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Louise Hanson-Dyer's *Melbourne Centenary Music Book*: an Australian celebration

EXPATRIATE PARIS-BASED MUSIC publisher Louise Dyer used the *Melbourne Centenary Music Book* of pipe music by Australian composers to celebrate the hundredth anniversary of Melbourne's foundation in 1934. Whilst reinforcing the objectives and principles of the pipe music education movement, which developed in England and France during the 1920s and 1930s,¹ the book also stands out as unusual amongst published scores of this time.² In this study I explore the Australian-inspired cover design in the context of its educational rationale.

Over 1934–1935 the city of Melbourne marked its centenary of European settlement, commemorating Edward Henty's arrival in Portland in November 1834 and Melbourne's foundation in June 1835 when John Batman announced the location of the new settlement.³ In the face of plummeting exports and commodity prices and elusive employment opportunities after World War I and the Great Depression, Melburnians were invited to more than 300 events organised for the festivities. These events were an opportunity to boost morale and to revel in Melbourne's cultural heritage and progress. Amongst the highlights was the royal visit of the Duke of Gloucester, son of King George V, who opened the celebrations and dedicated the Shrine of Remembrance.⁴ The cottage of Captain James Cook's parents, which still stands in the Fitzroy Gardens, was transported brick by brick from Great Ayton, Yorkshire. Memorable sporting events took place: the London to Melbourne MacRobertson Centenary Air Race in October and the Centenary Golf Open Tournament at the Metropolitan Golf Club. Trade shows demonstrated Australian produce and industry at the Royal Agricultural Show and the All-Australian Exhibition at the Royal Exhibition Building.⁵

In the same spirit, an expatriate recently based in Paris – music publisher and patron Louise Dyer, later Hanson-Dyer (1888–1962)⁶ – arrived in her birth city to participate in the celebrations. Newspaper articles heralded her strategy of cultural transmission and 'the many expressions of good will from France to Victoria'⁷ that she presented as gifts in the centenary year. Besides her support of the Melbourne Centenary Poetry Competition,⁸ she brought with her copies of *The Melbourne Centenary Music Book of Piper's Music by Australian Composers*.⁹

Louise Dyer often incorporated educational aspects in her projects, for instance the numerous live lecture-concerts she organised and subsidised in Melbourne.¹⁰ With the *Melbourne Centenary Music Book* she aimed to bring children's music into Australian homes. The book is dedicated 'To the children of Australia' with lines by John Keats: 'What melodies are there? They sound as through the whispering of trees' and an Australian poet whose talent and output Louise Dyer fostered, John Shaw Neilson¹¹: 'Let



The Melbourne Centenary Music Book of Piper's Music by Australian Composers, Paris: Editions de L'Oiseau Lyre, 1934



your song be delicate. The flowers can hear.' The poetry expresses the subtleness of music melody and the skill of listening. The celebratory and educational rationale as well as the national sentiment of the publication is explicitly stated in the 'Publisher's Note':

The Lyrebird Press issues this little book of Pandean Pipe Music by Australian Composers in order that one of the simplest and oldest forms of beauty which is Melody may find place in the musical plan of the youngest Nation when the Centenary of Melbourne is celebrated. On the historic date the Bamboo Pipes will be heard for the first time in Australia.¹²

