



VICTORIA



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A gala concert commemorating Victoria's 150th Anniversary recorded live in the Great Hall of the Royal Exhibition Building on Sunday 31st March 1985.

Victoria Victoria is proudly presented by the Melbourne Youth Music Council.

**CONDUCTOR:**

Richard Divall – Music Director: Victoria State Opera

**CHOIR:**

1,006 adult voices from all over the State of Victoria brought together just to sing at this historic event.

**SOLOISTS:**

Rosemary Boyle – Soprano.

Suzanne Johnston – Mezzo Soprano

Simon O'Loughlin – Tenor

Peter Cox – Baritone

**VICTORIAN COLLEGE OF THE ARTS ORCHESTRA**

Orchestra Leader – Russell McGregor

**CENTRAL BAND OF THE ROYAL AUSTRALIAN**

AIR FORCE under the command of

Sqd. Ldr. M.A. Butcher, LRAM, ARCM, LGSM

# VICTORIA VICTORIA



**FANFARE (1'04")**

RAAF Band conducted by Sqd. Ldr. M.A. Butcher

**AIDA, Triumphal March (1871) (7'12")**

Giuseppe VERDI (1812-1901)

by permission of G. Ricordi & Co.

**NABUCCO, Hebrew Chorus (1842) (4'03")**

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Modest MUSSORGSKY (1839-1881)

Soloists: Simon O'Loughlin, Peter Cox

**SERENADE TO MUSIC (1938) (13'00")**

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Soloists: Rosemary Boyle, Suzanne Johnston,

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**CORONATION ODE, Land of Hope and Glory (1901)**

(3'53")

Edward ELGAR (1857-1934)

Soloists: Rosemary Boyle, Suzanne Johnston,

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**ENCORE of Land of Hope and Glory (3'49")**

**1812 OVERTURE (1880) (13'55")**

Peter Ilyich TCHAIKOVSKY (1840-1893)

Speech by the Governor of Victoria, His Excellency

Rear Admiral Sir Brian Murray, KCMG, AO (5'38")

**VICTORIA (1880) (18'11")**

Leon CARON (1850-1905)

Soloists: Rosemary Boyle, Suzanne Johnston,

Simon O'Loughlin, Peter Cox

Recorded by



The Australian Broadcasting Corporation  
Producer: Trevor Wellby  
Recording Engineers: Peter Thorp, Phil Brennan,  
Brendan O'Neill



Digital Master Tape prepared by Martin Wright of  
Move Records, Melbourne.  
DIGITAL

Melbourne Youth Music Council

Design: Andrew Gerrard

Cover photograph: Andrew Clarke

Official Photography:  
McKenzie Gray and Associates

Photograph by Charles Nettleton of 1880 Concert,  
provided by Joyce Evans, CSPC, Melbourne.

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# VICTORIA VICTORIA

On Sunday 31st March 1985 at 2pm Richard Divall, a 1,000 voice choir, four soloists, the Victorian College of the Arts Orchestra and the Royal Australian Air Force Band prepared to perform the "Choral Event of the Century". The vice-regal salute was sounded and an audience of over 5,000 rose to their feet as the Governor of Victoria, Sir Brian Murray and Lady Murray were escorted to their seats.

Moments later the tiers of massed singers and musicians filled the Great Hall with a sound that will long be remembered by all who were present. This was indeed the "Choral Event of the Century". The largest gathering of adult voices and audience in Victoria's history. What a celebration!

To commemorate Victoria's 150th Anniversary the re-creation of a great musical event in Victoria's history was chosen as the focus for this concert. "VICTORIA", the prize cantata written by Leon Caron in 1880, belongs to a part of Melbourne's musical legend. It was composed for the inauguration of the Melbourne International Exhibition and the completion of the Exhibition Building. The "VICTORIA CANTATA" won for Caron the prize of 100 pounds and the privilege of conducting the 1,000 voice choir, four soloists and orchestra at the opening ceremony on the 1st October 1880.

VICTORIA VICTORIA brought together over 1,000 voices from all over the State of Victoria to re-create that spectacular concert. For this festive occasion the Governor of Victoria, Sir Brian Murray introduced the "VICTORIA CANTATA" of which the introductory section and chorus, solo quartet and chorus and the finale were performed.

