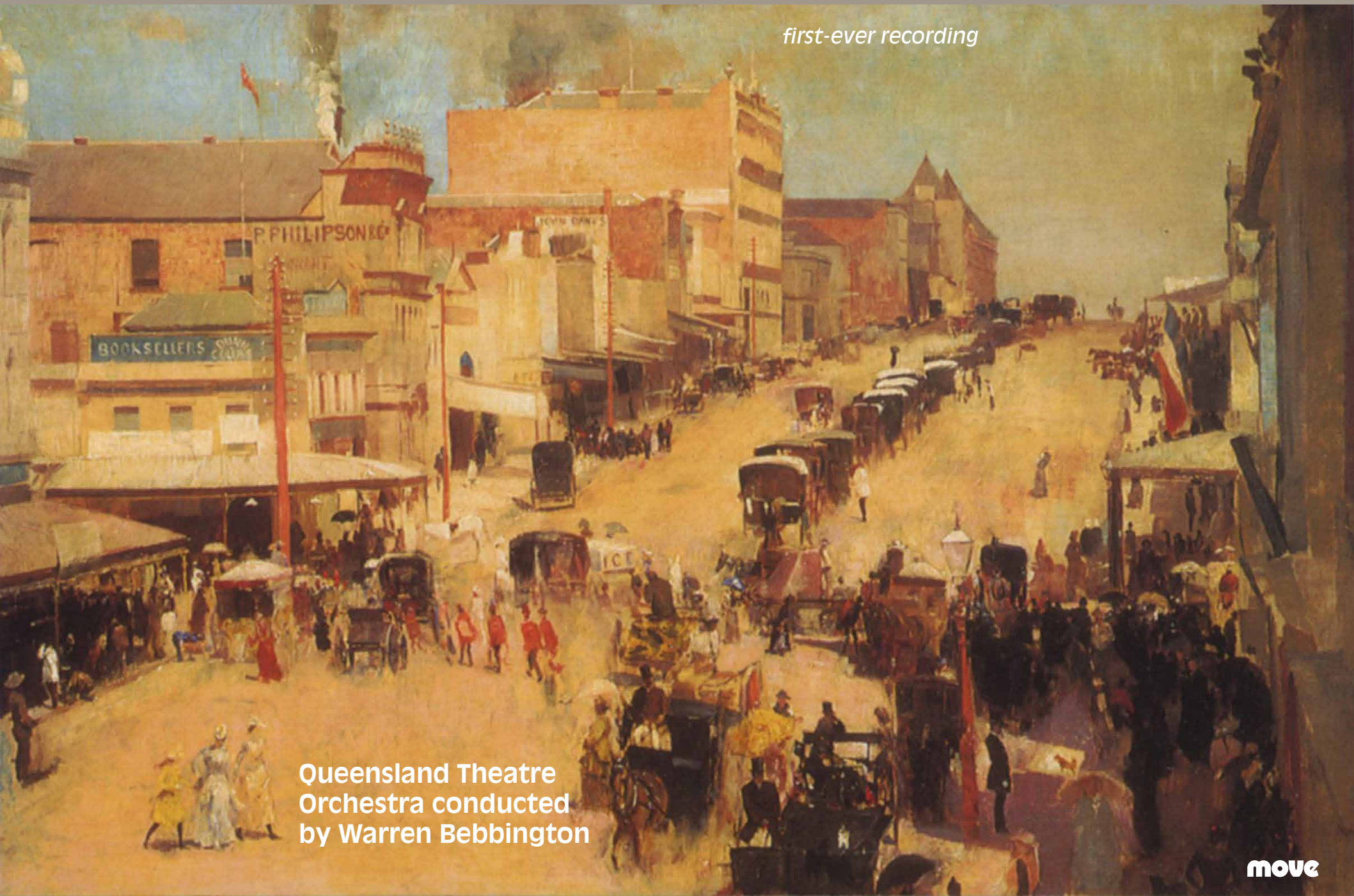
MARSHALL-HALL SYMPHONY



first-ever recording

Queensland Theatre Orchestra conducted by Warren Bebbington

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In 1900 the Melbourne Outpost described George William Louis Marshall-Hall as 'the most picturesque if not the most powerful influential personality in Australian intellectual life. If he were not so ostentatiously conscious of himself, he would also be the most amiable … he is almost an epigram—altogether a Paradox!'.

