

THE CONSERVATORIUM INAUGURAL CONCERT.

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The council and advisory committee, and an audience consisting almost entirely of representative musicians and other lovers of the art, gave stately greeting to their new Hall of Song at the N.S.W. Conservatorium yesterday afternoon. Architecturally graceful, and admirably equipped, Sydney's new concert hall proved also absolutely perfect in its acoustic qualities. Whilst no echo of any kind obtruded, there seemed to be a sufficiency of resonance. In this way, the professional orchestra of 53 players presented a matured smoothness of tonal quality that delighted every listener, and Miss Ella Caspers, the soloist of the historic occasion, sang with much more power than heretofore, and with all her wonted charm.

After the National Anthem, in recognition of the Governor's arrival, Mr Alfred Hill conducted Beethoven's *Dedication of the House*. This "Overture in C" (Op. 124) was composed for the opening of the Josephstadter [Josefstadt] Theatre in Vienna in 1822, and, according to eminent commentators, is the only one of Beethoven's overtures "which includes a fugal motive in the strict style." What is more important is that it is a work of rare beauty, with an entrancing march theme played first by the woodwind and strings, and then by the full band, whilst the genuine festival spirit gives it life from the first fanfare of trumpets to its magnificent close. In this mood this well-ordered concert ended, for Mr W. Arundel Orchard conducted the players in a splendid interpretation of the overture to *The Mastersingers*.

Mr Joseph Bradley faced the orchestra for Edward Elgar's "Symphony in A Flat" (Op. 55), defined by the composer himself as "written out of a full life-experience, and meant to include the innumerable phases of joy and sorrow, struggle and conquest, and especially the contrast between the ideal and the actual in life." This tremendous modern work, with its harsh dissonances and furious ensembles, in which all the world seemed at discord, presented also many exquisitely beautiful phases. Subtly changing rhythm as part of a great design attracts the mind even though, at a first or second hearing, the unity of purpose cannot be grasped. Fortunately, the listeners were introduced in the opening "Andante nobilmente e semplice" to a simple yet singularly original and graceful theme, the recurrence of which in phrases of allusion throughout the work seemed like the warm welcome of some familiar friend. The interpretation reached its height in the Adagio, an exquisite piece of inspired music, the ethereal effects of which were of exceptional sweetness. All three conductors evidently had a fine body of artists to handle throughout the afternoon, and this inaugural concert will not easily be rivalled in the pure enjoyment it afforded.

Miss Ella Caspers, singing at short notice, lost the advantage of association with this fine orchestra, but the Australian contralto was in such splendid voice, and was so perfectly accompanied at the piano by Mr W. J. Caspers, that the classic atmosphere of the programme was worthily maintained. Miss Caspers sang Giordani's noble air, "Caro mio ben," with Agnes Caspers' refined and charming song, "Morn," as encore; and later

rendered, with round and tuneful timbre and effective touches of dramatic passion, Salome's aria, "Il est doux, il est bon," from Massenet's *Herodiade*. Miss Amy Castles was unable to appear.

During the interval Mr. Arthur Griffith (Minister for Education) invited his Excellency, Sir Gerald Strickland, "to declare the Conservatorium to be the property of New South Wales now and for ever."

The Governor, in response, referred to the tribute of gratitude due to Mr Campbell Carmichael, who, when Minister for Education, realised that something worthy of his energy and power of organisation should be done to forward the scientific study of music in the State, and place it on a level with other centres. Australia had produced the greatest singer of her day in Europe in the person of Mme Melba. Now it was only reasonable to expect that a successor to this great songstress was more likely to emanate from this country under its known climatic conditions than from elsewhere; but without a scientific training this particular privilege might be lost. Over and above the gifts of voice and musical talents was the faculty of taking pains, and the diva in question, even when at the height of her great pinnacle of fame, continued to study. Her kindly ardour in advising young vocalists of unusual talent was well known; but how much better it would be in the future when such aspirants, instead of depending upon the charity of a prima donna, could secure the best possible training at a national conservatorium such as he now had the pleasure to declare open.

(Cheers.)