

THE OLIVE PINK OPERA

Dedicated to Pam Usher, Ian Coleman, and Claire Kilgariff

Libretto

by
Anne Boyd

The Characters

Olive Pink (1884-1975) Mezzo Soprano

Born in Tasmania, Olive Pink's early training was as an artist. As a mature aged student, she studied anthropology at the University of Sydney and made her first journey to Central Australia in 1930. Conducting research and camping with Warlpiri and Arrernte people for extended periods of time in the 1930s, she refused to publish sensitive cultural material and, in the end, abandoned anthropology to become a passionate advocate for Aboriginal rights. She returned to central Australia in 1940 with the dream of establishing a secular Reserve for Warlpiri people. The plans were thwarted, and she supported herself with odd jobs in Alice Springs from 1946. In October 1956, she was evicted from her home in a disused army hut on Gregory Terrace. Then 72 years old, she set up a tent on the banks of the Todd River and from there successfully lobbied politicians to establish an arid region Flora Reserve. In March 1958, she was finally able to move into her relocated hut on what is now the Olive Pink Botanic Garden. Here, she lived out her remaining two decades building and tending her garden, while always lobbying on behalf of Aboriginal people in trouble with authorities. She was notoriously outspoken, a prolific letter writer and generally regarded by the locals as an eccentric.

TGH Strehlow (1908-1978) Light Baritone

Theodore (Ted) George Henry Strehlow was born at Ntaria in the traditional homelands of the Western Arrarnta people, where German Lutherans first established the Hermannsburg Finke River Mission in 1877. Ted's father, Reverend Carl Strehlow, headed the Mission 1894-1922. After his father's death, when Ted was 14, he and his mother relocated to Adelaide where Ted completed his studies at the University of Adelaide, becoming a linguist. Having grown up with Aboriginal people, he spoke Arrernte fluently and he devoted much of his life to collecting sacred material and ancestral knowledge in Central Australia, published later in his 1971 epic *Songs of Central Australia*. His return to the Centre in 1932 became the first of many

extended periods of living and working in the area, for a time as the first Commonwealth patrol officer dedicated to Aboriginal affairs. The relationship between Ted Strehlow and Olive Pink was tense. She found him obstructive, and he can be regarded as her nemesis. He argued that as a woman she could not be privy to Aboriginal men's secret knowledge, and he questioned her anthropological credentials. Like many male public servants, police, academics and locals she targeted in her activism, he considered her overly emotional. Yet, they continued to share a sincere interest in Aboriginal people's welfare and broader recognition of their cultural practices and beliefs.

Daisy Bates (1863-1951) Mezzo Soprano

Friend and mentor to Olive Pink, the two women met at a Sydney conference and Daisy invited Olive to visit her at her South Australian Ooldea campsite in 1926 and again in 1927 to paint wildflowers. Here, Olive learned first-hand about Aboriginal ancestral beliefs and customs. Her friendship with Daisy was to be a lasting influence and both women dedicated their adult lives to Aboriginal welfare and cultural preservation.

Johnny Jampijinpa (c.1916-1973) Speaking Part

A Warlpiri man, Johnny Jampijinpa was born on Mount Denison Station northwest of Alice Springs. He served with the army during WWII with the honorary rank of corporal. Denied a pension because he had not formally been a soldier, Olive Pink insisted that as a gardener he receive the full wage – unusual for Aboriginal workers at the time. Working together for twelve years, they laid the foundations of the Botanic Garden. Johnny remained true to his ancestral beliefs all his life and resisted alcohol for many years.

Des Nelson (Light Baritone) and Pat Colley (Mezzo Soprano)

A young couple living in Alice Springs who had recently become engaged. Miss Pink liked and approved of young Des, who was a botanist

working for local authorities and keenly interested in desert plants. Pat Colley was at the time working as cashier in the District Office. She met up with Miss Pink on her many visits to that Department and they enjoyed a cordial relationship.

Mr Hargrave (Baritone)

Born in Adelaide in 1915, Hargrave moved to Alice Springs in 1949 where he worked as lawyer and was elected to the Northern Territory Legislative Council in 1954. His home was near the Olive Pink Garden.