The programme presents some of the grandest choral works of all time and includes two rarely performed versions of popular works. The choral version of Tchaikovsky's "1812 OVERTURE" received a standing ovation and "LAND OF HOPE AND GLORY", was not the version so familiar from the last night of the Proms, but Elgar's own vocal arrangement for which the audience demanded a complete encore.

VICTORIA VICTORIA will take its place in the history books as one of the highlights of Victoria's 150th Anniversary Year. It is an event that has captured the spirit of the Anniversary's theme – "Growing Together". This single concert involved the talent and dedication of thousands of Victorians and has given pleasure to many thousands more.

The excitement of VICTORIA VICTORIA lives on through the hundreds of letters and telephone calls, the broadcast, the recording, the reviews, the books and the film. VICTORIA VICTORIA did not only re-create an event in our history – it created history.



Simon O'Loughlin



Suzanne Johnston



The 'Victoria Cantata' was a splendid extravagance to celebrate a spectacular extravagance, the Melbourne International Exhibition of 1880.

The building in the Carlton Gardens cost £246,000, and the Exhibition itself was of the same scale. There were 13,000 exhibitors displaying 32,000 exhibits. It ran for seven months and attracted 1,300,000 visitors. This was Marvellous Melbourne.

The Exhibition symbolised Melbourne's pride in its growth. In 45 years, it had grown from a settlement of eight turf huts and five other buildings to be the largest city in Australia, and the spectacular Exhibition in its new building was a proper monument to its prosperity.

The building and the Exhibition were simultaneously declared open on 1st October, 1880, by the Governor of Victoria, the Marquis of Normanby. The National Anthem was sung; there were cheers for the Queen, the Prince of Wales, the Royal Family and the Governor himself; and then came the performance of the 'Victoria Cantata', on a scale appropriate to the event.

It was composed by the French-born Léon Caron, who set to music a poem by J. W. Meaden, and won £100 and the honour of conducting the work at the opening ceremony. He had the benefit of an organ built by Melbourne's George Fincham which cost £5,000 to install, a chorus of 1,000 massed in front of the decorated pipes, four vocal soloists and an orchestra of 125 musicians.

It must have been quite a sight. The chorus was

arranged in tiers, and the 500 women singers were all in white, with blue ribbons for the sopranos and red ribbons for the contraltos. Many of the members of the chorus must have been former pupils of George Leavis Allan, the founder of the music house which is a major sponsor of today's performance.

The cantata, a musical hybrid of Sullivan and Verdi, began with an evocation of Victoria's primeval past, introduced a rollicking tribute to the pioneers and went on to the pastoral calm of 1880 before the salutation to the 'Queen of the Southern Seas'. It was a wild success. 'Men stood and cheered and tearful ladies waved their handkerchiefs.'

Today's performance, the first of three choral events presented by the Melbourne Youth Music Council to celebrate Victoria's 150th Anniversary year, is conducted by Richard Divall, the Music Director of the acclaimed Victoria State Opera. He conducts an even larger group of musicians than Léon Caron did 105 years ago: a choir of more than 1,000 voices, the Victorian College of the Arts Orchestra, the Royal Australian Air Force Band and four soloists.

The programme reflects the celebratory spirit of the occasion, and includes some of the grandest choral music of all time. Fittingly the 'Victoria Cantata' will be introduced by the present Governor of Victoria, Rear Admiral Sir Brian Murray.

The Victoria Victoria Committee welcomes you to the choral event of this century.



LEON CARON, the composer of the 'Victoria Cantata', arrived in Australia only four years before the great Exhibition of 1880. He was 26 when he came to Melbourne, a talented violinist whose studies in France came to an end with the Franco-Prussian War.

From his native France he went to England, and then spent four years touring the United States as a violinist with the Theodore Thomas Orchestra. When the orchestra was dissolved, he decided to come to Australia.

He was immediately engaged on the music staff of the W. S. Lyster Opera Company, and later became its conductor. From then on, his home and work were in Australia. Most of his work was in musical theatre — had the performance of his 'Victoria Cantata' given him a taste for the combination of music and song?

