

# RADIO'S PART IN THE BAND CONTEST

## *Bandsmen Hear Themselves as Others Hear Them*

**A**T the New Zealand Brass Bands Contest recently concluded in Wanganui, the NZBS put into operation for the first time a system of recording the whole of the band events. Several interesting considerations arise from this, some of them with perhaps a bearing on the future of band contests in this country. In the first place, the comprehensive radio coverage of the contest came in for specially favourable comment, particularly among bandsmen themselves. It was notable what a keen interest they took in hearing the recordings of their playing following the actual performances. Whenever these recordings were on the air one noticed that the lounge at the hotel where most of the bandsmen were staying was packed with contestants listening to the radio. As a matter of fact, I would say that it was possible to hear more detailed work from the recordings than from the actual playing of the items in the open air, for the microphone is more meticulous than the human ear.

Thus, apart from the service to listeners scattered all over the country,

it was a great advantage, and an education, to players and conductors to be able to hear in this way just how their bands had performed. And speaking as one of the adjudicators at the contest, I would add that it was of considerable interest to the judges, too.

In fact, a thought arises in my mind that the time may come when band contests will be judged from recordings made at public performances, instead of being judged, as at present, on the spot at the performances themselves. There is the obvious advantage that an adjudicator would be able to play over a recording as often as he wanted to, and be able to check it immediately with the playing of another band.

One conductor, on listening to the radio broadcast of his band, was heard to say that if he had been able to hear his band playing like that before it went in front of the judges, it wouldn't be playing the way it was. That sounds Irish, I know, but I think his meaning was clear enough.

Apart from all this, there is the historical aspect: under this system of recording contest performances, valuable archives of band music could be built up for future reference.

As for the contest itself, Wanganui can well afford to be proud of the smooth organisation of the various events, of the record attendances—and of the weather. Great credit is due to the local committee and the New Zealand Brass Bands' Executive for the successful manner in which the contest was controlled. It was, of course, unfortunate that four bands were disqualified for a breach of the rules in the Hymn Test. The conditions governing this event were advertised on the contest schedule a considerable time before entries closed, and it is to be regretted that the bands concerned did not familiarise themselves with the instructions. However, the result of this unfortunate incident has been a further revision of the rules, which now provide that competitors shall play any one of 50 hymn tunes.

In the major event, the test selections, a high standard of performance was reached, and the new champions, Wanganui Garrison Band, are to be congratulated on their splendid playing. The chief adjudicator, Flight-Lieutenant Hugh Niven, indicated that the best New Zealand bands are as good as any in Australia. In the solo events, too, the standard was very high: indeed, two competitors were awarded the possible points—sufficient indication in itself of the very favourable opinion which Flight-Lieutenant Niven had of the performance.

### Women Players

An interesting feature of the contest was the inclusion of a solo event for women members of bands. In my opinion—and I was the judge of this event—the winner's performance was outstanding, her playing being so nearly flawless that she gained 96 points out of the 100 possible.

On the other hand, the standard was not high in the bass trombone and cornet duet competitions. But these were the only events in which the adjudicators were critical of the performances.

One remarkable feature of the contest was the standard of performance by the C Grade Bands, this section being won by Hawera Auxiliary Band, which played an arrangement of Wagner's *Rienzi*. In fact, the standard reached in this grade was almost as high as that in the B grade, and the judge expressed the opinion that at least two C grade bands should be playing in a higher grade.

My general impression of the contest is that it augurs well for the future of brass bands in New Zealand. The championship will be held in Dunedin next year, and since this will be Otago's centennial year, I suggest that it is quite likely that the record set up in 1947 will be broken.

—T. J. Kirk-Burnnand

## ★ **CHOSTIAKOFF RETURNS** ★

**A**FTER an interval of 10 years, during which he has toured South Africa, England, and Canada, become naturalised as a British subject in Australia, and spent the war years there, Senia Chostiakoff is back again in New Zealand. An experienced singer, he first visited this country in 1927 as one of the tenors of the Don Cossack Choir (which is still appearing in the United States). In 1934 and 1936 he toured the Dominion as a radio singer, and during this month and next he will once more be heard in broadcast recitals from all the main National stations.

"I am very happy to tour New Zealand again for the Broadcasting Service," he told *The Listener*, "because when I was here before I think I made a lot of friends. . . ." He opened his satchel and took out a huge sheaf of letters. " . . . I will do my best in my coming programmes to sing all the songs they asked for so long ago."

During his travels, Chostiakoff has brought his repertoire up to 200 songs. Some modern Russian songs by Shostakovich will probably be heard in his recitals.

Two recitals have already been given from 2YA this month, and other recital dates from this station are this Friday, March 14; Monday, March 17; Tuesday, March 18; and Thursday, March 20. The rest of his broadcast pro-



SENIA CHOSTIAKOFF

grammes are scheduled as follows: Station 4YZ, Sunday, March 23, Tuesday, March 25, and Thursday, March 27; Station 4YA, Saturday, March 29, Sunday, March 30, and Tuesday, April 1; Station 3YA, Thursday, April 3, Sunday, April 6, and Monday, April 7; Station 2YH, Saturday, April 12, Sunday, April 13, and Tuesday, April 15; Station 1YA, Friday, April 18, Saturday, April 19, and Sunday, April 20; Station 2YA (return), Saturday, April 26, Sunday, April 27, and Tuesday, April 29.

### To Speed or Not to Speed

"Robert Louis Stevenson used to say that it was better to travel hopefully than to arrive. I think it's best to travel hopefully and arrive. But, with our modern speed of travel we neither travel hopefully nor do we arrive. I would prefer a little more stability and stationariness to excessive speed."—(W. J. Brown taking part in a recent Brains Trust broadcast.)