Gap Kids Chorus

A group of local children from various cultural backgrounds who often met up to play, in the

vicinity of the Kilgariff property which was across the Todd River from the Olive Pink Reserve.

Central Australian Aboriginal Women's Choir

Formed in 2010 under the artistic direction of Morris Stuart, the women are custodians of a continuous choral tradition extending back 120 years to the original missionaries to the Western Arrarnta. In the opera, drawing in the main from their current repertory, they function in the manner of a Greek chorus, providing a scaffolding for the work as a whole and acting as an intermediary between the narrative and audience.

LIBRETTO

Prelude

*The **CAAWC** are seated under the trees. Words of introduction and welcome from Aboriginal elder. The Prelude music begins, led by the shakuhachi. Johnny enters, attending to the gardening. The **CAAWC** sing a Lutheran Chorale Jesu Ngananala ('Jesus Stand Among Us').*

Scene 1: Olive's Dream

Olive's Hut, early 1970's

(TGH Strehlow appears from hills)

TGH Strehlow:

Ah, I have returned to *Mparntwe*¹
Near the place of my birth
My totem, the twins,
Ntaria, ntaria.

I know this country well,
I know it's moving forms,
Its light-filled essences
Alive with ancestral spirits;
Their eternal presence

Inhabit the secret songs and dances
shared by the old men

Before they died.

I have recorded faithfully

The precious knowledge

Entrusted to me

For all future generations.

Yet I am not at peace, not at peace, not at peace.

My spirit wanders this caterpillar country

In search of Truth, Certainty, Justice

Always just beyond reach.

I know not this lovely garden,

Nor its purpose?

*(**Olive Pink** emerges from her hut.)*

Who is this woman?

Her form is familiar

But her presence is discomfiting.

She is not, I think, my friend.

Olive Pink:

Not your friend?

Discomfiting?

¹ Arrernte for the Alice Springs area

In this *my* garden?
My *Alchera-Jugulba*²
Who is it
That speaks?
Ah, it is you,
Professor Strehlow
I might have guessed
It would be you
who would disturb *my* peaceful sleep.
This cannot be a happy dream
For you are surely not my friend
Turning others against me.
Challenging my work
at every turn.
You speak of 'Truth', 'Certainty' and 'Justice'?

Strehlow:
Yes, Justice
Always just beyond reach

Olive Pink:
Whose Truth?
Whose Justice?

Strehlow:
Always,
Always,
Always just beyond reach.

Olive Pink:
White man's Justice
To a Black Man is not Truth.
The ancient Dreamtime Law
This is their sacred Truth.
Their sacred Truth

Strehlow (in counterpoint):
Always,
Always just beyond reach.

Olive Pink:
The ancient Dreamtime Law
This is their sacred Truth,
Their sacred Law.

Olive Pink:
To Aranda,
To Warlpiri,

Alchera-Jugulba,
Alchera-Jugulba.

I too value Truth,
Simplicity,
and Beauty.
And ... Honour,
Yes, Honour
which surely evades you!
You wretched, wretched man!!!

(Daisy Bates appears.)

Daisy Bates:
Olive,
Olive,
Olive
Olive Pink!
Olive!

Olive Pink:
And who is this?
A friendly voice?
Ah yes, I know it well.
It's, it's Daisy Bates!
Daisy, Daisy Bates!

Daisy Bates (in counterpoint):
Miss Pink
Miss Pink

Strehlow (in counterpoint)
Miss Pink!
Oh no!
Miss Chief and here's that old fraud,
Daisy Bates!

Olive Pink:
Welcome, welcome dear *Kabbarli*!³
Life-long friend and mentor.
I treasure all that you taught me.
Long, long ago,
Long, long ago at your Ooldea
campsite.
Can you see who else is here?
It's *Professor* Strehlow!
Missionary son,
Misogynist, Anthropologist,

² Olive Pink wanted to name her garden *Alchera-Jugulba* (*Altjira-Tjukurpa*) conjoining the Warlpiri and Arrernte words for the Dreamtime (Law).

³ "*Kabbarli*" means "grandmother" in several Western Australian Aboriginal languages and it was the name given to Daisy Bates by the Aboriginal people among whom she lived and worked.

