

# Adventures of an Announcer

## Round the World with Mr. Owen Pritchard

### By "CALL UP"



HERE can be few more interesting people associated with broadcasting in New Zealand than Mr. Owen Pritchard, programme organiser at station IYA, and certainly none with a more varied and interesting history.

Born not so very far from the present IYA station and educated in Auckland, he began to earn his daily bread in that city, but his life was cast to take a more interesting and exciting course than any humdrum job could ever supply. He was destined for the stage, and when the "Belle Crome Bellringers" came to New Zealand twenty-five years ago he joined them, this being his first professional engagement.

After touring New Zealand for two years with this company he doubled with Alf. "Redhead" Wilson, of Mor-

ris and Wilson, who were at that time Australian top-line acrobats. He was associated with Wilson for a long time in an act entitled "The Merry Ostlers," touring New Zealand and Australia. From there they went to South Africa, where they played all through the Union before sailing for England. They showed at most of the London city and suburban theatres and a good portion of the provincial centres before going to Scotland and Ireland. They then returned to London and dissolved partnership.

STRIKING out on his own, Pritchard wrote direct to Sir Oswald Stoll, the London theatrical magnate, and through his manager was instructed to appear at an audition at the old Middlesex Theatre, Drury Lane. Pritchard was surprised to find that there were so many other artists wanting

engagements at the same time that the auditions lasted two whole days. However, he was fortunate enough to be chosen from this big batch and was given a two weeks' engagement at the Middlesex, other engagements following in and around London which kept him booked up for nine months.

Pritchard then met and joined forces with Harry Carr, pianist for Hope Charteris, the Queensland soprano, who had taken the lead vacated by Florence Smithson in "The Arcadians." They sailed from Tilbury early in 1915 and opened at Cape Town, subsequently touring the Union for six months. The partnership was then split and Pritchard signed a nine months' contract with "The Scarlet Troubadours" and again toured the Union.

ON completion of this, his third theatrical tour of South Africa, he sailed for New Zealand to join up with the N.Z.E.F. On his discharge after two years' war service, at Christmas, 1919, he was asked by a number of Aucklanders to put on a show after the style of those presented to the troops behind the lines. As he had run a concert party at Etaples this was a job right into his hands.

He collected some of his former party and under the name of the Te Koas Concert Party they drew packed audiences to the Auckland Town Hall Concert Chamber for a two weeks' season. A nine months' tour of New Zealand with this show followed.

ONE might have expected Pritchard to have settled down in Auckland then, but he sailed for America at the end of 1920. On arrival there he soon found that the professional road was a hard one to travel for anyone without a thorough knowledge of American wit and slang and a good Yankee twang! However, he achieved his measure of success and played most of the vaudeville houses in and around San Francisco.

It was in 'Frisco that he first became acquainted with broadcasting, and while in America he appeared at all the principal radio stations on the Pacific Coast. This experience has naturally stood him in good stead in his present position.

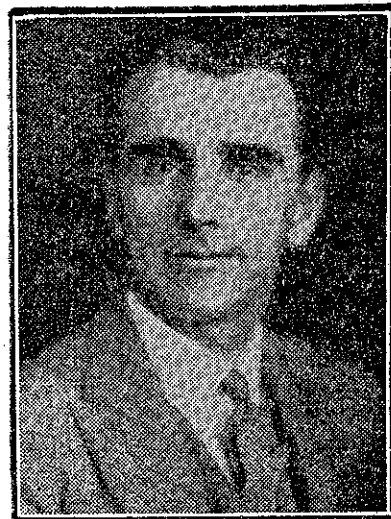
WHEN he had been in San Francisco twelve months he began to study the violin under Arthur Conradi, principal of the Institute of Music, and also took a position as cashier with the Western Union Telegraph Company. It was in this latter position that he received the greatest thrill of his life, this being no less than a darling hold-up by a gunman.

One morning he was at his place in the Western Union's office when over the counter hurdled a man with a drawn revolver.

"Throw up your hands and be quick about it," he demanded, levelling the

revolver at Pritchard. Pritchard darted out into a passage with the bandit at his heels and attempted to reach some men working behind a partition at the rear of the office, but failed. However, the gunman gave up the chase and escaped from the office, Pritchard's presence of mind having saved 1000 dollars in currency which was in an unlocked drawer a few feet away from the scene of the hold-up.

AFTER five years in 'Frisco Pritchard was engaged as orchestra leader on the s.s. Ventura, running between



MR. OWEN PRITCHARD.

—S. P. Andrew, photo.

'Frisco and Sydney. Three happy years at sea followed before he asked for his discharge in Sydney. There he was introduced to Mr. Phillip Lytton of "Cappy Ricks" fame, and was engaged by him to play principal comedian with his company on a twelve months' tour of Australia.

Pritchard then returned to Auckland to live with his mother, and not long afterward secured his present position. Even then his adventures were not at an end, for he had only been at IYA a few months when he married an Auckland girl.

Owen Pritchard has been acrobat, singer, violinist, comedian, actor, orchestra leader, producer, and broadcaster, and has sandwiched no end of adventures in between. With such a long and varied theatrical experience and such a knowledge of the world he is admirably suited to engage radio artists and to arrange programmes. As he himself says, broadcasting is an entirely different art from the stage, but showmanship is equally essential to both. It would be hard to find a better or more experienced showman than Owen Pritchard.

## CROSLEY JEWEL BOX

*Gives You the Thrill of Radio at its Best*

The Jewelbox was the latest 1929 Crosley Model and extremely popular. Excluding screen-grid, it is probably the most efficient receiver ever produced.

Simple, compact, sturdy. Beautifully finished in White-Gold effect. No batteries. Silent operation. Plugs direct in the light socket. Costs less than 3d. an hour to run. Gives pleasure, relaxation—the true enjoyment of modern radio.

Prove for yourself by comparative demonstrations at your nearest radio dealer, or fill in the coupon for illustrated literature.

**£10 down**  
52 Weekly Payments  
of 10/-.  
Special Price for  
Cash.

# CROSLEY

*Mail Coupon  
Now!*

**Branches:**

Bank Street, Whangarei.  
Taranaki Representative:  
C. R. Ruscoe, Devon Street,  
New Plymouth.

**ABEL, SMEETON, LTD.,**

Wholesale and Retail Merchants,  
27-29 Customs St. East, Auckland.

Sir,—Please send me particulars  
of the Crosley Jewelbox and other  
superb 1930 models, including  
Screen-grid.

NAME .....

ADDRESS .....

R.