Five Quadrilles and Two Waltzes
For piano
Sydney, 1833

William Joseph Cavendish
Kilkenny, 1789 – Sydney, 1839

Edited by
Richard Divall

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Published by
MUSIC ARCHIVE OF MONASH UNIVERSITY
Sir Zelman Cowen School of Music
Monash University, Victoria, 3800, Australia

ISBN 978-0-9925674-0-8
ISMN 979-0-9009656-0-8

The edition has been produced with generous assistance from
Monash University
The Marshall-Hall Trust
Introduction

William Joseph Cavendish was born in Kilkenny, Ireland in May 1789 and baptised on 27 May of the same year. Cavendish was born with the German surname of Castell although his father was Peter Castelli. William had a career in London as a violinist, violist, double bass player, organist and pianist. In common with many contemporary musicians Castell was forced to flee to France in 1826 because of unpaid debts. He later migrated to Mauritius where he adopted the pseudo-aristocratic surname of Cavendish de Castell. The composer arrived in Sydney on the ship Sovereign on 20 January 1833. He may have been accompanied by his ‘sister’ Mary, with whom he lived. The name may be a pseudonym, for as Graeme Skinner in his excellent study of early Australian composers suggests, she was in fact his mistress. According to Skinner and to Ann Beedell, Cavendish was respected in the short time that he was in Sydney as a competent musician, and he was either the founder, or one of the founders of the Cecilian Society, a learned group of amateur musicians who performed music in the Catholic Church Hall near St Mary’s Cathedral. On 26 January 1839 both William and Mary Cavendish were drowned on Sydney Harbour during the annual regatta commemorating the Foundation of Sydney.

Sydney Cove – 1844. Painting by Frederick Garling 1806-1873

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1 The publisher Louis Lavenu was one of these, and one of the members of the family came to Sydney after Cavendish’s death in 1839.


3 Entry on William Joseph Cavendish found on Graeme Skinner, “A biographical register of colonial Australian musicians: C-D”, Austral Harmony (a resource for music and musicians in colonial Australia), @ www.graemeskinner.id.au; accessed July 2014
In June after Cavenish’s death the Cecilian Society had their meeting where his portrait was hung in a place of honour. Sometime later the Society dissolved due to acrimonious disputes concerning whether professional musicians would be allowed to participate in the musical activities of that Society. Its role was later taken up by other groups under the leadership of the violinists John Philip Deane (1796-1849), William Vincent Wallace and Joseph Gautrot who had arrived from Batavia in 1839.

The first Australian born composer is Thomas Stubbs, who was born in Sydney in 1802 and died in 1879. However, Cavendish is the first composer resident in Australia whose music has survived. The Five Quadrilles and Two Waltzes survive in a letter written by the composer to presumably his father Mr Castell, 19 Stargate Street, Westminster Bridge, London, and dated Parramatta, Notasia, (meaning Australia), 20 July 1833 and sent via the ship “Edward Lombe”. The dances are entitled Australian, Notasian, Arabian, or Mallalgareske quadrilles. Two of the quadrilles have New South Wales titles: Woo-loo-moo-loo and Kurry Jong. Cavendish asks his recipient to publish the pieces, but ‘one at a time’. In the letter he mentions that the Sydney agent for the Ellard music publishers of Dublin would be interested in selling the works when they are engraved. Cavendish describes the music as The Fairy Quadrilles as danced on a Sunbeam by the Elves of the Ocean in the Halls of Beauty at the Coral Palace of the Queen of the Sea. Composed by the Peri of the Purple Wing. The letter containing the manuscript of the music was recently donated to the State Library of New South Wales.

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4 Stubbs was also Australia’s first returned serviceman, having served from the age of ten in the British East India Company forces as a fifer. Diana Drake, “Thomas Stubbs: Australia’s first returned soldier, native born composer & well known auctioneer”, Descent 31/4 (December 2001), 180-188. His daughter was the well-known composer and pianist Maud Fitz-Stubbs.

5 The Edward Lombe was wrecked in Sydney Harbour, near Watsons Bay on 25 August 1834.

6 Castell Family Papers 1786-1993. (MLMSS 7989). Sadly the manuscript has been somewhat damaged with adhesive tape.
First page of the music text written in the letter.
Courtesy of the State Library of NSW

The cover and address sheet of the Cavendish Letter of 20 July 1833
Courtesy of the State Library of NSW
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to acknowledge the support of Monash University and assistance from the Marshall-Hall Trust and my fellow Trustees, Sir James Gobbo AC, Lady Primrose Potter AC, Professor John Poynter AO OBE and Associate Professor Thérèse Radic. I express my deep appreciation to Allan and Maria Myers AO, to the Rector and Provost of Newman College, The University of Melbourne. And especially to Professor Ed Byrne AC, the President and Vice-Chancellor of Monash University, to Professor John Griffiths and the Head of the Sir Zelman Cowen School of Music, Associate Professor Rob Burke for their support and assistance of this project. I greatly appreciate the assistance and permission of the State Library of New South Wales and of our Editorial Coordinator Mitchell Mollison.

Richard Divall
July 2014

CRITICAL NOTES

There are no editorial notes.

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Quadrilles and Waltzes - Australia - 1833

Australia's First surviving Music
Written in a letter - Sydney 20 April 1833
'The Fairy Quadrilles, as danced on a Sunbeam by the Elves of the Ocean in the Hall of Beauty, at the Coral Palace of the Queen of the Sea. Composed by the Peri of the Purple Wing'

I. Le Pantalon-Radama [Australian]

William Cavendish. Kilkenny 1789- Sydney 1839
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'The Fairy Quadrilles, as danced on a Sunbeam by the Elves of the Ocean in the Hall of Beauty, at the Coral Palace of the Queen of the Sea. Composed by the Peri of the Purple Wing'
V. Finale. Matitanana

[Finale]

[V. Finale. Matitanana]
VI. Waltz I

Waltz II

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