

Smith, (Mabel) Olive

by Simon Taylor

Smith, (Mabel) Olive (1906–93) music campaigner and founder of the National Youth Orchestra of Ireland, was born 19 June 1906 in Dublin, youngest of three daughters of Charles E. Richardson of 47 Kenilworth Square, Rathgar, Dublin, merchant and wholesale grocer, and his wife Alice Maud Metcalfe. She was educated at Alexandra College, Earlsfort Terrace, and TCD.

While she worked as an administrator in TCD, she devoted her life to the service of music in Ireland. In 1948 she co-founded with Brian Boydell (qv), Edgar Deale (qv), and Frederick May (qv), the Music Association of Ireland, and she was responsible for bringing into operation the Music Association's coming-out recitals by young Irish artists. She founded the schools' recitals scheme. In support of the campaign to establish a national concert hall she arranged tours throughout the country for internationally established musicians and organised numerous concerts and recitals in support of the campaign. In 1970, with the violinist and conductor Hugh Maguire, she founded Ógra Ceoil, which became the Irish Youth Orchestra and ultimately the National Youth Orchestra of Ireland. She guided its development for more than 10 years until her retirement in January 1982.

Olive Smith gave many years of dedication to the work of the Irish Girl Guides and formed a guides' choir. She later became chorus mistress of the Culwick Choral Society and founded a successful ladies' choir, the Olivian Singers. Her contribution to musical life in Ireland was marked by an honorary doctorate from Dublin University.

She married in 1932 Lyall Gilchrist Smith (d. 21 January 1969), pharmaceutical chemist, founder of Lyall Smith Laboratories and president of the Photographic Dealers Association of Great Britain. They had one daughter, Gillian Smith, the pianist and harpsichordist. They lived in Foxrock, Co. Dublin, later in Rathgar, Dublin 6, and Moyard, Co. Galway. She died 12 September 1993 in Dublin and is buried in Enniskerry churchyard, Co. Wicklow.

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*Ir. Times*, 15 Oct. 1993; NYOI website ([www.nyoi.ie/index](http://www.nyoi.ie/index)); NLI web site (new acquisitions list)