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# G&T GAZETTE

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Established 1995. Incorporating the *Edison Echo*

October/November/December

2011



Editorial:

It's not often in my capacity as your editor that I have been privileged to bring before you some my knowledge as a photo historian. So grasping the opportunity with both hands here is some information which may lead you to understand what I've said.

The photographs on the front and back cover of this issue of the G&T Gazette were made by a professional photographer called Stan P. Andrew who operated a studio in Willis street from about 1905 to when he sold his business in the 1950s after depositing with the Turnbull Library some of his special negatives.

His firm was known for its high society clientele, including local dignitaries and visiting celebrities. It is my opinion that the photograph of Clara Butt was made in the 1920s. Careful retouching on her face has removed any unwanted aging lines, so don't be put off by her youthful appearance as she was in her late 40s when this was taken. Similarly, his portrait of the 'ballerina suprema' Anna Pavlova was made during her 1926 tour of New Zealand.

For a photographer of his standing business specializing in celebrity portraiture would have been a fairly lean existence. As if to add salt to these privations, a picture book of Pavlova in my local library several years ago contained Andrew's photograph with no credit!

How Andrew managed to charm Dame Clara into posing in this fashion remains untold. I wonder if that as a celebrity, she made a habit of this feature with every country she visited? I doubt very much if local Maori would sanction such flippant treatment of their precious heirlooms unless they saw merit in her appearance in their midst as a reciprocal gesture of friendship and understanding. I do know that when she and her husband stopped over in Rotorua she was afforded a special greeting by local Maori, so in all probability her appearance in this fashion may have caused no indignation with our local Whanau.

Bill Main

## DAME CLARA BUTT

Des Wilson writes about our feature artist for 2012.

2012 having been declared by the Scratchy Record Club to be "The Year of Clara Butt" there should be little difficulty in finding records to play. After several decades of sifting through piles of 78's in second-hand shops it slowly dawned upon me that the reason that some artists' records seemed to turn up so often was that they were frequent visitors to this country where, no doubt, copies of their latest records were available for sale in the foyer during the intervals of their concerts, just as still happens today. Such artists as Fraser Gange and Alfred O'Shea spring to mind, but especially Clara Butt who toured here four times, always with her husband Kennerly Rumford. Their first visit was in 1907-08. Then there was a world tour between 1912 and 1914 which took in Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the United States. The Rumfords were back again in 1919-1920 and one final time in 1925. It is amazing now to think of the sort of tours they undertook. Today an internationally famous singer is likely to fly into Auckland, give one concert, and fly out the next day. But Clara and her husband really did go on a tour and sang in many centres which would now not have heard a famous artist in many decades, places like Blenheim, Oamaru and Invercargill

You can get an idea of the extent of these tours by examining Clara Butt's discography. She made no records between July 1912 and November 1914, and there's another gap between July 1925 and September 1926. A long time to be removed also from the concert scene in her native country but no doubt when she returned from these marathon tours she was hardly a forgotten figure.

A little biography now. First, she was not born on the 1st of February 1873 which gave rise to the nice story of her being born 12 days before Chaliapin and 24 days before Caruso. Recent research has shown that, in fact, the year was 1872 so there's one anecdote we have to put to rest. After study at the Royal Academy of Music in London she made her debut at the Royal Festival Hall in Sullivan's "Golden Legend" with Emma Albani, Three days later she sang the role of Orfeo in Gluck's opera in a student performance. This was a personal triumph for her but it was to be her only operatic role. Her great height (more than six feet) pretty well precluded her from the stage and her enormous fame was to come as a concert and recording artist. About 1897 she met and began often to sing with baritone Robert Kennerly Rumford (1870-1957) whom she married in 1900. She had three sisters who also sang (in fact she paid for their tuition) and they all adopted Hook (their mother's maiden name) as their professional name. Ethel Hook can

be found on several Vocalion issues.

In her private life she had much sorrow to bear, Her elder son died whilst still at school and the younger shot himself. During the nineteen-twenties she was stricken with cancer of the spine, but her strong faith kept her working. She made many of her later records seated in a wheelchair. She was an ardent Christian Scientist and occasionally delivered a sermon in the Albert Hall, Dressed in silver sequins, she glittered, as one observer put it, like a giant mackerel.