So called 'Protector of Aborigines'.
Truly not my friend,
Nor theirs,
I fear him still!

Strehlow:

Miss
Pink
Oh no!
Miss Chief
More like it!
Self-styled Anthropologist,
Sociologist!
Pretender
to sacred knowledge;
But she would not share their secrets.
So unprofessional,
So uncollegial!
Her provenance is doubtful.

A mature aged student
Nurtured in the hallowed halls
of the University of Sydney.
Her supervisor, poor Professor Elkin,
Subject to her daily torments;
Her emotions exceeding her reasoning.
Her outrage often fanned
by this eccentric old windbag
Daisy Bates,
Daisy Bates,
Whom she visited at Ooldea.

If only she had remained content to paint the
desert flowers
Not meddle in the affairs of desert
people.
But no, no,
Not her,
Not Miss Pink!
Aboriginal social justice
became her *Miss Taken* cause.
What a pest!
What a pest!
What a nuisance she became.
Why even the local gaoler was prepared to
pay her fine
rather than put up with a single night of her
company in his cells!
Haha,
Haha!
Miss Pink!
Oh no,
Miss Chief
Miss Taken

more like it,
more like it!

Olive Pink/ Daisy Bates: (*in duet*)

Taunts!/Olive, Olive!
Insults!/Olive Pink!
(*together*)
Obstruction!/Olive, Dear Olive
Obstruction! /Olive

Taunts/Yes, taunts!
Insults/Insults!
(*together*)
Obstruction!
Outrageous Obstruction!

Olive Pink:

I planned a secular reserve for the Warlpiri:
a sanctuary, free from White Law
And the intrusion of Mission folk.
A place where they could plan their own
affairs,
Live out their traditional life
With time,
with time to adjust
To the White man's invasion
And changed economy.

I planned to live with them,
Their friend and protector,
Not a government official,
Nor agent for 'churchianity',
But as their mentor in the ways of the Whites.

I honoured my kinship ties
With the full bloods.
They trusted me,
They trusted me.
Their dear *Talkinjiya*,
Their dear *Talkinjiya*

Daisy Bates:

Olive,
Olive,
Olive!
Olive Pink!
Such a splendid idea.
Yes, splendid!
You worked so hard,
And with so much courage!
You deserved to succeed.

Olive Pink:

Long, long ago
Doing my field work
Camping at Yunmaji
I fell gravely ill.

Olive Pink: *(with ensemble)*

I fell gravely ill
I fell gravely ill and would have died
I would have died.

Strehlow/Johnny, and Daisy: *(echo Olive's words)*

Long, long ago
She fell gravely ill
She would have died, She would have died
Yes, died.

Olive Pink:

They carried me.
They carried me
They carried me to safety.

Strehlow/Johnny, and Daisy: *(in echo)*

They/We carried her to safety

Olive Pink:

Thanks to my Warlpiri friends
I recovered.
I recovered, I recovered,
I recovered, I recovered.

Strehlow/Johnny, and Daisy:

Thanks to her Warlpiri friends
She recovered, she recovered, she recovered.

Olive Pink:

I persevered with my plans
For a Secular Reserve for the Warlpiri
I persevered through ill health,
Through poverty,
And drought.
A land lease I obtained at Papinya.
My dream so nearly realised!
With little support
I was finally defeated by drought
And my failing, failing Chevrolet.

Daisy Bates:

Ah poor Olive
Dear brave Olive Pink
Ah poor Olive Pink

TGH Strehlow:

A ridiculous plan,

ridiculous!

You had but a Land Grant!
An old, old truck.
No further resources,
Your plans for a secular reserve,
doomed from the outset.

You had no credentials
to be an authority
Without support of Church nor State;
Reliant on a few old Quaker friends
And the good will of a few locals.
Of course your plan
was doomed
from the outset!

Daisy Bates:

Ah poor Olive
Dear brave Olive Pink
Ah poor Olive Pink

Do not grieve, dear Olive,
Do not grieve
You have achieved so much
And in this garden,
you wish to name
Alchera-Jugulba
Honouring the Dreamtime Law
Of Arrernte and Warlpiri alike.
Respecting kinship ties
You loved them as your own family, as your
family

Do not grieve dear Olive
You have achieved so much
Despite the worst efforts of this man!
You leave a lasting legacy.

