

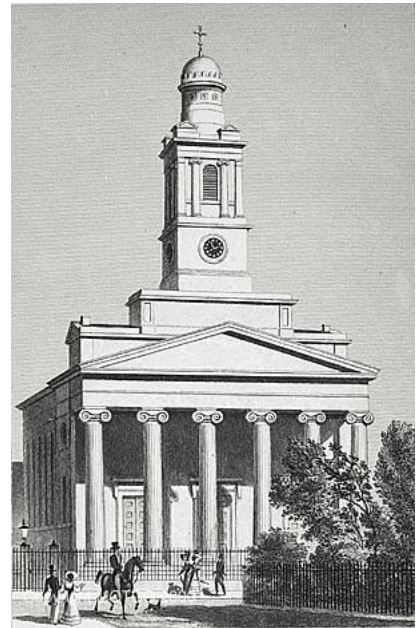
'The Musical Wonder'

Sarah Maria Welchman (nee James)
1839-1890

Talented daughters

Sarah Maria James and her elder sister **Eliza Chidlaw James**, daughters of **Eliza Chidlaw Goff** and **William James**, were born in the parish of St. Georges Hanover Square in London. Sarah Maria was baptised in the newly rebuilt church of St. Peter in Pimlico, Eaton Square. Their mother died when the girls were only 2 years of age and 5 years respectively. Their father William James made a living at different times as a shopkeeper, a stationer, a butler working for a Scottish noble in Piccadilly, and evidently William had some musical ability too. He also spent some time in the debtors' courts for insolvency.

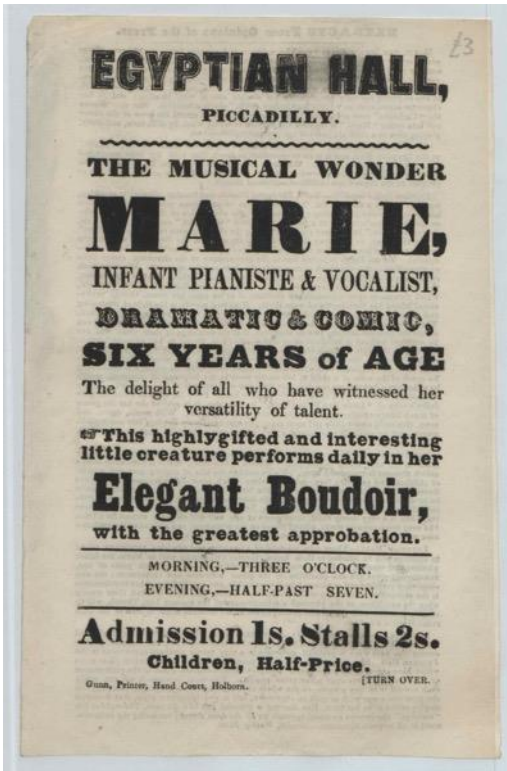
William must have recognized musical talent in his daughters, particularly Sarah Maria, and whilst the girls were still quite young, they were given piano, singing and dancing lessons. Sarah Maria must have demonstrated the most potential, and as early as 1849, William presented her to audiences around London, including the popular Egyptian Hall (now gone) in Piccadilly. Her stage name was 'Marie' and she became a very popular and curious entertainer.



St Peter's Church, Eaton Square, Pimlico in 1827. It burned down and was rebuilt from original plans in 1837. Sarah Maria was baptised here in 1839. Source: Wikipedia

The *Morning Post* of London on March 29th 1849 advertised:

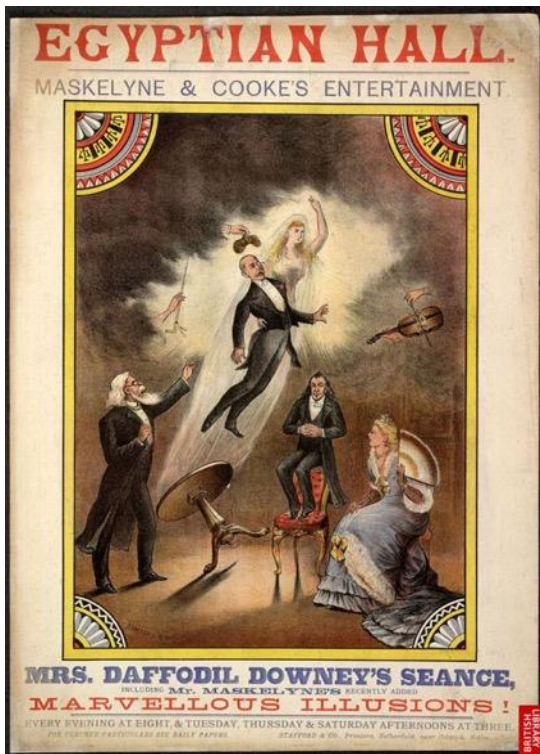
EGYPTIAN HALL, Piccadilly.——MARIE, the INFANT PIANISTE and VOCALIST, every day, Morning, Three o'clock; Evening, Seven. To appreciate the powers of this highly gifted and interesting little creature, it is only necessary to pay a visit to her boudoir, which, by-the-by, is fitted up in a style of elegance and comfort not to be equalled in London. Reserved Seats, 2s.; Balcony, 1s.; Children and Schools, half price.



