



Arthur James Barth, one of the most widely recognised musicians of Victorian Dunedin, was born in London in 1850. His father, William, was a tailor of German descent. Arthur took piano lessons from the age of seven, and afterwards studied at the London Academy of Music, where he himself became a teacher. He performed at the Crystal Palace and St James Hall, and as a concerto soloist at the Royal Albert Hall. He was organist at Christ Church and St Mary Abbots, Kensington. He composed drawing-room songs and salon-style music, and more than a dozen of his works were published in London.

In 1876 Barth married Ellen Thompson, and in 1881 the couple migrated to Dunedin to be near Mrs Barth's family. Barth was briefly organist at St Matthew's and All Saints' churches, and in 1884 he was appointed the first organist at Knox Church, a position he held for twenty years. His playing became a much valued feature of worship, and Rev. William Hewitson and many members of the congregation made a point of remaining after the service to hear Barth play the closing voluntary.

Barth continued to compose, and some of his later compositions had New Zealand themes, including *The March of New Zealand*, *Sons of the Southern Cross*, and an *Exhibition Anthem* to a text by Thomas Bracken.

As a conductor, Barth was associated with the Dunedin Choral Society (now City of Dunedin Choir) and Dunedin Liedertafel (now Royal Dunedin Male Choir). He was Dunedin's first local representative for Trinity College, London, and earned a reputation as one of New Zealand's leading music teachers. This reputation was reflected in his election as the first president of the

Society of Musicians of Otago. He died just a few weeks after his election, on 19 February 1905, at the age of 55. He suffered from a heart condition and was unable recover from the pleurisy he was thought to have contracted on a photography expedition to Stewart Island. At a concert held in his memory the Knox Church organ was draped in black.

He is buried in Dunedin's Northern Cemetery beside his wife Ellen who had died in 1926.

Arthur Barth was described as having a quiet, retiring disposition. He was a prominent Freemason and served as Worshipful Master of Lodge Otago No.7. He was also a member of the Dunedin Photographic Society, and won medals at their exhibitions. He belonged to the Kaituna and Dunedin bowling clubs.

Barth was survived by his wife, two sons, and five daughters. Three of these daughters (Beatrice, Ruby, and Irene) made their own mark on Dunedin music through the Barth School of Music, which operated from 1921 to 1972.

David Murray