Marshall-Hall was born in London in 1862 to a family of eminent but controversial scientists and inventors. His grandfather was a famous physiologist renowned for pioneering a method of resuscitating drowned persons. He was also author of publications on a range of medical and other subjects, including an article condemning slavery in the United States. His father was a barrister and amateur geologist who educated his son with a view to a career in the Civil Service in the Colonies. George however chose music—and was disowned as a 'damned fiddler'. His first opera, Dido and Aeneas, was written at the age of 15 and a book of his songs was published when he was only 16. Yet he had little formal musical education having studied, only briefly, at the Royal College of Music and in Germany. In order to support his wife, May Hunt, the young Marshall-Hall was at times organist, choirmaster, teacher and journalist. He nevertheless continued to compose: the operas, Harold (c 1888) and Leonard (now lost), the Harold overture (1888), the sextet Die Blumen (1886) and a Soliloquy from Tennyson's 'Maud' (1890). By 1888 Marshall-Hall was conductor of the choral and orchestral societies of the London Organ School and in that year the prologue to Harold was performed by the London Symphony Orchestra under George Henschel. Soon after, and with the aid of the recommendation of Sir George Grove, he was appointed first Ormond Professor of Music at the University of Melbourne. Professor Marshall-Hall arrived in Australia in January 1891, six foot three or four 'in stockings', to be greeted as a 'splendid specimen of a Wagnerian hero'. His appointment represented the first endowed chair of the university yet Melbourne was soon to discover that the new professor was no 'dryasdust' academic.

Marshall-Hall's lectures were unashamedly controversial, expressing his contempt for pedantry and his dedication to the emotional, rather than technical, aspect of Art. This was evident in his inaugural speech:

For all the great musicians, Bach, Beethoven, Schubert, Wagner and others have been men of mighty soul, and, though not jugglers with empty phrases, philosophers in the profoundest sense of the word, portraying in their works every phase of human nature; able, while holding their hearer enthralled by the sensuous beauty of art to elevate his whole moral being by the nobility of the motion inherent in it. The artist has but to open his score and he obtains a happiness which not only fills his whole being, but which leaves him a better man than he was before. For man's life is richer and purer for every deep and generous emotion he experiences. Such is the meaning of music to me, and my energies will be chiefly devoted to make this meaning clear to others.

Marshall-Hall proposed to lecture on the fundamental laws of expression, the interpretation of works and the aesthetics of music, and insisted on the study of German being included in the curriculum. He was a tireless advocate of the music of Wagner and Beethoven, and was known always to carry a pocket volume of Shakespeare. His lectures on form and expression were illustrated by examples from Beethoven's piano sonatas, while the operas of Wagner illustrated his discussions of

First performance for 80 years

Symphony in E flat
1 Vivace 13'48"
2 Largamento 9'58"
3 Allegro con spirito 12'18"
Symphony in C minor
4 Adagio Sostenuto 10'04"

Dedicated to painters Arthur Streeton and Tom Roberts, the **E-flat Symphony** was composed at their Heidelberg camp by their friend G.W.L. Marshall-Hall, founder of the Melbourne University Conservatorium and of Melbourne's orchestral subscription concerts. The eccentric Marshall-Hall, praised in London by George Grove and George Bernard Shaw, arrived in Australia in 1892. A composer of over 60 works, he was sacked from the University of Melbourne in 1900 for publishing poetry judged blasphemous and lewd. The **Symphony** was conducted in London by Henry Wood and in Berlin by Nikisch, but has not been heard since 1907. This is its first recording.

dramatic form. One of those present at his lectures later described them as 'the most wonderful ever delivered'. Marshall-Hall would lecture, for instance, on 'The Emotional Intensity of A Minor,' and enlarge on it for hours, with references to his beloved Nietszche, Schoepenhauer, Nordau and Havelock Ellis. And the most wonderful part of it all was the remarkable good humour with which Hall received the laughter of an artistic audience to his most sacred thoughts, sometimes pausing in the middle of a passage which had struck listeners as particularly funny to join in the laugh himself.

