Two Nineteenth Century Australian Masonic Waltzes

There were many waltzes composed in the nineteenth century. It was around 1830 that Franz Lanner and Johann Strauss composed waltzes. It had taken a while for waltzes to be accepted by polite society but they eventually were in many parts of the world, including Australia. Balls were conducted in which dances, including waltzes, were danced. Some of these balls were conducted by the Freemasons. So it makes sense that masonic waltzes have been composed, probably to be played at masonic balls. The two waltzes that are examined in this paper were written in the latter part of the 19th century and written for the piano.

The composer of the first of these waltzes is George Peck, a Freemason who was probably born in 1810. He arrived by ship in Australia in 1833, returned to England in 1839 and returned to Australia in 1863. He died in Sydney in September 1863. Composing was only one of his activities. Peck was also a violinist, a music seller, a music publisher, an artist, a craftsman and a fine-arts dealer.

Peck’s composition is entitled The Australian Masonic Waltzes. It was published in Sydney in 1859. He based this piece on a number of songs. One of these, Matthew Birkhead’s The Enter’d Apprentice’s Song, is English and dates from the early 18th century and has a definite masonic connection. The other two, Foley Hall’s Ever of Thee I’m Fondly Dreaming (published in 1858) and Stephen Foster’s Willie We Have Missed You (published in 1854) are American songs, contemporary to the time that Peck wrote his waltzes. The piece begins with an introduction, not in waltz time, which is followed by three waltzes based on the three songs above in the order Ever of Thee I’m Fondly Dreaming, The Enter’d Apprentice Song and Willie We Have Missed You, then follows a Finale in waltz time. It can be assumed that the Introduction and Finale have been composed by Peck. He has altered the time signatures of the three songs to conform to waltz time and the key signatures of all three are altered. There is also a change from compound to simple time in The Enter’d Apprentice waltz and a key change at the start of the third waltz in Peck’s work. These time and key changes as well as other aspects of this work are explained in detail and illustrated in this paper.

S. A. Thompson was the conductor of the Bathurst Philharmonic Society. They met in the Masonic Hall in Bathurst and Thompson conducted Grand Concerts in the 1890s, the first being held in August 1890. His waltz was dedicated to the Duke of Jersey, the second Grand Master of the United Grand Lodge of New South Wales. On the cover of the sheet music there are masonic motifs such as the Square and Compasses, a Temple with Columns and a dedication to the Great Architect of the Universe in Greek over the porch. At present, it is uncertain whether Thompson was a Freemason but a Freemason must have had input to the cover sheet of his work.
Thompson’s *The Masonic Grand Waltz* was published in Bathurst in 1891 and is divided into three parts, the first and last in the same key and the second in another. The waltz time is used throughout. There are numerous repeated sections in the piece and grace notes and triplets are employed. A detailed examination of the waltz is given in this paper.

Balls and waltzes remain of interest to Freemasons in Australia. Although less frequent than in the past, debutante balls are still conducted, particularly by country lodges. Also, at the sesquicentenary celebration of the City of Goulburn in March 2019, the masonic lodges were heavily involved and, in the masonic centre, a Goulburn resident and composer, Dr Paul Paviour, performed two musical pieces including *The Goulburn Waltz*, composed by Ali Ben Sou Alle, also known as Charles Jean-Baptiste Soualle. It was composed approximately 160 years ago and it is claimed that this was only the second time this waltz was performed since then.

**About the presenter of this paper**

Bro David Slater, happily married to and supported in his masonic endeavours by his wife Marguerite, is a third generation freemason. He was initiated in 1983, passed and raised in 1984 in Lodge The King’s School (No. 760, UGL of NSW & ACT) by his father, VW Bro Bob Slater, then WM. The tradition continues with David occupying the chair at his son Alex’s three degrees. Lodge The King’s School consolidated with other school lodges in 2010 forming The Schools Lodge (No. 639). David is also a member of Lodge Commonwealth of Australia (No. 633), a lodge in which he was WM for three terms. He is the Organist of Yass Lodge of Concord (No.27), WM-elect of The Discovery Lodge of Research (No. 971), Treasurer of the Linford Lodge of Research, a member of Q.C.C.C., an associate member of the Lodge of Living Stones (No. 4957), a correspondent member of the Victorian Lodge of Research (No. 218 UGL Victoria) and a member of Kring Nieuw Holland.

David is a vice president of the ANZMRC and a Kellerman Lecturer, having presented a paper on *Mysticism, Masculinity and Masony* at its 2004 conference. He is also the 2018 winner of the Norman B. Spencer Essay Prize with a paper entitled *Revisiting John Browne's Ciphered Masonic Works* which he presented at the Quatuor Coronati Lodge in May 2019.

David has the conferred Grand Rank of PDGDC and he is a member of a number of other masonic orders. David has bachelor degrees in Engineering, Science and Asian Studies, and Graduate Diplomas in Computing, Divinity, Linguistics and Museums.