

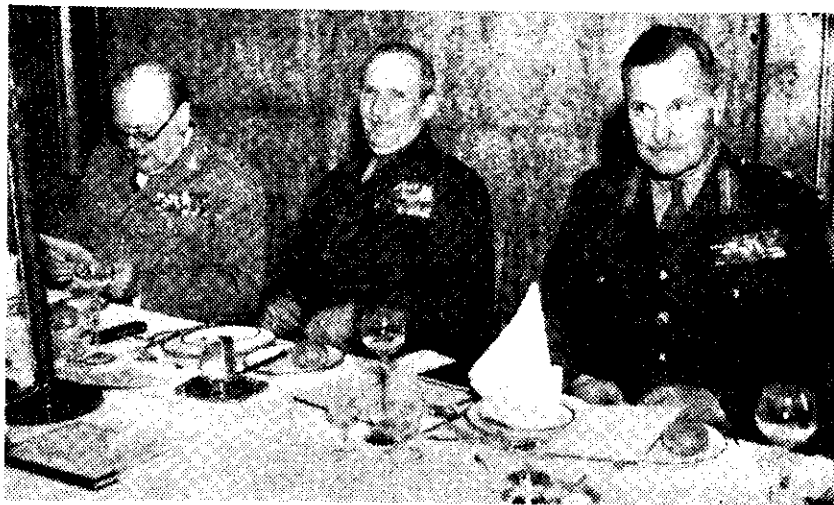
Anyone who wants to know what manner of man is the most successful British general since Wellington can read all these books with profit—and should read them all and not one only.

He made himself known to his troops in a way that no other British general did, and in doing so got to know them. Of course he was then accused of being a publicity monger. Yet Moorehead says he held only two Press conferences and did not handle them very well. What he did and said was just naturally news, and if he sought publicity it was purely and solely for its value to his troops. He was always emphatic, deliberate, and direct, the unquestioned commander. "We are going to Tripoli, going to Tripoli," clearly we were going to Tripoli. "You may cough and clear your throats for one minute and then there will be no more coughing or hawking," and there was no more. I tried to maintain that there was no evidence that my men had been smoking. "When I say your men were smoking they were

smoking." I felt that he had made the position clear; they evidently had been smoking.

Before Alamein he inspected all the troops who were to make the assault, as later in England he inspected those destined for the Normandy beaches. Fifth Brigade put on a full ceremonial and to my proud eye looked splendid, the battalions beautiful smooth running machines, the men hardened, refreshed and confident. The Army Commander walked with me along the front of every company, looking closely at each man. I remarked, "Every man is a veteran, Sir." "Yes," he said, "trained to kill in the moonlight." It was faintly shocking, even though we were by no means soft-hearted in those days, but after all killing was our business. As we walked away he said, "It is an inspiration to see such troops," and I felt that he meant it.

To me he seemed a very great soldier and by the end of the war I believe he had become a great man.



WITH Mr. Churchill and Sir Bernard Freyberg at the El Alamein dinner in London on October 23, 1945

## BRAITHWAITE OPENS TOUR AT AUCKLAND

### Programme Arrangement "Unorthodox but Sound"

Written for "The Listener"

THE popularity of the National Orchestra concerts has not flagged during the Auckland season—although there has been such a remarkable concentration of musical activity of all kinds in this city that some falling away of public interest (through sheer exhaustion) would not have been surprising. There has been none. The last concert of the season, at which Warwick Braithwaite conducted, brought a bumper house. Sitting in the hall and listening to the applause, one could have been forgiven for thinking, at certain moments, that New Zealanders are becoming as enthusiastic about music as they are about football.

It is not quite as good as that, of course. But if the present degree of enthusiasm can be sustained there is no need for us to feel in the least apprehensive about the ability of the Orchestra to establish itself as a public institution.

