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HUMPHREY BISHOP: The microphone has superseded the footlights

"THE SHOWMAN" PAYS A VISIT

MANY older listeners will remember the hey-day of the variety stage, and the entertaining contributions made to it by Humphrey Bishop, of "I'm the Showman" fame. The other day he revisited New Zealand for a few days, after an absence of 12 years, on a combined business and pleasure trip, and he naturally had something to say about the New Zealanders who had appeared with him at one time or another. To-day most of his time is taken up with producing entertainment for broadcasting. Many of his shows have been, and are, heard regularly through the NZBS, and for this work his wide experience in the touring days is standing him in good stead.

Mr. Bishop has a reputation for encouraging New Zealanders, for at one time he had no fewer than seven in one of his shows. They included Theo Tresize, Dan Flood, and Zelda Bailey, of Auckland; Basil Dean, of Wanganui; Betty Burt, of Pahiatua; and two others. Then there were Ngaire Ph'pson and Evadne Royle, from Wellington; and Cecily Audibert, and Charles Stewart, of Christchurch. From Dunedin he took Bert Crawford, Joe Brennan, and Lalla Forbes to Australia. To-day, he said, there were a great many New Zealand artists at work in Sydney. Bob Pollard, formerly of the NZBS, was compering his latest musical show, the *All Time Hit Parade*.

The first Humphrey Bishop production broadcast by the NZBS was *The Masked Masqueraders*. The *Show of Shows* recently started from 2YB New Plymouth, and *Show Time* is now on the 2YA Monday evening programme. *The Bright Horizon* is heard from 2ZB on Saturdays at 3.30 p.m. and from 4ZB on Fridays at 6.0 p.m. *Ye Olde Time Music Hall* was another of Bishop's radio attractions.

* Asked how the National and Commercial stations in Australia compared,

Mr. Bishop said that in the classical and educational field the National stations led; they also gave a remarkably wide sports coverage. The Commercial stations dealt with the lighter types of entertainment, such as quiz sessions and musical revues, but some of the advertisers spent huge sums on sponsored programmes. A broadcast could cost £1,000.

Sydney was still short of theatres. Only one showed musical comedy, one variety, and one, the Minerva, presented plays. But the "little theatres" were doing a good job with plays which the commercial houses would consider doubtful as financial ventures.

"At the moment we have the best comedian for years, Tommy Trinder, who has been most successful both in Sydney and Melbourne," said Mr. Bishop. "And such success is unusual for a comedian because generally one city or the other is more or less indifferent to an artist. Trinder makes much of topicalities, saying, among other things, 'You know we have strikes in England, too, but we're only amateurs; you're professionals,' and 'What's that coat-hanger over the harbour for? We haven't such a large bridge in England, but we can cross for nothing.' The pianist in the Trinder show is Len James, of Invercargill, whom I took over to Australia some years ago."

No Australian could be expected to chat for half-an-hour without mentioning cricket. Mr. Bishop said there was a point which would bear repeating. An Australian writer said recently that when the Australian Cricket Board first approached the MCC, the MCC said that they were not ready for test matches, and that it would take several years to recover sufficiently from war conditions to put a team in the field. But the Australian Board pressed the matter through Dr. Evatt, who was in London, and through him the MCC agreed to make the trip—more in the nature of a goodwill tour. "That, I think, is something that should be more widely known," he added.