

FOHC TALK SERIES

UNCOVERING THE HIDDEN HISTORY OF CHINESE MUSIC IN AOTEAROA

NB -Tuesday, 18th May

The speaker, Henry Johnson, is Professor of Music at the University of Otago. His research interests are in the anthropology of music, Asian Studies and Island Studies. His books include *Asia in the Making of New Zealand* (2006); *Many voices: Music and national identity in Aotearoa/New Zealand* (2010); *Recentring Asia* (2011); *Migration, Education and Translation* (2020).

He is Associate Director of the Centre for Global Migrations at Otago and is currently researching Chinese music history in New Zealand with the help of the Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation for International Scholarly Exchange.

He will explore with us Chinese music making in Aotearoa from the late nineteenth century to the present day. From gold mining communities to Chinese opera, the presentation will uncover the diversity of creative practice and cultural production across New Zealand.

As always the lecture begins at Hocken at 5.30. You are welcome to come for light refreshments at 5.00pm - tell, and bring, your friends.

21st July - Mr Michael Wall, the University Librarian, has accepted our invitation to talk to the Friends about his entry into his new and very important task.

2nd September - This is the occasion of the anniversary of the Hocken Deed of Trust. The celebration will include a 'report' from Dr Jonathan West on the progress of his major

study of New Zealand lakes – towards which goal the FOHC Award was made.

There will be a 5.30pm start on this occasion and since we have a concern that Hocken itself is not big enough for all who might want to attend we are looking at other venues. Following the there'll be an Opt-In Dinner at a pre-booked venue within easy walking distance of the presentation.

17th November - FOHC Annual General Meeting.

Our March speaker, Dr Pat Langhorne, spoke to a well-filled Seminar Room at Hocken, and she captured our attention. It was not just that she was so closely acquainted with her subject, but that it was for her, at least, a matter of global significance.

Climate change is an expression that runs the inevitable risks associated with frequent usage. It is only when one sees and 'senses' the pervasive threat that it poses to humanity that the ordinary citizen of the world takes notice. Dr Langhorne certainly has the gift to bring the subject into the conscious concern of the listener, but has a passion for her subject that is compelling. Her title was 'Why care about sea ice?' At the end of the evening we were in no doubt.

On Saturday 17 April It was a pleasure to join with a good crowd in the Seminar Room to hear the thrice-postponed talk by Peter Simpson on Colin McCahon. It was well worth waiting for. His knowledge of and delight in his subject to clear to all.

HERE IS THE NEWS

Last February Radio NZ described an item in the 2021 Budget: 'New Zealand taxpayers will need to fork out \$1 billion in subsidies to the film industry in the next five years, Treasury has warned – money the Government will have to find by ratcheting down new spending in other departments. Despite these eye-watering costs, Finance Minister Grant Robertson is happy with the scheme, saying it's the cost of having a film industry.'

How would £15,000 in 1921 compare with today's \$1 billion? Something like £750,000. That would have been an eye-watering sum 100 years ago!

A hundred years ago exactly this was an *ODT* headline:

PICTURE PRODUCING AN ALL-NEW ZEALAND FILM DUNEDIN AS STUDIO CENTRE

'Dunedin had been selected by a new producing company as the place where will be filmed all the interior scenes in a six-part dominion production, the scenario for which is almost completed. The picture which will be called "The Birth of New Zealand" is to be the first release of a newly-formed syndicate with headquarters at Palmerston North, where the original capital had been subscribed.'

At the time of writing the two principals of the syndicate, Wallingford Tate and Harrington Reynolds, were staying at Wain's Hotel, in search of authentic material for the reconstruction of the goldfield days. The outdoor scenes were to be filmed at Dargaville, 'for the sake of sunshine and warmth' because many of the scenes necessitated the appearance of Maori in their traditional garb.

Dunedin had been selected because of the valuable records in the Early Settlers' Museum and the Hocken Library, and because it 'is the only town in New Zealand with an electric service of sufficient voltage to run the brilliant

lights used in modern picture production. The producers wanted to use the Early Settlers' Hall as a studio.

This latter requirement may have been more important than the first – there was no such thing as a film studio in New Zealand, though at the very same time Otaki was being touted as the future Los Angeles of New Zealand. It would be interesting to know how the Early Settlers Association responded to this request. In the end, the film was not made in Dunedin, and by July it was being reported that filming was under way at Howick.

The two men named in the [ODT article](#) were well known in the New Zealand entertainment world. Harrington Reynolds Jr was the son of an actor-manager of the same name who had died in Christchurch in 1919. Australian newspaper reports referred to him as a Canadian vaudeville artist, at the beginning of 1921 touring this country as a member of the 'Globe Trotters'.



Harrington Reynolds

Wallingford Tate was also a member of this troupe, and seems to have had a role both as a 'society entertainer' and as a musician. Another member of the staff was Ted Coubray, the first New Zealand film-cameraman of note. And it is

possible that Rudall Hayward, the film entrepreneur of the 1930s, was associated.



