine instruments also drew comment, particularly the clarinet and the Stradivarius cello. The Beethoven Quartet Opus 18 No. 2 and Schubert's *Death and the maiden* were 'played as no quartettes were ever before played in these colonies',³⁴ while the Mozart Clarinet Quintet was denoted as 'the finest quintette yet rendered'.³⁵ Led by Isidor Schnitzler, who had trained under the great Joseph Joachim, the ensemble also performed Raff's *The pretty miller's daughter* quartet, and various string quintets by Beethoven and Mendelssohn. They may well have introduced to Queensland audiences the original orchestration of the ubiquitous Boccherini *Minuet*, which henceforth remained a firm favourite with local ensembles. The Mendelssohn Quintette Club's Brisbane concerts were presented in the recently opened Albert Hall in Adelaide Street (not to be confused with the later building of the same name, which opened in 1901 at a different location). Their 'western tour' to Toowoomba was postponed by several days in order to schedule additional Brisbane concerts, the final one evincing 'expressions of satisfaction [which] were frequent and hearty' from the appreciative audience.³⁶

It is clear that a strong legacy was left behind by the Mendelssohn Quintette Club. In the words of one commentator 'they have given us the true realization of "chamber music"'.³⁷ Notably, that term was now being more frequently used in the public domain as denoting this highly specialised but collaborative form of music-making. On a functional level, Jefferies and his musical comrades took immediate steps to institutionalise a local chamber music tradition that did not rely on the box office. Within a month, a new 'String Quartette Club' had been formed by Jefferies, Rosendorff, Quin and Patek for the purpose of reading repertoire in the presence of 'a favoured few who have the entrée'. During an initial three-hour marathon, they 'played at sight' with 'completeness and exactitude' five quartets – one each by Mozart, Beethoven and Mendelssohn, and two by



Jefferies family string quartet – father and daughters, ca 1906. From left: Arena Massie Jefferies (Mrs Muller, violin), Mary Massie Jefferies (cello), Richard Thomas Jefferies (viola), Vada Massie Jefferies (violin). Source: State Library of Queensland, image number 197779.

‘Papa Haydn’.³⁸ Unfortunately, further evidence of this organisation’s existence is scant.

During the remainder of the 1880s, it appears that Jefferies and Quin performed intermittently with various ensembles, playing repertoire that included trios by Hummel and Reissiger. The elder Jefferies daughters were heard in a string trio by Beethoven, and within a few years it became clear they would benefit from more intensive exposure to advanced teaching. The Jefferies family, recently expanded to include the youngest daughter Vada and two brothers, left for England in mid-1887 for an extended study tour which lasted nearly three years. While overseas, they became established as a family string quartet, and sometimes performed in other combinations with father Jefferies playing the piano.³⁹

In their absence, Brisbane’s chamber music circles again regrouped and, as before, it was the German colonists who were most prominent. A newly formed ‘quartette club for the purpose of reading the classics together’, in the style of the one mentioned above, made a public appearance in the first of Dr Walter’s Promenade Concerts at the Exhibition Buildings in August 1887. Comprising the well-known Rosendorff and one of the Benvenuti sons as leader and cellist respectively, the inner parts were played by violinist Herr Götting and violist Herr Nürnberger. They presented Schubert’s *String quartet in G minor*, which being ‘cut down about half ... proved to be one of the most pleasing numbers on the [primarily orchestral] programme and earned warm applause’.⁴⁰

New Venues and Formats in the 1890s

The early 1890s saw the rise of some novel entertainment formats, notably the Monday Popular (Promenade) Concerts at the Breakfast Creek Pavilion. Enjoying the patronage of parliamentarians and municipal officials, and under the direction of Frank Fowler, these events were ‘modelled as far as possible on those given with so much success in the Covent Garden Theatre in London’.⁴¹ The choice of nomenclature, drawing as it did on past local examples of successful series, would soon be drawn into question. For the moment, though, the immense success of the events was obvious, with sometimes more than 3000 in attendance, to the point where it was suggested that the promenading area might have to be reduced in size.⁴² One concert in January 1891 was billed as a ‘Classical Night’, but clearly the large venue suffered from the lack of appropriate acoustic infrastructure for chamber music. This particular occasion was notable, however, as it featured the welcome return appearance of the Jefferies family. A subsequent concert featured one of the ensembles led by Rosendorff, performing a Hummel piano concerto in chamber style with Mallalieu, who was now known by her second married name of Mrs Willmore.⁴³ Although on at least one occasion ‘the musicians present freely expressed their astonishment at the number of people present’, the Breakfast Creek venue was responsible for providing the widest exposure yet given to chamber music in Queensland. For example, a Haydn quartet played by the Jefferies family appealed to a large ‘mixed audience’, with the music ‘applauded by those who understood it, and those who did not sat or stood and listening, admiring though not fully appreciating’.⁴⁴