Olive Pink:

Thank you, thank you dear Kabbarli,
Your words are such a comfort.

I remember well the evenings
We spent by your Ooldea campfire.
Sharing our womanly secrets,
Under the stars
Fanned by evening breezes from the

Nullarbor.⁴

Daisy Bates: (*in counterpoint*)

I too remember evenings we spent
Sharing our womanly secrets,
Under the stars
Fanned by evening breezes from the
Nullarbor.

Olive, Olive,
Olive!
Dear Olive
Pink!
Your visits were a joy!
Yes, joyful.
You learned so much
And with
understanding.
You gathered the ancient stories
And placing them in safe keeping.
You honoured their secrets!
Unlike Professor Strehlow!
He published all he knew
For anyone to read.
He spurned my writings
As crass journalism,
More fiction than
Truth.
Dearest Olive,
I share your antipathy for this man!
Professor TGH Strehlow,
TGH Strehlow!

TGH Strehlow:

Ah, these blathering and misguided women.
Interlopers, Romantics,
Spurred by their imperfect
knowledge.
A false sense of Truth.

Straying from the Paths of
Learning.
No rigour nor methodology,
Using intuition only as guide.
Ignoring the progress of
civilisation.

The old men's ceremonial secrets
Can never be, never be, never be shared with
women. I'll try not to get angry.

My spirit wanders still in this caterpillar
country
In search of Truth,
Certainty
and Justice,
Always just beyond reach.

I have no wish
No wish at all,
to inhabit the dreams of Olive Pink.
Of Olive Pink.
Wake up old woman,
Wake UP!
WAKE UP!!!

(Strehlow exits.)

Olive Pink to Daisy Bates:

(Daisy begins exiting.)

Ah dear Daisy,
Dear *Kabbarli*,
Your presence now is fading:
I must be waking up.

Daisy my friend,
Always welcome,
Unlike my old enemy Strehlow,
Professor T.G.H. Strehlow!
A strange unpleasant dream
Thank goodness he has gone now!

(Johnny enters.)

Olive Pink to Johnny:

Who, who's there?
Johnny?
Good!
There's much to be done in the garden today!

Johnny:

Yuwa⁵, Napaljarri⁶
Them mallee shrubs ready for planting,
Sun too hot later.

⁴ Olive Pink visited Daisy Bates at her campsite at Ooldea Siding in 1926 and 1927, ostensibly taking a holiday to paint the desert wildflowers. They found many common interests and Olive's desire to learn more about the desert people was ignited.

⁵ Warlpiri for 'yes', 'OK' etc.

⁶ *Talkinjiya Napaljarri*, the name Olive Pink is known by to Warlpiri people (Marcus, Julie 2001:93)

Olive Pink:

Ah, Johnny,
This is to be a place of peace and beauty
For all future generations.
The world began with a garden,
Simple and honest,
I hope that's how it ends.⁷

Johnny:

Yuwa, Napaljarri.
I like that story.
We belong to the earth,
We must nurture it always,
Always.
We must nurture it always.

Johnny/Olive Pink (together):

Always.

CAAWC sing *Myatja altimani mununi minala* ⁸

Scene 2: Gap Kids and Horses
Olive's Hut

(A mob of horses graze peacefully along the banks of the Todd. The Gap Kids come down to play.)

Children:

Danny, Frances, Helen, Claire,
Marie, Tommy, Brian, Paul!
Can you come down to the Todd to play?
Can you come down to the Todd to play?
Come down now,
Com'on,
Com'on,
Come down now,
Com'on, Com'on.

Danny, Frances, Helen, Claire,
Marie, Tommy, Brian, Paul!
Come down now
Com'on,
Come on.
Come down now
Com'on
Com'on

Oh look, Oh look!
A mob of horses,
must have strayed!
They must have strayed.

W-hoo,
Wee!
Wee!
Wee!
Yah!
Whoo!
Whoo!
Ye-haa,
Yah!