Louise Dyer was well known in Melbourne before her arrival on the *Oronsay* in 1934.¹³ She was born in 1884 in Melbourne as Louise Berta Mosson Smith to medical practitioner and politician Dr Louis Laurence Smith and his second wife Marion Jane Higgins. Her father had a surgery at 41 Collins Street. Her education comprised studies at the Presbyterian Ladies College, Alliance Française, Melbourne Conservatorium of Music in Albert Street and piano training which took her to London and Glasgow. After her marriage to James Dyer in 1911, her Melbourne homes Torryburn in Hawthorn and Kinnoull in Toorak became thriving salons where she welcomed the best local and visiting musicians and upcoming local young performers, composers, artists and poets. Jimmy Dyer was former President of the Melbourne Liedertafel and Treasurer of the British Music Society, Victorian Centre, which his wife founded in 1921. The society aimed to stimulate British and Australian music in Melbourne and was known for its chamber music focus. Besides being the secretary of the British Music Society, Victorian Branch, Louise Dyer was involved in the Presbyterian Ladies' College Old Girls' Association and the Alliance Française.¹⁴ After a prolific period of live music curation and arts patronage during the 1920s, the Dyers left Melbourne in 1927 to settle in Europe where Louise would have better conditions to continue her philanthropic activities.¹⁵

After her last trip to Melbourne in 1932 as Lady Mayoress to her brother bachelor Sir Harold Gengoult Smith, Louise Dyer returned to Australia as an established music publisher.¹⁶ She launched her music press Les Éditions de L'Oiseau Lyre in Paris in 1932 with her historical deluxe edition of François Couperin's entire output. What is more, a month before her arrival, the French President Albert Lebrun had decorated her with the Légion d'Honneur for contributions to the dissemination of French music and culture.¹⁷ The medal was added to those given to her by the Alliance Française in 1924 and 1927.¹⁸

The Couperin edition not only revived the music of one of the foremost French composers from the Baroque period, as edited by music specialists such as Paul Brunold, Maurice Cauchie, Amédée Gastoué, André Shaeffner and André Tessier, but set new quality standards for music binding and printing. Hanson-Dyer appreciated art; she purchased Australian art¹⁹ and commissioned concert program cover designs from Australian artist Thea Proctor in 1923 and English Australian artist Blamire Young in 1926.²⁰ For the Couperin edition, she employed French bookbinding designer Rose Adler who created a contemporary Art Deco cover in green and beige curves contrasted with a big 'O' in green shaped into a musical instrument. Silver letters were used for the

Newspaper photo of Louise Hanson-Dyer with some of the floral tributes she received upon her arrival in Melbourne to attend the 1934 Victorian Centenary Celebrations, *Argus*, 28 August 1934, p. 5



MRS. JAMES DYER, who is visiting Melbourne from Paris to be present at the Centenary Celebrations, is shown with some of the 500 floral tributes which she received yesterday at her flat in Rutland Court, St. Kilda road. The flowers will be distributed among the hospitals.

name of the composer, while the letters 'O' and 'L' represented the name of the publisher in silver, green and gold. Louise Hanson-Dyer's press became renowned for reviving early music and publishing new classical music.²¹ It was to receive an array of industry awards for quality printing in the years to come such as the Grand Prix de Beaux Arts for books, which she was awarded in 1937.²²

Throughout her career as a music patron and publisher Louise Hanson-Dyer used anniversary dates as a starting point for publicity and marketing campaigns of live events or music publications with the objective of supporting music making and knowledge of music. Besides the bicentenary of Couperin's death, which helped launch her press, amongst the many commemorative concerts she curated in Melbourne²³ was the production of *Le Mariage Forcé* by Molière and Lully in aid of the Foundling Hospital at the Comedy Theatre on 5 March, 1932 as Lady Mayoress. She used a similar strategy with the *Melbourne Centenary Music Book*.

While the pipe music education movement was taking flight in England and France during the 1920s and 1930s, the publication of the *Melbourne Centenary Music Book* was an attempt to launch it in Australia in 1934.²⁴ Thus the publication was endorsed with prefaces by the founder of the movement in England, Margaret James, and by the Director

of La Nouvelle Education, Madeleine Gueritte. The *Melbourne Centenary Music Book* is a statement of new music education, promoting an accessible alternative for families that could play music without having to purchase and maintain expensive instruments such as the piano or the violin during tough economic times in a young society that did not have established traditions and facilities of music making. The founder of the pipe music movement, Margaret James, emphasised both the democratic and economically viable approach to pipe music as well as its high quality potential in the introduction to her *Piper's Guild Handbook* thus:

A poor man may buy a bamboo stick for a few pence and carve it with a pocket knife into the shape of a flute. What kind of music can he expect to conjure out of anything so easily acquired?

