

The Girl with the Golden Voice

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Ella Caspers, “the girl with the voice of gold,” was born in Olive Street Albury (site now occupied by SS&A Club) on August 28, 1888 to Henry, a music teacher, and Eleanor (or Ellen) Caspers. Eleanor’s father was William John (‘Coffin’) Jones, twice Mayor of Albury, builder, undertaker and furniture dealer.

Ella attended St Bridget’s Convent School in Albury before moving to the Goulburn Convent in 1899. In Goulburn she came to the attention of Madame Christian, a former oratorio singer who became a nun – she knew that Ella was headed for the top.

The *Albury Banner* reported “the first public appearance” of the 14 year old Miss Ella Caspers at the Albury Sportsground in January 1903 when she received “vociferous applause.”

The talented musical family included sister Agnes, a violinist who often accompanied Ella, and brother William, an organist and composer – *By The Hovell Tree* (1924), music by Will J Caspers and words by Jack M Byrne, and *Hurricane Hinkler* (c1928), words and music by W J Caspers.

Ella performed several times with famous Albury bass singer, Malcolm McEachern. In 1908 McEachern and Caspers joined up to tour NSW. A newspaper reported that “Miss Ella Caspers is the finest contralto we have heard for a generation, the audience is simply thrown into ecstasy ... the audience could not get enough of Mr McEachern.”

In 1909, Albury and Goulburn patrons raised money to send Ella to the Royal Academy of Music in London where a few years later she performed for King George V and Queen Mary.

Dame Nellie Melba described her voice “exquisite” and Dame Clara Butt said “I have heard many beautiful voices but Ella Caspers has a place all by herself.”

Ella performed with great orchestras and conductors in London and returned to perform in Albury a number of times. In May 1914, the *Border Morning Mail* reported “Miss Ella Caspers’ ‘Coming Home’ to her native Albury, with the culture and experience



Ella Caspers, 1910

gained in the art centres of Great Britain and Europe, was a triumph in every way at the Theatre Royal.”

In May 1921 Ella retired from the international stage after marrying Alban Albury Maloney, a Taree dentist and childhood friend who was also born in Albury in 1888. Ella spent her final years in a Mosman nursing home. She died aged 98 on April 21, 1987 and is buried next to her sister Agnes at Macquarie Park Cemetery, Sydney.

Hear a 1913 recording of Ella at <https://www.nfsa.gov.au/collection/curated/daddy-ella-caspers>

