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13



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VICTORY LOAN CONCERT

Wellington's Big Night

THE sum of £40,000,000 should be an easy target for the new Victory Loan if enthusiasm is aroused throughout New Zealand equal to that shown by the audience at the first Victory Concert in Wellington. To begin with, the house was nearly packed—the Opera House, which holds 1650 people. In the second place, the guest artists, Mary Pratt (contralto), Henri Penn (solo pianist) and Kenneth Macaulay (baritone) all went over so well that there were complaints afterwards that not enough of their items were included in the programme.

However, the NBS Variety Orchestra, with Vincent Aspey as leader, and the 2YA Wireless Chorus formed an excellent background for the work of the soloists, and what was lacking in the quality of the music chosen was more than made up in the zest with which it was performed. Kenneth Macaulay carried off the Victory Loan campaign song, "Let's Back the Attack," as very few could have done in the circumstances, and he was well supported by the chorus, whose complete entering in to the spirit of the concert did much for the creating of a patriotic atmosphere. The members of the orchestra were also obviously enjoying themselves, and under the baton of the well-known and competent conductor, Gil Dech, played with gusto the rousing music which comprised the greater part of the programme.

During the evening the Victory Loan was inaugurated by the Hon. Walter Nash, who made a moving appeal for funds for food and clothing for the troops. An appeal of a different kind was made later by one whose name did not appear in the programme. In fact, we suspect that the organisers of the concert knew nothing of his activities or his part in the programme. He made his appearance during the interval by crawling out from under the small platform used by the conductor, and sitting in front of the curtain with that appealing look in his eyes which only a grey and white tabby cat can have.

The most popular items of the evening were the performances by Mary Pratt and Henri Penn. Mr. Penn's rendering of the favourite "Warsaw Concerto," in which he was assisted by the orchestra, was greeted with prolonged applause, and he played as an encore the introduction to Tchaikovsky's Concerto No. 1, or as he announced, "You may know it better by its boogie-woogie, jitterbug title 'Concerto for Two.'"

Mary Pratt's powerful contralto voice gave new meaning to the oft-heard words of "For England," but the vociferous reception she was given was earned by her ability as a singer and her friendly personality rather than by the selections she sang. "Land of Hope and Glory" formed a grand finale to the programme. The solo part was taken by Mary Pratt, but at the invitation of Gil Dech the whole audience joined enthusiastically in the chorus, feeling that the Victory Loan was being launched in the right spirit. "Launched" is the right word, for the artists who took part are now on tour, and Wellington's concert was only a prelude to a series.