Other lectures by the professor included 'Music as a Religious Force', 'The Literary Side of Wagner's Musical Dramas' and 'What progress has England made in music during the last ten years' (this last being quite unflattering of his contemporaries).

Early in 1892 the painter, Arthur Streeton, began a portrait of Marshall-Hall. During the sittings they told stories and jokes to one another and Streeton wrote to his friend Tom Roberts that Marshall-Hall 'laughs and gurgles away and the whole bally room shakes'. Marshall-Hall occasionally camped with Streeton and his artist friends at Charterisville, northeast of Melbourne, where the 'Music Hall' played Schubert and they discussed art and music and railed against philistinism. Marshall-Hall's overture, Giordano Bruno (1891) and collection of poems, Hymn to Sydney (1897), are dedicated to Streeton and in return, Streeton decorated the cover of Marshall-Hall's poems, To Irene (1896). One of this group of artists, Ernest Moffitt, died suddenly of appendicitis in 1899 and at his funeral, as Norman Lindsay described, Marshall-Hall 'had dug up an old skirted frock-coat too small for him. When the coffin was lowered into the grave … he turned and ran from the graveside, distractedly leaping the mounds of other graves with his coat-tails flying, making a spectacle of grief at once ludicrous and impressive'. In his lectures and programme-notes, Marshall-Hall often drew analogies to painting, as in his discussion of Brahms's Variations on a Theme by Haydn. Here he likened the composer to a painter 'bent on decorating the realm of space with beautiful imaginings' who 'fills the vacancy of panel after panel with subtle variations of lines and colours, all different, yet having affinity one with the other, being all the children of one parent idea' and describing each individual variation as 'various phases of soul-experience'.

It was this depth of emotion that Marshall-Hall brought to his conducting for which he was celebrated. No permanent orchestra had been established in Melbourne prior to Marshall Hall's arrival and with the assistance of Mr George Allan, of Allan and Company, a concert was arranged in 1892 in the Town Hall. The orchestra performed Beethoven's Fifth Symphony to great acclaim: Table Talk noted that those present 'must have recognised his strong magnetic power, which did not act as a metronome merely to his orchestra, but rather swayed the forces under his control so that the feeling of the music was portrayed without consciousness of alteration of time'. As a result of this success the Marshall-Hall orchestra was established, giving its first concert in December 1892. The orchestra was to continue to give six concerts a year on average (a total of 111), before it disbanded in 1912. Its conductor was tireless, once taking 17 sectional rehearsals for a single concert, and always thoroughly studying the history and circumstances of the composition of the score at hand. Occasionally, Marshall-Hall included his own works in these concerts: his C minor symphony, completed in December 1892 was first performed in June 1893. His Symphony in Eb was completed on 29 October 1903 and dedicated 'to my friends and comrades under the Southern Cross'. It was first performed in Melbourne on 28 May 1904 in a programme which included Wagner's Faust overture and Brahms's Academic Overture. The audience on this occasion included the Vice-regal party. The symphony must have been received with acclaim, as it was repeated by the orchestra in its 1907 and 1908 seasons, and in 1907 it was conducted by Henry Wood at the Proms in London

Premieres of Marshall-Hall's compositions continued to take their place with first performances in Melbourne of outstanding new works from Europe. In the 1906 season the orchestra performed Rimsky-Korsakov's Scheherezade, Brahms's Fourth Symphony, Strauss's Don Juan (all new to Melbourne) along with Marshall-Hall's Orchestral Idyll (1894). In the six concerts of that season, 10 new works were aired. Another of the orchestra's successes was Debussy's Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun. Already heard twice in the 1911 season, it reappeared on the programme in 1912, along with Marshall-Hall's own Soliloquy from Tennyson' s Maud, at what was to be the orchestra's final concert. The program notes for the concerts were written by Marshall-Hall himself, and by 1911 these extended to as many as 14 pages, complete with musical examples. About Debussy's work, Marshall-Hall informed its hearers:

Mallarme's luscious impressionistic nature-poem has suggested the exquisite tone-picture which has made Debussy's name famous through the world of Art. Without a doubt, this is the most original musical creation of our times, and the fascination it exerts on the mind is not due to any

far-fetched bizarrerie of manipulation, as is so often the case, but to genuine poetical inspiration, expressing itself, as always, through new types of melody, and amazingly subtle revelations of unsuspected harmonic relations, the unusual character of which soon lose their strangeness, and captivate with their languid beauty.

Arthur Streeton regularly attended the orchestra's Saturday afternoon concerts and believed Marshall-Hall to be the finest conductor Australia had ever had. A visiting Englishman, Mr A J Lee, was astonished to discover in Melbourne a conductor whom he regarded as one of the finest of the day, and he subsequently donated £1000 to the orchestra. Lee rated the Marshall-Hall orchestra alongside the Leipzig Gewandhaus: 'a full-fledged orchestra collected from all quarters, and a conductor endowed with ideas and ambitions. What Mendellsohn once had done for Leipzig and all North Germany, Marshall-Hall now did for Melbourne and all Australia. Letting no difficulty stand in his way (and the difficulties were great and numerous) he gave to the Australian people all that was best in music'.

Besides being a conductor, composer and teacher, Marshall-Hall wrote several books of poetry: To Irene, Hymn to Sydney, A Book of Canticles (1897). His fourth volume of verse, published in 1898, was unwisely named Hymns Ancient and Modern (also the title of the Anglican hymnal). Its contents quickly spawned charges of blasphemy and the ensuing scandal was to prove the fixation of the Melbourne press for years to come. In August of 1898 the Argus reported the text of a sermon at St Paul's Cathedral in which the Rev. Barnes announced that Marshall-Hall's poetry flaunted 'profane unbelief and gross animalism'. It was recalled that Marshall-Hall had rashly advocated war in a recent speech at a concert of the Melbourne Liedertafel which, combined with the notorious verses, made him the object of the Argus's venom.

The scandal was revived in 1900 when Marshall-Hall was due for re-appointment to his position at the university. The Warden of Trinity College, Dr Alexander Leeper, produced a petition critical of the professor and signed by 78 headmistresses of Melbourne girls' schools. At the meeting of the university council a motion was tabled that the professor 'had endangered the future of the School of Music and of the Conservatorium by the libidinous character of his poems and other writings, coupled with his ostentatious parade of disbelief in Christianity or any form of Theism'. Despite the presence of supporters, including a hundred university students, teachers of the Conservatorium, members of the Liedertafel and parents of past and present students, reappointment was denied at the crucial meeting of the council.

Marshall-Hall continued at the conservatorium (later the Albert Street Conservatorium) without the Ormond Professorship, but was now dependent on income from teaching and conducting. He nevertheless opened his house to friends and students to whom he would lecture, sing and play through entire Wagner operas. In this period he composed an Australian National Song (1900), the opera' Aristodemus (1902), Phantasy for horn (1905), Violin Fantasies (1907), Capriccioso for violin and orchestra (1910) and String quartett in F (1910).

