Entry type: Person
Entry ID: PR00198

Concannon, Gertrude

(1899 - 1978)

Born	18990520, Maryborough Queensland Australia
Died	19781124, Wyongah New South Wales Australia
Occupation	Arranger, Author, Composer, Music adjudicator, Music teacher, Musician, Opera singer, Pianist

Summary

Gertrude Concannon was a highly successful Australian-trained lyric soprano. Later in her life she contributed to Australian music with equal significance through her teaching, composition, and encouragement of younger musicians.

Details

Born in Maryborough, Queensland, to English migrant parents, Concannon was placed at the age of three into the care of the local convent following the death of her mother. She completed her education at the convent and had her first vocal training from a Mr Charles Kenningham. In 1918, she entered the Garcia School of Music, Sydney, as a student of the distinguished teacher Madame Ellen Christian, whose mentorship had an inestimable influence on the young singer. Remaining at the School for seven years, Concannon completed singing and piano diplomas and gave numerous public recitals, concerts, and radio broadcasts.

Concannon subsequently embarked upon an international career spanning nearly 15 years. She departed for the United States of America in 1925, where she sang and learned her craft with a number of opera companies. She moved to England in 1928 and in the ensuing decade maintained a busy opera and recital schedule. She also toured extensively in Europe, Africa, India, Singapore, and Burma. All the while, Concannon was acutely conscious of her Australian identity. She deliberately programmed Australian works in many of her recitals. She also wrote of her travels in newspaper and magazine articles and in her unpublished autobiography, *Around the World in Song*, intending to relay her experiences for the benefit of others.

On her permanent return to Australia at the outbreak of the Second World War, Concannon commenced a busy vocal teaching practice in Sydney, establishing a studio of her own in Darlinghurst in 1939 and taking over the students of the late Madame Christian two years later. She also became actively involved in the eisteddfod movement as an adjudicator. She married Jack Degnian in 1943. Concannon’s settlement in Sydney allowed her to renew her passion for songwriting and composing. She had commenced composing in her teens, and one of her songs, *At Evening*, was published in 1924.

Concannon joined the Bread and Cheese Club Songwriters’ and Composers’ Group in the 1940s, and in 1950 was president of the NSW branch. She received numerous prizes from this group for her works, including prizes presented in 1950 by Alfred Hill in serious and light ballad categories for her songs *The Swing Song* and *Lullaby*.

Published resources

Resource
Gertrude Concannon, National Library of Australia - Music Australia, 2005,
http://nla.gov.au/nla.cs-ma-ANL%3AMA~Converted-matthew-215

Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

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