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10TH ANNIVERSARY



REMEMBRANCE

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REMEMBRANCE EDUCATION RESOURCE

INTRODUCTION



Australian troops in Egypt. Image courtesy of Australian War Memorial

During the centenary year of the ANZAC landing in Gallipoli, Victorian Opera presents *Remembrance*, a moving tribute in story, song and image. Written and directed by acclaimed Australian author Rodney Hall, *Remembrance* spans six chapters - enlistment, embarkation, training, landing, trench warfare and homecoming. One of Australia's best known operatic tenors, David Hobson joins Victorian Opera's talented young artists as they create a series of moving musical portraits against the backdrop of archival footage, accompanied by a chamber orchestra and community choir.

Sung in English with English surtitles.

90 minutes with no interval

Venue & Date

- Hamer Hall, Arts Centre Melbourne
- Thursday 13 August 2015, 7.30pm

Regional Tour: Venues & Dates

Ulumbarra Theatre, Bendigo

- 15 August 2015, 7:00pm

The Cube, Wodonga

- 31 August 2015, 10:30am & 7:30pm

West Gippsland Arts Centre, Warragul

- 3 September 2015, 8:00pm

Eastbank Centre, Shepparton

- 12 September 2015, 7:30pm



OVERVIEW

"...so ended that brutal, futile war. Everyone knew who we were fighting against, no one knew what we were fighting for." – Rodney Hall



John Hicks & Co patriotic float 1916. Image from State Library of Queensland, accessed via [Flickr](#)

There is a plethora of information about Australia's involvement in World War One available. This resource is not going to replicate that information. This resource discusses *Remembrance* and the role of music in WWI for the soldiers and the general population.

During the wars in which Australia participated, music was a significant part of the experience for those involved overseas and those at home. Music created a space for emotional and creative expression, it brought people together, allowed for a sharing of feelings, values and opinions, a way to show their collective sense of humour and as a means of escape.

During the wars, the Australian character and sense of national identity was forged both at home and overseas. From the perspective of journalists who travelled with the soldiers, a distinct Australian 'character' was reported and embraced. The music and poetry of the time helped to support this emerging identity.

As the soldiers and civilians began to see themselves as 'Australians' and not just a colony of the Empire, the music and poetry reflected this sense of national pride. The population wanted to hear its own voice as distinct from the British Empire.

Music was used by politicians to call to arms, by the population to hark back to the homeland and defend the Empire, and to express their emotions. It was used to 'take the piss', to glorify, to share experiences, to rally and to unite.

Richard Mills and Rodney Hall have created a work, *Remembrance*, that weaves the story and songs of the First World War into a musical narrative. The story in the libretto is told through representative characters such as 'War Correspondent', 'Young Recruit' and 'Soldier' who tell the broader stories through their specific experiences and memories. All of the text in the piece come from letters, and recorded words of the soldiers themselves, which makes this commemoration particularly poignant. The War Correspondent is used as the device to relay the key events of the war to the audience. Approximately 100 images are projected to enhance the music and to create the backdrop of the work. The images, video footage, displayed names, words and music all combine to create a space of remembrance.

A community chorus is used to supplement the soloists. The use of a community chorus instead of a traditional opera chorus was intended to revisit the role of music from that era. The community choruses have been created from singers in the townships in which *Remembrance* will be performed. This bringing together of professional musicians and community singing reflects the way many events happened in communities in wartime.

In this year, commencing the 100 years since Australia's involvement in the Great War began, when so many events have been created to commemorate what many see as the country's coming of age, this work chooses to bring the songs of the era into the present by embedding those songs into a brand new work.



The Creation of Remembrance - Dr Richard Mills

This work creates a space of remembrance through music, story and images. We seek to commemorate the heroism of the ANZACs through recollection of their origin in a futile evil war, in which Australian manhood was often wasted and destroyed through British incompetence and a British view that the working class, and particularly the Australian working class, was expendable in the service of empire.

Despite the defeat of Gallipoli, the actions of those who served there made a statement of understated laconic heroism, coloured with a fatalistic and grimly humorous bravery, which bore death and suffering without complaint and also respected the Turkish foe, and expressed this through many kind gestures in the heat of war. We also commemorate the terrible battles of the Somme and the Western Front, the compassion of the medical staff, and the stark contrast between the euphoric sense of the adventure of enlistment, embarkation and training in Egypt, and the profound disillusion of the return home, often to unemployment and difficult personal and domestic circumstances, in the context of an Antipodean innocence which was actually incapable of understanding the full horror of the European war. We also meditate upon the emergence of the traditions of comradeship, service, sacrifice and heroism which expressed something especially unique in the soul of a young nation, and which have powerfully engendered a legacy that has been and is valued as sacred by succeeding generations.