This little book, however, is written to prove the excellence of the music he makes. In these days when we expect to pay heavily in money and in years of labour for everything that is good, pipe-making is an exception and a surprise.²⁵

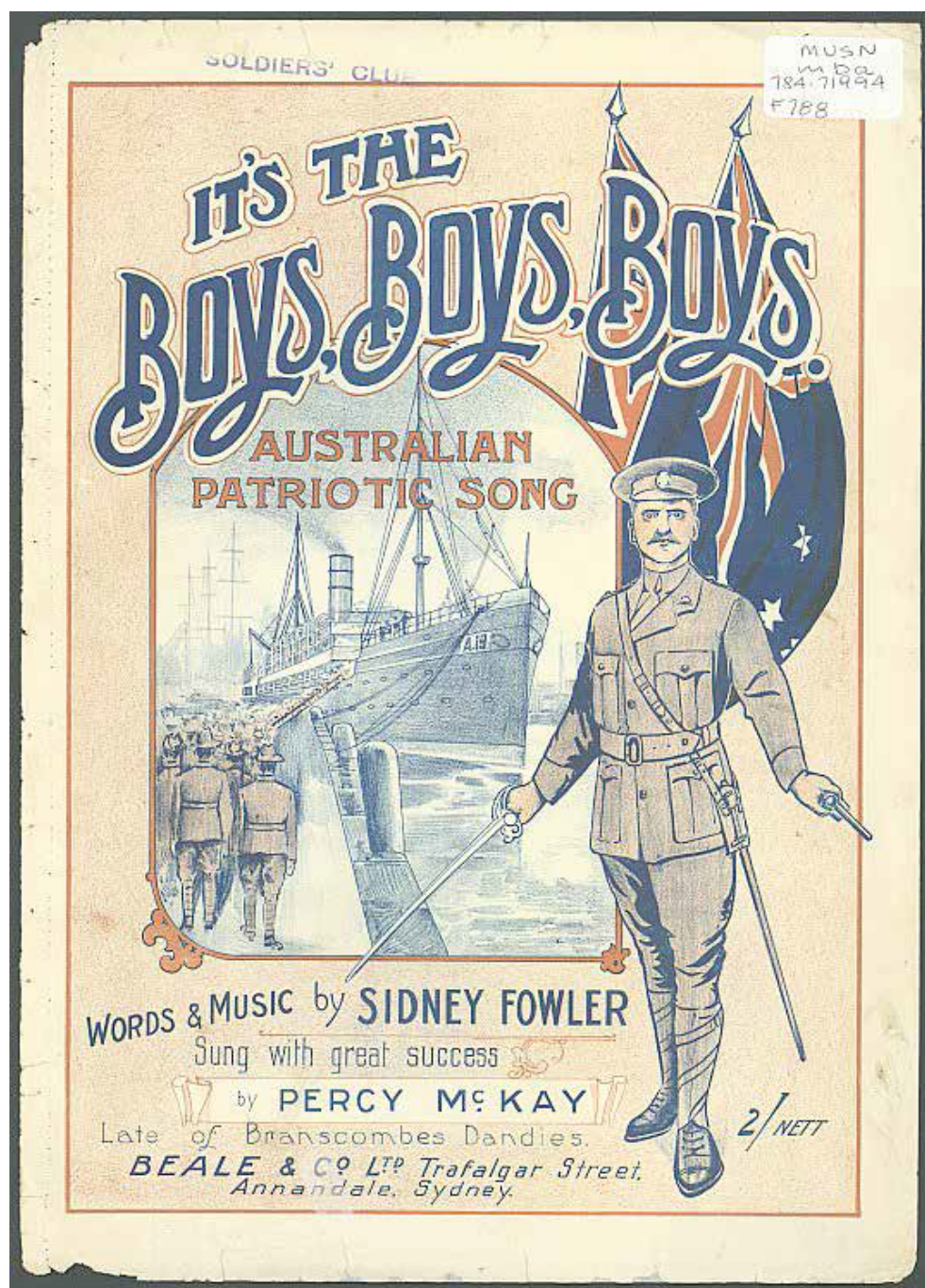
The *Melbourne Centenary Music Book* celebrates pipe music composed by four Australian composers who were living overseas at the time of its creation: Arthur Benjamin, Peggy Glanville-Hicks, Esther Rofe and John Tallis.²⁶ The book contains seven ensemble pieces for bamboo pipes of different tuning with two or three parts. The pieces progress from simple to complex and allow for development of ensemble skills and knowledge of various metres, tempos, rhythms, melodies, phrasing, counterpoint, harmony, articulation, ornamentation and dynamics.

