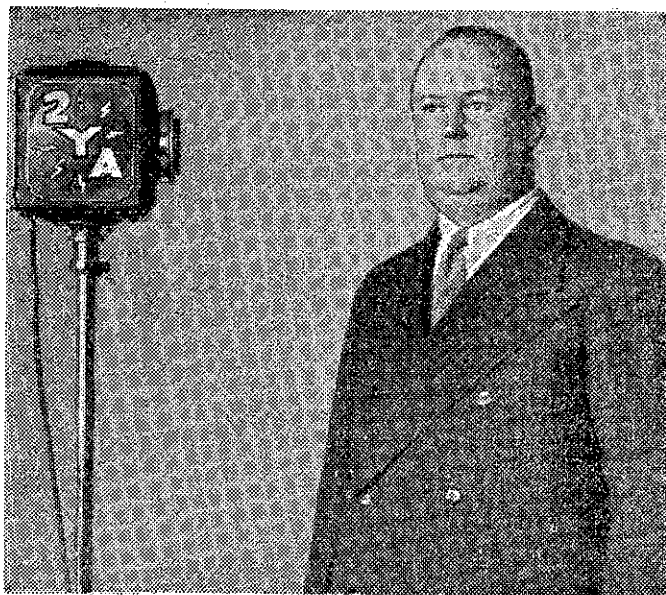


Famous Tenor Arrives to Delight N.Z. Radio Fans

Lionello Cecil, the famous operatic tenor, found himself facing a "Radio Record" cameraman almost as soon as he set foot on New Zealand soil. Mr. Cecil is seen here beside the microphone at 2YA.



ONE thing I discovered about Lionello Cecil in the first two minutes I met him—he has his pet superstitions. There were three of us talking in the 2YA Studio an hour after Mr. Cecil came off the Marama and, in lighting our cigarettes, he refused to let any of us be "third match." He laughed when we remarked on it: "Silly, isn't it? The idea's dying out in Australia—but very slowly."

Mr. Cecil is one of the really big stars engaged by the New Zealand Broadcasting Board, and he has a world-wide reputation behind him. He expects to be in New Zealand for about two months, spending part of the time in sight-seeing. "Although I'm an Australian," he said, "I've never crossed the Tasman before. You see, I've spent a great deal of my life in Europe, and the opportunity has never cropped up before. I had a look at a film called 'Romantic New Zealand' at the Embassy in Sydney the other night, and it made me all the keener to have a look at the country. There are some wonderful scenes in it of the southern part of New Zealand—Milford Sound and Lake Wakatipu—and the audience clapped when they came on the screen."

"By the way, I believe that 'Ten-Minute Alibi' is here just now? I'm rather interested in that show, for I sang some operatic excerpts in Sydney as a sort of 'curtain-raiser.' It was something of a novelty to stage a curtain-raiser of that kind with a mystery play, but it went down very well."

Mr. Cecil has been singing all his life, starting as a choir boy in Sydney. As a youth he studied under Hector Fleming, who advised him to go abroad. And so to Italy he went—to Milan, where, in his first year, he won a scholarship at the Conservatorium; the first British subject who had ever done so. In Milan he studied under Maestro Pieraccani, and made his debut in "Rigoletto" at Modena (a few miles from Milan) in 1918. Since that time Mr. Cecil has given his life to opera, and has sung in such famous opera houses as La Scala, the Royal Theatre at Rome, in Naples, Barcelona, Buenos Aires and London. He has toured Switzerland, France, Germany, Spain—and sung in Berlin with no less a conductor than Toscanini. ("By God! there's a wonderful conductor for you!") Concert tours of England filled with recitals in the Albert Hall and Queen's Hall, London. He sang with Sir Hamilton Harty, when the latter was conducting the Halle Orchestra at Manchester. Mr. Cecil was able to renew his acquaintanceship with Sir Hamilton when he visited Australia last year, the famous conductor choos-

ing the Australian to sing "Elijah" with him at the Sydney Town Hall.

In September, 1933, Mr. Cecil came out to Sydney under contract to the Australian Broadcasting Commission, which was then embarking on the broadcast production of a number of grand operas. A six months' tour of the Commonwealth followed his engagement with the "Ten-Minute Alibi" company—and now New Zealand, with a further six months' contract with the A.B.C. when he returns to Australia.

"I've not done any broadcasting in England," said Mr. Cecil, "but I have in Italy. Italian broadcasting has attained a very high standard, with broadcasts from all the principal opera houses. The Italian has a genuine love for good music—there's no high-brow feigning about it—although the continental type of jazz is supplanting opera for the younger generation. When I first went to Italy there was scarcely any sport—to-day the younger people are sport-mad, with less time for opera. There is jazz in Italy, too, you know, although it differs considerably from the American jazz which Australians and New Zealanders know. It has a different sentiment and rhythm."

Mr. Cecil went on to mention the broadcasts that were being given by the Australian stations of the performances of the Fuller Opera Company in Sydney. I asked him if he thought they lost by being performed in English.

"Yes, they do lose to a certain extent. People don't go to opera to listen to the words—they know the plot from the synopsis given in the programmes or the papers, and they go to listen to the glorious music and the singing. A grand opera is not like a straight play, and it should never be treated as such. The German operas may be all right in English, but the Italian opera loses greatly. The present company presenting opera in Australia, however, is a splendid one, and it is doing good business in Sydney. The Melbourne opening was something of a fiasco. It was a great mistake to put the company into a theatre like the Apollo, which was never intended for grand opera. J. C. Williamsons are to manage the tour after the company finishes in Sydney, and they will be putting the operas on in His Majesty's Theatre on the return Melbourne visit. The second season should be much more successful than the first."

"I've heard good reports of the musical appreciation of New Zealanders—I hope they will like my work. My wife is an Italian—she comes from Trieste—and this, too, is her first visit to New Zealand."