THE programme on Friday evening was unorthodox in its arrangement, but I think Mr. Braithwaite's decision to begin with the hour-long *Eroica* Symphony of Beethoven was sound. When it comes to building programmes one tends to think in terms of the meal table—hors d'oeuvres, soup, fish, then the main meat course, followed by sweets. But it doesn't often work out like that. And there are a dozen different principles of programme-arrangement.

A work of the dimensions of the *Eroica* places a heavy strain on the attention of the listener, especially if he is not familiar with it. It was probably the best plan to launch straight into the symphony, while the audience was fresh.

One must admire Mr. Braithwaite's courage in getting the Orchestra to tackle such a Himalayan peak. The Orchestra is, after all, very young. It has not yet had time to develop to the stage at which such feats can be attempted with the hope of complete success. It must be said that the players

came within striking distance of it, and in doing so gave further evidence of the most astonishing progress that has been made in such a short space of time. But they will need more experience, and intensive rehearsing over a much longer period than was possible on this occasion, before they can expect to master the *Eroica* or any of the other really big symphonic works.

It was good, all the same, to find the thing being attempted. In making his first appearance with the Orchestra Mr. Braithwaite could have taken the easy road; he could have chosen much simpler music, and have achieved a facile success. He preferred, however, to take the Orchestra and the occasion seriously,

and he was fully justified in the event. We were given, not a completely satisfying performance, but one that was (on the highest standards) very respectable indeed. And at the end it was clear that in Warwick Braithwaite we have a conductor of considerable stature.

His style is both vivid and sensitive. He infuses a great deal of spirit into his work, and maintains an intimate relationship with the players. I was struck by the way in which his whole bodily movement expresses his feeling about a passage, there is no movement of head, feet or body that is not dove-tailed neatly and significantly into the movements of the baton and of that very eloquent left hand. He gives the impression of being possessed by the music, and at home with it; of being quite sure of himself without cockiness or affectation; and of managing always to be completely explicit in his communications with the players. He must be a very satisfactory conductor to work under.

The most serious faults in the performance of the *Eroica* were, first, a lack of fullness and richness in the tone of the violins—which otherwise played well, with precision and good expression; secondly, an occasional hint of rawness of tone among some of the woodwind section, and a loss of pitch by a bassoon; thirdly, a

touch of stridency in the brass now and again when it was not called for. These are faults that will be overcome in time, no doubt. But they meant, on this occasion, that the *Eroica* fell a little short of its full grandeur.

IN the Oberon overture the longer rhythms of the music tended now and then to lose definition; here and there the fiddles were a little shrill; and a wind instrument would have a moment of uncertainty. There was also, I thought, a certain loss of crispness towards the end, a hint of frayed edges on a phrase. But apart from these flaws the performance was a very satisfactory one. The opening passage on the horn was beautifully played. The overture was repeated at the end of the evening as an encore.

Mozart's *A Little Night Music* was given sensitive treatment, on the whole. The necessary lightness of texture was maintained, and the lyrical qualities in the music were brought out. Now and then the 'cellos were a trifle weak in a phrase that needed emphasis without weight. I should enjoy hearing Mr. Braithwaite conduct some more Mozart.

The gentleness of the Mendelssohn "Nocturne and Scherzo" was well-realised, and it provided a contrast with the last number on the programme, Borodin's "Polovtsian Dances" from *Prince Igor*, where the Orchestra had a chance to let itself rip in the barbaric rhythms of Tartary. This sort of music is not my cup of tea, and I really cannot say whether it was well or ill played. It certainly provided the audience with a noggin of raw musical spirits—"one for the road," as it were, on a cold winter's night.

The concert was undoubtedly a personal triumph for Mr. Braithwaite. But, as he hinted in a brief speech, it was the keenness and competence of the players themselves that made this possible. The ovation given both players and conductor at the end provided a fitting culmination to the first Auckland season of the National Orchestra.

—A.R.D.F.



AT rehearsal with the National Orchestra

Sparrow photograph