

MUSIC BROUGHT HIM BACK

American Clarinettist Settles in Auckland

GEORGE HOPKINS, the clarinettist who is to be heard in a series of Sunday afternoon programmes from 1YA, playing music for clarinet and piano (with Owen Jensen at the piano), is an American married to a New Zealander. The war brought him here in the first place, and after taking his wife back to the United States for a couple of years he decided that Auckland, rather than America, could give him the kind of life and work he wants. His broadcasts with Owen Jensen will introduce to Auckland listeners some clarinet music they have not heard before at all, and some that is unfamiliar. There will be two Sonatas by Brahms, one by Mendelssohn (of which the manuscript was discovered in England only a few years ago), a Ballade by a young French composer, Le Boucher (which won a prize at the Paris Conservatory just before the second war), and an "Italian Fantasy" by another Frenchman, Marc Delmas.

Mr. Hopkins and his wife came back to New Zealand to live last September. He landed here in the first place in 1942, when he was a pilot in SCAT (South Pacific Combat Air Transport). Later he was pilot to Major-General Ralph Mitchell, U.S.M.C., during the Munda, Bougainville and Green Island campaigns. On leave in Auckland, he sought the company of musicians, and met the violinist Helen Gray. They were married in 1944 and left for America in 1946, not expecting to return. For a while they were involved in the typical American occupation of that time—trying to keep together while the U.S. Army moved him from place to place, and living mostly in a caravan. Now they are involved in the typical New Zealand occupation of looking for a house.

Seven Years' Symphony Work

George Hopkins comes from Youngstown, Ohio, a town about the same size as Auckland. (But Youngstown supports a symphony orchestra of its own.) He first played a wind instrument in 1923—when he was nine—and was taught by Grover C. Yaus at Youngstown. Then for seven years he was a solo clarinettist with the symphony orchestra, and did some commercial broadcasting. He took his bachelor's degree in music at Miami University, which is not in Florida, but in Oxford, Ohio; and for four years was student-conductor of a band. Then for two years he directed High School Bands in Ohio—at Johnsville-New Lebanon, and at St. Mary's.

Before Pearl Harbour he was training as a pilot in the Naval Reserve. After Pearl Harbour he was commissioned as a pilot in the U.S. Marine Corps. And a few months later he was in New Zealand.

After his discharge in the United States, he and his wife were at Ann Arbor (University of Michigan) for a while, and he majored in woodwind instruments in the graduate school. There his teacher was Albert Luconi, a woodwind teacher of considerable fame in America. The Hopkinses travelled a lot



GEORGE HOPKINS and OWEN JENSEN discuss a point of interpretation

before they decided to come back here, saw a lot of America, and heard a lot of music.

"Here Music is on the Move"

But George Hopkins feels that there is a job for him to do here, where music is on the move, and he can keep in touch with music through ensemble playing as well as engaging in school work, for which he has enormous enthusiasm. He says there is much more chamber music going on in Auckland than in any typical American city, and feels that the only serious lack at the moment is in the availability of musical materials.

The teaching of woodwind instruments, he feels, ought to begin earlier than it does in most countries. The child of nine or ten, he says, is physically ready to start on a clarinet (after which he can move on to the flute, oboe, cor anglais or bassoon, which need longer fingers); or on a cornet (after which he can go to the trumpet or the trombone, which needs longer arms); or on a violin (after which he can change to the bigger stringed instruments if he wants to).

Children Should Start Early

George Hopkins's face lights up when he starts to talk about the teaching of wind instruments to young children, and he is full of ideas about it. He thinks they should start early, learning simple techniques on their instruments, and should then be given folksong tunes to play.

"Co-ordinate folksong with their vocal music programme—co-ordinate it with their history, geography, so on—it rarely happens that way in a school, but that's the way I like it."

"And there is printed material available for doing that?"

"Oceans of it. Only a matter of getting it."

In the States, George Hopkins didn't find that boys had a prejudice against playing instruments. They are mostly mechanically-minded, and an instrument is a machine, to them. So he lets them approach music through that interest. Besides, the physical demands of playing wind instruments are like the demands of sport, and he found at Johns-

ville-New Lebanon and St. Mary's that most of the best athletes were the best musicians too.

The first thing he does when he looks over a group of boys who are to be taught (as he did recently at Pukekohe Technical High School) is to make them buzz their lips, to see whether they are likely brass players. About 50 per cent., he says, can get no buzz at all. It's doubtful if those ones will ever play a brass instrument. Of those that do get a good high buzz, he would select the bright ones, and would expect them eventually to do well on cornets and French horns. Boys with protruding upper teeth he would mark as good prospects for the double-reed instruments (oboe, cor anglais, bassoon). And boys with thick lips he would mark as bad prospects for the clarinet.

The Great Upsurge

"What's going on in school music in America?"

"Lots. The great upsurge began about 1921-22. I got caught up in that. It started, roughly speaking, in the Eastern portion of the Middle East, with a band craze. Bands in all the schools. Then by 1930 or thereabouts, bands started giving way to orchestras. By then, the movement had crept west. Texas and California started the band craze, then, and they're still in it. They haven't got to the orchestras yet. But in the Middle West now they're moving on once more, and there are a lot of small ensembles (chamber music groups and woodwind ensembles). I was there last year judging competitions and heard some of them. There were very few chamber music ensembles when I was a student."

"And in the East?"

"The East Coast's different. They have Fine Arts High Schools there. There's one in New York City, one in Detroit, one in Chicago. Outstanding students can major in music or painting in those schools. Then they can go from there to a conservatory if they want to."

"When you say there's more going on in music in Auckland than in a comparable American city, just what do

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