Louise Dyer contributed to the educational repertoire of the pipe movement by commissioning new pieces and arrangements. The *Melbourne Centenary Music Book* was one of ten publications of pipe music L'Oiseau-Lyre produced in support of the pipe movement over the period 1934–1937.²⁷

An advertisement sheet titled *Music for the Pipes* lists five of the pipe music editions from 1934.²⁸ The sheet publicizes the following scores: *The Dancing Schoole* arranged by Arthur Benjamin, *Melodies for the Pipes* by French composers, *Motets of the 13th Century* arranged by Yvonne Rokseth, the *Melbourne Centenary Music Book* and *Enfantines* by Jacques Ibert. The introduction by Margaret Sutherland informs prospective buyers of the simplicity of the tunes, their progression from unison to two-, three- and four-part compositions for mixed ensembles, including percussion, and their entertainment value.

In 1934 Dyer also published *Six Scottish Folk Songs*,²⁹ arranged for voice and pipes with piano accompaniment by Imogen Holst, the daughter of English composer Gustav Holst who benefited from Hanson-Dyer's patronage,³⁰ was an inspired educationist. She advocated pipe music in her teaching practice, and arranged and composed folk music using pipes, including the tin-whistle and celluloid whistle pipes as well as bamboo pipes. Imogen Holst explored the potential of teaching music rudiments through simple instruments such as the pipes before the introduction of the Dolmetsch recorder in schools.³¹

The pipe music education movement recognized the simplicity and beauty of folk



An example of early twentieth-century printed music: 'It's the Boys, Boys, Boys', words and music by Sidney Fowler, Sydney: Beale and Co., [between 1914 and 1918]. Original in the National Library of Australia

tunes after the English folk music revival championed by Cecil Sharp at the beginning of the twentieth century and used as inspiration by the English national school of composers including Gustav Holst and Ralph Vaughan Williams; Vaughan Williams having contributed to the pipe repertoire with his *Suite for Pipes* in 1939. New British music was a major part of the repertoire presented in Melbourne while Louise Dyer was Secretary of the British Music Society, Victorian Branch.³² Her effort to promote new British music continued after she settled in Paris.³³

Dyer advocated the concept of the pipe music education movement in Australia as part of the publicity of the *Melbourne Centenary Music Book*, which commenced four days before Hanson-Dyer disembarked and continued throughout her stay in Melbourne.³⁴ She was quoted in the *Argus*:

I had also hoped to bring a large book of Australian composers' works for bamboo pipes, but the composers were unable to have them ready in time for publication before I left, so I had to be content with a book of eight tunes by four Australian composers living in England.. . The book is entitled 'The Melbourne Centenary Musicians' Book of Australian Composers' Pipe Music.' I shall offer a complete first edition to the British Music Society of Melbourne as an acknowledgment of the excellent work of the secretary and members during the recent difficult years.³⁵