At this point, with the team of Jefferies and Willmore (Mallalieu) once again reunited, some rivalry appears to have arisen about the very title ‘Monday Popular Concerts’. The performers also wanted to address the urgent and obvious need to find a venue more conducive to chamber music. In a single move, Jefferies reasserted his prior ‘copyright’ ownership of the event title, and set about promoting a new series of weekly chamber music, but across town in the Protestant Hall situated between Queen and Raff Streets.⁴⁵ Commencing in May and lasting to the end of August 1891, this was an astonishing effort with eighteen concerts, almost exclusively presented by Willmore and the Jefferies family. During these ‘winter’ months, the Breakfast Creek Promenade Concerts went into recess, by mutual agreement. Meanwhile, Fowler set up a rival series in the Exhibition Hall, where it was reported that ‘between 300 and 400 people’ attended on 5 May, and which included a Hummel trio as the chamber music component.⁴⁶

On the same night in the rival venue, the first of Jefferies’s Monday Popular Concerts was also ‘very well attended’, and featured Mrs Willmore in two movements of the Rheinberger Piano Quartet Opus 83.⁴⁷ This comparatively serious work set the tone for the reinstated ‘Monday Pops’ series, which featured ten string quartet works variously by Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Spohr, and Küssmayr, and also piano quartets and quintets by Schumann, Brahms, A.C. Mackenzie and Dvořák. Trios for strings alone or with piano also featured, including works by Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, Mendelssohn, Rubinstein and Krommer, and various duo sonatas including the perennial *Kreutzer* and that by Chopin for cello. Not including the customary ‘brilliant’ solo instrumental pieces, this single series

featured in all more than 30 major chamber works, although in some cases not all movements were performed.

The massive effort involved was mitigated by the judicious repetition of several items. For subscribers, this was not necessarily a disadvantage, as it provided an opportunity to enhance their familiarity with particular repertoire, not to mention the similar benefits that accrued to the performers. The ‘highly educational character’ of the series was noted by critics,⁴⁸ and evidenced by the fact that ‘excellent explanatory and analytical notes given in the programme enabled all to follow them with an intelligent interest’.⁴⁹ As a case in point, the Rheinberger Quartet that opened the series appeared either in excerpted or complete form at three later concerts. By way of reference to the London Popular Concerts, where the same Rheinberger work had been performed annually since 1874, local audiences were also party to the international phenomenon of a serious chamber music composition becoming a familiar ‘classic’ during the composer’s own lifetime.⁵⁰

It might have been expected that the scene was now firmly set for weekly chamber music, at least in Brisbane – something that had been proposed by Jefferies two decades earlier as a worthy community aspiration.⁵¹ However, this was not to be, as available records show that henceforth throughout the 1890s the Jefferies Quartette appeared mostly under the auspices of other organisations and venues. This was also a period in which Willmore became extremely active as a church and civic organist, performing frequently on the newly installed Willis organ at the Exhibition Hall, which remains in existence today as a showpiece of the Brisbane City Hall. Attracting large and loyal audiences, these recitals juxtaposed organ solos with vocal and instrumental items, and quite regularly chamber music works. Early on in this new initiative, it was noted that ‘it will not be held to detract from the organ performances that the feature of the afternoon was the string music of the Jefferies family’.⁵² In 1894 alone, at least twelve such works were presented, half of which were Haydn quartets, and the remainder by Beethoven, Mozart, Spohr and Boccherini, and also Onslow’s Quintet, in which ‘Master Jefferies’ appeared – probably Felix, then aged thirteen. Expansion into large works was also evident in Jefferies’ 1892 ‘Benefit Concert’, when Gade’s Octet was performed with the assistance of Göttling and Messrs Sleath and Dougherty.⁵³

Despite their continuing prominence, it would be incorrect to surmise that the Jefferies family members were the only active chamber musicians in Queensland. Rosendorff’s quartet returned to the Breakfast Creek concerts when they resumed in late 1891, and he did not eschew classical compositions, despite the previously criticised performance setting. Their Mozart quartet was ‘beautifully executed, and most thoroughly enjoyed by the large audience present . . . of over 1,000 persons’.⁵⁴ This same ensemble, including Benvenuti and Sleath, both of whom continued to be very active in theatrical and popular orchestral music, appeared in local conductor Seymour Dicker’s ‘Farewell Testimonial Concert’ in 1898. On that occasion, they performed the Boccherini *Minuet*, albeit within a composite program of mostly lighter numbers.⁵⁵ Another violinist who gained prominence in the late 1890s and beyond was Signor Truda, who performed either or both of his two favourite sonatas, Beethoven’s *Spring* and Grieg’s Opus 8, at frequent intervals.⁵⁶

