

## 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 18<sup>th</sup> 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 1<sup>st</sup> 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 6<sup>th</sup> July summed up succinctly: 'The concert was a wonderful success in every way and should do much to advertise the Island'.

Ramsey, March 2022.