Louise Dyer was referring to the difficult years of the Great Depression which resulted in the disbanding of the British Music Society in London in 1933 – the parent body of the British Music Society, Victorian Branch, which she founded in 1921. In contrast, the branch in Melbourne continued its work, surviving largely because of her generosity and vision.³⁶ It is still in operation today as the Lyrebird Society. By 1934, the society had delivered chamber music series to Melbourne audiences on an annual basis, had a library stocked with musical scores and records, and members who made music together in its quarters in 465 Collins Street.³⁷ The educational and cultural achievements of the British Music Society, Victorian Centre, were thus repeatedly acknowledged and celebrated:

Mrs. James Dyer offers the quality volume to the British Music Society of Melbourne, as a tribute to the work Miss Sybil Hull has done in making good music popular in the Australian schools. The idea behind this book, of Pandean pipe music is that Australian children shall make their own pipes, and play this Australian pipe music while the Centenary of Melbourne is being celebrated. Pipe making in schools was first suggested by Miss Margaret James, an Oxford lady, in 1920, and has gained real popularity. A bit of bamboo, a pen-knife, a file, a small saw, a bit of cork, and the Lyre Bird book open the way to the formation of a piper's guild.³⁸

The *Melbourne Centenary Music Book* is a small score of twenty pages, 29 cm long and 17 cm wide, between an octavo and quarto size with landscape orientation. The hard cover carton imitates wood with engraved music staves where the stars of the Southern Cross and the Commonwealth Star appear as musical notes. Rose Adler, the designer who created the Couperin edition cover, was also responsible for the cover of the *Melbourne Centenary Music Book*; she is acknowledged on the last page of the book. Adler studied at L'Ecole d'Art Décoratif in Paris. She was a gifted book binder with noted exhibitions

in Paris during the 1920s and the founding member of the Society of Original Book Binding.³⁹ The design of this music print is of high standard and originality, merging musical symbols with symbols of Australian national identity as found in the Australian national flag.

Normally printed music displays the title and the author(s); only a few covers featuring illustrations as it is more expensive to produce them.⁴⁰ In the case of the *Melbourne Centenary Music Book*, the cover lists two titles – the cover title and the title page title – and mentions Australian composers but does not specify their names. Instead, intriguing graphics and formatting dominate the design of the cover.

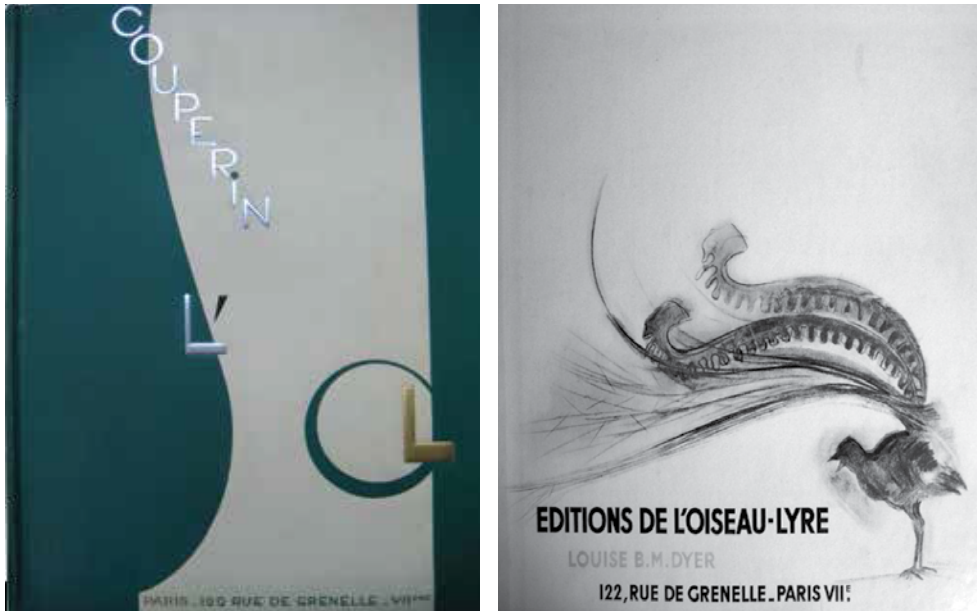
A plastic binding comb holds the twenty pages into the embrace of a hardcover with slit small handle on the right that enables small hands to carry the book vertically.⁴¹ The comb binding is one of the cheapest types of book binding and was unusual for publications of the 1930s. It enables the user to open the book without breaking the spine which would have been desirable in the case of a music score that contained music ensemble pieces that were to be played by children.