They've started to run
Boy this is fun!
Look at 'em go!
Look at 'em go!
Look at 'em go!
They've started to run
Boy this is fun!
Look at'em go!
Look at'em go!
Look at'em go!

Oh no, Oh no!
They've bolted off course!
Oh no!
They've bolted off course!
Oh no, Oh no, Oh no!
Oh no!
Oh no!
That mob's headed straight for Miss
Pink's!

We can't stop them now,

⁷ Christopher and Natasha Raja *The First Garden* (2012)

⁸ Tune composed by Tony Campbell, Mimili Gospel Singers. Transcribed by Anne Boyd from *Godyana* CD. Used with permission (pending).

We can't stop them now.
Headed straight for her garden
We're in big trouble now!
We're in big trouble,
Big, big trouble!
Such big trouble!

Oopsy, poopsy,
Here she comes!
Oh no,
She's got her gun!
She's got her gun!
She's got her gun!

(Olive strides out of her hut and the startled children scatter up/behind trees.)

Run, run
She's got her gun!
Run, run
She's got her gun!
Run, Run,
Run!
Hide!

Quick, quick up the trees
Hide, hide
Don't make a sound
She's right below us
On the ground.

Shhh, shhh
It's the wind
Shhh, shhh.
Shh, Shh
Shh, Shh

(Olive calls to her neighbour, Mr Hargrave.)

Olive:
Mr Hargrave,
Have you seen some very naughty children
come this way?

Mr Hargrave:
Why no Miss Pink
Not today Miss Pink

Olive:
Mr Hargrave, as a man of Law,
are you really sure?
I'm certain they ran
In this direction.

Ah I hear some rustling in these trees
Perhaps it's birds?
Or possums,
dressed in brightly coloured clothing?

Perhaps I should try a few
Shots up into these branches
Ah but that might startle the birds, so perhaps
not today,
not today.
Please Mr Hargrave
Do let me know if those very naughty
children come this way?

Mr Hargrave:
Of course, Miss Pink,
I will Miss Pink.
I'll let you know.
What mischief have they caused?

Olive:
Ah, a mob of horses they disturbed
These rushed upon my garden –
trampling down my newly planted desert
shrubs
that Johnny and I have worked so hard to
create.

Mr Hargrave:
That's bad, Miss Pink, I'm sorry Miss
Pink.
And if I see them
I'll be sure to let those naughty children
know that if they're caught, to prison they will
go.
Those possums in the trees can be our
witness.

Olive:
Ah yes, a good plan I agree.
Thank you, Mister Hargrave.
Back to work now I go.
No thanks to those children my progress is
slow

(Johnny comes to greet Olive and they exit.)

Mr Hargrave:
OK Kids,
The coast is clear.
Miss Pink's gone.
You can come down now,
come down now.

Children:

We can come down now;
Com'on, com'on.
We're all OK,
Com'on,
Come down now.

Mr Hargrave:

You'd better stay out of her way today;

Children:

We'd better stay out of her way today;

Mr Hargrave:

You'd better find somewhere else to play.

Children:

We'd better find somewhere else to play
Thanks, Mr Hargrave,
You're a real pal,
She had her gun,
We had to run!

Mr Hargrave:

You better stay out of her way today.

Children:

We'll belt up the ridges
Well out of her way

Mr Hargrave and Children:

The Todd River bed's
not the place to stay
The Todd River bed's
Not the place today.

Children:

Thanks Mr Hargrave,
It must be said
Miss Pink had her gun.
We thought we were dead,
We thought we were dead,
we thought we were dead.

(The children run off. Mr Hargrave exits.)

Interlude

The CAAWC sing a verse of the Nicolai Chorale *Kaarrrerrai wurlamparinyai* ('Sleepers Awake')

Scene 3: The Afternoon Tea Party
Olive's Hut

(Olive, preparing for a tea party, begins to hum a few bars from 'As I'd Nothing Else to Do'.)

Olive:

La-la, La-la, La-la,
La-la,
La-la, La-la, La-la, La.
When I woke and _
La-la, La-la _
Puzzled how my time t'employ.
Ah yes,
A pretty song.
I remember it well;
A suitable song to share
With a recently engaged couple.

(Johnny enters.)