Although the Marshall-Hall orchestra was disbanded in 1912, Marshall-Hall managed to produce his opera, Stella (1910) in Melbourne that year. It is set in 'a town on the sea-coast of Australia. Present time 1909'. Its scenery includes a view of a harbour, tree-ferns, ti-trees and Australian honey-suckle. The local colour and contemporary dress make it the first Australian verismo opera, and it was one which its composer believed would secure his fame in England. Archibald Lee had offered to arrange for Marshall-Hall to conduct symphony concerts with the London Philharmonic orchestra and perhaps one or two Wagner operas. With this incentive Marshall-Hall soon left for London. He took with him the scores of Stella and a new opera, Romeo and Juliet (1912) which he regarded as his greatest work. But in London his aspirations were constantly thwarted, and although Stella was performed at the Palladium, it was drastically cut—'mutilated' according to the composer—being apparently 'sandwiched between a lady in rouge who warbled to the moon and a gentleman in lamp black who warbled about it'. Marshall-Hall was hopeful of a performance of Romeo and Juliet in Nuremberg but these hopes were dashed when the intendant went mad and was put in an asylum. At the outset of war in 1914 he was trapped in Zurich and only escaped by standing 10 hours in the corridor of a train. Dispirited by these events, he believed that Australia had absorbed the best of him. And yet in 1914, fortuitously, came news of the death of the incumbent Ormond Professor and with it an invitation to resume his old position. Marshall-Hall returned to Melbourne at the beginning of 1915 with plans for his teaching and for composing two further operas. Tragically, on 18 July 1915 he died of complications from appendicitis and Melbourne was suddenly robbed of its foremost musical personality. After a life of both triumph and tragedy, Marshall-Hall was described at his death as 'a man of energy and purpose far above the common'. Several obituaries reported an incident

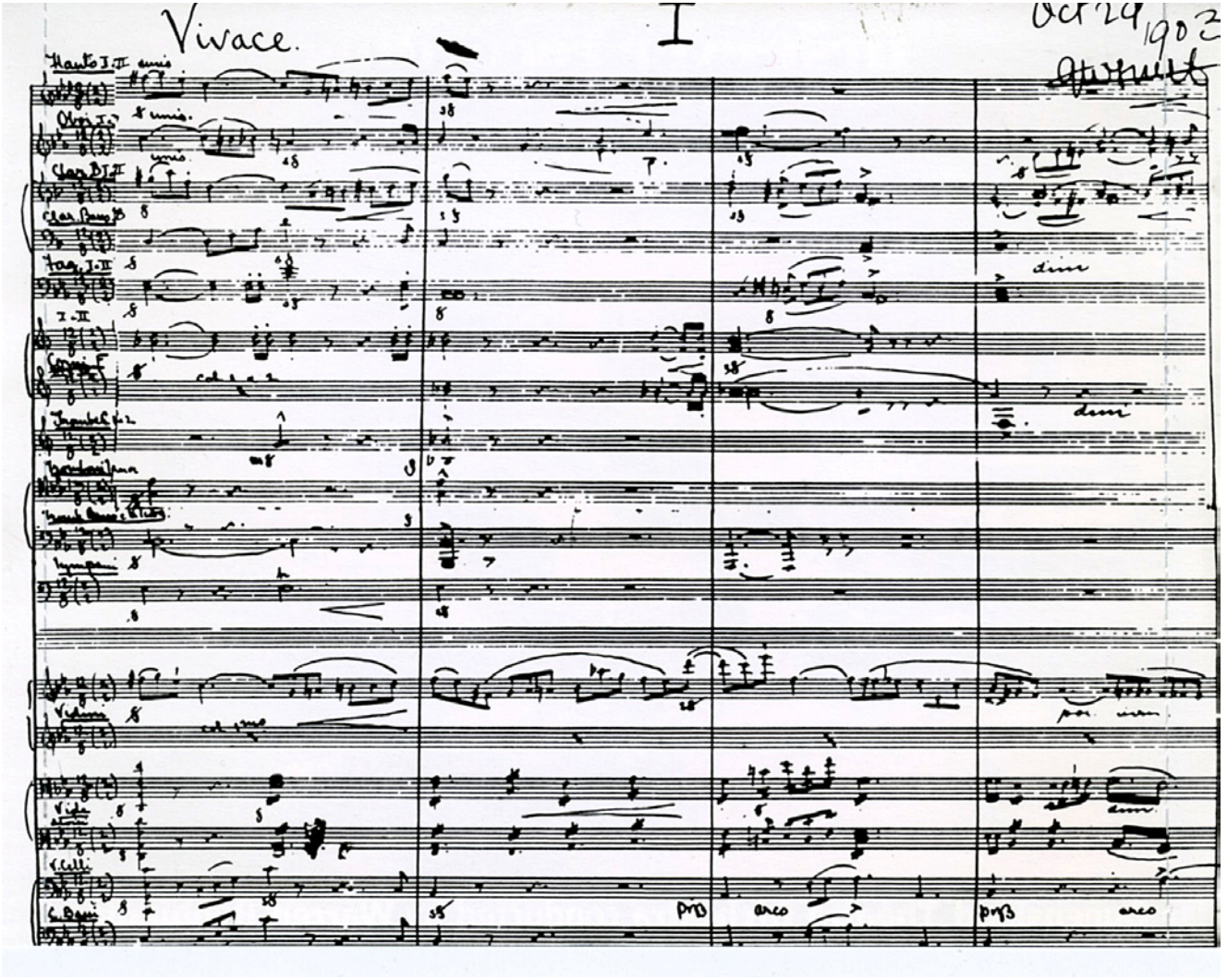
typical of the man, and one frequently recounted, which took place in the midst of a cyclone which struck Melbourne in 1897:

