

The Australian Women's Register

Entry type: Person
Entry ID: PR00187

Willmore, Henrietta

(1842 - 1938)

Born	18420327, St George Hanover Square London England
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Died	19380822, Wynnum Brisbane Queensland Australia
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Occupation	Musician, Women's rights activist
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Summary

Henrietta Willmore received no formal musical training, but overcame this to emerge as a proficient pianist, much in demand in musical circles. As an accompanist or soloist in numerous concerts, she introduced a widening repertoire of classical music, frequently in collaboration with her friend Richard Thomas Jefferies. Her long teaching career began in 1867 through economic necessity when her husband's attempt to establish a printery ended in insolvency. Henrietta became music mistress at Mrs Thomas's Academy for Young Ladies. She pioneered organ recitals and organ-based concerts in Brisbane. She toured South Africa in 1896. Her final appearances were chamber music recitals in Brisbane in 1911 with members of the Jefferies family and her protégé Percy Brier.

Willmore believed in women's political rights and responsibilities; serving on the executive of several women's organizations. The Willmore Discussion Club was formed in 1931 in her honour. She was awarded the Medal de la Reine Elisabeth, a medal instituted on 15 September 1915 and awarded to both Belgians and non-Belgians for services to Belgium and its citizens as a consequence of the 1914-1918 war. It was awarded particularly for relief of the suffering of the civilian population and the sick and wounded.

Details

Henrietta Willmore was born on 27 March 1842 in London, daughter of a literary editor. Though she had no formal musical training, she became a proficient pianist. At Chester on 25 September 1862 she married Alfred Mallalieu, a property-owner. They arrived in Brisbane in the Prince Consort on 12 May 1864 with their infant daughter.

From 1866 Brisbane audiences responded enthusiastically to Mrs Mallalieu. In 1867 she began a long teaching career when her husband's business failed. Henrietta became music mistress at Mrs Thomas's Academy for Young Ladies. She later taught at other schools and after her husband's death, increased her private classes. Dedicated and determined, she often took promising pupils without charge and gave freely of her skills and organising ability to further the cause of music.

Undeterred by popular prejudice, she decided to become an organist. Her teacher was Walter Graham Willmore whom she married in All Saints Church, Brisbane, on 28 December 1885: they were unhappy and eventually parted. Henrietta was organist at St John's Pro-Cathedral from 1882 to 1885, at Wickham Terrace Presbyterian Church and at other churches, and pioneered organ recitals and organ-based concerts in Brisbane. The vogue for such entertainments did not last and her fund-raising concerts to retain the Exhibition Building's Willis organ were considered overly classical and met with a cool reception.

In contrast, her recitals in Sydney in 1890 proved successful, her pedalling being judged remarkably fine. On a visit to South Africa in 1896 she won praise for 'preserving a calm dignity and firm seat at the instrument while attacking all difficulties'. Her final appearances were chamber music recitals in Brisbane in 1911 with members of the Jefferies family and her protégé Percy Brier.

Survived by two daughters and one son of the five children of her first marriage, she died at Wynnum, Brisbane, on 22 August 1938 and was buried in Bulimba cemetery with Anglican rites. There is a Henrietta Willmore memorial chair, carved by L. J. Harvey, in Women's College, University of Queensland; Mallalieu Home (her former house at Toowong) is a hostel for female music students.

Published resources

Thesis

An Account of the Music of St John's Cathedral Brisbane from 1843-1887, Boughen, R. K., 1974

Life and Influence of Mr Richard Thomas Jefferies, Heben, B. J., 1980

The Bands and Orchestras of Colonial Brisbane, Ericksen, F. J., 1987

Resource Section

Willmore, Henrietta (1842-1938), Crouchley, Betty, 2006,
<http://www.adb.online.anu.edu.au/biogs/A120576b.htm>

Resource

Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

Archival resources

John Oxley Library, Manuscripts and Business Records Collection

OM73-48 Willmore Discussion Club Records 1935-1937

OM80-54 Henrietta Willmore Biography ca. 1940

Author Details

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