

Giving The Great Australian Adjective An Airing

Pungent Sketch in "Honi Soit": Ernest Rolls' Revue Company Due in Wellington

(By Our Theatre Critic)

"The Frenchest thing outside Paris" was the way that the Australian papers described Ernest Rolls' revue, "Honi Soit"—and Aucklanders who saw the show are willing to believe it. But there was one little sketch that smelled strongly of Australia. Let's describe it. The scene is a homely fireside, with dear old granny and the inevitable piece of knitting. Enter the bright young grand-daughter. "Hello, granny, how are you?" "— awful," is the dear old soul's reply.

AUCKLAND looked sideways at it—and grinned. One daily paper described the sketch as "in questionable taste," while a weekly spoke of "Honi Soit" as "Charles Norman putting over the great Australian adjective and getting away with it."

The company opened in Auckland a few weeks ago, and is due in Wellington next Saturday night with "Bright Side Up"—the first of several shows. Ernest Rolls is one of those producers who keeps a close eye on the public's likes and dislikes—and hands out theatrical fare accordingly. His shows are always bright, well dressed and modern—no black-faced comedians or "Fireman, save my chee-ild" sort of melodrama for Mr. Rolls.

Charles Norman, the principal comedian, is as different from George Wallace and Syd Beck as cheese from chalk—but he's every bit as funny. Most New Zealanders will remember him in one of the principal comedy roles in "Rio Rita"—the part played in the film (at present being rescreened in New Zealand) by Woolsey, of the famous comedy duo. But perhaps we should have first mentioned Jennie Benson, a bright English comedienne, who carries a lot of the show on her shoulders. Next is Rene Riano, a talented girl who is well known in America and England. Colin Crane, who may be remembered by older theatre-goers as a member of the Dick Henderson Vaudeville Company, is with the company, and so is Maie Baird, who has been one of J. C. Williamson's principal dancers for a number of years. Miss Baird will be remembered in their lavish pantomimes that the firm brought to New Zealand at regular intervals a few years ago.

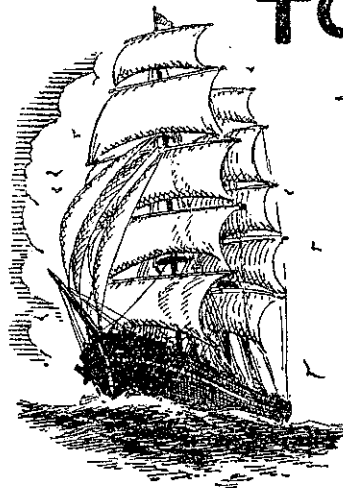
The dancing is a feature of the show and the Australian ballet of beautiful girls is one of the not inconsiderable reasons for the company's successful seasons in Australian cities. Several revues are being presented in the larger New Zealand towns, and each one pays strict attention to the essentials for shows of this kind—speed, colour and music. The Frank Nell company earned something of a reputation for itself by the speed with which one act succeeded another. Ernest Rolls's show will maintain that reputation.

Of "Bright Side Up," the revue with which the company opens its Wellington season, the newspapers in the Dominion have grown enthusiastic.

One Auckland critic described it as "A gorgeously mounted production which was characterised by more verve, vivacity and attractiveness than any other musical play ever staged in New Zealand. From the rise of the curtain the fun jumps to top speed, and it never flags for a moment in the ensuing three hours' rush of revues, sketches, song scenes, dance specialties and striking ensembles."

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