Olive Pink to Johnny:

Johnny, Johnny,
We have guests today.
Can you help me to prepare the table.

(They begin to create the tea setting in front of the hut.)

Johnny:

Yuwa, Napaljarri.
How many guests are we expecting?

Olive Pink:

Ah, just
young Des Nelson and Pat Colley. Such nice
young people.
They have recently become engaged.

Johnny:

Yuwa, Napaljarri.
Des knows plants good.
Today I will work in the far garden
Those plants need water bad.

Olive Pink:

Ah, Johnny.
You are a treasure.
This garden is our legacy,
Yours and mine.
You know these local plants so well.

Johnny:

Plants are like people,
We must care for them.
We don't own the earth,
The earth owns us.

Olive Pink:

Oh yes, so true,
How wise you are.

(Johnny exits.)

Olive Pink *(she continues to sing to herself):*

La-la-la
La_ la-la, La.

(Des Nelson and his new fiancé Pat Colley enter. Des is carrying some plants.)

Pat Colley and Des Nelson:

Hello Miss Pink.
We're here Miss Pink.
Hope we've not come too early?
It's Des and Pat.
Thank you for inviting us to visit you.

Olive:

Ah, you're here already.
Good afternoon young people.
No, no, not too early.
It is good of you to accept my invitation
I'm sure you have much more important
things to do
Than spend these hours
In company with an old Tasmanian Devil!
That's me, you know.
They say Tasmania is rather like England;
I wouldn't know.
I don't care for the English;
They seem to me to be
A most arrogant race,
Who could not accept that this country
Was inhabited already
By the world's oldest living race.
Truly a disgrace!

A deeper spirituality

connects indigenous inhabitants
To their country
in sacred rites of obligation.
They nurtured their lands
Their country,
Their very life force.
In mission settlements,
Forbidden to speak their languages;
Ceremonies banned;
Their rights overlooked;
Their Law ignored.
Treated as slaves
and worse.

My dears, I do apologise,
Not a time for righteous anger,
A time to celebrate
Your commitment to each other.
How happy you must be.

Pat and Des:

We are Miss Pink,
Yes Miss Pink,
We are very happy.
Our families, too,
Excited to be gathering
for our wedding.

Pat:

Look Miss Pink,
Des has bought you some plants;
Gathered from his excursion
to Argadagarda Station
Where research is underway
To isolate the toxins
Of the poisonous Gidyea tree.

Olive:

How kind you are, young Des.
We will walk around the garden
To find the best spots for them to grow.
I will name them in your honour
And water them well;
For you are such a nice young couple.
See this Acacia tree:
I named it
After a one time good friend,
Whose offence was so great,
In good conscience,
I could no longer water it.

Des:

Oh dear me,
Oh dear me,

That tree is nearly dead.
Umm yes, Miss Pink,
I think I understand your reasons:
Best ask no more.
I see the Hasluck tree
Still in admirable condition.

Olive:

Of course, of course,
The Honourable Mr Hasluck,
A true gentleman and considerate.
He supported my application
To establish this Reserve
For the brave but fragile desert plants
So endangered by white habitation.

This is to be a place of peace and beauty
For all future generations.
I hope some day
You will bring your children
To this lovely space
To school them in plant lore,
And perhaps to celebrate
more special anniversaries.

Here, here's a card I've painted
To honour your engagement,
Wishing you much Joy
in your future lives together.

Pat and Des:

Thank you, Miss Pink.

Des:

How beautiful it is;
We will treasure it always!

Olive:

Now let's have some tea,
Or perhaps you'd prefer
A little Bickford's lime?
Or perhaps a sherry?
A special celebration, after all.
And you must try a slice of madeira cake.
I hope, young Des, my garden passes
Your expert assessment.

Des:

Indeed, Miss Pink, it does!
It is in excellent condition.

Olive:

How kind you both are.

And now young people
I have a witty ditty
For your entertainment;
My father sang it well.

Alas, my voice now frail,
No match for his;
But I think the lyrics will amuse,
Please join in the chorus lines,
Sing along when you can.

(Olive passes each of young guests a Song Sheet, then bursts into a lively rendition of 'As I'd Nothing Else to Do'. They follow her lead, joining in when appropriate.)

