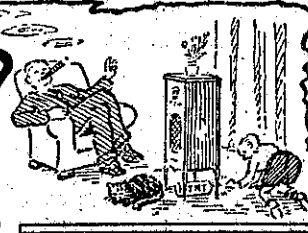


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Wellington Competitions Helped Many On Road To Fame

Marie Ney, Thurza Rogers, Ngaire Phipson and Harold Whittle Started in N.Z.

When one looks back to the early days of the Wellington Competitions Society, and reviews the names of some of those who made their first appearances behind the footlights under the aegis of the society, it is surprising to learn how many have risen to success in song, music, drama, or the ballet, says "The Dominion."

There are doubtless many Wellingtonians who will remember Marie Fix, now known as Marie Ney, a well-known London actress. She was a pupil of Mr. J. M. Clark, now in Auckland, and had many successes at the Wellington Competitions. Miss Helen Gardner, vocalist and elocutionist, has delighted New Zealand audiences with her work, and is now teaching dramatic art. Thurza Rogers, who was a popular dancer at the festivals, now holds a prominent position in London, and provides the ballets for many of the leading London theatres. She was premiere danseuse to Pavlova and Adele Genee. Doris Symes, Wanganui, who has figured prominently in the festivals, is now a successful actress in musical comedy in London and the provinces. She made a great hit in "Lilac Time," and once took the contralto part in "Rigoletto" at a day's notice.

Mr. Culford Bell, a prominent teacher in Auckland, Betty Purdom (now

Mrs. Culford Bell), Cecile Haines, the great child reciter of 1912, who went on the stage and is following a successful career in London to-day, Baxter Buckley, the brilliant pianist and pupil of Rubenstein, who won the 80-guinea piano at the first festival in 1911, Mr. E. Casey, now assistant general manager of New Zealand Railways, winner of impromptu and prepared speeches in 1911, were associated with the days when the society established itself. Miss Millie Knight is now a prominent lieder singer in England, and paid a visit to New Zealand five or six years ago. Miss Jean McLachlan (now Mrs. Braid) is one of the leading teachers of Scottish dancing in New Zealand, and adjudicates at festivals.

Lionel Inch went on the stage in America. Ailsa Nicol and Nellie Amies are both now in London. Thelma McKenzie, and Ngaire Phipson are both on the American stage. Mary Cooley (now Mrs. Craig McKenzie) is well known in literature and drama.

Madge Shearer is now Mrs. C. G. Kirk, of Nelson. Her husband adjudicated last year. All these names recall memories of outstanding performances at festivals of years ago.

Others who have made advances in their professions of businesses include Miss Kioere King, of the Christchurch Repertory Club, Mr. Byron Brown, who won the dramatic and elocution championships in 1913, is now adjudicator at festivals, Mr. Bernard Beebe, of Christchurch, for some years with Mr. Allan Wilkie's Shakespearean company, and also a member of the Irish Players, Mr. Frank Charlton, now on the operatic stage in Sydney, Miss Gwen Shepherd, formerly known on the air as "Aunt Gwen," Mrs. Ivo Symes, of Wanganui, Dr. D. N. Isaacs, president of the Savage Club, Mr. Vryn Evans, now president of the Competitions Society, Miss Phyllis Gribben, Auckland, Mr. Barton Ginger, an old favourite in Dickens impersonations, and Anita Winkel.

Among other past competitors are Mr. H. H. Cornish, barrister and professor at Victoria College, Mr. O. C. Mazengarb, Mr. C. A. L. Treadwell, Miss Myra Olegg, Mr. J. Knowsley, now studying dancing in America and London, Mr. H. F. Wood and Mr. Norman Aitken, joint owners of the noted race-horse Autopay, and both well known in entertainment circles in Wellington.

Such references would not be complete without the name of Mr. Harold Whittle, who for ten years was the official accompanist to the society. He has accompanied such stars as Dame Melba, Madame Albani, Cisneros, Paul Dufault, and Giel. He left Wellington for Australia four or five years ago, and is now in London.