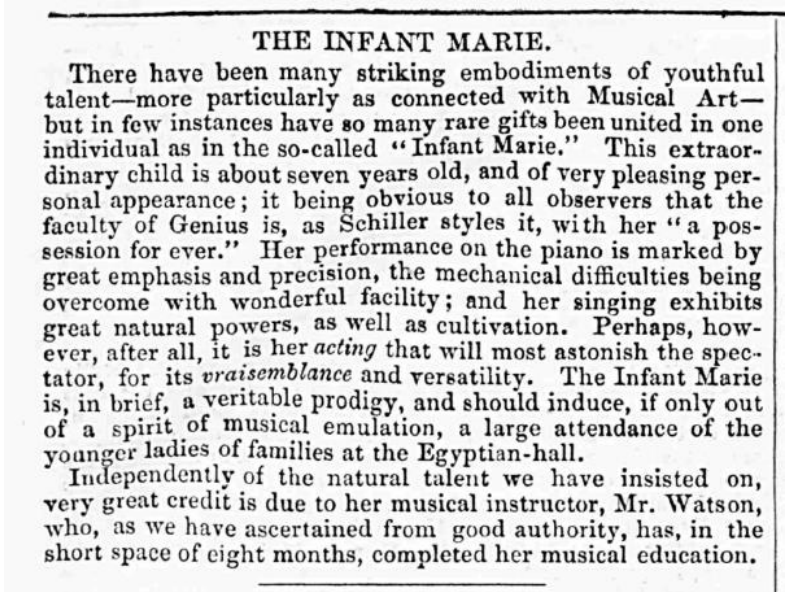
Advertisement for one of Sarah Maria's concerts at Egyptian Hall, Piccadilly. Source: Sheffield University, National Fairground Archive.



Above and below: article from *The Lady's Newspaper* London June 2nd 1849



Egyptian Hall was more a venue for magic acts and freak shows than serious music. Source: darkvictoria.livejournal.com



Egyptian Hall, demolished in 1905. Photo: 1895 Source: The Victorian Web.

A six-year-old??

A review in the entertainment magazine *The Era*, on April 15th 1849 wrote:

'Marie, the Infant Pianiste. - The morning and evening levee of this very clever young artiste has been well attended during the week. Her pianoforte playing is truly wonderful; scarcely yet six years old, with hands so small that she cannot yet span an octave, she performs some of the most difficult pieces of pianoforte music with an ease, a brilliancy, an accuracy, and a power of execution which might put to the blush many a professor, and which in one so young are truly astonishing; her singing also is very pleasing; and, in her character songs, such as Little Red Riding Hood, she is admirable. She also dances the Cachucha very gracefully. All little ladies should attend the levee of the clever and interesting Marie, if only for the purpose of seeing what, by skill and taste and study, playing even in a child six years of age can accomplish.'

'scarcely yet six years old'? It seems William was passing his daughter off as three or four years younger than her true age, possible for more dramatic effect. She must have been quite small for her age, which in April 1849 was 9 years. Then, in *The Era* on May 6th:

'Marie, the Infant Pianiste.- This little prodigy continues to excite the wonderment of Egyptian Hall visitors by her extraordinary performances. Her musical tuition extends over a period not longer than seven months, and yet she executes some exceedingly difficult (for a tyro) passages from the works of Czerny, Herz, Schubert, &c., with a facility that cannot but cause surprise. Marie is unquestionably a budding genius, and never, in a child of six years of age, do we remember witnessing such a precocity of musical taste. The little creature is sufficiently gifted with the vocal and terpsichorean arts, in addition to her pianism, as to afford a two hours' amusement, without any evident tendency - judging from what we have seen and heard - to cloy the appetite, or regret the visit to the Grecian Room at the Egyptian Hall, where Marie holds her meetings.'

