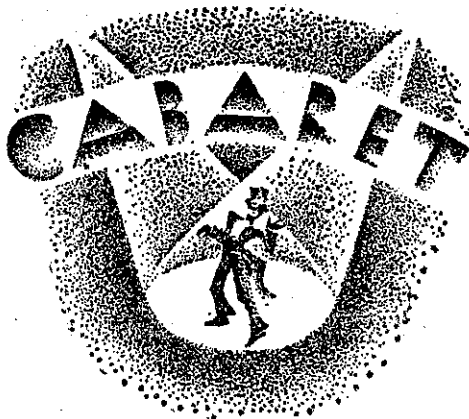




New Thursday, April 27, an original entertainment which should have a wide appeal will be presented from 2YA by Edwin Dennis and Company. It is entitled "Cabaret Musicale," and depicts an evening with a cabaret party. The continuity, which is bright and generously seasoned with clever quips, was written by Mr. Dennis around the varied selection of songs, both solos and concerted, which complete the cabaret atmosphere.

EDWIN DENNIS has been associated with the stage since he was six, when he made his first public performance by singing a solo at a church anniversary concert in Melbourne. Since then he has had a very extensive experience, singing and acting in grand opera, musical comedies, revues, concert parties and pantomimes. He has also conducted orchestras, dance bands, choral societies, and operatic productions, and has produced over twenty different works.

For five years prior to the war he studied singing in New Zealand. During the war, when on leave from the front, he was associated at Sling Camp with Stanley Mackay in the production of several pantomimes and in the organisation of concert parties. Readers may remember that Stanley Mackay has since the war toured New Zealand several times with various companies. Later Mr. Dennis was in charge of the Codford Concert Party, and in this capacity gained a wide experience in conducting, producing and solo work.

Following demobilisation, Mr. Dennis studied for several years at the Royal College of Music in London, and gained an Associate Diploma—one of the highest qualifications a vocalist can obtain. While at this college he studied under such famous musicians as the late Alberto Visetti and F. A. Sewell. The latter was the accompanist at the Royal Albert Hall for 25 years. During the next few years he toured England, fulfilling various engagements with different companies. He was in the original cast of "The Maid of the Mountains." In London he has appeared in various concerts at those famous music-halls—Queen's, Central and Palladium.

Mr. Dennis is certainly nothing if not versatile for, beside his high qualifications as a vocalist and conductor, he has also tried his hand very extensively at composing music and writing sketches, plays and books. He has written a number of songs, several of which will be broadcast during his concert. Included in his writings are several short sketches, plays, a complete musical comedy, and a book which is at present with the publishers. One of his short sketches, "The Burglar," will be broadcast during the second portion of the programme.

In his wanderings as a professional musician, Mr. Dennis has had many interesting experiences. We shall ask him to relate them himself:—

Perhaps the most unusual experience I had took place while I was with a touring Pierrot Company, which I joined at Southampton. When in that city, just after the Armistice, I noticed an advertisement to the effect that the winner of a competition organised by a Pierrot Company would be given a four months' engagement. I entered and managed to secure first place. During the following season I appeared in no fewer than three capacities—that of vocalist, comedian, and conductor of the orchestra.

It happened in this way. One night, a few minutes before the opening overture, the conductor's

wife came round with the disconcerting news that her husband had been taken seriously ill. The manager was in a terrible state. "I would give a thousand pounds for a good conductor," he groaned. "It's mine," I broke in, and within three minutes I was in front of the orchestra, and there I stayed for three weeks until the conductor returned. As a result of this I later received an appointment in Blackpool in the same capacity, but not my thousand pounds!

Later in the season the comedian fell ill, and once again I was called upon to fill the gap. I had the assistance of a red nose, in which was planted a diamond, but I knew my tap-dancing was too weak to put over, so with the assistance of the musical director and the drummer I worked out an effective gagging stunt so that when I broke badly I blamed the orchestra. In this way we completed the season.

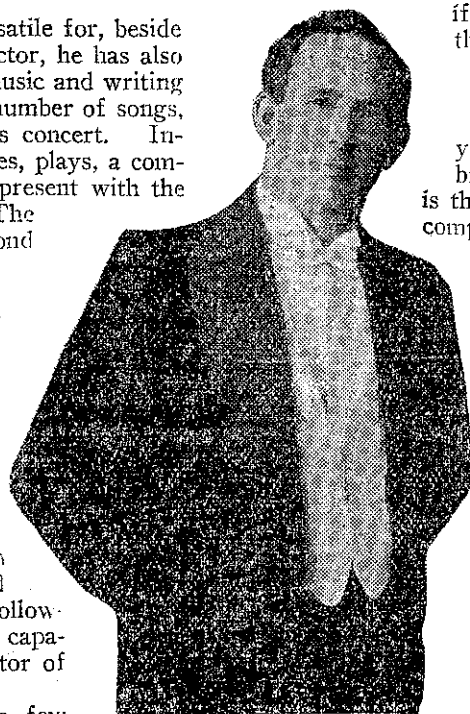
This little occurrence made me thankful I had included conducting in my course of music at the Royal College. I studied under the late Sir Frederick Cowen, and I well remember one occasion when I was very neatly reproved by him. He was watching me conduct a selection from "Il Pagliacci" and when we came to a point where the clarinet takes up the melody this instrumentalist did not respond. I asked him why he didn't, but before he could answer Sir Frederick broke in with, "Why didn't you give him the cue to come in? Any fool can wag a stick. It takes a conductor to give instrumentalists their correct cue." I didn't make that mistake again.

Because of my long association with the stage I am often asked if I miss a flesh-and-blood audience when I appear before the microphone. Well, yes and no.

ON the stage it is wonderful to feel an audience come up to you, as it were, if your work is good. This you miss in broadcasting, but the thing that has always helped me greatly is the advice given me by a London teacher. "When the accompaniment opens," he said, "sing mentally until you commence vocally, and you will never fail to get the correct atmosphere with your audience." By taking the same idea into the studio, you immediately visualise your audience and play up to them.

I have one quarrel with broadcasting, however, and that is this: You cannot hear your own efforts as listeners hear them, and you feel that if you could they could be improved. I say this because often I hear people I know personally performing over the air—people who have quite good voices, but who, because of some particular quality in their singing do not broadcast at all well. The microphone is not equally kind to everyone.

And so some day I hope broadcasting stations will each have some kind of recording device so that artists can listen to their own voices.



Edwin Dennis.