Clara Butt gave the first performance of Elgar's "Sea Pictures" at the Norwich Festival in 1899, and at a later performance she heard his march "Pomp and Circumstance No. 1". "What a tune!" she exclaimed to Elgar, "Why don't you write a song for me, and use that as a refrain?" And so was born "Land of Hope and Glory"

Clara was a prolific recorder, there being a total of 445 sides, but many were unissued. Her recording career started oddly with just one title, a duet with Kennerly Rumford, recorded in January 1899. The fact that only one number was attempted at this session suggests that it may have been more in the nature of a test which turned out so well that the record was put on the market. But it was another ten years before the Rumfords would record again and from then (July 1909) there were regular sessions for the Gramophone Company, including two in Berlin, until the last in March 1915. After this she was exclusively a Columbia artist, from 1917 until her very last recordings, two sides made in Tokyo, in February 1931. For the gramophonist, playing Clara Butt's records poses a real dilemma in that they play at a bewildering variety of speeds ranging from 74 right up to 86. Although Columbia used to print "Speed 80" on their labels this can not be relied on. It's the earlier Columbias, in particular, which often play well above 78. Perversely by the time we reach about 1930 we find that most sides play below 78. For information on correct speeds consult The Record Collector Vol 44, No 2 which has a definitive discography.

Clara Butt died on January 23, 1936, in the same week as Rudyard Kipling and George V. To many people at the time it seemed like the end of an era. Finally, I wonder if she is still speaking to us from beyond the grave and, perhaps, planning a comeback. If you Google the Ticketmaster site you will find the information "We currently do not have any tickets on sale for Dame Clara Butt".

## BOOK REVIEW BY COLIN MORRIS

(Reproduced from **New Zealand Books** -a quarterly review Spring 2011)

### **Blue Smoke: The Lost Dawn of New Zealand Popular Music 1918-1964**

by Chris Bourke

Auckland University Press \$59.99

To anybody under the age of 25, it might come as a shock to read Chris Bourke's book and discover that once upon a time records were not manufactured in New Zealand, and that the fragile imported 78 rpms were chosen, on your behalf, from a catalogue, to be delivered some months later. It might also shock anybody, over the age of 35 to know there are no longer any record stores, discounting the Red Sheds or a slight detour into Palmerston North, between the Wellington CBD and Whanganui. Of course, we are now living in an age of such technological advance that it's possible to envisage an industry where we might, in future, dial a telephone service and order music to be piped into our homes at our Convenience.

It pays to keep these facts in mind as you plough through what is arguably the last great book on the subject of the formation and players of the first wave of New Zealand music; such is the breadth and scope of Bourke's book, it would seem unlikely this subject and period will ever be re-searched as thoroughly again.

Blue Smoke is an extraordinary body of work, lovingly curated over a couple of years, chock-full of anecdotes, facts and figures, stunning photos from both private collections and those of the National library, and, most of all, insights into how New Zealanders lived and worked. It interweaves the politics of the day and the notable events that shaped the country - from the Napier earthquake, WWII, the 1951 waterfront lockout and beyond.

It is also a voyage of discovery, each chapter covering a specific decade. It's a common fallacy among hacks and historians that popular music can be corralled into single decades. They label the 50s as rock 'n' roll, the 60s as the Beatles and psychedelia, the 70s as disco and punk, and so on. But a musical style doesn't just stop at the decade's end: it evolves all the time. Dance music turns slowly into jazz, country and western moves towards Americana. In fact Bourke, who has a degree in musical history from Victoria University, goes to great lengths to debunk this myth.

Starting with the 1920s, each chapter chronicles a decade as it slowly morphs into the next, and the music and technology evolve against the history of the day. The best of these cover WWII's Maori battalion, the "invasion" of American troops (along with nylons and candy bars, they brought plenty of new sounds with their collections of 78s and the exclusive armed forces V-Discs), and then the introduction of television. The latter effectively killed off the dance bands but opened the door to a more visual brand of entertainment.

And radio, yes the dear old New Zealand Broadcasting Corporation, was moulded on auntie BBC. The wearing of ties while broadcasting was compulsory; the banning of even the most innocuous tracks for fear of a public backlash or the influence of the moral campaigners these are mirror images of what occurred in Old Blighty.