Triumphant tours

In the same year we can follow her concerts to: the *Sussex Hotel*, Tunbridge Wells; *Vaughn's Marine Library*, Margate; and the Music Hall, Ramsgate. Then, her father appeared in the Debtors' Court, but when he was released, her tours continued with her singing at the Union Hall in Torquay. In May 1850, now acclaimed as 'only SEVEN YEARS OF AGE' she performed at the Mechanics Institute and then the Royal Subscription Rooms in Exeter, not only singing and dancing but also giving demonstrations of her sight-reading capabilities. *The Western Times* of Devon notes in its advertisement on June 8th:

'At the last Performance, a gentleman produced a piece of Music, and asked Marie to play it at sight. The child's success was so triumphant - her accentuation - the lights and shades of expression - were all so truthfully given, as to excite doubts of it being her first acquaintance with the piece. To refute these doubts, an Entertainment will be given as above, when Marie will Play and Sing any Music that may be placed before her.'



The Royal Subscription Rooms, Exeter. Destroyed by bombing in 1942. Engraving c1830 by Lambert and Bartlett. Source: demolition-exeter.blogspot.com.au



Section from 'The Pittville Pump Room, Cheltenham' Lithograph by Picken, Day and Haghe, 1850s when Sarah Maria was performing there. Source: rareoldprints.com

Later in June and July she was entertaining the crowds in song, dance and piano playing in Somerset, and then in Gloucestershire at the Pittville and Montpellier Spas.



Montpellier Spa, Cheltenham where Sarah Maria performed in 1850. Photo: Euan McGillivray 2014

'Another young genius' - Eliza

By August 1850, Sarah Maria, now 10 years old, had performed at several venues in Worcester - the City and County Library, the *Belle Vue* Great Malvern, and the Lecture Rooms of the Natural History Society. Here the advertisements also mention Mr. E. Graham, 'Marie's Musical Preceptor'¹ (her teacher) a well-known comic singer of the time. Then in Derbyshire, in late October, Mr A. Crowquill is mentioned as writing an

opening address to the audience for her. Alfred Crowquill, (real name Alfred Henry Forrester 1804-1872) was a comic writer and illustrator. Also at these concerts, her sister Eliza, 'Miss E. James, another young genius'² was noted as singing and playing duets with Marie at the piano. The *Cheltenham Looker-On* of October 26th 1850 also mentions their father, 'parent and preceptor'.

In late November Sarah Maria performed in the Free Trade Hall, Manchester and it was noted that she could also sing in Italian. A review in the *Manchester Times* of November 27th also notes:

'.....an ease of manner, and an evident absence of fatigue.....immediately following her Scotch dance, showing no catching of breath or the slightest indication of over-work. This perhaps is one of the charms of her performance. Her piano forte playing is clear, and brilliant in touch, with a strength and freedom in the left hand we rarely find in professors of much "larger growth".'

Eliza's performance was also described:

'An elder sister showed considerable musical taste, and a very good quality of voice. She sang Benedict's beautiful song "By the Sad Sea Waves", in a very nice manner, and was much applauded.'

The two sisters continued their touring visiting cities and towns such as Liverpool in December and Leeds in the following January, then the Theatre Royal in Blackburn through to the end of February.

On the road again

In the 1851 Census (March 30th - 31st) the sisters and their father were living at 68 Charlotte Street, Marylebone in London. Professor of Music, William Watson and his son William Watson (composer Michael William Watson 1840-1889) were visiting them. William senior became Sarah Maria's piano teacher.

The two girls continued touring around England receiving much popular acclaim. In May 1851, *The Morning Post* of London advertised:

EXTRAORDINARY ATTRACTION.—The INFANT MARIE, Pianist and Vocalist.—This astonishing child, only 8 years of age, will give her FIRST ENTERTAINMENTS THIS SEASON, at the Music Hall, Store-street, Bedford-square, on WEDNESDAY, May 7th, and WEDNESDAY, May 14th. Tickets 1s., 2s., 3s., at Mr. Charles Ollivier's, 41 and 42, New Bond-street; at Mr. Campbell's, 53, New Bond-street; and at the Rooms. Doors open half-past 7, commence at 8. MARIE will shortly appear in a NEW DOMESTIC SERIO-COMIC ENTERTAINMENT, written for her by E. Fitzball, Esq.; Music by C. Glover, Esq.

