

Festivals of New Zealand Music, Christchurch, 1916 and 1918

Paper Presented to the New Zealand Musicological Society, Christchurch, 2018¹

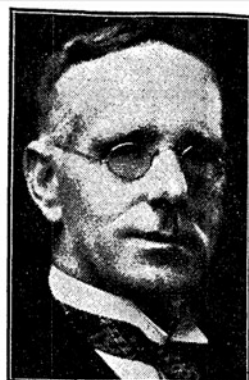
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Detail from University of Canterbury, Macmillan Brown Archives

In 2017, Francis Yap and Joanna Szczepinski introduced the New Zealand Musicological Society to the work of the Christchurch musician, Arthur Lilly, and his work *Life* with its strong association with World War 1.² They discussed Lilly's background, his immediate connections to the war, the score and the work's performance in Christchurch by the Royal Christchurch Musical Society in November 1930.³ The work had, however, had its debut performance in 1916 as

part of the first Festival of New Zealand Music, Christchurch.⁴ This was the first of two festivals designed “for the encouragement of New Zealand music” and it is these festivals that are now to be further examined.



Press, 6 October, 1932

Arthur Lilly (1882-1960) settled in Christchurch after his return from studies at the Royal Academy of Music during which he obtained the Associate of the Royal College of Organists. He took on a variety of church music roles and also established himself as a teacher of piano, organ, and harmony. From his early teaching years he also promoted local composition classes where he hoped “by interchanges of ideas, encouragement and a friendly rivalry among members, some talent may be discovered and the way paved to higher works”.⁵

When in early 1916 a Mr Hayward offered a £50 prize for a new national anthem, Lilly suggested that the prize would be better used to help “create a distinctive New Zealand ‘style’ of music by New Zealand born composers.”⁶ In the same letter he went on to say “There is a lot of splendid talent among New Zealanders but it is being stifled. The time is ripe for its acknowledgement and encouragement”. In 1914 he had encouraged the Canterbury Society of Musicians to offer an annual prize for composition.⁷

Lilly himself had been exploring his own compositional style and ideas. The previous year he had organised the performance of his nine movement cantata, *Christmas Joy*, for soprano and tenor soloists, chorus and orchestra. The forces required to perform *Life* were even larger, and Lilly recognised the need to create some type of support structure to garner the necessary resources and public support.

So it was that the Society for the Encouragement of New Zealand Music was formed and in September 1916 a Festival Committee established. It had as its Chair Mr Henry Holland, the Mayor of Christchurch whose enthusiastic support of the Festivals continued throughout their existence. The Governor-General, the Earl of Liverpool agreed to become patron, and the Committee consisted of many of the leading figures in Christchurch music. As well as Lilly, it included John Bradshaw, Professor of Music at Canterbury University College, Madame Alice Gower Burns, a leading singer, and Alfred Bunz, conductor of the

Christchurch Orchestral Society.⁸ There was involvement by members of the Christchurch Professional Musicians Society and other members of the Christchurch Orchestral Society, including the lawyer and City Councillor Henry Loughnan. The dates for the first series of concerts were set for December that year and any profits were to be contributed to the Patriotic Fund.

These concerts were far from the first to highlight New Zealand music, not even the first in Christchurch. The 1895 New Zealand Exhibition held in Christchurch included a New Zealand concert which proved so popular that some intending attendees were turned away due to lack of space.⁹ The Exhibition's Programme Committee selected a programme consisting "entirely of pieces by New Zealand composers, sung and played by New Zealanders,"¹⁰ which on that occasion included Alfred Hill, Sydney Hoben and R. H. (Harry) Rossiter.

So what was the nature of the 1916 and 1918 Christchurch Festivals for the Encouragement of New Zealand Music and who were the composers who featured in it?



The 1916 Festival season consisted of 3 concerts. The first, on December 11th was made up entirely of works by Lilly – as well as *Life* his *Soldiers Requiem*, *Christmas Joy* cantata and choral work *God is our hope* were performed. This programme was repeated for the third concert on December but the reception was not positive.¹¹ The audiences were small, attributed in part to the ‘unfestive’ nature of the times remembering that 1916 had involved New Zealand forces in the devastating Somme campaign. Newspaper critics soundly criticised the programme being all the work of Lilly, and were not generally kind to the works themselves or the performances. Lilly responded that he was required to fill the breach as the works by other composers were not ready in the timeframe required, to which the Editor of the Press commented, that this was a further sign of Lilly being a ‘young man in a hurry’.¹²

The second 1916 concert seems not to have suffered the same response. Consisting of a number of smaller works, it included a string quartet and song by Alfred Hill, songs by Alice Forrester and Louis Benzon and a repeat of Lilly’s *Life* and *Soldiers Requiem*. Despite the lack of popular success, the concerts did stimulate some discussion about the nature of New Zealand music and how best to promote its development with various writers to the newspapers arguing there was nothing specifically of “New Zealand” in the works presented while another saw the potential of some of the songs which included Maori elements. That same writer also suggested that the promotion of New Zealand music was significantly the responsibility of performers who should be including New Zealand works in their concerts, rather than having concerts dedicated to New Zealand compositions, which could give the impression they could not stand alongside compositions from other countries.¹³

Despite the very limited success the Committee continued to meet and decided to hold another series of concerts in 1918.