When the storm was at its height, and the thunder was booming like a battery of guns, and the sky was wriggling with lightning flashes, the Professor was missed. Yelling to one another to make themselves heard, the other teachers and the students of the Conservatorium rushed all over the premises seeking their beloved chief. He had disappeared! In desperation, one courageous soul dashed out into the yard, and there astride the gable roof of an outhouse, waving his baton in the air, indifferent to the lightning flashes that played around him, was Professor Marshall Hall—conducting the thunderstorm.

Marshall-Hall's scores and papers were purchased by Percy Grainger and are now in the Grainger Museum at the University of Melbourne, along with a portrait by Tom Roberts (1901). The portrait painted by Arthur Streeton a year after Marshall-Hall's arrival in Australia is now in the National Gallery of Victoria.

The **Symphony in Eb** (1903) reflects the vitality and ebullience of its composer. In his note to the first performance Marshall-Hall wrote that 'it represents in purely lyrical form the manifold impressions of various life upon an ardent, active temperament. Scenes, impressions, passions, activities, continuously succeed each other as in life itself'. The first movement Vivace is cast in sonata form. The bold flourish of the first few bars makes way for the main theme which follows, espressivo, in the wind. A more tranquil second subject appears in cor anglais and oboe and a succession of ideas, including a resolute marked theme in brass, and a more lyrical melody in violins follow. It is here that echoes of Brahms can be discerned in the instrumental voicing. A dramatic lull, and suggestions of the opening, herald the development section with its dramatic ebbs and flows. The opening theme returns in triumph, and its impetuosity results in an emphatic and forthright conclusion.

The second movement Largamento, according to the composer, represents 'a mind in repose amid the grander forms of nature, the infinity of ocean, mountain, and sky'. The opening of the movement is wistful and dreamy and is contrasted with a brighter and more active theme. The use of delicate pizzicato arpeggios suggests the sea and the whole evokes wistful recollections. No doubt Marshall-Hall was recalling his excursions to Heidelberg with his artist friends Arthur Streeton, Frederick McCubbin and Ernest Moffitt, and their musings about Art and Life.



The third movement Allegro con spirito is set in rondo form and it is here that the various scenes and impressions converge, as the music 'hurries from one life-impulse to another'. Each new idea arises out of the previous one and the initial three note motif is never distant. The opening sense of foreboding in oboes and horns quickly turns to contentment, to a languid solo melody in the 'cello and finally, to the dramatic blast of trombones and tuba which heralds the final statement of the theme. The exuberant conclusion reveals its composer undaunted by adversity and instead savouring life. Marshall-Hall wrote that his symphony 'will have produced its intended effect if it re-awakens in its hearers those emotions of beauty, joy, and courage, from which it sprang'.

