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Dandenong to the stages of the world

Dandenong has long been perceived as a cultural wilderness. Such has never been the case, especially when we have produced artists of the calibre of Lauris Elms.



World acclaimed: Lauris Elms, schoolgirl singer at the Dandenong Town Hall, became a world-acclaimed opera and concert singer.

THE world-acclaimed opera and concert singer Lauris Elms, now of Sydney, and a former student of the Springvale Primary School and Dandenong High School, could rightly be described as one of our finest leaders in the musical world.

As a child she studied violin with Stella Nemet in Springvale, and in her teens, was a leader of the Melbourne Junior Symphony Orchestra.

She studied art for four years at the Swinburne Technical College, majoring in book illustration and, at the same time, started vocal studies with Madam Katherine Waileart in Melbourne.

Elms won a radio singing competition and began her professional career as a singer, receiving her first engagement with the ABC in 1953.

Along with her father she was an enthusiastic worker for the Dandenong Festival of Music and Art for Youth and still donates a prize in memory of her late husband, Harry.

This year she came down especially from NSW to officially open the festival and adjudicate a number of vocal sections including the Elms Vocal Recital.

Elms' first performance in the Dandenong Town Hall was as a schoolgirl in 1946.

The Rotary Club of Dandenong gave her a fine start when club members organised a fundraising farewell concert for her on the eve of her departure for France on June 25, 1954 to take up a scholarship with Dominique Modest.

Two years later she won a prize in the Geneva International competition after which her career took off.

Following a Covent Garden debut in Verdi's *A Masked Ball*, Elms was engaged to sing in Gielgud's production of Berlioz's *The Trojans* conducted by Kubelik.

She made numerous appearances with Joan Sutherland including the historic Sutherland/Williamson opera tour.

In 1975 with Geoffrey Parsons, she gave the inaugural concert of the National Lieder Society of Australia.

She has recorded lieder with Parsons for the ABC, while other recordings of note include the original *Perter Grimes*.

Biography

- Since retiring from singing, Lauris Elms has adjudicated the MacDonald's Aria in Sydney and the Melbourne Sun Aria and has conducted master classes with Geoffrey Parsons.
- She teaches a select few singers, is active in support of a chamber music group, has written her autobiography and has exhibited and sold a number of semi-abstract paintings.
- For her services to music in Australia, Elms has been awarded the OBE, the AM and an honorary doctorate in music (University of Sydney).