The programmes for the second festival was very different through the increased involvement of composers other than Lilly. The process for inclusion was transparent: expressions of interest for inclusion were called for and there was also a competition for poets to provide the text for an intercessory hymn, which would then be set to music with the best setting being included in the programme.¹⁴ Lilly also reminded the Committee that their role was educational and that they should not expect to discover masterpieces.¹⁵

The Committee drew up a list of “New Zealand” composers who might be approached to contribute something to the Festival. Several of these composers had New Zealand ties but were neither New Zealand-born nor New Zealand resident so stretched the original definition of what might be considered New Zealand music. Lilly also approached his former teacher in England, Frederick Bridge, for a work that might be performed.

Charles Willeby responded by providing a copy of his latest song, *Allah*. Willeby, or as he was earlier known, Willeby-Hawthorne, came to New Zealand with his

mother and step-father as a child. He received his early musical training in Dunedin and worked for a time in Wellington before leaving permanently for England in the 1890s, making a successful career as a songwriter, music critic and writer. Frederick and George Clutsam, while Australian born, also lived for part of their childhood in Dunedin. George (1866-1951) went on to have a successful career in the musical theatre, his most popular works being his arrangement of the music for the musical *Lilac Time* and the song, *Ma curly headed babby*” His brother Frederick, settled in Australia then England and patented a number of changes to the piano mechanism, including a circular keyboard.

Frank Hutchens provided a manuscript of his *Trio in f minor*. Born in Leeston near Christchurch, he had left New Zealand at the age of 13 to study piano at the Royal Academy in London. He returned to New Zealand for a short period between 1911 and 1913 but after that became a key figure in the Australian musical world, being foundation professor of music at the New South Wales Conservatorium and remaining there for 50 years.

Lilly also wrote to his former teacher, Sir Frederick Bridge, asking if he had a work that he would agree to sending for inclusion in the festival. Bridge obliged by sending his 1913 intercessory choral anthem *God and his good cause*.

The results of these initiatives produced a much broader range of material for two concerts in the 1918 Festival, with the programmes being made up of a larger number of smaller works by different composers, rather than fewer, larger scale works.

The first night’s, August 6th, programme included songs, orchestral works, choral works and a piano trio. Those with works included in addition to the names already mentioned included J. C. Bradshaw, Bryant Williams, Alfred Hill, Winifred Hawcridge, Katherine Foster, H. Johnston, Robert Horne, Mai Burnes-Loughnan, Alice Forester and J. Sinclair.

I don’t think it is being unrealistic to expect that only a very few, if any, of these names would now be recognised as being part of the corpus of New Zealand composers. Alfred Hill is the name that you may have been expecting to see, and was represented by one work. Of the lesser-known composers, the names that I want to explore a little more are those of Alice Forrester, Robert Horne, Mai Burnes-Loughnan and Katherine Foster.

Festival of New Zealand Music, 6 August, 1918
Programme

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| 1. Empire Intercessory Hymn (words by Jessie Mackay) | J.C. Bradshaw |
| 2. March prelude for full orchestra "Young Belgium) | Bryant Williams |
| 3. Song – Allah | Charles Willeby |
| 4. In paradise – choral work with orchestra | Arthur Lilly |
| 5. Ballad from 'Hinemoa' | Alfred Hill |
| 6. Autumn winds – 4 part sketch for voices | Winifred Hawcridge |
| 7. The seas hath its pearls – song | Frederick Clutsam |
| 8. If all my desires – song | George Clutsam |
| 9. a. The weka – school song | Mrs K. Foster |
| b. A song of New Zealand – school song | Arthur Lilly |
| 10. Empire Intercessory hymn no. 2 (Wds G. Miller) | H. M. Johnston |
| 11. a. A fragment – song | R.A. Horne |
| b. White horses – song | R.A. Horne |
| 12. God and our good cause | Frederick Bridge |
| 13. Trio in f minor for piano, violin and 'cello | Frank Hutchens |
| 14. a. The gift of India – song | Mai Burnes-Loughnan |
| b. The call of Spring – song | Mai Burnes-Loughnan |
| 15. Maoriland song cycle | Alice Forrester |
| 16. Overture in F major for full orchestra | J. T. Sinclair |