Wallingford Tate

An Australian report suggested that Harrington Reynolds had been commissioned by the New Zealand Government to make the film. By mid-1921, however, a company had been formed to demonstrate the 'great possibilities' of film production in the Dominion. 'It will serve to perpetuate New Zealand's remarkable early history, and will be of exceptional value as an historical record,'

The estimated cost of the film was £6000, and the capital required for the company's long-term operation was £12,000. The prospectus of the company, to be known as New Zealand Cinema Enterprises Ltd., was published in the *New Zealand Herald*. 'It is worthy of note that the services of Captain Harrington Reynolds, late of the Canadian Army, and son of the well-known actor, the late Harrington Reynolds, have been secured as producer.' Reference was made to his great experience in the production of moving pictures at Los Angeles and other parts of America.

According to a later report the film had the official blessing of the Government, who saw the importance of it as a means of education and propaganda. It had already assisted the producers in many ways, and was proposing to make the film available for screening in all

the state schools. It would also be shown overseas as advertising, for the encouragement of emigration presumably. The picture would 'traverse important scenes in early New Zealand history, and the 'heart interest' would be secured by the introduction of typical characters of the time and the development of a love story between two of the principals. There was to be a 'sturdy old doctor', and a typically resolute pioneer whose daughter Dorothy would illustrate the 'type of beauty that is the heritage of the New Zealand girl today.'

The episodes particularly chosen were Cook's arrival on the shores of New Zealand, his landing there, and his later tragic death; then would follow the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi at Busby's house; the cutting down of the flagpole at Kororareka was next, and its sequel in the northern wars. It was noted that there would be a 'faithful replica' of the town of Russell built in the studio. Then the focus would turn south, to the furore over the proposed French settlement at Akaroa, and the film would end with the discovery of gold by Gabriel Read, and the bushrangers and the miners and their way of life at Gabriel's Gully.

So the picture was made, with Howick being the operational base. What do we know about its impact? Mostly extremely favourable, if the newspaper reviews of early 1922 are to be believed. It was generally released in February, but there had been a private screening at Palmerston North the previous December – for the sake of the stakeholders, presumably.

What do we know about the film itself - very little, because the newspapers tell us so little. Stella Southern played Dorothy; Norman French played Tom Campbell; Harrington Reynolds played Con O'Hara; George Kingsland played Septimus.

But mainly we know so little because of the supposedly 8000 ft of original film, only 154 ft have been located. There is no complete copy.

What a great pity

A DISTINGUISHED VISITOR

The local newspapers in May 1921 made much of the visit to the Otago region of the recently retired Governor-General of the Netherlands East Indies. Count Johan Paul van Limburg Stirum (1873–1948) was a former diplomat, and as a reformist Governor-General had worked for the economic development of the colony. He later became ambassador to Berlin where he was known for his critical views on National Socialism, even refusing Nazi officials entry to the Dutch embassy. A delightful morsel of trivia is that he was the maternal great uncle of Audrey Hepburn.

Why this news? Because he visited the Hocken Library while in Dunedin. That's all that the newspapers tell us. Why would he visit the Library? How had he heard of the place? Might it have had something to do with Abel Tasman? What other reason would there be. And what happened when he came to the old building – who was there to meet so illustrious a character, and escort him round, and show him what he wanted to see?

COMMITTEE NEWS

Later in the year we will hear from the first recipient of the **FOHC Research Award**, Dr Jonathan West. The Committee is working towards another such grant being made in 2022, and fund-raising will be part of this planning. For example, there is available, under certain conditions, the Robert Lord Writers Cottage at 3 Titan Street. In principle it seems that this facility may be available to the Research Award holder, and that is a significant consideration for someone from outside Dunedin who will be using the Hocken Library for their research.

For a number of years the FOHC sponsored the **WW1 Transcription Project** – and many people have given their time and their skills to bringing to life again the journals and diaries of WW1 participants who recorded their experiences and their feelings. This project is now being wound up and the work of these volunteers was acknowledged over ANZAC Weekend with an

updated [Friends' website page](#) about the project focused on this not-to-be-forgotten tragedy.

HOCKEN NEWS

- Hocken are delighted to have the new University Librarian here, and so quickly hard at work. The Library Executive Management Group are engaged in concentrated planning sessions, for example. With his arrival, the recommendations of the University Library Review of 2019 are being considered and actioned.
- One very interesting donation that has been received by Hocken is an 1860s book of poetry by Christina Fulton, and published at Lawrence. This book isn't to be found in the New Zealand National Bibliography, as has been noted by Rowan Gibbs in PANZA (2017). Christina, Edinburgh born, was a resident at Blue Spur and the local librarian. She died in Fiji in 1874, but did turn her hand to poetry a second time, before she left for Fiji. That venture roused an often unfavourable response (as it might be called) in Dunedin in 1868. They didn't hold their critical punches in those days! Another acquisition is the Provincial Council papers belonging to James Bradshaw, an early 'Labour' man.
- An outcome of the new University Librarian's arrival is that the Terms of Reference for the 2021 Review of the Hocken Collections are being developed with senior Hocken staff.

FOHC MEMBERSHIP

Subscriptions: Individual \$25 per annum; Life Member \$250; Joint \$30 per annum; Joint Life Member \$300

Friends are reminded of that subscriptions are due, and to note that cheques can no longer be accepted.

Online payment: Westpac 03 0903 0393175 000 - "Subscription" in Particulars field, surname/initials in Code/Reference fields.

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