Her given age is still two or three years younger than her true age. This hall in Store Street seated up to 700 persons; the fee being, with use of piano, £5 5s.; without it, £4 4s.

An American tour?

Advertisements have been found for their performance in June in the Assembly Rooms, St. Leonard's, Sussex, and in October at *Mr. Fox's Music Hall*, London. By January 1852 the girls were touring to the Exchange Rooms in Bradford, and again at Free Trade Hall in Manchester where an advertisement claims she was leaving for America:

'LAST NIGHT OF THE INFANT MARIE – FAREWELL ENTERTAINMENT, PREVIOUS TO HER DEPARTURE FOR AMERICA – POSITIVELY FOR THIS NIGHT ONLY'

However, I found no evidence that she ever went to America. Was it another advertising gimmick, like her young age?

Infant Malibran

Scotland was next in February with performances at Queen Street Hall, Edinburgh. Here, Sarah Maria was credited with writing her own characters for the performances. Travels returned south, this time to Yorkshire, performing at the *De Grey Rooms* in York. In July and August of 1852, when performing at the *Three Cups Hotel* in Colchester, Sarah Maria was being promoted as 'Marie the Infant Malibran'³, taking the name from the famous soprano Marie Malibran (1808-1836).

Sarah Maria and Eliza performed several more concerts together, however the press noted on one occasion Eliza was unexpectedly unable to perform, but that 'the entire burden of the evening's entertainment was sustained by Marie alone', and apparently this 'afforded evident satisfaction to a numerous audience.'⁴



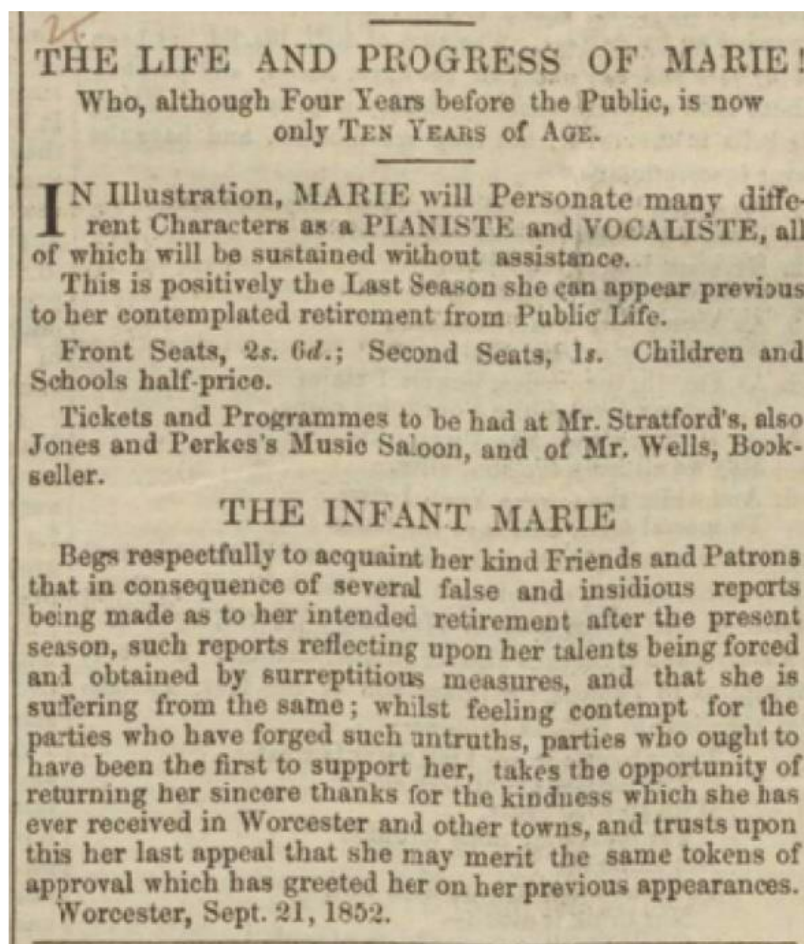
Queen Street Hall, Edinburgh, still a music venue today. Photo: Euan McGillivray 2016

De Grey Rooms, York, where Sarah Maria performed in 1852. Photo: Tim Green.
Source: [flickr.com](https://www.flickr.com/photos/timgreen/10000000000/)



'False and insidious reports'

In September an article appeared in the *Cheltenham Chronicle* that the Infant Marie would give another 'farewell' performance. In the *Worcester Chronicle* Sarah Maria, or perhaps someone writing on her behalf, made a firm response to the statement that she was retiring (also note here she was described as ten years old, when she was actually 13 years.):



THE LIFE AND PROGRESS OF MARIE!
Who, although Four Years before the Public, is now
only TEN YEARS of AGE.