The texture of the carton cover imitates Tasmanian oak, paying homage to the Australian forest industry. It is important to note that, while in Melbourne during the centenary celebrations, Louise Dyer opened an exhibition of Australian timber together with her brother, the Lord Mayor Harold Gengoult Smith. The press reported that at the opening of the exhibition Dyer expressed an interest in promoting Australian timber further through her press by publishing a book with panels made of Australian wood.⁴² During the centenary celebrations, Dyer also demonstrated her interest in supporting art and decorative arts by opening a needlework and craft exhibition⁴³ and the Victorian Artists Society Spring Exhibition.⁴⁴

Further, the cover of the *Melbourne Centenary Music Book* features the colours of the Australian national flag: dark blue, red and white. Two white musical staves appear to be carved out of the wood, while Australian national identity is closely linked to that of Mother England through the image of the Union Jack on a dark blue paper label suspended between the spiral spine and the handle. The dark blue colour contrasts with the wood-textured cover and alludes to the colours of the oceans that surround the Australian continent and the deep blue Australian skies. The rest of the national flag's elements appear on the cover as musical notes; the Commonwealth Star on the left-hand stave and the Southern Cross on the right-hand stave.⁴⁵ Moreover, the dark blue label features the cover title in clear white typesetting shaped like a boomerang.

The cover's design represents Australian visual identity by employing the symbols and colours of the national flag. This approach can be found on the covers of patriotic and nationalistic song sheet music published in Australia at the beginning of the twentieth century.⁴⁶

Besides using the media to launch the pipe music movement in Australia, Louise Dyer contacted music organisations and teachers in Melbourne and sent cork, tools and



Cover and imprint page from a volume of *Oeuvres Complètes* of Francois Couperin published in twelve volumes by Editions de L'Oiseau Lyre over 1932-33

bamboo pipes of different sizes in different stages of completion to music educationist Ruth Flockhart.⁴⁷ She met with members of the Association of Music Teachers of Victoria.⁴⁸ Finally, she organised a concert at the Christmas Gathering of the British Music Society, Victorian Centre, on 11 December, 1934. Pipe music was programmed in combination with piano music by C. Debussy and J. Ibert, dance music by C. P. L. Delibes, F. Schubert and A. Scriabin, and spoken verse and drama by English authors. The Methodist Ladies College Pipers delivered a selection from several L'Oiseau Lyre publications and played arrangements by Margaret Sutherland, compositions by Arthur Benjamin and an original tune composed by one of the pipers. Only the first composition published in the *Melbourne Centenary Music Book*, 'Marching Tune' by Arthur Benjamin was performed at the concert. In addition, Louise Dyer delivered a speech on the value of Pandean pipes music making to the audience.⁴⁹

A closer investigation into the design uncovers Rose Adler's original approach that accentuates the educational conception of the publication. If the blue paper label is removed, the letters of the title page title, *Piper's Music*, are revealed together with the entire splendour of the elegant French Art Deco design that represents a synthesis of musical and Australian national symbols.

