



PETER DAWSON, as seen by a cartoonist

PETER DAWSON VISITS US

Famous Ballad Singer's NBS Concerts Begin This Week

to give a short talk, which proved to be a particularly happy one, largely concerned with an enthusiastic sightseeing tour of Christchurch which he had made that day. His talk ended, he happened to hear an orchestras practising in an adjacent studio, and contract or no contract, he offered to sing a song over the air. "Do you know the accompaniment to 'The Mountains of Mourne'?" he asked the pianist, who said no, but he had a general idea of how it went. And after a few minutes' rehearsal, 3YA listeners were treated to one of the most impromptu song recitals ever broadcast from the station. The telephone was jammed with requests for more.

Peter Dawson is like that. After more than 40 years of professional singing he is prodigal with his voice, singing for the sheer love of singing, giving always of his best.

His Career

He was born in Adelaide in 1882, and sang as a treble in the choir of the Melbourne Congregational Church. Then his voice broke, and at the age of 17 he won first prize in the bass solo, open class, at the Ballarat competitions. In 1901, he went to England, and a year later became a pupil of Sir Charles Santley, who made him an artist. His big chance came when he appeared in London with Madame Albani. In 1904 he recorded for the old Edison Bell company; then in 1905 for His Master's Voice, under contract to whom he has been ever since. In 1909 he made his first appearance in Grand Opera at Covent

Garden, but early in his career his audience decided to make him the nation's most popular ballad singer.

He Seldom Gets Tired

"Recording was a full time job in those days," he once recalled. "I used to reach the studios at ten in the morning and sing without a real break until one o'clock. Then I had an hour off for lunch and sang again from two until five. Fortunately, I have been gifted with a powerful voice, and overstrain is almost unknown to me. Many singers simply could not have kept up the singing for six hours a day, five days a week. That is one of the reasons why comedians with 'leather voices' are among the most popular recorders.

"Recording had its lighter side in the early days, too. I remember meeting a famous comedian on his way to make his first records. He had heard it was a bit monotonous and was evidently determined to create the right atmosphere, for he was accompanied by three cases of beer—one for himself and two for the band. Unfortunately the officials wouldn't allow the beer into the studio."

Admires Our Audiences

Mr. Dawson has been broadcasting regularly for many years, and is an enthusiastic and critical listener. "The radio has taught people to listen," he declared to an interviewer in New Zealand in 1933. "From this fact there is evolving an appreciation of good music that, but for broadcasting, would never have been awakened in the breasts of the masses."

A staunch Australian, he has also rallied to the defence of Australian and New Zealand audiences on more than one occasion. "They are good. They have a high standard," he has observed. "It is all rubbish to say they lack musical standards or conscience. Besides, they show common sense, and prefer songs in English . . ."

On the platform and off, Peter Dawson is a homely, pleasant, straightforward person. Here is how an interviewer meeting him for the first time, described him: "He is a fairly short man, as comfortably stout as his rich baritone suggests. He has a baldish head and a face that crinkles like an apple while he listens to other people's stories. He laughs deeply, with a bubbling good humour, in all the right places. His talk and actions exactly suit the voice you hear in microphone recordings . . . He doesn't diet; eats what he likes; goes where he likes; does what he likes. It keeps him tough, 'not like those Italians who wear coats over their throats, all coddled up. Throats should be open to the air.'"

SINCE 1905 he has made more than 12,000,000 records, he sings opera but he prefers Kipling; he has written the music of many of his songs; he boasts that in 15 years he has never practised; he is 60 years of age, but still a long way from retirement; he is living in Australia now.

Who is he? The most nervous musical quiz competitor would be able to answer Peter Dawson without faltering. And for the first time since 1933, Peter Dawson, recognised as the finest bass-baritone ballad singer of the day, is visiting New Zealand — to broadcast for the NBS and to star in a series of big patriotic "Liberty" concerts. Mr. Dawson arrives in the Dominion very shortly and will give his first broadcast from the 2YA studio this Saturday, May 16.