At the heart of this book, of course, is the story of the song "Blue Smoke", its composer Ruru Karaitiana and singer Pixie Williams. Like much in life, "Blue Smoke" had a magical and fraught birth. Karaitiana sailed with the 2nd Maori Battalion on the *Aquitania* from Wellington Harbour in 1940. A sergeant remarked on the smoke from the ship's funnel going right back to New Zealand, and in that instant Karaitiana, a dance band pianist from Dannevirke, heard the song in his head and wrote the lyrics in half an hour.

It's to Bourke's credit that he doesn't jump ahead to the recording of "Blue Smoke". There are many chapters in between, but all the time he is sowing the seeds of anticipation for that historic day.

When the time comes, it seems the song will never be recorded. Technical problems and the absence of singer Pixie Williams on one particular day look likely to scupper the project. But a small team of dedicated people, and as always the infectious Karaitiana, pursued the dream, and on 26 June 1949 "Blue Smoke", along with The Bill Crowe Orchestra and Ken Avery singing his own composition "Paekakariki", became the first two recordings wholly pressed in New Zealand's fledgling industry and issued on the TANZA label. The acronym stood for To Assist New Zealand Artists.

But was it the first to be recorded here? To find out, you will have to read between the lines. Certainly I'm not going to spoil the party.

In June 2011, a complete album by Pixie Williams was released in New Zealand by Ode Records. Regrettably, Bourke was unable to include a CD with the book because of time and copyright constraints. But that release, and another later in 2011 of a CD collection of recordings by Auckland's famous Stebbing Recording Centre of music from the same period, will go a long way to completing the jigsaw pieces that form the history of this country's musical heritage.

I recommend listening to the music while you read the book. You can also catch podcasts of Bourke's radio programmes on the subject, starting Sunday 2th August 7pm on Radio New Zealand.

Do I have favourite parts of the book? Yes. One chapter might have been titled "Sex! Infidelity! Murder! Music!" Seems that one Eric Mareo, a conductor of grand opera, pantomime and West End shows in England, arrived in 1933 to major newspaper headlines and fanfare. Within a week he had hired some 45 musicians to play in his orchestra. On stage he was a showman, with tinsel-covered baton, and his name emblazoned in flowers. And he could be seen strutting down Auckland's Queen Street flamboyantly dressed, with cane, white gloves and a long cigarette holder. But he also brought much needed work to some of the country's biggest and brightest.

Sadly, Mareo caught his wife Thelma in bed with the exotic New Zealand dancer Freda Stark, herself infamous for dancing in nothing more than gold glitter and balloons. Thelma then took an overdose, Mareo was

charged with murder, found guilty in two trials and sentenced to hang. After an appeal, he served 12 years in Mt Eden Prison and on his release left with 500 pounds, royalties earned while he was incarcerated. A lurid *New Zealand Herald* headline ran: “Homophobia has no place in the tale of fatal love triangle.”

I’m particularly indebted to Bourke for reintroducing me to many of the characters I’ve been lucky enough to meet in the years I have been employed in the music industry. Ken Avery, who worked at Radio New Zealand on ‘The Terrace’, was a regular at my music shop. I had to call Douglas Lilburn and apologise after a friend alerted me to the fact that he was not dead, as I’d stated in a review. Then there was Ray Harris, doyen of Radio New Zealand’s jazz programmes for 40 years and a dear friend, and Arthur Pearce, some of whose books I still have, and who was a fount of all knowledge when I worked for Polygram Records. His weekly visit to elicit the latest 45s and L.P.s for his radio shows invariably resulted in my acquiring more knowledge. Murdoch Riley and Tony Vercoe at Viking Records, and HMV’s producer Frank Douglas, suddenly become people again on these pages.

Future historians and scholars alike will look back on this book with gratitude; libraries will see it as an essential tool in educating a newer generation; anti plain old-fashioned fans like myself will forever be indebted to Bourke for making such a complex and wide-ranging subject so easy on the eye - just about every page has some kind of illustration.

Looking at the photos of, say, Edgar Randall’s Collegian Band is akin to looking at an old picture of Louis and Lil Armstrong - the tuxedos and bow-ties, the framing of the characters with an eye to the symmetry of their instruments are as much about the photographer’s eye as they are a nod to the greats of the jazz era. So too is the introduction of stories about visiting musical “royalty”: Noel Coward, Artie Shaw and Cole Porter among others. Such anecdotes prevent the book from being merely New Zealand-centric. At the end of the day, music is a world-wide experience and an art form that daily breaks down barriers.