The stave lines are not restfully horizontal as they would be in notated music but

diagonal, alluding to activity so that the design may appeal more to children. The title would be rendered in Phrygian mode if the treble clef was written. It sounds playfully on the two staves as the letters dance on or between the lines. The red dot of the 'I' punches through the 'P', while the final 'C' suggests a clock and timing, which is so important in music. The cut corners on the right-hand side of the score are more obvious because of the absence of the dark blue label. The colour scheme is the same: dark blue, red and white.

The dark blue paper label with the tribute message *The Melbourne Centenary Music Book, 1934, Piper's Music, Australian Composers* was a supplementary element. It was added later to strengthen national sentiment by emphasising national flag symbols through the addition of the Union Jack and dark blue field of the national flag and to tie the publication to the Melbourne centenary.

Every detail of the publication's conception, production, publicity and promotion was considered carefully and executed with finesse. What is more, music publishing in this case rested within cross-disciplinary practice. As a young woman, Louise Dyer went to study in Glasgow⁵⁰ where the ideas of the nineteenth-century Arts and Craft Movement flourished. The movement promoted decorative arts, craftsmanship and unity of the arts,⁵¹ influencing early modernism.⁵² Blending art, craft and music making was also an ideal upheld by the pipe music education movement Margaret James initiated in the 1920s. She wrote:

When the music, craft and art teachers are determined to combine their efforts to bring about a hand-made orchestra, there will be creative music in schools. Its quality will be beautiful beyond any expectation, and boys and girls will for ever after demand perfection of tone and pitch.⁵³

Louise Dyer supported contemporary Australian composers and continued producing crafted publications with tasteful cover designs. This music score was followed by more new Australian music prints of music furnished by Margaret Sutherland and Peggy Glanville-Hicks. Educational repertoire of pipe music featured imaginative cover designs, for instance, *How to Make Pipes* by Margaret Sutherland,⁵⁴ the first edition of Margaret Sutherland's *Australian Melodies*,⁵⁵ with an illustration by Melbourne-born artist Sam Ateyo on the cover, as well as *Exercise Musicale* by Darius Milhaud⁵⁶ with an illustration by Sam Ateyo and cover formatting by Rose Adler.

Solid business acumen is evident in the approach to production, marketing and publicity of the *Melbourne Centenary Music Book* both in England and Australia, which demonstrates the importance of the music publishing aspect of the project. Besides the 1000 copies of the first edition that were given as a gift to British Music Society members in Melbourne, a second edition of 4000 copies was printed 'for all those who love the Pipes'.⁵⁷ At a time when Australian publishers such as Allan's Music had to use the method of photolithography under copyright agreements instead of selling fully imported sheet music,⁵⁸ L'Oiseau Lyre, termed an Australian publishing house, made impression at the Books of the British Empire Exhibition in London, thus boosting the reputation of both

publication and publisher. The *Argus* correspondent reported on 15 August, 1934:

If the most recent of Australian publications had to be selected, the productions of the Lyre Bird Press could establish a good claim to the first vote. This is an Australian venture, with its home in Paris, and it specialises in the publication of classical music . . . As a contribution to the Melbourne Centenary, this Paris house has produced a selection of pipe music . . . It is published in such a form that the children of Australia can carry it by a handle in the cover, which is made of a stiff wood-like paper capable of withstanding such usage . . . Altogether this is one of the most original books of 1934, original alike in conception and production, and offered for only half-a-crown.⁵⁹

The *Melbourne Centenary Music Book* exemplifies Hanson-Dyer's promotion of original decorative cover design, her multifaceted approach to conception and distribution, and her pioneering work in publishing works by Australian composers and educational repertoire for the pipe music movement. In this particular edition, Hanson-Dyer promoted patriotic sentiment by bringing into focus Australian composers and an Australian-inspired cover design with the idea of centenary celebrations.

Acknowledgement

The author wishes to acknowledge the expert assistance of the editor and reviewer, and the librarians from the State Library of Victoria; the Louise Hanson-Dyer Music Library, University of Melbourne, and the Baillieu Library at Monash University.