This was a war commemorated in song. It was a time when singing was a vital part of Australian life. People made their own amusement. Radio was in its infancy, television was well into the future and sound films did not exist. *Singing was part of public expression in a way it is not completely easy to grasp in our own time: families sang together in the evenings, men sang at work, people sang at parties. Song was a natural part of life in a way which we have lost today.*

Indeed, our soldiers were called “The Singing Soldiers” by C J Dennis in *The Moods of Ginger Mick* from 1916:

They wuz singin’ in the troop ship, they wuz singin’ in the train;
When they left their land be’ind ‘em they wuz shoutin’ a refrain,
An’ I’ll bet they ‘ave a chorus, gay and glad in greetin’ us,
When their bit of scrappin’s over, an’ they lob back ‘ome again...
An’ the blokes that ain’t returnin’ – blokes that’s paid the biggest price,
They go singin’ singin’ singin’ to the Gates uv Paradise.

Just three years previously, in his *For Australia and Other Poems*, Henry Lawson imagined Australia as a nation of singers:

“...glorious were the songs we sung, in those grand old days when hopes were high.”

The *Sydney Daily Telegraph* reported in 1916:

The Australians are, if not a nation of musicians, at least a nation of singing people; and their soldiers come from homes of music. But they had no marching songs, the call had not previously come to them.

Despite this being true, the various battalions soon appropriated various tunes for this very purpose, the most popular by far being “Tipperary” which generated some delicious parodies, one of which we share with you.

It should also be noted that not all was doom and gloom, despite the harsh conditions and the constant possibility of death. Robert Holden, in his excellent book, *And the Band Played On* (an important source and inspiration for this project), quotes a certain Frank Grose from his “*Reminiscences of France*”:

Much has been said of the gruesome and tragic side of war, but little of the humorous. That is a pity, for believe me, there was plenty of fun between the acts, and even during the acts.



SYNOPSIS

The structure of Remembrance is in chapters, this enables us to go on the journey with the characters, through the experience of the war. The score composed by Richard Mills links the wartime songs and provides the body within which the text exists.

I Enlistment



Image courtesy of Australian War Memorial

The War Correspondent, with the recorded voice of Duke Tritton, (1886-1965) introducing our War Correspondent and the cast of four young women and four young men who, will assume multiple roles throughout the piece.

This introduces how the war came about, Australia's involvement, and how the different elements of the community initially responded to that involvement.

Songs

- Wake Up Australia
- It's a Long Way to Tipperary with parody, That's the wrong way to tickle Mary
- Ragtime Must Be Put Aside. It's Wartime
- Goodbye to Dear Old Melbourne

Characters

Duke Tritton / War Correspondent / Father and Son / Narrator / Young Recruit / Prime Minister Fisher

II Embarkation (The Journey)



Departure. Image courtesy of Australian War Memorial

This chapter introduces the beginning of the war and the initial Australian participation. It highlights the attitude of the troops who embark on the 'adventure' and the women they leave behind.

Songs

- We're leaving West Australia
- We Must All Fall In If We Want To Win
- Our Tommy (from the Land of the Kangaroo)
- Good Bye Boys
- They Wus Singin' on the Troop Ship (C.J. Dennis)

Characters

War Correspondent / Young Recruit



III Training (Egypt)

This chapter explores the troops in Egypt, the training they undertook there and the battles of this time.

Songs

- Pyramid's Loneliness
- Bawdy Songs – The Sexual life of the Camel and It was Christmas Day in the Harem
- We are the Ragtime Army Fellers of Australia
- Blokes an' Coves an' Coats
- Wild Colonial Boy

Characters

War Correspondent / Young Woman / British Officer / Young Recruit / Soldiers and Nurses

IV Landing (Gallipoli)

In this chapter the well-known story of the Gallipoli landing and departure is presented and explored.

Characters

Young Recruit / War Correspondent / Nurses / Soldiers / Women

V Trench Warfare (Western Front)

This chapter moves to France and explores through letters between the young recruit and his mother and the reporting of the War Correspondent the portrayal and perceptions of that part of the war story.

Songs

- Forward Joe Soap's Army
- Mademoiselle from Armentieres and Three German Officers Crossed the Rhine (with parody Men from Melbourne and Ballarat, Parlez Vous)
- I'll Make a Man of You
- The Horses Stay Behind
- When this Bloody War is Over



In the trenches in France. Image courtesy of Australian War Memorial.

Characters

Young Recruit / War Correspondent / Officer / Soldier

VI Homecoming

The conclusion explores the attitudes and feelings about the war's end and about being home.

Songs

- I'm glad to be back in Victoria (...I gave my best for my country, all I want is the right to work)
- Stony Broke in No Man's Land

Characters

War Correspondent



THE SCORE

Richard Mills' score for Remembrance includes many elements that enhance the music from the era, allowing the listener to journey through Australia's war story.

