

EXPANSION OF ORCHESTRAL WORK

N.B.S. Plans Post-War Development

If enough qualified musicians offer themselves for test auditions at the main NBS stations in each of the four centres, it is probable that the National Broadcasting Service will go ahead with its long-delayed plans to develop full-time orchestral work.

This scheme, which was discussed as long ago as 1937, earned the good wishes of visiting artists and followers of orchestral music in New Zealand. But, like many other pre-war projects, it had to be shelved while the war lasted. Now the NBS has decided upon considerable musical expansion in various ways, one of which is to offer full-time employment to more musicians who can demonstrate claims for inclusion in a permanent orchestra.

The future orchestral policy of the Service has not yet been definitely settled, but in the meantime tests will be made by Andersen Tyrer, English orchestral conductor, who has been in New Zealand since 1940, and who will visit the centres. It is hoped to complete the auditions by the middle of February,

deal to New Zealand. He referred to a combination consisting of symphonic players purely and simply, whether local or imported.

There was, said Moiseiwitsch, a great future for the development of musical culture in the country and, unless it was undertaken in determined fashion, and without too much of an eye to the commercial side, it would suffocate.

In the same year Jascha Horenstein, conductor of the orchestra with the Monte Carlo Russian Ballet, said that a great deal was talked about musical education. But it was not the slightest use giving a child a musical education

if he was unable to put that knowledge to the test and to its full use when he left school. He declared that money spent on a child's music at school was wasted if he could not hear good symphony orchestras and concerts as a grown man.

The expressed view of the Director of Broadcasting was supported by the visiting musicians. But the director had gone a step further, saying that a symphony orchestra formed an integral part of his ideal of New Zealand's own Conservatorium of Music.

It is pointed out officially that invitations to auditions do not necessarily mean positions. Applicants will have to

satisfy the examiner that they are worthy of inclusion. And there is also the question of numbers and balance. There might be, in New Zealand, a goodly number of good violinists, yet a paucity of certain other instrumentalists. All such considerations must be gone into before an orchestra is formed.

So the immediate step is the testing of ability, and it remains to be seen what talent is forthcoming. The final decision of the NBS—whether New Zealand is to have its own broadcasting symphony orchestra—depends very largely on those tests. It is greatly to be hoped that difficulties will be few.

Forms of application for auditions are available at all the main stations.

Symphonic Music is Valuable—and Expensive!

THE following article (which we have abridged slightly) was written by THOMAS RUSSELL, and appeared in a recent issue of "The New Statesman and Nation." Though conditions are not exactly parallel in New Zealand, it gives some indication of the financial outlay involved in maintaining a good symphony orchestra.

ECONOMICALLY speaking, a symphony orchestra is not a productive unit. Its only achievement is sound, sound which dies beyond the reach of our ears as soon as it is created. But modern economics allows a place for such a body in its calculations, for entertainment is valuable as a stimulus to real solid production. Thus a symphony orchestra is allowed to live. And if it is allowed to live, its individual members must be provided for, and the expenses incurred in the organisation of concerts must be found.

There's the rub! For a symphony orchestra not only is non-productive, but is also not self-supporting. And the problem of paying for it has yet to be solved. Various methods have been tried in various countries, and in England there are even now several methods in operation, not one of which works with entire satisfaction. Some facts and figures, the details of which do not apply exactly to any particular orchestra, will give an idea of what it would cost to make the best of those orchestras as good as it could possibly be.

Limitation of Reward

We speak of the musical profession as we might of the legal or medical professions, giving it a similar dignity, status and stability. But only in a few of its highest positions does it possess these qualities. Although the training of a first-class musician takes time and money, the rewards which he may hope to receive later are limited and uncertain. A successful soloist or conductor may achieve something comparable to the income of a doctor or lawyer, but orchestral players are left far behind, especially if they belong to a permanent orchestra which demands their full services and thus prevents them from profiting from well-paid but less artistic engagements outside.

It is normal to have three grades of fees or salary in a symphony orchestra: principal, sub-principal, and rank and file. The principals are the first wind-players and the leaders of each string section (the leader of the orchestra has a special fee, equal to about double the salary of a principal). The sub-principals are the second wind instruments and the other first-desk players, while the remainder of the strings fall into the "rank-and-file" category. There may be one or two odd exceptions to this grading, but they do not upset the general rule. A weekly salary will vary from £10 and £16 as between the lowest and the highest grade; the limits may vary between one orchestra and another according to the conditions of work. Star players can often exploit the law of supply and demand in their favour, and place themselves on a higher financial level than their colleagues, but the virtue of this from the general orchestral point of view is extremely doubtful; in a permanent orchestra the standard of moral is important, and can only reach its highest point when all players feel that they all stand or fall together. This does not mean that I recommend a flat rate for everyone; the added stimulus of higher rank and payment still plays a large part in human endeavour, and it would be vain idealism to deny this.

Big Business

At the rates mentioned above an orchestra of 90 players or so will cost not less than £1,200 a week in salaries alone. The conductors' fees will be more variable, not less than £6,000 a year, and usually a good deal more. Then, of course, a proportion of programmes will include works needing the co-operation of soloists and, although no set figure can be assessed, it is bound to reach several thousands a year. It will be seen from this that the cost of the musicians' services alone for a year will amount to about £80,000 for a permanent orchestra with an unchanging personnel, making no allowance for the demands of star players, but including a 10 per cent addition to cover running costs, administration, etc.

These figures, however, mean nothing unless they are seen against a background of concert-giving, and unless the

working conditions of the orchestral players are considered. Before concerts can be given, a number of other expenses have to be taken into account. Hire of halls, printing, all forms of publicity (for it is purposeless to give concerts unless everybody knows of them), fees for the local representative, railway travelling for orchestras which tour (and some touring will remain essential, even when each region has its own orchestra), hotel accommodation and a few less important items, will bring the sum total needed annually to well over the £100,000 mark. The running of a symphony orchestra has become big business.

Social Responsibility

This means that gross income must be in the neighbourhood of £2,000 each week. How is such a sum realised, if it can be realised? By a choice of two methods, or, rather, by a consideration of two methods, for an orchestra has no choice of its immediate circumstances. One orchestra may be subsidised by its municipality in cash, or in the free use of a hall, or both. Another, less fortunate, may have to earn 96 per cent of its income from box-office receipts, and will be severely criticised for its efforts to ensure this by an occasional series of safe, popular programmes. It is important for us to think more about the latter type of orchestra, which is to be found in the capital of the British Empire; provincial orchestras are already treated with more generosity.

As musicians are no more capable of working every day of their lives than are other people, we can only allow for a maximum of six working days a week. I know that those who understand such things will start with alarm at such a prospect for an artistic organisation; but at the moment I am dealing only with economics—with how to keep a symphony orchestra out of the bankruptcy court. Even so, each concert will have to attract some £350 to the box office, and in the present state of concert-hall shortage in Great Britain, where available rooms are small, such a figure is almost beyond reach. It means, also, that prices

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Returning Home



Spencer Digby photograph **ANDERSEN TYRER**, who is returning shortly to Great Britain after a five years' stay in the Dominion. His last task for the NBS before leaving New Zealand will be to hold musical auditions to choose players for permanent orchestral work.

as Mr. Tyrer leaves shortly for England to conduct a series of concerts.

At present the Service has the NBS Strings, which are in full-time employment at 2YA, while there are part-time studio orchestras in other centres.

During a tour of the main radio stations in 1937 Benno Moiseiwitsch, the pianist, remarked that, since concerto work was vitally important for musical culture, the formation of a real symphony orchestra would mean a great