*'Twas a pleasant summer's morning
just the day I like t'enjoy:
When I woke, and looked out early,
Puzzled how my time t'employ;
In such fine and splendid weather,
I don't care for work, do you?
So I went to see my sweetheart,
As I'd nothing else to do.
So I went to see my sweetheart,
As I'd nothing else to do.*

*Off I started thro' the meadows,
Where the dew-heads pearl'd the spray,
And responsive to the songbirds
I kept singing all the way.
Quite surprise'd she was to see me
Come so early there to woo;
'Till I said I'd just walk'd over
'cause I'd nothing else to do.
'Till I said I'd just walk'd over
'cause I'd nothing else to do.*

.....

*And when e'er our conversation languished
For a word or two
Why of course. I kindly kissed her,
As I'd nothing else to do
Why of course. I kindly kissed her,
As I'd nothing else to do.*

*But before the day was over
I'd somehow made up my mind
That I'd pop the question to her,
If to me her heart inclined;
So I whisper'd "Sweet my darling,
Will you have me, Yes, or No?"
"Well," said she, "Perhaps I may dear,
When I've nothing else to do!"
"Well," said she, "Perhaps I may dear,*

*When I've nothing else to do!"*⁹

Pat:

That was really entertaining.

Des:

A most amusing song;

Pat and Des:

A moral to take into our future lives together.
A reminder,
We must never take one another for granted.

This time in your Garden
Has been so pleasant.
But we musn't intrude,
To stay any longer would surely be rude.

Thank you for tea,
The beautiful card,
And for teaching us
such entertaining song.

Olive:

Yes, indeed

it's time to go now.

Des, Pat and Olive:

It's time for us/you to go
Yes, yes,
Off we/you go now.

Olive:

I have much enjoyed your company,
I will always be glad to hear your news.

Des and Pat:

We have much enjoyed your company,
We will certainly stay in touch.

Olive:

Good-bye now.

Olive, Pat and Des:

Good-bye, good-bye,
Good-bye, good-bye,
Goodbye.

(Des and Pat exit.)

Epilogue

(Olive is left alone. She sings reflectively.)

Olive:

Daily as the sun sinks in the western sky,
I view the distant ranges
Alhekulyele – Mt Gillen.
My beloved Dingo,
His nose reddened in the fading light.

From the peaceful space
of this my garden,
my *Alchera* – *Jugulba*,
Hewn from the desert soils
with help from my Walpiri gardeners.

Alone, yet not alone,
My solitude a blessed state

For reflection.

My life's mission accomplished:
Recognition,
Recognition of Aboriginal rights to land
Grows apace
And gladdens my failing heart.

My brave plants,
Nurtured with my love
And Johnny's knowledge;
The future of this Reserve assured,
I am at peace,
I am at peace,
I am at peace.

⁹ *As I'd Nothing Else to do*: Words by Herbert Fry; Music by J.L. Hatton (1859). From Olive Pink's Song Folio loaned to the composer by Claire Kilgariff and first sung to her *en route* to Hermannsburg, Sep. 10, 2018.

*Ade pmara nukanha, ade,
Pmara nukanha, ade.¹⁰
Altjirra nuka-lela lhama,
Yinganh' alkngrlkngrilama.¹¹*

My life truly a dream
Surrounded by the sleep
To which I must return.

This lovely garden,
My Alchera-Jugulba
My Alchera-Jugulba

*(Olive turns and enters her hut closing the
door behind her. Johnny enters and waters the
garden.)*

CAAWC:

*Kala pakanmalta!
Palya ringkula
Pataalkula ngura
Pitalytjit jaku
A-min.*

FINIS

O8.viii.22

¹⁰ Andrew W. Hurley (2017) *Farewell My Country?* Hermannsburg, Gus Williams, and the Indigenised *Heimatlied*, *Journal of Australian Studies*, 41:1, 18-31,

Ade pmara nukanha, ade, Pmara nukanha, ade
Goodbye [my] my country, [My] country goodbye

¹¹ Ibid. *Altjirra nuka-lela lhama, Yinganh' alkngrlkngrilama*. God/eternity [Altjira] goes with me, Comforts me