IN Illustration, MARIE will Personate many different Characters as a PIANISTE and VOCALISTE, all of which will be sustained without assistance.

This is positively the Last Season she can appear previous to her contemplated retirement from Public Life.

Front Seats, 2s. 6d.; Second Seats, 1s. Children and Schools half-price.

Tickets and Programmes to be had at Mr. Stratford's, also Jones and Perkes's Music Saloon, and of Mr. Wells, Book-seller.

THE INFANT MARIE

Begs respectfully to acquaint her kind Friends and Patrons that in consequence of several false and insidious reports being made as to her intended retirement after the present season, such reports reflecting upon her talents being forced and obtained by surreptitious measures, and that she is suffering from the same; whilst feeling contempt for the parties who have forged such untruths, parties who ought to have been the first to support her, takes the opportunity of returning her sincere thanks for the kindness which she has ever received in Worcester and other towns, and trusts upon this her last appeal that she may merit the same tokens of approval which has greeted her on her previous appearances.

Worcester, Sept. 21, 1852.

Article in the *Worcester Chronicle* September 22nd 1852.

Kind friends

Just before Christmas 1852, her teacher William Watson had her sit for the King's Scholarship Examinations for the Royal Academy of Music. It was reported that Sarah Maria received a high commendation. In January 1853, a benefit concert was held for her at the Natural History Room in Worcester. The *Worcestershire Chronicle* of January 19th says: 'this interesting young lady.... is now in the care of kind friends who are intending to place her at the Royal Academy,....' The benefit concert included several singers and instrumentalists, as well as Sarah Maria herself, who sang, among other pieces, a work by Hadyn and played a Beethoven piano sonata. Apparently the concert was a great success, but there is no record of her attending the Academy, and it is not known who these 'kind friends' in Worcester were. After this time, no news reports of the 'Infant Marie' have been found, except one mentioning her donating some needlework to the Worcestershire Natural History Museum Bazaar in September 1853. By now Sarah Maria would have been 14 years of age, and probably could not

be passed off as 'infant' any longer and the novelty of the child prodigy perhaps wearing off.



Worcester City Museum and Art Gallery where Sarah Maria performed with others at her 'benefit concert' in 1853. Source: Wikimedia

Emigration and the Melbourne concert circuit

Five years on, in 1858, Sarah Maria, now 19 and her sister Eliza now 22, decided to migrate to Australia. On July 27th they boarded the ship *Aloe* in London and began a four-month journey to Melbourne. Their grandfather James Goff had left them an inheritance due when they reached 21 years of age. Perhaps this helped to pay for the passage, and it's interesting to see the passenger list gives Sarah Maria's age as 21.

Now settled in East Melbourne, Sarah Maria continued performing as a singer and pianist. The first record found is an advertisement in *The Argus* of June 1859 for 'Mr. George L. Allan's Miscellaneous Concert' at the Mechanics Institute (George Allan, 1826-1897 established the music firm Allan and Co.) Miss James, pianist, was the headline artist to accompany a chorus of sixty voices. From then until around 1863, Sarah Maria gave various concerts around Melbourne including at the Temperance Hall, Russell Street; the Mechanic's Institute, Emerald Hill (South Melbourne); and the People's Concerts at Trades Hall. A review in of one of George Allan's concerts stated:

'The accompaniments were played by a Miss James, who, though apparently a very young lady, possesses a more than sufficient command over her instrument.'⁵

And another *Argus* review of the concert at Emerald Hill, which was to be the first of a series of such concerts, stated:

'Mr. W. H. Williams of the Philharmonic Society, assisted by Miss Marie James, Mr. Angus and other vocalists, gave a miscellaneous concert at the Mechanics' Institute, Emerald Hill..... Miss James is a recent and welcome addition to the



Emerald Hill mechanics Institute Cecil Street South Melbourne. Built 1857 by Knight and Kerr. Sarah Maria performed here in the early 1860s. Source: Heritage Council Victoria

number of our lady vocalists. She has a pleasing voice, and evidently a perfect knowledge of music.¹⁶

Performing with the best

Sarah Maria performed with several popular singers of the day including among others, the soprano Octavia Hamilton (who apparently had a scandalous reputation), the baritone Emile Coulon, and the tenor Thomas Ewart. A review of one of the People's Concerts in *The Argus* September 19th 1859 stated it included:

'a compact constellation of some of the best vocal talent now in Melbourne - Miss Octavia Hamilton, Miss James, Mr. Ewart, and Messrs. Tait, Davis, Jones, Moxon, &c. Miss James opened the concert by performing some airs from *Maritana* on the pianoforte.'



