

Christchurch Singer's Success In Australia

(From Our Australian Correspondent)

SECOND prize in Australia's most important opera contest, the Sun Aria competition, was won in Melbourne in October by Mrs. Harold Cordery, the well-known Christchurch soprano who has been heard frequently in recitals over 3YA. This year there were 142 entrants, comprising the finest young operatic voices in the Commonwealth and several promising singers from New Zealand.

In the preliminary stages of the contest, which is held annually in conjunction with the famous Ballarat competitions, Mrs. Cordery impressed the judge with her singing of Weber's "Ocean, Thou Mighty Monster." He commented: "Her voice has purity, power and brilliance and is used with histrionic imagination. She responded freely to the great aria's changing moods."

In the finals, which were sung before an audience of 3,000 people in the Melbourne Town Hall, Mrs. Cordery was awarded 179 points, and the winner, Miss Mavis Webster, of Bendigo, Victoria, gained 184 points. The judge, Mr. Thorold Waters, commented: "While it cannot be said that Alison Cordery is heavily dramatic, her singing was finely controlled and at all points musical."

Mrs. Cordery's success against unusually strong competition is a tribute not only to her own talent but also to the skill and judgment of her teachers. The daughter of Mr. and Mrs. A. M. Stephens, of Riccarton, she took up singing only about five years ago after her marriage to Mr. Cordery. She studied voice production under Miss Lucy Fullwood, who is now Mrs. Leslie Kent, of Christchurch, and for the last four years has been trained by Mr. Will Hutchens of Christchurch.

In 1938 she went to England with her husband on what was intended to be a holiday trip, but eventually became a period of very hard study. In London, she was trained by the Australian singer, Miss Dorothy Helmrich. But for the outbreak of war, she would have returned to Europe this year for a further term with Miss Helmrich. As it is, she is resigned to singing "Home, Sweet Home" in the gentle security of St. Albans, Christchurch.

In the New Zealand musical field, Mrs. Cordery's successes include winning the women's scholarship at the Christchurch Competitions Society trials in 1935, and the grand opera aria contest in May this year. But to take even second prize in the 230-guinea Sun Aria contest is easily the handsomest feather in her cap so far. Sun Aria winners have for years more than held their own in world music. Among the most outstanding are the New Zealander, Denis Dowling, and the great Australian prima donna and Metropolitan Opera House star, Marjorie Lawrence.

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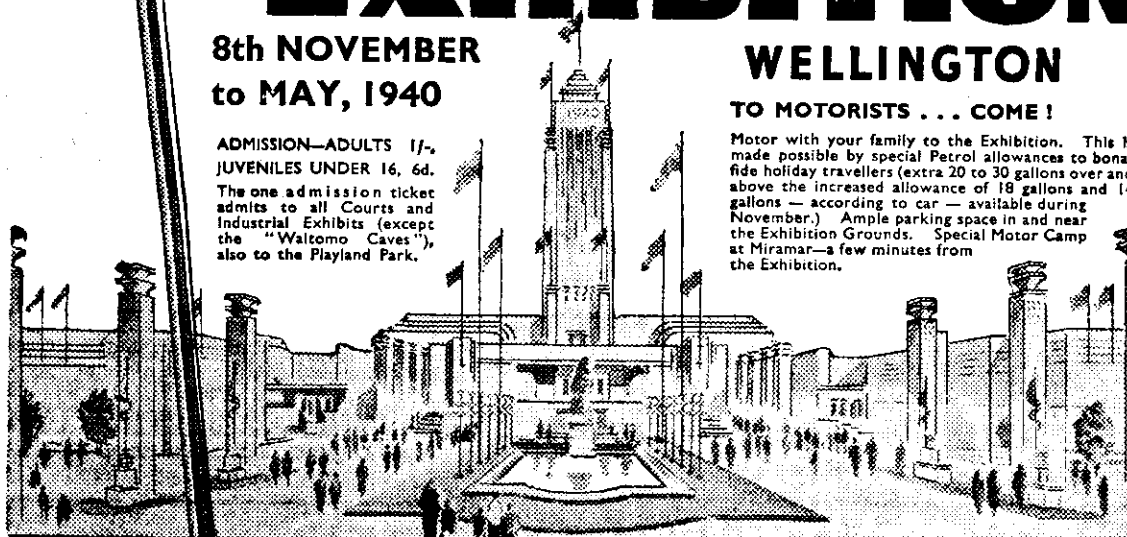
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