

FOUR NAMES— *But Still the Same* BEAUTIFUL VOICES

—and World-Famed Husband from N.Z.

In the role of Brunnhilde, in "Die Valkyrie," Madame Florence Austral is pictured on the right. Famous as she is for her Wagner, this is her most outstanding Wagnerian characterisation. Below is John Amadio, formerly of Wellington, her illustrious flute-playing husband.



MOST women change their name only once in their lifetime—but Madame Florence Austral, the celebrated Australian soprano, who last Thursday opened a tour of the National stations, has had four names since she came into the world. No, she has not been in the divorce courts. She was christened Florence Mary Wilson as a baby, but later she adopted her stepfather's name, Fawaz, and it was as Florence Fawaz that she first attracted attention in musical circles in Melbourne. However, when the time came for her debut at Covent Garden the director of the Opera House was most emphatic on the point that Florence Fawaz was a name that would not "register" with the public.

In the first place, no one would know how to pronounce Fawaz, and if they did know they wouldn't remember it, he said. So Miss Fawaz had to get busy and think up a name the public would remember. Feeling very nervous, and home-sick for her country, the young Australian singer timidly suggested "Austral."

"The very thing," replied the director, "and if your stage-name brings you the same good fortune as the name Melba has done for Dame Nellie, you will have no cause for worry."

Thus it was that Florence Fawaz became Florence Austral, and within a few days of changing her name the young soprano had become famous. A couple of years later Florence Austral married John Amadio, and now, if she wanted to confound autograph-seekers, she could write her name as Florence Wilson-Fawaz-Austral-Amadio.

Now she has come to New Zealand with her husband, and Dominion listeners may hear her flute-like soprano notes and the tones of John Amadio's flutes from the same stations in combined recitals. When Madame Austral arrived in Wellington on Tuesday last week, she had to spend two days a-bed owing to a chill, but her first recital on Thursday night from 2YA gave listeners an appetite for more.

Even when she was a schoolgirl in Melbourne her rich soprano proved a constant source of amazement to her friends, for its extraordinary power was something of a

phenomenon. It was more of a joke than anything else—in her own estimation—when some friends persuaded her to enter as a competitor in the Ballarat festival, and nobody was more surprised than she herself when her voice aroused the keen interest of the judges. The name Wagner then conveyed nothing to her, and when some of the musicians present predicted that she would some day be a fine Wagnerian singer, Florence was not quite sure whether or not they were having a joke at her expense.

But within a period of 15 years Florence Austral found herself acclaimed not only as a great Wagnerian singer, but as the greatest Wagner artist of the present time! Fresh from triumphs overseas, she returned to her country two and a half years ago for a six-months' concert tour with John Amadio. This was, however, followed by a long

engagement with the Fuller Grand Opera Company. (Sir Benjamin Fuller built the company round Madame Austral, considering her presence in Australia too good an opportunity to be wasted.) Then a broadcasting tour was undertaken with joint recitals of husband and wife. Finally there was a season of broadcast operas in which Madame Austral again starred, this time under the aegis of the Australian Broadcasting Commission.

From here the two are going to tour America with the National Broadcasting Company, thence back to their home in London. Soon after their arrival in England Madame Austral will again be on the move when she tours the country with the famous violinist, Szigeti. It's a busy life.

Thanks to recordings and performances broadcast in Australia in the last couple of years, Madame Austral's name is far from unfamiliar to New Zealanders, and always it is linked with that of her New Zealand husband, for their joint recitals have been most successful. John Amadio has become a flautist of the highest degree of fame. But he has no more lost the friendly naturalness and approachability to which colonial life is accustomed (although it is 17 years since he was in Wellington) than has Madame.

"It is remarkable how easily one gets familiar again with the city," he said to a "Radio Record" representative. "I have been along a few streets near my old home, and there are still many of the same old houses there. This morning I was greatly pleased to have a call from Charles Hill. We were boys together, and I used to have lessons from Mr. Hill, sen., brother of Alfred Hill and leading Wellington flautist."

John Amadio is a doughty man with bishops, rooks, pawns and all the rest of the pieces on a chessboard. In fact, there seems to be something of an affinity between the "Amadio clan" and the chess-board. John's father, Mr. "Tony" Amadio, of Melbourne, also a brilliant flautist, is an ardent chess-player, and several other members of