In 1889, he joined "The Firm", as J. C. Williamson's was known, and was its musical director until his death sixteen years later. He conducted opera, musical comedy and continued with his own compositions — music for ballets, at least four pantomimes for Williamson's and a musical comedy called **Djin Djin**. He was a popular man, with audiences and colleagues, and was known to his company as "Daddy".

In 1905, although he was in poor health, he insisted on leading Williamson's Gilbert and Sullivan Company on its first tour of New Zealand. The tour was a success, but shortly after the company returned to Sydney, Caron died. He was only 55.

## TRIUMPHAL SCENE AND GRAND MARCH — AIDA

Giuseppe Verdi (1813–1901)

Giuseppe Verdi's grand Egyptian opera *Aida* is one of the most brilliant and popular operas composed in the 19th century. Verdi was no stranger to composing operas for houses or companies in foreign lands. St. Petersburg, London and Paris all commissioned operas from the Italian based composer. However, none would have received such an exotic première as that of *Aida*, first performed in the new Opera House in Cairo, as part of the festivities celebrating the opening of the Suez Canal. Because the sets and the costumes were caught in the Siege of Paris in the Franco-Prussian War, the opera opened rather later than the Canal. It is difficult to say which occasion was the more splendid.

Set to a text by du Locle from an idea of the French Egyptologist Mariette Bey, *Aida* is a passionate, heroic Italian opera set in ancient Egypt. Eastern colour and pageantry provide an ideal opportunity for one of the grandest of all operatic scenes.

Act II, Scene II is set in the City of Thebes, where the King arrives in state to the temple of Ammon. After a chorus of praise and thanksgiving to Isis and the King, a Grand March opens a resplendent procession of soldiers, priests, captains and standard bearers. Trumpeters hail the arrival of Radames and the Egyptian Army as they proceed through the Triumphal Gate. At this moment, if the stage is big enough, elephants and other fauna traverse the stage. The work builds up to a grand finale, in both numbers and sound.

## HEBREW CHORUS — NABUCCO

Giuseppe Verdi (1813–1901)

Verdi's opera *Nabucco* was his first great success. The opera is set around the siege of Jerusalem by the Babylonians under Nabucodonosor in the year 586 BC.

Abigail is installed as Regent in place of the demented king. She decrees death for the captive Hebrews who have been brought to Babylon. By the River Euphrates, the Hebrews sing their great song of mourning and longing for their homeland. "Va, pensiero sull' ali dorate" — "By the rivers of Babylon we sat down; there we wept when we remembered Zion . . . How can we sing a song to the Lord in a foreign land?"

This powerful chorus in Act III, Scene II of the opera is one of the greatest revolutionary pieces of music ever composed and became one of the most popular tunes of its day. It was sung spontaneously by a vast gathering at the memorial funeral service to Verdi in 1901.

## BORIS GODUNOV

Modest Mussorgsky (1839–1881)

*Boris Godunov* is one of the great masterpieces of Russian operatic literature, and the Coronation Scene stands as one of the most triumphal and majestic pageant scenes ever composed in opera. Mussorgsky devised his own libretto for the opera from Pushkin's play and Karamzin's *History of the Russian State*.

In Scene I of the Prologue, a crowd of Moscow citizens gather. In Scene II the people are assembled in the courtyard of the Kremlin where Prince Shuisky announces the decision of Boris Godunov to become Tsar. The people and boyars hail him — "Live and flourish O Tsar, our father". Boris Godunov accepts the throne, after which the people rejoice. To a peal of bells from the Kremlin Square, the crowd renews its welcome and song of praise — "Long live Tsar Boris Feodorovich".

## SERENADE TO MUSIC

Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872–1958)

Vaughan Williams' *Serenade to Music* is one of the most sublime pieces of music ever composed. Written in 1938 and dedicated to Sir Henry Wood, the Serenade was first performed in the Royal Albert Hall, London by an orchestra and 16 of the finest singers in Britain, each of whom is specifically identified in the score. The great Australian bass baritone Harold Williams was one of those taking part in the first performance. Vaughan Williams later authorised a second version of the work which is being performed today; it is scored for four soloists and choir.

The text is judiciously selected from Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*, Act V Scene I. Jessica and Lorenzo enjoy the beauty of the night when Portia returns home from her exploits in Venice. A beautiful impressionist night scene is set by the orchestra and solo violin before the magical entry of the voices. With unsurpassing tenderness, Vaughan Williams evokes the power of music in this great score.