Alice Forrester might be more familiar under one of her other names as she married three times and produced works under each or those names as well as her maiden name. As Alice Rowley she was one of the first two B.Mus. graduates from the University of New Zealand, graduating in 1901. She struggled to get her works published and noted in a letter to Sir George Grey that the overseas publishers suggested she concentrate on lighter works as there was a limited market for larger-scale works.¹⁶ As Alice McLean and later Alice Forrester and Alice McKay, she continued to compose, mostly songs, many of which were performed at local fund-raising concerts. She had a particular interest in music of Caledonian heritage and also in setting New Zealand poets, including her sister-in-law, the well-established poet Jessie McKay. While few of her later songs were published a number of the manuscripts have been preserved and are part of the New Zealand music manuscript collection at the Alexander Turnbull Library. As well as first three songs from her *Maoriland* Song cycle at the first concert, her vocal quintet *When I call upon thee* was sung at the second concert.



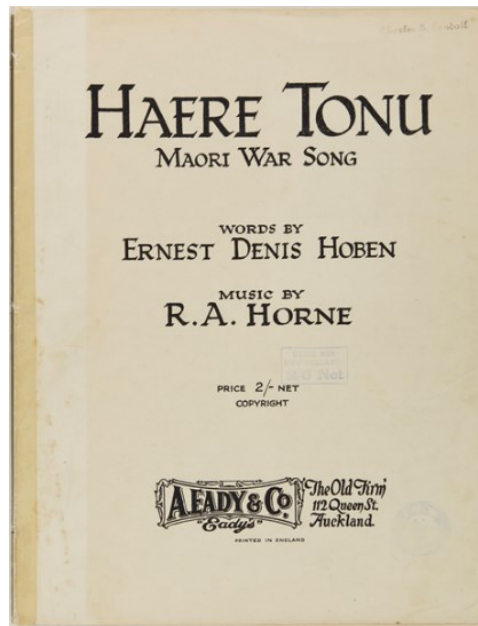
Standish and Preece, photo.
MRS D. McLEAN.

Alice McLean nee Forrester

Cyclopedia of New Zealand, Canterbury Provincial District, p821

Robert Adam Horne was born in Tasmania in 1865. He was composing dance music and songs from an early age and his waltz *Tasma* won first prize at the Tasmanian Exhibition in 1891-1892. Horne and his second wife moved to New Zealand with Horne initially working as a piano tuner in Southland before rising to be manager of the Dresden, later Bristol Piano Christchurch store. His musical activities included accompanying at concerts, conducting and composing – he was a member of the Christchurch Professional Musicians Society and had a number of works performed by the Christchurch Orchestral Society, including the orchestral item *Corisande* which was performed in the second of the 1918 Festival of Music concerts. Philip Jane has noted that there was an established collaboration between Horne and Lilly with Lilly undertaking the orchestral arrangements of Horne's melodies, and this was the case with this entr'acte.¹⁷ The work was performed not only in Christchurch but by orchestral societies in Auckland, Palmerston North, Wellington and Greymouth. Presumably Horne had the ability to score for full orchestra as he was awarded a special prize for his overture *Aotearoa* in the 1940 Centennial Music Competition that was won by Douglas Lilburn's *Drysdale Overture*.

Over 15 of Horne's songs and dances were published, many in Australia. His most well-known song in New Zealand is without doubt *Haere Tonu*, written in 1916 to words by Ernest Hoben, brother of the pianist Sydney Hoben. This was not the only work of Horne's to be recorded – his *Ave Verum*, *Jours Passes* and *Loreta* were all recorded. No copies of his orchestral works appear to have survived, although there is a band set in existence for his *BB March*.



Mary Ethel Burnes-Loughnan, or as she was usually known "Mai", was born in Australia but lived her early life in France. Her musical training is unknown but soon after she migrated to Christchurch with her family there are references to her accompanying singers on the piano. She trained as a nurse but after a short time opened a tea kiosk in Wellington along with a colleague.¹⁸ Shortly after this she returned to the South Island to marry Henry Hamilton Loughnan, a leading lawyer in Christchurch and a keen amateur cellist.

Burnes-Loughnan was a tireless supporter of various charities and often hosted fundraising concerts, as well as acting as accompanist. Four of her songs were published by Allan's in Melbourne during the 1910s, with one, *Ships that passed in the night* was also produced in an American edition. Two of her other unpublished songs, *Commandeered*, and *Morning at your window smiles*, were performed at the second 1918 concert.