The contexts in which chamber music was now being heard further diversified. Following the successful model seen at the Exhibition Hall earlier in the decade, a series of mixed organ recitals were presented in the Albert Street Wesleyan Church in

1897. Attesting to their continuing popularity, the Jefferies Quartette was ‘warmly greeted on appearing’ at one such event.⁵⁷ The following year Brisbane welcomed George Sampson, the newly appointed organist of St John’s (pro-)Cathedral. While not a chamber music player himself, Sampson almost immediately sponsored a series of ‘History of Music’ public lectures at the Technical College, in which the Jefferies Quartette provided live examples from the works of Corelli and the Viennese classics.⁵⁸ Regional appearances were also part of the Jefferies’ performing schedule. The Jefferies–Willmore 1892 duo concert in Bundaberg was a ‘great success’,⁵⁹ and three years later similarly in Roma, where the family quartet concert ‘passed off most successfully’.⁶⁰

Foundations of a Chamber Music Tradition Pre- and Post-Federation

As the new century dawned with the prospect of Australian Federation, the musical situation in Queensland showed definite signs of positive growth. Some initiatives, such as chamber music concert series, were highly successful on an artistic level, but ultimately proved too ambitious to be sustained over lengthy periods. Numerous musicians were increasingly prominent in community life, of which chamber music performance was by the 1890s an established if intermittent feature. In addition to some larger venues such as the Exhibition Hall and Breakfast Creek Pavilion, a small number of inner-city halls and churches were proving to be usable as chamber music venues. Due to their familial solidarity and consistent identity as a well-established ensemble, the Jefferies Quartette and the group’s regular keyboard partner, Mrs Willmore, appear to have outshone other participants in terms of frequency of performances, and also the variety and depth of the chamber music repertoire. Their collective contribution as music educators, in their offering of classes in ensemble playing, was also noteworthy. Notable also were the significant contributions of numerous German- and Italian-born musicians, who enjoyed a varied profile as chamber music, orchestral and entertainment or dance band players in the colony.

In the early decades of the twentieth century, chamber music concerts would continue to provide a performance avenue for professional musicians and advanced students, and to provide aesthetic edification for local audiences. The advent of several professional organisations – such as the Musicians’ Association of Queensland (1905–09) and later the Music Teachers’ Association of Queensland (established 1921) – would also support chamber music, as would choral societies such as the Brisbane Liedertafel, which dates from 1885. The cause of chamber music would also be promoted by a succession of subscription-based concert organisations, notably the Chamber Music Society (1910–11) and its successor, the Brisbane Chamber Music Society (1921–25). Both organisations were avidly supported by local pianist Percy Brier, who partnered regularly with the Jefferies sisters across several decades of performance. Those developments might not have occurred without a foundation being laid by Queensland’s colonial musical pioneers, particularly R.T. Jefferies, Mallalieu–Willmore, Rosendorff, Benevenuti and others.

Chamber music does not figure strongly in research previously undertaken into Queensland’s early musical development. To date, the main focus has tended to be on larger choral, orchestral and operatic ventures, or that of particular individuals. However, the versatility and relative mobility of chamber music as a performance

medium made it a vital ingredient of formal concert-giving, and also a component of various social traditions. It also provided performance outlets for the many fine musicians who might not otherwise have gained recognition if they had had to rely purely on the relatively limited solo opportunities. A comparative novelty in the 1870s within the context of the more mainstream ‘virtuoso-popular’ tradition of Victorian concert-giving, the term ‘chamber music’ was later unashamedly promoted by musicians working in the 1890s and beyond. The presentation of programs primarily consisting of small-ensemble repertoire had virtually become a badge of artistic honour. Chamber music denoted refinement, expertise and social enrichment for music lovers and musicians alike, both in the rapidly expanding colony and subsequently the state of Queensland.

