



The Tasmanian Nightingale

—1887—

It was a crisp winter's day in 1887 when Amy Sherwin arrived home in Hobart. She was the first Australian singer to make it overseas. Crowds had gathered an hour before her arrival, filling the streets from Town Hall to Hadley's with a sea of billowing scarves and feathered hats.

'Home, sweet home' was played on piano in the Town Hall. The Town Clark stood up, rang a bell and declared:

You have done more than any born Tasmanian has before you to make the name of our country illustrious in circles of high art in Australia, America, and Great Britain, and which has earned for you the name of 'The Tasmanian Nightingale'.

Amy had a serendipitous rise to fame. As often as she could, she would steal away to her family's paddocks closest to the road in Huonville and sing, dreaming of being discovered. Then one day it happened. She was overheard by a member of an Italian Opera Company who happened to be picnicking nearby. He was awestruck and determined to see her rise to stardom.

Sherwin soon travelled around Europe, America, Asia and South Africa, singing in grand theatres, becoming beloved worldwide.

When she arrived home in 1887, the crowd was so excited they decoupled the horses of her carriage and began to carry it themselves!

As she was slowly taken to Hadley's by her adoring fans, she was serenaded by Steinbach's Glee Club.

At Hadley's, the parlour was full with well-dressed guests —who “all appeared to have outshone each other in tasteful attire”. Sherwin herself was the standout, dressed in a rich brown silk gown with a gold lace and diamond ornaments. She sang for over an hour, and spent even longer meeting and thanking her admirers. With violin playing by Herr Rhodes, and accompanied by her cousins, Mrs C.J. Barclay and Mr Stockwell, her 'At Home' performance at Hadley's was universally pronounced a “perfect success”.

References:

Telegrams: Tasmania, Hobart', *Daily Telegraph*, Launceston, 22 Jul 1887, p. 3
'50 Years Ago: At Home', *The Mercury*, 21 Jul 1937, p.10