*Blue Smoke* won New Zealand’s *Post Book of the Year* and the *People’s Choice Award* in this year’s *New Zealand Post Book Awards*.



Pixie Williams in 1949, source Karaitiana family and Jim Carter collection.

## THE BUTT-RUMFORD CONCERT A GALLERY IMPRESSION

The visit to Wellington of Madame Clara Butt and her husband, Mr. Kennerley Rumford, with their company is an occasion of great musical interest. Their first concert was given to a numerous audience in the Town Hall last evening. A second is announced for to-morrow evening, and a third for Saturday. Madame Butt and Mr. Rumford are as well known, and have sung so often in public, that they may be described as classical figures in the contemporary musical world. Their merits and defects have been ascertained and assured by a long process of criticism; and there is nothing to add to the settled verdict but an impression of last night's evidence.

Madame Butt is highly gifted. Her singing voice is truly called a magnificent organ. Classed as contralto, it has extraordinary range and remarkable power, with unusual quality in a great portion of its field. Mme Butt's accomplishment as a singer displays her gift with impressive effect. Mr. Kennerley Rumford has a good and sonorous baritone voice, and sings as a finished concert artist. Indeed the concert stage cramps his talent; and time and again last evening he seemed to feel the need of dramatic gesture, as assuredly some of his work demanded it.

The effect of the concert was subject to the condition of the large hall, inappropriate for solo executants, The size of the hall indeed was commensurate with the vocal capacity of Madame Butt, whose notes rang fully and clearly to the distant gallery, though with a natural loss of resonance. But Mr Rumford's voice, to the gallery, sounded sometimes husky, and the strain of carrying it so far was prejudicial to his art. Of the piano and violin solo the gallery could form no just impression. They may have been much more admirable than they seemed.

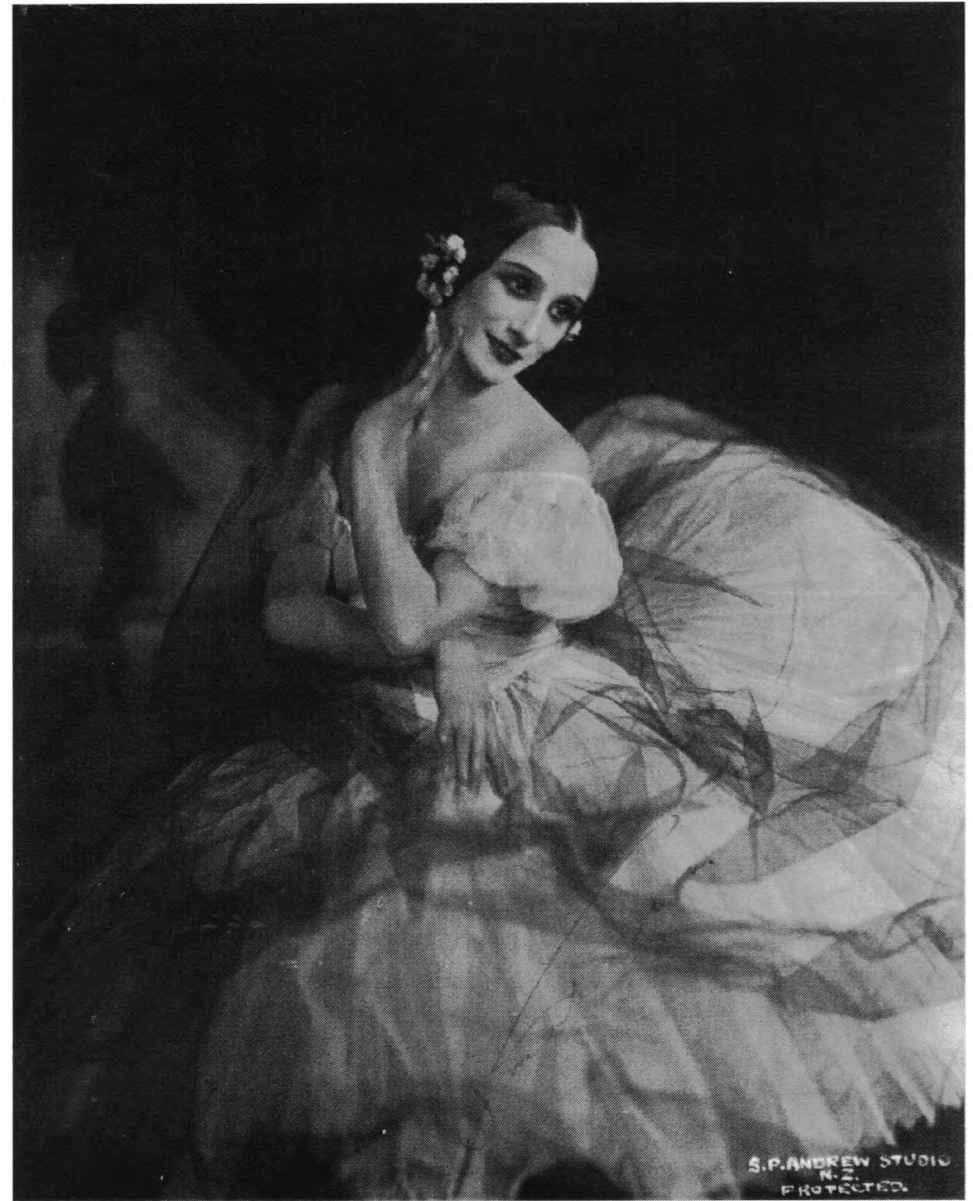
Madame Butt's first contribution to the programme was the aria, excellent in her case for vocal display, "O Don Fatale" from Verdi's opera of "Don Carlos." The natural wonder of her voice did not fail to create its due effect upon the audience. Madam Butt is indeed so far beyond the course that all description fails to make her astonishing volumes of sound appreciated, and she is heard always with a new surprise. The audience applauded warmly, and to the recall of Mme Butt gave a delicate French bal-