Katherine Foster nee Young was born and educated in Edinburgh. She studied at the Edinburgh Educational Institution where Sir Alexander McKenzie was musical superintendent. She came with her family to New Zealand in 1883, married Arthur Young and settled in Timaru. She was a strong advocate for the Trinity College examination system and was the local secretary for some years before moving to Christchurch. In her early years in New Zealand, she published a patriotic song, *Our boys return*, referring to the Boer War. One reviewer noted the inclusion of Maori language in the chorus although not all reactions were as positive. As well as piano she taught singing and was had a particular interest in school singing which she felt was not as valued as it should be. The song included in the programme is *Weka* which was performed by a group of 50 school children at both of the 1918 concerts. After the Festival, Foster had a number of copies of the song printed and distributed to local schools.

The second 1918 Festival concert a few days later had a mostly different programme, adding C. Murray-Gibbes, Harry Hiscocks, G. Kennedy and Sydney Hoben to the roll call of New Zealand composers included. The press reception was more supportive than for the first series of concerts two years earlier, within somewhat muted expectations.

Summing up, we could not expect to encounter marked features of distinction and originality in all the works submitted in so large a programme, but enough has been said to establish the fact that the productions included not a few specimens of skill and talent worthy of our admiration and respect.¹⁹

Despite the limited success, the Committee remained optimistic in its outlook. A meeting in May 1919 noted a deficit of £40 but was confident this could be obtained through appeal. No further Festival series eventuated.

Did the Festival have any long-term impacts and were the composers featured heard of in other circumstances? Certainly, an article in the Otago Daily Times applauded the aims of the Festivals and called for greater encouragement of local composers so that they did not have to leave to receive recognition.²⁰ One of the tangible outcomes might be seen in the range of songs chosen in the New Zealand selection at the various Musical Competitions – Horne, Forrester and Burnes-Loughnan all featured over the next decade. The radio station 3YA featured concerts of New Zealand music which included many of the works performed at the Festivals. It isn't really possible to say whether this would have happened without the profile of Festival but, even if for short amount of time, amateur and semi-professional New Zealand composers were given an opportunity to hear their works performed in a concert setting, and the idea of New Zealand music was presented to a local audience. This can surely have continued to build the environment needed for the success of succeeding generations of composers.

¹ Some minor amendments have been made to the version read at the Conference.

² The outcome of this research was subsequently published as: Szczepanski, Joanna Z. and Yapp, Francis. "Music in honour of a First World War soldier: *Life by Arthur Lilly*". *Records of the Canterbury Museum*, 2017 Vol. 31: p. 127–138.

³ ROYAL MUSICAL SOCIETY'S CONCERT? STAR (CHRISTCHURCH), 20 NOVEMBER 1930, PAGE 5

⁴ MUSIC FESTIVAL. LYTTTELTON TIMES, 13 DECEMBER 1916, PAGE 8

⁵ Page 10 Advertisements Column 3. PRESS, 27 JANUARY 1909, PAGE 10

⁶ NEW ZEALAND "NATIONAL ANTHEM." PRESS, 12 APRIL 1916, PAGE 8

⁷ Press, 10 March 1914, p4 – Annual meeting

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- ⁸ NEW ZEALAND MUSIC. PRESS, 15 SEPTEMBER 1916, PAGE 9
- ⁹ LT 14 Oct 1895.
- ¹⁰ Press, 8 Oct 1895, p5
- ¹¹ MUSIC FESTIVAL. LYTTTELTON TIMES, 12 DECEMBER 1916, PAGE 8
- ¹² THE MUSICAL FESTIVAL. PRESS, 16 DECEMBER 1916, PAGE 6
- ¹³ Mimes & Movies. STAR (CHRISTCHURCH), 15 DECEMBER 1916, PAGE 2
- ¹⁴ Page 1 Advertisements Column 8. LYTTTELTON TIMES, 23 AUGUST 1917, PAGE 1
- ¹⁵ FESTIVAL OF MUSIC. PRESS, 5 MARCH 1918, PAGE 2
- ¹⁶ Letter from Alice Rowley to Governor Sir George Grey, GLNZ M14.1. Auckland Libraries, Sir George Grey Special Collections.
- ¹⁷ AN HISTORICAL SURVEY OF THE ESTABLISHMENT OF AN ORCHESTRAL TRADITION IN CHRISTCHURCH TO 1939, p165
- ¹⁸ Titbits and Twaddle
Observer, Volume XV, Issue 870, 31 August 1895, p11
- ¹⁹ FESTIVAL OF NEW ZEALAND MUSIC. PRESS, 7 AUGUST 1918, PAGE 8
- ²⁰ ODT 24 August, 1918. Musical Art in New Zealand