Cigar box lid c1880s showing a scene from *Maritana*. Source: Wikimedia Commons

However, the reviewer also reported:

'Miss James performed some variations on "Cease your Funning." This young lady has a certain cleverness in her style of playing, but she lacks expression and brilliancy.'

Oh well.... can't please everyone. In April 1863, Sarah Maria took part in a soiree at Hockin's Assembly Rooms, Melbourne, given by the Musical Union. *The Argus* reported that following the singing by Miss Octavia Hamilton and others:

'Miss James and Miss Horowitz each executed a solo on the pianoforte, with great taste and ability. The intervals between the songs.... were occupied by the inspection of a collection of works of art, stereoscopic views, &c..... Dancing was kept up with great spirit until an early hour this morning.'¹⁷

'Speaks French'

Sarah Maria was becoming a part of Melbourne's music scene. She had performed in at least four of the People's Concerts, including the inaugural one, several of George L. Allan's concerts and also concerts of the Temperance Union. There is no evidence of her sister Eliza continuing a musical career in Australia. In September 1859, Eliza married John Box at Richmond, Victoria, and Sarah Maria was a witness. But how did Sarah Maria earn a living? How much paid work she obtained for singing is not known. In July and August 1863 an advertisement appeared in *The Argus* for 'An experienced young lady desires ENGAGEMENT in a confectioner's shop. Speaks French. Mrs. John Box, Cromwell-street, Collingwood'. Possibly her sister advertising on her behalf?

Marriage, baby, AND a career

Sarah Maria didn't marry until 1865 and did not give up her music. On May 13th 1865, she married William Welchman at Trinity Church East Melbourne, the first wedding conducted at that church. William was a pastoral station manager working on a property called *Taronne* near Port Fairy in the western district of Victoria. Sarah Maria's sister Eliza Box was now living in East Melbourne. An advertisement in *The Argus* on May 30th for 'MANAGER with 12 years' experience, seeks a SITUATION, either on sheep or cattle station. Address B., Mr. John Box, Albert-street, East Melbourne.', seems to be for William Welchman. Perhaps due to this advertisement William found work that year at *Boyanga Station*, Lachlan River in New South Wales, where on October 9th their daughter and only child Lizzie, was born. The birth was registered the following year in the nearby town of Hay. On the registration certificate William's address is given as Woolloondool.



Trinity Church, East Melbourne c1865, on corner of George and Clarendon Streets where Sarah Maria and William married in 1865. The church burnt down in 1905. The new church was built on the opposite corner. Source: holyltrinitymelbourne.org

Ladies' schools

Over the next couple of years, the Welchmans moved back to Victoria to Belfast (Port Fairy) where Sarah Maria, was teaching and continuing to give concerts until August 1868 when they moved to the much larger town of Warrnambool. Here Sarah Maria opened a private girls' school: firstly, on the corner of Kepler and Merri Streets; then from October 1868 at *Airlie House* in Henna Street; and finally, in 1871 at *Belle Vue House* in Koroit Street. Needing more space seems to be the reason for changing addresses.



Airlie House Warrnambool, where Sarah Maria opened a private girls' school in 1868. Source: provincialhomeliving.com.au

In the *Warrnambool Examiner* of February 3rd 1871 a notice appeared stating that *Belle Vue House* was 'a commodious residence, containing a larger school room than was formerly available, and is altogether admirably adapted for a ladies' seminary, and most conveniently situated, with a delightful view of the bay and neighbourhood.' The school was for boarders as well as day pupils and also offered dancing lessons to external students. The following year Sarah Maria was in Melbourne to continue to enrol students:

LADIES' EDUCATIONAL ESTABLISHMENT
BELLEVUE-HOUSE, WARRNAMBOOL.
 Principal—Mrs. Wm. WELCHMAN,
 Assisted by competent Resident Governesses.
 Terms, in advance :
 Under 12 years — .. £50 per annum.
 Over 12 do £60 do.
 Mrs. Welchman may be seen at Fountain Barber's,
 Collins street, between 3 and 5 o'clock on the 8th,
 9th, and 10th instant, or will call upon receipt of letter
 up to the 15th inst.