lad in which her vocalisation emphasised the clear fullness of her middle notes. The final breathing of the word "L'amour" was really beautiful. In the second part Mme. Butt appealed in turn to the religious, the familiar, and the patriotic sentiment. She sang, with an organ obligato by Mr. J. E. Sykes (whom we hope to hear solo before he leaves us), Little's setting of the hymn, "Abide with me," sonorously and fervidly. For the encores she sang a ballad of a baby, and for a second encore the Scotch song of "My Ain Folk," where to an ear in the gallery she reached her highest point of expression during the evening. Her later duet with Mr. Rumford, Goring Thomas's "Night Hymn at Sea," was at many points admirable; and for this, the final number of the programme, the singers were five times recalled. Mme. Butt, who looked very well indeed, was presented with several gifts of flowers; and the warmth of her reception left no doubt of the great impression she had made upon the audience.

Mr. Rumford had the pleasure of rousing hearers with his first number - Rossini's imperishable "Largo al factotum." He was in fair voice, and sang admirably, giving great satisfaction. For the encores he gave another favourite in different vein. "Du bist wie ein Blume." His later contributions were the Welsh air "All through the Night"; Maud White's setting of Browning's song, "King Charles." and for encore Arthur Somerville's "Little Red Fox," which was very well given and must have been heard to advantage nearer the singer.

The company's pianist is Mr. Frank Merrick, who showed considerable ability. He played in the Town Hall under great disadvantage and only in Brahms' "Romance in F" was it possible for the gallery to gain some glimpse of his true merit. The violinist is Mr. Carl Barre, who also was heard at a loss, and who acquitted himself well in the difficult circumstances. His execution and tone are alike fine, and in "La Ronde des Lutins" he well deserved an encore. Mr. Arthur Godfrey, the accompanist, was led forward by Mme. Butt when acknowledging finally the evenings applause.

It is likely that the second concert will be still more enjoyable than the first, and a partial programme is given in our advertising columns. The exceptional capacity of the company makes attendance inevitable by all lovers of music in Wellington.



The *G&T Gazette* is published quarterly and distributed gratis to friends and associates who attend or share in the interest of a group known as the "Scratchy Record Group". Opinions expressed in the *Gazette* are those of the authors and do not represent the philosophies and beliefs of the SRG. Unsolicited material is welcome. Care with submissions for publication will be exercised, but no responsibility for loss or damage in transit will be accepted. Advertising rates are negotiable. All material is copyrighted. Permission to use anything appearing in the *Gazette* must be cleared in the first instance with the editor William (Bill) Main 93 Burma Road, Wellington - 6035 New Zealand. Telephone (04)971-3535, e-mail <wmain@paradise.net.nz> This edition was proof read and edited by Des Wilson.