## LAND OF HOPE AND GLORY — CORONATION ODE

Sir Edward Elgar (1857–1934)

Sir Edward Elgar's *Coronation Ode* is the musical representation of the British Empire at its grandest. The work was commissioned by the management of the Covent Garden Opera Syndicate for a gala concert to be held on the eve of the Coronation of King Edward VII.

King Edward had expressed interest in words being set to the popular tune of Elgar's *Pomp and Circumstance March No. 1*. The composer asked Christopher Benson to write a text suitable for the occasion. Benson obliged with eight verses calling for four soloists, mixed grand chorus, organ and large orchestra plus optional parts for a military band. Due to the inconvenient illness of the King, the Coronation was postponed and the Ode was first performed in Sheffield in 1902 before its London première in October of that year. By popular demand, the finale *Land of Hope and Glory* had to be repeated. The audience joined with the choir and soloists in singing the main tune, "Hark a mighty nation. . ."

## VICTORIA PRIZE CANTATA

Léon Caron (1850–1905)

*Victoria*, the Prize Cantata written by Léon Caron in 1880, belongs to part of Melbourne's musical legend. It was composed expressly for the inauguration of the Melbourne International Exhibition and the completion of the Exhibition Building. The Cantata won for Caron the privilege of conducting the huge choir, four soloists and orchestra at the opening ceremony on 1st October, 1880.

With the *Victoria Cantata*, Caron contributed to a period of great musical activity. Whilst not being Australia's answer to Berlioz or Brahms, the *Victoria Cantata* is scored in a highly imaginative and authoritative fashion. It is musically satisfying but unfortunately belongs to a genre which has since passed sadly out of fashion. The text by J. W. Meadan, a Melbourne ironmonger and temperance lecturer, is both sentimental and highly Victorian in nature.

For this festive occasion, the introductory section and chorus, solo quartet and chorus and finale will be performed. The synopsis of the original score gives the following notes for these sections.

"In the introduction, the Largo movement, with which the Cantata opens, is intended to suggest the original solitary condition of Victoria. This is followed by a Double Tempo, in which the Theme, given by the wood and stringed instruments in unison, expresses the poet's idea of 'Victoria aroused by voices which foretell the glorious future of the country'. The same subject occurs in the pathetic bass song, 'Now, on the grassy plains', at the commencement of the Second Part, depicting the gradual process of settlement. The chorus, 'In slumbers deep', opens with an imitation of stringed instruments of the rippling of the surrounding sea; and the final chord is given by the singers with closed mouth, like a breath of Victoria amidst her sleep, or the humming sounds of insect life, which serve to intensify the silence of solitude. The tenor solo, 'O, Summer Land', with its accompaniment of strings and harps, again suggests the primitive beauty and solitude of the country. 'On Thy Sweet Peace Intruding', a contralto solo, is of a dramatic character, and foretells the approaching change in the history of Victoria. This idea is still more clearly brought out in the soprano solo, 'Then, Fair South Land', and the quartet and chorus by which it is accompanied. The Cantata concludes with a general hymn of Thanksgiving to the Almighty."

## 1812 OVERTURE Op 49

Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840–1893)

On 12th September, 1812, Napoleon's conquering army reached the town of Borodino, outside Moscow, where a bitter but indecisive battle was fought, with casualties numbering in the vicinity of 8,000. The Russians withdrew to redeploy their forces and Napoleon entered Moscow to find a city deserted and devastated by fire. With limited shelter and no supply lines, the French retreated. The harsh winter and Russian guerilla attacks resulted in their defeat.

The consecration of the Temple of Christ the Redeemer, in central Moscow, called for a festival in celebration of the defeat of Napoleon. Thus, in 1880, Tchaikovsky was commissioned to write a suitable commemorative work. He selected elements of the historic event as programme.

The Russian hymn, "God, preserve thy people", is heard at the outset. In the main body of the orchestral writing the battle of Borodino is depicted musically in a Russian folk song and the French Marseillaise. A thunderous climax, with cannons, the church bells of Moscow and a jubilant Russian National Anthem brings the work to its victorious completion. This work is one of the most popular pieces of music ever written.