The Argus Saturday 6th
 January.

Return to Melbourne

In Warrnambool in July 1873, Sarah Maria was given a 'COMPLIMENTARY CONCERT' to raise money for her, and to thank her for performing for so many charitable functions. According to the *Warrnambool Standard*, the concert was a 'brilliant success'⁸, with over 300 people attending the Orderly Room in Warrnambool. By November she gave public notice she was retiring from her school and moving to Melbourne.



Orderly Rooms, Warrnambool in 1949 by Colin Caldwell. Sarah Maria was given a 'complimentary concert' here in 1873. The building is now part of South West TAFE. Source: trove.nla.gov.au

The *Standard* stated 'her departure will be much regretted'⁹. Perhaps business was not going so well. At this time many small private schools lost pupils to the newly established free State Schools, after the Education Act of 1872 came into operation. Sarah Maria may have felt that Melbourne, with its much larger population, could provide a better business.

Sarah Maria's first school in Melbourne was a *Young Ladies' Institute*, on Williams Road, Mount Erica, Prahran. Her advertisement in *The Argus* of December 11th 1873, added: 'everybody who knows Mrs. Welchman will not require any assurance as to the general arrangements of the establishment being of the highest class.'

Her musical career however, did not come to a standstill. In February 1874, *The Argus* advertised a forthcoming concert at the Melbourne Athenaeum to celebrate the installation of a new organ. Mrs. Welchman was included in the list of artists and it was noted it would be her first appearance. She was to play, with Mr. Guernett (a teacher to the young Nellie Melba), Chopin's duet for two pianos, the Rondo.



The Athenaeum Melbourne in 1876, before the present facade was added in 1886. Source: The Melbourne Athenaeum Library



Mr. Guernett, a teacher of Dame Nellie Melba, played a Chopin duet on piano with Sarah Maria in 1874. Source: nellielmelbamuseum.com.au

At the same time, she continued to advertise her Ladies' Educational Establishment now at *Stanley Villa*, Williams Road, Toorak. Perhaps there had been some problem with the first school's site, as she states in her advertisement:

'In accordance with the request of many friends and relatives of the former and present pupils, Mrs. Welchman has selected the above healthy locality as being central and convenient, and announces her readiness to receive boarders, for whom every provision has been secured for imparting first-class education in all branches.'¹⁰

Charitable work in Mount Gambier

By at least April 1880, Sarah Maria (and presumably her daughter and husband), went to Mount Gambier in South Australia and opened yet another school 'for young ladies' at her home, *Cypress Cottage*. For the next two years Sarah Maria became part of the local community not only in education, but again as a performer. She raised money for the Institute Piano Fund by her students giving a concert, and she donated her time to sing at the local YMCA fund-raiser for the poor. She also sang at a benefit concert for a fellow singer, and also the Presbyterian Church's anniversary concert in April 1882.

Another move

This same month, *Cypress Cottage* and all its contents were advertised for auction. The *Border Watch* newspaper reported she was leaving Mount Gambier for Queensland. There was no mention of her husband. On April 14th, a benefit concert was given for her in the Institute Hall at Mount Gambier, in which many local singers and instrumentalists performed alongside Sarah Maria herself. Attendance was 'very limited' even though the performance was, according to the newspaper review 'a superior one'¹¹.

Teaching in Ipswich and Brisbane

The first evidence of Sarah Maria Welchman in Queensland is an advertisement in the *Queensland Times, Ipswich and General Advertiser* on July 1st 1882:

Music and Singing.	
M RS. WELCHMAN, recently from Victoria, having great experience as a Teacher of Music and Singing, will be glad to RECEIVE a FEW PUPILS, or to undertake the TUITION of a FEW YOUNG LADIES in General English, French, and German.	
Clareview, Syntax-street, Ipswich.	781

At Ipswich I haven't been able to locate *Clareview*, but Syntax Street contains many houses from the Victorian era. In February the following year, Sarah Maria advertised her music lessons in the *Brisbane Courier*. Applicants were referred to *Kingston, Harris Terrace*, one of a now classified 1860s row of terraces in George Street Brisbane, and in 1883 Sarah Maria's husband advertised for a general servant there. Later 1880s references to *Kingston, Harris Terrace* note it became a boarding house.



