

# STAND UP AND SING!

*Three Dunedin Men Who  
Proved That The Best Things  
In Life Are Still Free*

Special to the Record

by

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**T**HE "community sing" was one of the few really worthwhile developments of the Great Depression.

Since they were unable to afford a full quota of canned and celluloid music in those anxious years, a great number of people found—as people have been finding for more centuries than the Adam-and-Eveists care to admit—that there is only one amusement more cheering than listening to music—that of making it for yourself.

Song is about the one gift without strings left in this money-ridden old world.

With return to more normal economic conditions, the community sing has perhaps lost a little of its appeal, but there are still parts of New Zealand where it is enjoyed as eagerly as ever. And there are still hundreds of sick and crippled people who look to the radio to bring them something of the hearty, cheerful spirit of happy people singing old, well-loved songs in unison. Dunedin is one city in which community singing seems to have come to stay.

## The Unhappy Year

DUNEDIN community sings started in 1931. That was not, you will recall, a happy year. And because it was not happy Messrs. H. P. Desmoulins, J. F. Himburg, and Alf. Pettitt decided to make things a little brighter all round. "Community sings" were started—and were patronised—because people realised the need for them. "Demmy," "Himmy," and "Alfie," as they were soon to become known, had started something, but not even they could then have guessed just how much.

When the first season ended they had collected £74/0/10 for charitable work, and when last season ended they found they had collected for six months the staggering total of nearly £1400, 20 times the sum they had collected their first year!

In 1931 £74 was collected; the following year this sum rose to £164; in 1933 to £400; in 1934 to £600; in 1935 to £668; in 1936 to £920; and last year to that amazing total of £1400.

The financial response is all the more praiseworthy when it is realised the committee insists that the sings be sings. Little, if any time, is wasted in auctioning goods; no raffles are ever held, and no games of chance of any sort.

All money collected is given voluntarily, save for that raised by means of sales. Every Friday a stall is open in the vestibule of the Strand Theatre.

Four special appeals were made at sings last year. An appeal on behalf of the King George Memorial Fund raised

**P**ERHAPS you don't care for community singing. I know there are scores of people who don't . . .

But that doesn't alter the fact that for every one who doesn't, there are probably a round thousand who do.

£109/1/9; an appeal for the Johnstone quadruplets, £100; the Mayoress's Christmas Cheer Fund, £85; and finally—the most notable success of all—an appeal on behalf of the Plunket Society brought

£210/0/6. Each of the quoted sums was raised at one concert.

"**DEM**MY" deserves his success as a leader. He knows how to get the best from his audiences—how to get them in the happy, friendly frame of mind so essential for community singing.

The committee does not confine its attentions to Dunedin alone. Many concerts are organised in country towns. Last year Demmy, Himmy, and Alfie went as far afield as Milton, Timaru, Oamaru, Roxburgh, Mosgiel, Port Chalmers, Green Island, and twice to Gore. These trips occupied a good deal of time, but the results made the effort well worth while. At Roxburgh £62 was raised.

The committee is naturally delighted with the public response to its work. But the members do not say very much. "Himmy" will express appreciation of support, but will say nothing about his own or his colleagues' work.

## Embarrassed Them

**T**HE trio were embarrassed last year when the citizens of Dunedin gave them a complimentary sing in the Town Hall. Three thousand people packed the hall. The guests appreciated the compliment paid them. Their services were further acknowledged by the presentation of suitable gifts.

Artists visiting Dunedin have always been willing to help these community concerts for charity, and there is no doubt that they have helped the box office satisfactorily.

Last year the English Soccer team, the New Zealand Soccer team, the Young Farmers' Party, Country Girls' Party, men of H.M.S. Leander, under the Rev. Ellis, Peter Dawson, of the J. C. Williamson Company (now Peter of NZB), Dave Howard, English saxophonist, Jimmy Taylor, English entertainer, the Four Blenders from the Montague Show, Mollie Doyle, champion girl piper from Southland, and the Johnston quadruplets, all these were the guests of the committee. Wherever possible they contributed items to the concerts.

**T**H**E**R**E** is another man who must not be forgotten—Big Brother Bill, idol of the children's sessions from 4YA, lends a hand. He it was who conducted the appeal on behalf of the Mayoress's Christmas Cheer Fund, and manages the children's sing from the main Town Hall. Always a feature of the "singing" year, children in thousands flock to the hall, delighted to be near (Continued on page 45).