

BOY SOPRANO INTO BARITONE

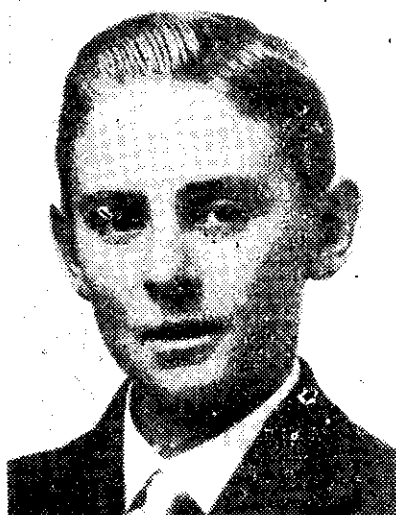
Lex Macdonald on the Air from 4YA

ONLY a few outstanding visiting musical geniuses ever captured the public imagination in New Zealand as much as a 12-year-old boy who used to sing in Dunedin. No other local artist was ever in such demand for concerts. Few other local concerts turned away the crowds that had to stay outside Dunedin's Town Hall on the night of the farewell concert given the lad before he left to make gramophone records in Australia.

Master Lough, of Brompton Oratory, had captivated the hearts of gramophone owners. Here was a New Zealand boy with the same sort of clear soprano voice, and a command of technique which his thousands of "fans" claimed outvalued the singing of the famous English boy soprano. Lex Macdonald was famous.

Much has happened since then. The boy with the angelic voice has won a University Blue at tennis, and is now busy lowering his golf handicap as near par as he can get it (it's down to 12 at the moment). But he still sings, and listeners to 4YA regularly hear his fine baritone.

His next broadcast will be heard from Dunedin's Station 4YA at 8.10 p.m. on Saturday, September 28.



LEX MACDONALD

He has grown up since this was taken

He Started Young

Lex Macdonald was about six years old when he began to sing at small concerts, but did not think about learning singing until he was 12 years old. He became a pupil of Ernest Drake's, and soon developed as a boy soprano, the natural voice range for boys of his age.

Two beautiful anthems have been associated with boy-soprano voices since

choirs first sang them: "Hear My Prayer" (which includes the passage "Oh for the Wings of a Dove"), and "I Waited for the Lord." These young Macdonald determined to master, with what effect listeners in New Zealand and Australia, and indeed overseas as well, still remember.

His first public performance of any importance was given during Ernest Drake's recital in 1930. Twice he entered for the Dunedin competitions in the open class under 18, and was first both times.

Exciting Times

The years 1930 and 1931 were exciting times for him. He sang at every local concert of importance, and was the sensation of the moment, singing the part specially written for a boy-soprano voice into Maunders' Cantata, "The Martyrs."

His fame quickly spread. The Wellington and Christchurch Harmonic Societies engaged him for concerts. He sang for the Timaru Orchestral Society, with the Invercargill Male Choir, and with most of the Dunedin societies. In the end it was arranged that he should go to Australia to make recordings. More than 3000 people listened to his farewell concert in Dunedin Town Hall.

Records in Sydney

In Sydney he made six records, still much prized by gramophone owners. He broadcast for 2FC. Although he found, as he said recently to *The Listener*, that "music, as far as concerts were concerned, was as dead then in Sydney as it has now become in New Zealand," he had a successful stay there.

He still broadcasts for 4YA, but regrets that singers do not appear so often before audiences as they used to.

FUSING OF TALENTS

CBS Programme Organiser on NBS Station



VINCENT ASPEY

ERIC BELL, programme organiser for CBS Station 2ZB in Wellington, and Vincent Aspey, leader of the NBS String Orchestra at 2YA, will bring a long-established musical combination under the eyes of official approval in a broadcast next week from 2YA. On Monday, September 23, at 8.44 p.m., they will play Eric Bell's Sonata in E Minor for Piano and Violin.

Both these artists are already widely known in this country. For some time now Mr. Bell's piano presentations have been among the brightest and best of their kind from 2ZB. He began his

career as a pianist early, and while he was still in his 'teens had several successes in competitions. When he began broadcasting from 1YA Auckland, in the late 'twenties, he soon became known to Auckland listeners for diverse presentations—such as talks on great musicians, recitals, and announcing.

Meanwhile, he began composing; first, several light songs in collaboration with other Auckland musicians; then, in 1935, he wrote the Sonata in E Minor, which was given its first public performance (with Vincent Aspey and the composer as soloists) in August of that year at a concert by the Royal Auckland Choir.

The work was also performed in Australia, whither Mr. Bell went later for eighteen months, during which time he broadcast over several Australian stations. There have been very few compositions of this type written by New Zealanders. Mr. Bell's Sonata was the product of three months' labour, and he dedicated it to Vincent Aspey.

Now the leader of the NBS String Orchestra under Maurice Clare, Vincent Aspey needs little introduction to listeners, especially in the Auckland province: he began broadcasting from 1YA Auckland some years ago, and until he came to Wellington with his violin, to join the



Spencer Digby photograph
ERIC BELL

String Orchestra, he was well known on Auckland concert platforms.

Like Eric Bell, Vincent Aspey began his musical career while still in his 'teens, with concert and theatre performances. On the advice of such musicians as Heifetz, Kreisler, and Zimbalist, he went to Sydney to continue studies at the Conservatorium. While in Australia, he broadcast from several Australian stations.

Back in New Zealand once more, he has broadcast in studio recitals, chamber music, concert work, and has been associated with several eminent visiting artists.

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