

Bal Moane brought merriment and memories

MEMORIES of Limerick's colourful musical past were recalled last week by the visit of Bal Moane, leading comedian with the Val Doonican Show. Bal was accompanied by his father, Mr. Albert Moane, who is a member of a family that did much to enhance Limerick's musical reputation at the turn of the century.

Albert's father, the late F. P. Moane, was Professor of Music at Mungret College for over 30 years, and was also prominently associated with the Boherbuoy Band and St. John's Brass and Reed Band as bandmaster and tutor. He had the distinction of being the first man in the world to send a band of apostolics to the Vatican, where they entertained the Pope to a programme of music.

Another member of the family, James, brother of Albert, was one of Limerick's most gifted violinists. In addition to his dance band, "James Moane and His Millionaires," James was leader of the Theatre Royal Orchestra for some years before the Theatre was destroyed by fire in 1922.

When Jack Cronin was proprietor of the Athenaeum Cinema (later to become the Royal), James and another member of the family, Victor, played in the orchestra there. James died in Limerick about 17 years ago, and is survived by his wife, Nellie, who lives at 37 St. Joseph Street. Another member of the family, Albert, nephew of Mr. Albert Moane, is employed with Messrs. Keane's Bakery.

BAL

Albert himself left Limerick 40 years ago and toured all Ireland with Moane's Road Show. Later on he joined the Bowyer-Westwood Opera Company. His son, Albert, junior (familliarly called "Bal," after General Balbo, the Italian aviator, who made an epic flight in 1936), was born in Limerick at the Bedford Row Hospital in 1936.

After some years with the show as a child actor, Bal left the stage and was apprenticed as a jockey to the trainer, Captain Tommy Rogers. However, the turf was not to be his career, and he joined his uncle, Harold, in England in commercial activities. About that time Albert disposed of

his Road Show and followed his son to England.

Bal had an insistent urge to

return to the stage, and enjoyed some success as a pop singer, as well as playing

piano solo and drums. Then he discovered his flair for comedy and over the past four years has gone from success to success. He is now one of England's most popular comedians and tops the bill everywhere he goes.

Seeing Bal perform in England, Joe Cahill of Dublin invited him to be principal comedian on the Val Doonican Show—a much coveted spot in which he has proved a tremendous success. Earlier this week he played at the Grove Theatre in Belfast and has been invited back there for a full week's solo show commencing April 8.

He has also been asked to return to Newry and in Limerick the crowded houses at the Savoy gave him a memorable reception.

Bal has been warmly acclaimed too, by the Dublin critics, and he has been offered an assignment extending from ten to twelve weeks with the Eamonn Andrews Studios in Dublin.

MEMORIES

Mr. Albert Moane has a fund of memories of musical Limerick in the old days. Some of the many names he recalled included Sam Benson, drummer with the Boherbuoy; Bartle Dillon Snr. and Bartle Dillon Jnr., clarionets; and Fred Hogarty, clarinet. And there were Jimmy Trehy and Paul O'Brien, and a chap named Flanagan who played at the Theatre Royal.

The musicians of Limerick met every Sunday at 23 Catherine St., where a big Irish harp adorned a window. The recitals attracted big crowds on the street outside, and an old "Bobby" was always there on duty to keep them moving. But the crowds would always come back again, and the second time without interruption, because the old "Bobby" would become so entranced with the music that he would forget his surroundings!

Mr. Albert Moane, father of the talented comedian, Bal Moane, who is topping the bills in England.

