

The Manx National Concert of 1934

by Maurice Powell

The January issue of KMJ contained an extract from the *Radio Times* showing details of a 'Programme of Manx National Music' presented by the London Manx Society and broadcast on 18th May 1927. Seven years later, in July 1934, another concert featuring Manx traditional music, albeit on an altogether larger scale, was broadcast from the Palace Coliseum in Douglas. Here is a brief account of what was hailed in the local newspapers as 'a full-blooded Manx National Concert . . . and a great event'.

The concert, one of five events broadcast from different venues at that time, was organised by Charles Fox* at the invitation of the BBC and was broadcast on Sunday 1st July from 'a crowded Palace Coliseum'.** The *Isle of Man Examiner* predicted that '. . . this concert will undoubtedly be the greatest Manx National Concert we have ever heard . . . a treat in store for those who tune in on the North Regional wave . . .'

* See Maurice Powell, *Charles Fox Jr.* manxmusic.com

** Further details of the concert may be found in the *Isle of Man Examiner*, 29.06.1934; the *Mona's Herald*, 03.07.1934 and the *Ramsey Courier*, 06.07.1934.

Harry Wood, the Musical Director of the Palace & Derby Company, was in overall charge of the concert and contributed enormously to its success as he had in January 1897* for the first Grand Concert of Manx National Music following the publication of *Manx National Songs*. Thirty-seven years later he was responsible for orchestrating many of the vocal items, engaging the soloists and the orchestra, and conducting part of the concert.

* See Maurice Powell, *Manxland's King of Music*, Lily Publications, 2018.

The concert commenced at 8.30 pm with the hymn *Onward Christian Soldiers*, followed by the overture to Rossini's *William Tell*, the aria *O Don Fatale* from Verdi's *Don Carlo* sung by Ada Mylchreest, and *When Childer Plays* performed by the Ramsey Ladies Cushag Choir under their conductor Mary Purcell Black.*

* Maurice Powell, *May Purcell*, manxmusic.com.

The Manx, broadcast, part of the evening commenced at 9.05 pm with Haydn Wood's *A Manx Rhapsody* conducted by the composer, the principal guest conductor. J. E. Quayle, 'one of noted Manx musicians',* conducted his arrangement for orchestra of *Oh, what if the fowler my blackbird has taken*, and Haydn Wood, 'who has done a lot of good for us in introducing many of our old tunes', returned to direct a performance of his *Mannin Veen*.

* See Maurice Powell, *John Edward Quayle*, manxmusic.com.

Ada Mylchreest (contralto) sang *Mylecharane* and *Graih my Chree (Love of My Heart)* and *The Battle of Santwat*; John Christian (tenor) sang *Mannin veg villish veen*, *Sooree (A song on Farmer's Daughters (version no. 1))* and *Ny Kirree fo Niaghtey (The Sheep under the Snow)*; Margaret Minay (mezzo-soprano) sang *A Song on Farmer's Daughter (version no. 2, Kiark Catriney maroo)*, *Home (Moghrey laa Boaldyn)* and *Robin and Betsy*; J. W. Kelly, of Peel, sang

The Manx Wedding (Car y Phoosee) and *Ramsey Town*. Some songs were sung in Manx and others in English, and all were 'greatly enjoyed'.

The Cushag Choir featured prominently in the broadcast part of the concert and contributed *The Fair Maids of Man, She Sang to her Spinet, The Harvest of the Sea, Hush, Little Darling* and *Ellan Vannin*. Mrs Ethel Barrow, piano, played Harry Wood's Manx Fairy Tale: *The L'il Fella* accompanied by the orchestra - 'a delightful item' - and the evening concluded at 10.25 pm with Harry Wood's new military march, *March of the Manx Legionnaires*, which included four Manx tunes, the *Manx National Anthem* and *God Save the King*.

Although the Coliseum was crowded, many people stayed at home to 'hear how the concert came through' over the radio. The *Ramsey Courier* of Friday 6th July summed up succinctly: 'The concert was a wonderful success in every way and should do much to advertise the Island'.

Ramsey, March 2022.