Songs of the 1914 - 1918 era are sequenced as a series of musical snapshots, mounted in a symphonic storytelling album. The orchestration is splashy, dramatic and colourful, resonating the pictorial and the emotional subtexts of the chronicle of events surrounding Australia's engagement in World War I.

The filmic nature of the score allows the listener to connect easily with the visuals and the text, both spoken and sung. This is a conventional construct which is familiar, and references both film and radio documentary. The melodic lines that connect the songs from the era are more contemporary in their harmonies and structures. When the songs or parodies emerge they are clearly identifiable as songs different to the rest of the music, allowing those that don't know or recognise them, as many of the younger audience members might not, to realise they are from the era.

One of the interesting aspects is the contemplation of the wartime experience from the perspective of women. The use of the female voice in this work is poignant. The experience of the wives, girlfriends and mothers left at home and the bloody realities of the field hospital and the fortitude and courage of the nursing staff in these situations are presented as simple statements without emotional or histrionic distortion. Indeed all the words in the piece would have been uttered by voices of the time. Not only the song text but also the phrases from letters, parodies, newspaper articles telegrams and official communications are based on historical fact, grounded in the utterances of the real Australians of the time.

Each of the six chapters creates a slightly different mood. Mills uses many different devices to achieve these moods. These changes are achieved with many subtle compositional devices such as pedal points, recurring motifs, impressionistic harmonies and violent contrasts.

The score is atmospheric, designed to allow the audience to experience the Australian WWI story simply, clearly and with compassion and honesty, allowing each person to find their own point of reference or connection.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES FOR JUNIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

1. There are a number of the songs used in Remembrance available to be heard on YouTube. Listen to one of the following songs used in Remembrance and discuss or write your response to the song.

[Wild Colonial Boy](#), (Dr Hook version)

[Stony Broke in No Man's Land](#)

[I'll Make a Man Of You](#)

[It's a long way to Tipperary](#) (sung by John McCormack with WW1 images)

- What is the song about?
- Why do you think it was sung by soldiers or others during the time of WW1?
- Why do you think it became associated with WW1?



2. Read the poem *Austra---laise* by C.J. Dennis

The Austra---laise
Fellers of Australier,
Blokcs an' covcs an'
coots,
Shift yer --- carcasses,
Move yer --- boots.
Gird yer --- loins up,
Get yer --- gun,
Set the --- enemy
An' watch the ---
run.

Chorus:

Get a --- move on,
Have some --- sense.
Learn the --- art of
Self de- --- -fence.
Have some --- brains
be-
Neath yer --- lids.
An' swing a --- sabre
Fer the missus an' the
kids.
Chuck supportin' ---
posts,
An' strikin' --- lights,

Support a --- fam'ly
an'
Strike fer yer ---
rights.

Chorus:

Get a --- move, etc.
Joy is --- fleetin',
Life is --- short.
Wot's the use uv
wastin' it
All on --- sport?
Hitch yer --- tip-dray
To a --- star.
Let yer --- watchword
be
"Australi- --- -ar!"

Chorus:

Get a --- move, etc.
'Ow's the --- nation
Goin' to ixpand
'Lest us --- blokcs
an' covcs
Lend a --- 'and?
'Eave yer --- apathy

Down a --- chasm;
'Ump yer --- burden
with
Enthusi- --- -asm.

Chorus:

Get a --- move, etc.
W'en the --- trouble
Hits yer native land
Take a --- rifle
In yer --- 'and
Keep yer --- upper
lip
Stiff as stiff kin be,
An' speed a --- bullet
for
Pos- --- -terity.

Chorus:

Get a --- move, etc.
W'en the --- bugle
Sounds "Ad- --- -
vance"
Don't be like a flock uv
sheep
In a --- trance

Biff the --- foeman
Where it don't agree.
Spiffler- --- -cate him
To Eternity.

Chorus:

Get a --- move, etc.
Fellers of Australier,
Cobbers, chaps an'
mates,
Hear the --- enemy
Kickin' at the gates!
Blow the --- bugle,
Beat the --- drum,
Upper-cut and out the
cow
To kingdom- --- -
come!

Chorus:

Get a --- move on,
Have some --- sense.
Learn the --- art of
Self de- --- -fence!

- What is the blanked out word? Why do you think it was blanked out?
- What do you think the Mr. Dennis's attitude is to signing up for the war in this poem?
- Write your own poem about Australia's peacekeeping activities in the Middle East now, or reflect in a poem about your own attitudes to war in general.

3. Explore some contemporary Australian songs written in response to war.

Listen to:

[I was only Nineteen](#) by Redgum (or the [full band version](#))

[And the Band Played Waltzing Matilda](#) – Eric Bogle version

[Khe Sanh](#) by Cold Chisel

- How do these songs make you feel connected to the war stories?
- What other songs do you know that were written about war? Why do you know these songs?



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THANKS

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EDUCATION REFERENCES

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