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FORWARD THE SIX HUNDRED!

Children's Large-scale Music Festival

BEFORE the 1942 earthquake made the Wellington Town Hall unsafe for use, the primary schools of the capital city used to produce a large-scale music festival in it each year. Now the building is safe once more, and on Tuesday, October 17, this festival is to be revived. Part of the programme will be broadcast from 2YA, beginning at 8 p.m. With the exception of two songs, everything in the programme has already been broadcast this year over the main National stations, for the object of this festival is to consummate the year's work of the music classes in the Educational sessions. The conductor at the Town Hall will be T. J. Young, whose music sessions on Thursdays are heard by thousands of children all over New Zealand and, we suspect, by a good many grown-ups, too. The songs that have been learnt in front of the microphone by the broadcasting group, using the textbook provided for the purpose and then practised in the primary schools after the set has been turned off, will be performed with orchestra (and some with organ as well) by 600 children from 24 schools.

Among the songs there are sea shanties and negro spirituals, traditional English airs and modern English songs, Handel's march from *Scipio*, Mozart's "Cradle Song," and so on. One song which is not "out of the book" is by a New Zealander, Alan Heathcote White. It is called "Aotearoa," and will be sung with orchestra and organ.

How It Is Done

The organisation that goes on behind the presentation of a festival like this is phenomenal. Representatives of the schools concerned, 24 altogether, form the festival committee, and their interest is so keen (according to Mr. Young) that at least 20 of the schools are always represented at committee meetings. The teachers come together to hear the set pieces practised under Mr. Young in the Educational Institute rooms (this is in addition to the Thursday broadcasts), so that they will all be working along the same lines. Circulars to all the classes are also sent out while rehearsals are under way, since points which need attention in the rehearsals of the special group are bound to crop up in the school classes, too. Then rehearsals are held in three zones, the schools in each zone combining. Next the entire programme is rehearsed with the orchestra by the special group and the timing is tried out. Then there is a massed rehearsal in the Town Hall, and the actual difficulties of herding 600 children on to the stage are encountered. All this involves more circulars, and 24 duplicated plans of the seating. Then after one final rehearsal with the orchestra, the concert itself. It will be given this year under Vice-Regal patronage.

"It isn't done with the idea of making a splash," Mr. Young told *The Listener*. "We could have thousands of children, but more good is done by being selective and demanding a certain standard before choosing the children from each school."