Harris Terrace c1869. Source: State Library of Queensland and John Oxley Library



Harris Terrace, George Street today, Brisbane, Queensland. Photo: Euan McGillivray 2015

Medical Instruction.

MUSIC, SINGING, AND HARMONY

MRS. WELCHMAN, of the CONSERVATOIRE HANOVER, Pupil of Herr Lange, Koeniglicher Kapellmeister, is prepared to give LESSONS in the above. Apply Kingston, Harris-terrace, 2021

Sarah Maria's advertisement in *The Brisbane Courier* 22nd, 26th and 27th February 1883. The same advertisements appeared in 1886. Could Herr Lange have been Gustav Lange (1830-1889), composer of popular songs such as *Edelweis* and *Blumenlied*? And as for the *Conservatoire Hanover*, that is anyone's guess.

In 1886 Sarah Maria continues advertising lessons in 'Music, Singing and Harmony'. This time enquiries are referred to Mr. S. Kaye, a piano dealer in Queen Street Brisbane.

Daughter Lizzie marries

Then on June 19th, Sarah Maria's daughter Lizzie married Henry Robinson at St. John's Pro-Cathedral, Brisbane. A notice appeared in *The Queenslander* on July 3rd 1886:

ROBINSON—WELCHMAN.—On the 19th June, at St. John's Pro-Cathedral, by the Rev. V. R. Handyside, Henry, youngest son of Major G. C. Robinson, Royal Artillery, to Lizzie, only daughter of Wm. Welchman, Esq., late of Boyanga Station, Victoria.

Note William Welchman's address is erroneously given as Victoria. At this time mothers' names were rarely given.

Death in the bank

Lizzie and her husband lived at Ipswich and had two children there, the first child dying in infancy. In early 1890, Henry took a position as manager of the Queensland National Bank at Harrisville, a small town about 30 kilometres south of Ipswich in Queensland. It was here, at the bank, that Sarah Maria died suddenly on December 28th 1890. The death notice appeared in *The Brisbane Courier* on January 3rd 1891:

WELCHMAN.—On the 28th December, 1890, at the Queensland National Bank, Limited, Harrisville, very suddenly, Sarah Maria Welchman, dearly beloved mother of Mrs. Henry Robinson. [Victorian papers please copy.]

Her death certificate gives the cause as mitral stenosis (a malfunction of the mitral heart valve) from which she had suffered for two years. Sarah Maria was only 51 years old. She is buried in the Anglican section at Ipswich Cemetery, but I have been unable to locate the grave.

Sarah Maria's daughter Lizzie died at age 35 in New Zealand in 1900 and her husband William Welchman died in Queensland in 1910.

Devoted to music

I have to admire Sarah Maria. Without a mother from an early age, she had endured a demanding career as a child musician, travelling in difficult times to perform all over Britain and at the mercy of her father's fluctuating fortunes. Luckily, she appears to have had the support, on and off the stage, of her older sister Eliza and with her ventured to the other side of the world to begin a new life. She was clearly devoted to music performance and teaching which she managed to carry on, even after marriage and motherhood, unusual for women at that time.

Ann Hurley

2020

See my story **Missing Person** for more about her sister Eliza Chidlaw James

hurleyskidmorehistory.com

Notes:

¹ *Worcester Chronicle* August 14 1850

² *Gloucester Journal* November 9 1850

³ *Essex Standard* July 30 1852

⁴ *Essex Standard* August 6 1852

⁵ *The Argus* July 16 1859

⁶ *The Argus* July 29 1859.

⁷ *The Argus* April 7 1863

⁸ *Warrnambool Standard* July 11 1873

⁹ *Warrnambool Standard* November 15 1873

¹⁰ *The Telegraph, St Kilda, Prahran and South Yarra Guardian* February 7 1874

Other resources:

Australian Electoral Rolls 1903-1954 (Ancestry.com)

Birth Death and Marriage certificates - General Register Office England

British Newspaper Archive (British Library)

England and Wales census records (Ancestry.com)

Ipswich Local History Library Qld.

O'Callaghan, Elizabeth - *Silent Lives - Women of Warrnambool and District 1840-1910* (2017)

PROV Immigration lists and shipping

Queensland Family History Society

Trove (National Library of Australia)

Victorian Birth, Death and Marriage certificates

Warrnambool and District Historical Society Vic.