Wagner's Tristan und Isolde influenced the **Adagio from Symphony in C minor** (1892). Its poignant theme on clarinet and viola expresses what the reviewer of the first performances described as 'the sadness of unutterable regret'. A contrasting, more genial section is followed by the original idea in a succession of imitative solo entries, which serve to accentuate the sadness. The episodic structure culminates in a brief and affective recollection of the second theme.

SUZANNE ROBINSON



W.L. Marshall-Hall (1862-1915) was Melbourne's most important musical pioneer, and one of Australia's first composers of significance. Born in London, Marshall-Hall studied composition with Parry and Stanford at the Royal College of Music, and after a period teaching music and languages in the provinces, launched himself energetically into London musical life as a composer of operas and orchestral works. By 1890, he was regarded as one of the brightest young talents on the London scene: an excerpt from his opera Harold had been performed by Charles Santley at the Crystal Palace and his first published work, A Song Cycle of Life and Love was enthusiastically reviewed by George Bernard Shaw. He was appointed founding Professor of Music at the University of Melbourne, Australia, and in 1892 settled in Australia.

In Melbourne, he quickly became a figure of prominence and an object of controversy. A naturally gifted conductor, he assembled an orchestra and gave concerts of Beethoven, Mozart, Brahms, Wagner and the latest French and German works of a standard hitherto unknown in Melbourne, and this led to the establishment of the city's first subscription concerts under his direction. A charismatic teacher, his championship of Wagner and Schopenhauer soon attracted comment, and his outspoken views on every issue from religion to politics soon brought him trouble. A man of bohemian tastes and habits, he fell in with the Heidelberg school of painters, camping with them, playing to them, and buying their works. His little book of poems, Hymns Ancient and Modern, was judged lewd and sacrilegious, and in 1900 he was dismissed from the University.

After this, he simply continued as Director of the Conservatorium he had founded, whose lease and property were largely his own, until 1912, when he returned to London to promote his compositions. He was reinstated to the University of Melbourne in 1915, only to die of peritonitis after an appendix operation a few months later. He had composed 60 works, including operas, symphonies, overtures, string quartets and songs, and through his teaching and conducting laid the foundations of much of Melbourne's present-day musical life.

The **Symphony in E-flat** is dedicated to "my friends and comrades under the Southern Cross" and in part composed during Marshall-Hall's camping trips with Arthur Streeton, Tom Roberts and their circle. Marshall-Hall conducted its first performance at his 1904 Subscription Concerts in Melbourne, and it was later heard in the present (revised) version with the London Philharmonic under Henry Wood at Queens Hall and at Berlin under Nikisch. It was published in a duet arrangement by Breitkopf und Härtel and then in full score by Paris and Company, Berlin, but has not been performed since 1907.

The **Adagio Sostenuto** from the earlier Symphony in C minor was revived by Sir Bernard Heinze in the 1930s and warmly received. Otherwise the works were not heard after the composer's death in 1915. Percy Grainger purchased the manuscripts for his collection, and they lay largely forgotten in his Grainger Museum at the University of Melbourne until the present recording.

WARREN BEBBINGTON

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■ Recorded in digital stereo at Mayne Hall, University of Queensland by Peter Freeman on 16 and 17 November 1986. Prepared for CD by Martin Wright, Move Records. ■ This recording was made with the assistance from the Australia Council and a Special Project Grant from the University of Queensland. ■ Front cover: Tom Roberts (1856-1931) "Bourke Street Melbourne" or "Allegro con brio", oil on canvas 51 x 77 cm, National Library of Australia, by permission. ■ Portrait of Marshall-Hall: Tom Roberts, oil, from the Marshall-Hall collection, Grainger Museum, The University of Melbourne, by permission. ■ Reproduction of score: first page of the autograph full score of the E-flat Symphony showing the composer's hand. ■ This recording was first released in 1995 by MOVE RECORDS … **www.move.com.au** … ℗ 1995 Move Records