PRIZE CANTATA.

WORDS BY J. W. MEADEN.

## ARGUMENT.

**Part I.—THE PAST.**—Victoria, sleeping amidst the primeval solitudes, is aroused by voices which foretell the speedy discovery and settlement of the country, and presently the songs of the mariners are heard as they make their way across the ocean to the, as yet, undiscovered land.

**Part II.—THE PRESENT.**—Victoria discovered engaged in various pursuits—pastoral, agricultural, industrial, etc.—is approached by a company of Nymphs, representing the various nations of the earth. These hail her, with acclamation, as the "Queen of the South" Victoria responds with a jubilant song of welcome, and, as she leads her guests to the banquet, the people burst forth in a patriotic hymn, with which the Cantata concludes.

### PART I.

#### THE PAST.

In slumbers deep—where branching fern trees wave,  
And Austral seas the long, low beaches lave.  
Where, fringed with reeds, the silent, lone lagoon  
Reflects the starry cross and crescent moon,—  
With garner'd sweetness in her peaceful breast,  
The fair Victoria lies too long at rest.

O summer land of silence,  
O land of beauty rare,  
Where solitude lies brooding  
O'er hills and valleys fair;  
Where silent streams are stealing  
O'er each untrodden plain.  
And the lonely shores but echo  
The sigh of the surging main.

On thy sweet peace intruding,  
The old world soon will pour  
An army vast and busy,  
Forth from its teeming shore;  
And to thy pleasant harbours,  
That now all lonely lie,  
"As the doves unto their windows"  
Shall the white-winged vessels fly.

Then, fair South Land, no longer  
Thy coasts shall silent be,  
The merry voice of laughter  
Shall echo songs of glee.  
Then busy sounds of labour,  
Shall rise on the summer air,  
And sweetly chime the Sabbath bell  
That calls to the house of prayer.

#### THE MARINER'S SONG.

Our northern homes we leave behind,  
To seek some golden strand;  
Our sails we trim to catch the wind,  
And steer for the Southern Land;  
O'er glittering seas we gaily glide,  
Where the sunbeams dance on the laughing tide.

When storms arise their wrath we brave,  
Nor fear the lightning's flash,  
Though madd'ning winds around us rave,  
And the surging billows dash.  
O'er unknown seas we fearless sail,  
Where the storm-fiend rides on the hissing gale.

### PART II.

#### THE PRESENT.

Now, on the grassy plains the browsing flocks descend,  
While Ceres' toiling swains her fruitful reign extend;  
Deep in the gloomy mine the digger seeks his prize,  
'Neath Labour's sway benign the fair-domed cities rise,  
And all around we see a power subdue the land—  
A power from God that nerves the toiler's willing hand.

#### CHORUS OF THE NATIONS.

From distant shores we come to greet,  
With loud acclaim our sister sweet,  
And hail her, as with queenly grace  
Amidst our band she takes her place,  
"Queen of the Southern Seas."

#### VICTORIA'S SONG OF WELCOME.

O golden day of glory! O chrysolite of time!  
Now fly all shadows hoary before a dawn sublime;  
Now clad in golden sunlight a bride adorn'd I stand,  
My dowry, England's birthright, her banner in my hand.

O Welcome! Sisters gracious and friends from every  
land!  
My heart warms at your coming to this bright and  
sunny strand.  
My banquet hall is furnished, my table richly spread,  
The grand old flag, with star-gems decked, gleams  
brightly overhead.

Wave, wave, your silken banners, your silver trumpets  
blow!  
Sing, sing, your loud hosannas! that all the world may  
know  
This day is born a nation, 'neath England's banner free  
That, like a constellation, flames o'er the Southern sea.

#### HYMN.

O Thou whose arm hath for our fathers fought,  
Whose guiding hand their sons hath hither brought,  
Lead onward, till Australia's land shall rise  
A Greater Britain 'neath these Southern skies;

With bounteous hand our fields with plenty bless,  
Increase our flocks, our homes with peace possess;  
Make wise our rulers, and in righteous ways  
Guide Thou our feet to Thine eternal praise.

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*The Melbourne International Exhibition Concert, 1 October 1880*