The Meeting of the East and the West
Or ‘The March of Christian Man’
For voice and pianoforte
Sydney, 1850

Isaac Nathan
Canterbury, 1790 – Sydney, 1864

Text by Sir Thomas Livingstone Mitchell
Scotland, 1792 – Sydney, 1855

Edited by
Richard Divall

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Introduction

Isaac Nathan, musician, journalist and composer was born in Canterbury, England, the son of a Polish Jewish cantor. A pupil of Domenico Corri, who composed the ballad opera on the South Seas, *Pitcairn Island*, Nathan came to prominence with his publication in 1815 of the two volumes of *Hebrew Melodies*, set to the poetry of Lord Byron. Financial difficulties caused Nathan to leave England, and he arrived in Sydney in April 1841. There through his self-promotion he became a well-known musical figure in early Sydney. Together with William Vincent Wallace he was the best known musical identity in the early life of the Colony of New South Wales. Nathan worked as a musician at the embryonic St Mary’s Roman Catholic Cathedral, then under the Benedictine Bishop [later Archbishop] John Bede Polding, as well as having an association with St James’ Anglican Church. This church had been commissioned by Governor Lachlan Macquarie in 1820 and designed by Francis Greenway. The first full biography on Nathan was ‘The Hebrew Melodist’ by Catherine Mackerras, published in 1963.\(^1\) Mackerras, was the mother of the great Australian conductor, Sir Charles Mackerras who was also a descendant of Nathan. Nathan is supposed to have written the first opera composed in Australia, *Don John of Austria*, which was presented on 7 May 1847 at the Victoria Theatre, Sydney. A vocal score survives in the Mitchell Library, as well as the complete libretto and dialogue, which is in the Colonial Secretary’s papers in the State Library of NSW. Nathan composed in many genres, songs, sacred music and especially music written about the indigenous inhabitants of the Sydney region, some of the texts being set in the native language spoken around Port Jackson. He died in 1864 as the result of an accident on the newly introduced horse drawn tram in Sydney. Very few of his manuscripts survive, presumably because his widow burned them after his untimely death. We now know that in Sydney, apart from being a musician and composer, Nathan was a prolific writer, commentator and may have been Australia’s first food critic. The Sydney academic, Dr Graham Pont is currently completing a large scale study of the composer’s life and works, including his contributions to Sydney’s journals.

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Sir Thomas Livingstone Mitchell was one of Australia’s most dedicated explorers. Born in 1792 in Grangemouth in Stirlingshire, Scotland, he lost his father when he was only twelve years old, but was sent by the family at an early age to The University of Edinburgh. Mitchell saw service in the Peninsula Wars and specialised in the drawing up of maps and gathering topographical intelligence for the campaign. An active and enquiring man, he was appointed Surveyor-General of New South Wales in 1828, succeeding the explorer John Oxley. Between the years 1831 and 1846 he undertook four expeditions into the interior, ranging from the northern reaches of the Darling River in Queensland, to opening up an overland route from Sydney to Portland, Victoria. For his successes in this field he was knighted in 1839 and received an Honorary Doctor of Civil Laws from Oxford University. He was a keen admirer of poetry and during the period, several of his poetic works were published in Sydney journals and newspaper. Fifty-five of his own poems survive, and he did a complete translation from Portuguese of the epic poem The *Lusiads* of Luís Vaz de Camões.
Mitchell’s three verses of *The Meeting of the East and the West*, also entitled *Stanzas for Music* or, *The March of Christian Man* first appeared in *The Sydney Morning Herald* on 24 December 1850, and presumably the music was composed by Nathan soon after.² The poem celebrates the ‘arrival in Australia of Mail Steamers from Suez and San Francisco and in anticipation of the telegraph cable’.³ The song was published, possibly by the music house of Henry Marsh, but the final page covering the last five bars from bar twenty-five onwards has not survived. The only copy of the song is found in Volume VII of the Papers of Sir Thomas Mitchell, held in The Mitchell Library, which is named after him. Nathan only set the first verse of the poem but I have included verses two and three in the edition in a reconstruction. It is one of the works dedicated to the exploration of the interior of Australia that were written by Nathan and Stephen Hale Marsh. Nathan set two other works in tribute to the German explorer Dr Ludwig Leichardt, entitled *Leichardt’s Grave* (1845), and *Thy Greeting Home Again* (1846), celebrating Leichardt’s triumphant return from his successful overland expedition from Moreton Bay in 1884 to Port Essington.

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Richard Divall
July 2014

CRITICAL NOTES

Apart from the points mentioned above in the introduction, the only notes needing mention relate to the adding of an extra quaver or semiquaver in the vocal line, to facilitate the setting of the different words in verses two and three. The final five bars of the song have been reconstructed, owing to the final page being missing.

The Editor
Frà Professor Richard Divall AO OBE is a Vice-Chancellor’s Professorial Fellow at Monash University, an Honorary Principal Fellow in Music at The University of Melbourne, and Visiting Professor at The University of Malta. He is Chairman of the Marshall-Hall Trust and is a Knight of Malta in Solemn Religious Profession. He was awarded a D.Lett. (Hon Causa) in 1992 by Monash University, and a Doc. Univ. (Hon Causa) by the Australian Catholic University in 2004. He holds a PhD in Theology from the University of Divinity on eighteenth-century sacred music on Malta that includes an edition of the complete sacred works of Nicolò Isouard (1773-1818), and is an Honorary Research Fellow at the same university. Richard Divall has edited early Australian music since 1967.
'The Meeting of the East and the West'
or 'The March of Christian Man'

*The song and poem were composed to celebrate the arrival in Australia of
Mail Steamers from Suez and San Francisco* TLM 24 December 1850

Issac Nathan 1790-1864

Sir Thomas Livingstone Mitchell 1792-1855

Arranged and edited from the surviving fragment by Richard Divall
SLNSW, The Papers of Sir Thomas Mitchell Vol. VII

Verse I

Where the Macedonian Phalanx or the

Verse II

No torrid zone, nor stormy cape, nor

Verse III

On Westward haste Americans and

Piano-Forte

Legions of old Rome, Where Cortez or Pizarro in their

iceberg, nor typhoon, Can stay his mighty progress, all the

cut your isthmus through, Across the Rocky Mountains flaunt your

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pride could never come. From East and West ad-
earth shall see it soon. Each island in the
Spangled Banner Blue. On Eastward haste Brit-

vanishing art and science in the van, O'er time and space tri-
vasity deep, and every sunny shore, Shall yield to human
tan-nia's Son's with Glory to main-tain, Vic-

umphant see the March of Christian Man. The
labour and be fruitful e-ver-more. Be
Empire and to rule the bound-less Main. To
March of Christian Man, The March of Christian fruit-ful e-ver-more, Be fruit-ful e-ver-
rule the bound-less Main, to rule the bound-less

Man, O'er time and space tri-mon-tant see_the_
more, Shall yield to hu-man la-bour and be
Main, Vic-to-ria's East-ern Em-pire and to

March of Christian Man Main.
fruit-ful e-ver-more. Main.
rule the bound-less Main. Main.