Endnotes

- 1 For example, Belinda McKay, ‘A state of harmony? Music in the deep north’, *Queensland Review* 5.1 (1998), 1–16. I have identified at least fourteen theses on aspects of Queensland’s local musical history that were completed during the 1970s and 1980s at the University of Queensland alone.
- 2 Peter Roennfeldt, ‘The power of persistence: Musical advocates north of the Tweed’, *Queensland Review* 18.1 (2011), 42–53.
- 3 *Brisbane Courier* [hereafter cited as *BC*], 28 October 1867, 1.
- 4 For the purposes of this discussion, chamber music denotes works composed usually in three or four movements, both for smaller combinations including duo sonatas and trios with piano, as well as larger ensembles from quartets, quintets to octets for either strings alone or with piano and/or wind instruments.
- 5 *BC*, 13 July 1866, 1.
- 6 ‘Concert at South Brisbane’, *BC*, 19 July 1866, 4.
- 7 ‘Events of the month’, *BC*, 19 November 1867, 7.
- 8 ‘Brisbane Philharmonic Society’, 24 May 1867, 2.
- 9 *BC*, 23 April 1870, 1.
- 10 *BC*, 25 August 1871, 2–3.
- 11 *BC*, 25 October 1871, 2.
- 12 *BC*, 1 February 1872, 1.
- 13 *BC*, 6 February 1872, 3.
- 14 Bernard Shaw, *London music in 1888–89 as heard by Corno di Bassetto* (New York: Vienna House, 1973), 311.
- 15 *BC*, 28 May 1872, 2.
- 16 *BC*, 12 December 1872, 2.
- 17 *BC*, 13 July 1872, 4.
- 18 ‘The Monday Popular Concerts’, *BC*, 15 September 1873, 3.
- 19 R.T. Jefferies, ‘The Monday Popular Concerts’, *BC*, 16 September 1873, 3.
- 20 *BC*, 3 March 1874, 2–3.
- 21 *BC*, 2 December 1873, 2.
- 22 *BC*, 21 July 1874, 1.
- 23 *BC*, 7 December 1875, 3.

- 24 'Madame Mendelssohn and Mr. Jeffries' [sic] Concert', *BC*, 24 February 1876, 3.
- 25 'Concert', *BC*, 13 September 1877, 3.
- 26 *BC*, 20 November 1876, 2.
- 27 *BC*, 23 September, 1879, 2.
- 28 *BC*, 26 June, 1880, 5.
- 29 Euterpe, 'Music', *BC*, 4 June 1879, 3.
- 30 *BC*, 6 May 1880, 2.
- 31 'The Carandini Concert', *BC*, 6 May 1881, 3.
- 32 *BC*, 24 November 1880, 1.
- 33 'Entertainments: The Mendelssohn Quintette concerts', *BC*, 24 October 1881, 3.
- 34 'Entertainments: The Mendelssohn Quintette concerts', *BC*, 25 October 1881, 3.
- 35 'Entertainments: The Mendelssohn Quintette concerts', *BC*, 27 October 1881, 3.
- 36 'The Mendelssohn Quintette concerts', *Queenslander*, 5 November 1881, 591.
- 37 'Amusements: The Mendelssohn Quintette concerts', *BC*, 31 October 1881, 3.
- 38 *Queenslander*, 26 November 1881, 687.
- 39 'Musical echoes', *BC*, 10 December 1889, 7.
- 40 'Dr Walters' Promenade Concerts', *BC*, 8 August 1887, 5.
- 41 *BC*, 16 December 1890, 4.
- 42 'Amusements: Monday Popular Concerts', *BC*, 13 January 1891, 5.
- 43 'Concert at the Centennial Hall', *BC*, 5 February 1891, 5.
- 44 *BC*, 17 February 1891, 4–5.
- 45 *BC*, 4 May 1891, 2.
- 46 'Amusements: Mr. Frank Fowler's concert', *BC*, 5 May 1891, 5.
- 47 'Amusements: Concert at the Protestant Hall', *BC*, 5 May 1891, 5.
- 48 *BC*, 31 August 1891, 4.
- 49 'Amusements: Concert at Protestant Hall', *BC*, 2 June 1891, 5.
- 50 'Musical Echoes', *The Queenslander*, 16 May 1891, 930.
- 51 R.T. Jefferies, 'The Monday Popular Concerts', *BC*, 16 September 1873, 3.
- 52 'Albert Street Wesleyan Church', *BC*, 16 April 1894, 6.
- 53 'Mr Jefferies' concert', *BC*, 13 October 1892, 6.
- 54 'Breakfast Creek concert', *BC*, 15 December 1891, 6.
- 55 *BC*, 12 March 1898, 2.
- 56 'Evening entertainments: Miss Elsie Hall's concert', *BC*, 18 July 1898, 6.
- 57 'Amusements: Organ recital', *BC*, 17 May 1897, 7.
- 58 *BC*, 27 June 1898, 1.
- 59 *BC*, 20 May 1892, 5.
- 60 *BC*, 17 July 1895, 6.