His first "Liberty" concert will be in the Wellington Town Hall on Tuesday, May 19, and he will sing in the Auckland Town Hall on May 23, in the Christchurch Theatre Royal on May 28, and in the Dunedin Town Hall on June 1. Details of his studio appearances at 4YA, 3YA and 1YA will be published later. Touring with Mr. Dawson will be Andersen Tyrer and the NBS String Orchestra, which will be augmented in each centre.

When Peter Dawson toured New Zealand in 1933 he was singing on the concert platform only, but he did make one appearance in front of the microphone. It was at 3YA, and he had agreed

SAINT-SAENS AND BARTOK

Piano Recitals By Henri Penn

HENRI PENN has every reason to take a special interest in the works of Saint-Saens, whose Fifth Concerto he played with the NBS Orchestra from 2YA on Tuesday, May 12. He played under Saint-Saens in Beecham's orchestra in 1912 when the great French conductor came to London to conduct and play at a concert in his honour.

Saint-Saens was in his 77th year then, and Mr. Penn remembers him as a dynamic little old man whose playing was superb and whose conducting was always definite and masterful. Members of the orchestra who attempted to help the old man to the rostrum found him self-reliant to the point of irritability.

Tuesday evening's performance of the Fifth Concerto is believed to be the first in New Zealand, and two years ago in Melbourne, Mr. Penn played it for the first time in Australia. It was performed first of all in Paris in 1896 at a concert commemorating the 50th anniversary of Saint-Saens' debut. He played the piano part himself. Like Beethoven, he wrote five concertos. The fifth is influenced by his travels in the Orient, and in the slow movement he uses a number of old folk tunes. Not many pianists play the concerto, but Mr. Penn thinks it is sure to become popular on account of its lightness, folk interest and above all its pleasant music.

On Friday of this week, May 15, Mr. Penn intends to present from 2YA ten minutes of music by another famous composer whom he met in London—the Hungarian modernist Bela Bartok. Mr. Penn met him, along with John Ireland, Frank Bridge and Alan Bush (a young futurist composer) at a festival of contemporary music just before the war. Bartok, who played and conducted his own music, is a dynamic personality. On Friday, Mr. Penn will play four short pieces by him.



Alan Blakey photograph
HENRI PENN
Had a special interest

Listen For These

AT 5.45 p.m. on Wednesday, May 13, the BBC will put on a special feature for New Zealand—a dramatisation of the life of David Low. This will be one of a series of "Contemporary Portraits" arranged by Stephen Potter. Then at 6.45 p.m. on Monday, May 18, in the series "Calling New Zealand," the High Commissioner for the Dominion, W. J. Jordan, will give a talk, "What Representing New Zealand in London Means." Both these features, if reception conditions are favourable, will be recorded and broadcast again at suitable hours, but some will wish to be sure and hear the broadcasts direct from London.

Ennui

(By WHIM-WHAM)

"[The Army psychologists came to the conclusion that women have a high physical capacity . . . they are more easily bored than men, but are more resourceful in entertaining themselves. . . .]"—Cable from London.]

YOU cannot lightly set aside
The Findings of Psychologists:
To classify and analyse
The human Mind, its Kinks and
Twists,
Is Work that's better left, I feel,
To Those who have the Skill and
Zeal!

OH, not for me to puzzle out
How Reflex Arcs may be de-
fined,
To test Intelligence, or dredge
The Depths of the Unconscious
Mind,
Or piously invoke the Names
Of Freud or Jung or William
James!

BUT in the Ways of Women—
there
The Expert treads on shaky
Ground!
What Method can be valid there?
What Intuition safe or sound
To demonstrate that Woman can
Be bored more easily than Man?

DEGREES of Boredom there
may be,
But surely it's an empty Boast
To hint that one can estimate
What bores a Woman least or
most,
And how she can be bored, and
why—

The Expert knows no more than I!
NO doubt they've measured
Boredom on
Some canny scientific Scale,
By laboratory Tests compared
The female Subject with the
Male,
To prove—Oh Psycho-fiddsticks!
That Half-a-dozen equals Six.