

(continued from previous page)

energy and alertness, especially at rehearsals, of a well-trained sheep dog.

The immediate fruit of all his labours is an evening's programme which, if it is not beyond reproach when considered as music alone, shows that some hundreds of children are going to come away from one school with a place in their lives for music, and a sense of the joy there is in playing it. At a time when there are pessimists who believe that radio has killed domestic music, this school and one or two other centres of similar activity in New Zealand provide convincing answers.

These are words of praise, and not everything on the programme was beyond criticism, even after taking into account all the limitations. For instance, there can scarcely be any reason, even if we all believe that New Zealanders must develop their own speech and speak as is natural to them, for letting 200 children learn to sing "Drink to me ahnly with thoine oies and Oi will pledge with moine." In spoken language it may well be authentic New Zealand pronunciation either now or in the future, and may be defensible on that ground. But everyone who has taken the most rudimentary instruction in good singing believes that a nasal "oi," sung as the Hutt Valley children sang it, is not such a musical sound as an open, well-rounded "ai."

In the choral singing in general, too, there was not nearly enough light and shade, not enough tone left in reserve for "forte" when it was called for, and several songs were taken far too fast. But these few faults, and the handful of trashy, pretentious compositions which were fitted into the programme here and there can be left out of the account in the meantime. When you have heard 200 young voices sing "And the Glory of the Lord" from memory, you are prepared to overlook the debit side.

### The 600 and the 13

It was about three weeks after the Hutt Valley children had given their concert that the choir seats of the Town Hall were again loaded with rows and rows of children—younger ones, this time, from 24 primary schools in and around Wellington.

This programme was a different kind.

With one or two exceptions, all the vocal music was chosen from songs in the music books used for the Educational Broadcasts to Schools from the main National stations every Thursday afternoon. One of the objects of the concert was to let children all over New Zealand hear what they had been learning this year and last, done as it were in full dress, with the NBS Strings' (13 strong) as accompanists. Thus almost everything was brief, even fragmentary.

But what the musical ear found to enjoy in this concert was the exhilarating freshness of the singing, not anything particularly remarkable in the music used. In the first half of the programme, for instance, the only item by a classical composer was "Mozart's Cradle Song" (which is not by Mozart). But for good fun in music, it takes a lot to beat a couple of good rousing sea-shanties ("When Johnny Comes Down to Hilo" and "The Drummer and the Cook"), sung with dash and spirit by 600 youngsters who take a great delight in describ-

ing the cook who "had a cockeyed look":

*With her one eye in the pot*

*And the t'other up the chimney,*

*With a bow wow wow*

*Fal-lal the dow-a-diddy, bow, wow, wow.*

"Funiculi, Funicula" came off well, too, with good contrasts of soft and loud, and the Dance from "Hansel and Gretel" reminded everyone of the well-known record of the Manchester Children's Choir. It was well sung. It is good fun too to hear representatives of 24 plain ordinary State primary schools singing the "Eton Boating Song" with such conviction... "But we'll still play together, and swear by the best of schools."

O . . . O . . . O . . .

Vowel sounds at this concert were more musical. Anyone who was listening for pronunciation must have noticed the tone on the repeated refrain in one of the sea-shanties, "Roll the Cotton Down," and observed how much quality came into the voices in that line. It is that quality that has to be sought, with a little more trouble, on other vowels. An axiom that choir conductors could use to some purpose in New Zealand and especially in schools is: "What sounds Affected in speech sounds Effective in song."

The NBS orchestra (conducted by Harry Elwood in the items between singing) accompanied the children, using ingenious and sympathetic arrangements by Thomas Gray, who can make something grow out of the most inconsequential fragment.

Though the hugeness of the hall and the contrast of the adjacent hosts of children rather dwarfed the sound of the orchestral items, the 13 players delighted their audience with their clean undemonstrative style. It is a pity they cannot be heard more often in public, with a more responsive audience than four soundproof walls and a microphone.

One of the last choral items, "Aotea-roa," by H. Temple White, was among the most effective things on the whole programme. Without having a particularly striking tune or anything remarkable in its style, it seemed to have caught the spirit of the choir and set it free in that soaring descant.

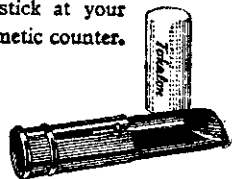
A number of the people who heard these two concerts might have wished that all children in New Zealand should have their chance, at primary schools and then at secondary schools, of getting to know music in the manner these hundreds of Wellington and Hutt children. Certainly it must have occurred to them that if music could be got out of adults in the same proportion we would be well off for it. And that of course is one of the hopes of the people who organise such things, for all these children will be grown-ups before long. Will their music grow up with them, or will they merely grow out of it?



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