

(continued from previous page)

In Wellington, the closing brass chords simply wipe out everything else, but in Dunedin the rest of the orchestra still has its correctly proportioned voice right to the end.

This difference in the percussion is one of the most startling features of the Dunedin hall. In Wellington, a "piatti" player in a forte passage momentarily obliterates the rest of the orchestra, and it takes a second or two for a sensitive ear to readjust itself after the excessive overtones from the cymbals. The piccolo similarly tends to split away from its fellows in Wellington, and becomes acutely dominating. But in the Dunedin Town Hall both these trouble-givers can be let out without the slightest fear, for in the loudest passages they still only form part of what the whole orchestra is saying.

Although the Tchaikovsky composition has been selected to deal with in detail, any item could have been chosen, for all show the same thing—the effect of a totally different ensemble from what we hear in Wellington. Never does the music sound disagreeable from introduced resonances, peaks or reverberations, and from the most delicate pianissimos (e.g., in the *Walk to the Paradise Garden*) to the loudest climaxes there is a feeling not only of perfect distinctness and rightness of tone-colour of all the instruments, but also of cohesion and balance. The sound swells up and floats out into the hall in a way most satisfying to the musician's ear. I had thought the Brahms No. 1, given in Auckland, was the orchestra's finest playing to date, but then the Borodin in Wellington seemed to top it; whether the Dvorak No. 4 in Dunedin was actually played better than these I would not like to say, but there is no question that aurally it was easily the most rewarding, due to the wonderful hall.

#### Luck and Judgment

One is tempted to speculate on why the acoustics are so much better in the Dunedin Town Hall; it may be the much higher ceiling or it may be largely luck, but the fact remains that Dunedin, through the foresight of a previous City Council, and the generosity of some of its public-minded citizens has something of which it can be very proud. If only Wellington had a building like this to rehearse and play in, what a wonderful National Symphony Orchestra and Conservatorium of Music New Zealand could build up! It is to be hoped that some day an attempt will be made to improve the present hall acoustically, as has been done in the Royal Albert Hall in London.

That leads to my final remark. It must be obvious from what has been written that I believe our orchestra has not been properly or adequately heard at all until it is heard under the acoustic conditions available in Dunedin. And therefore it follows that some of the fairest and most constructive criticism of this orchestra's capabilities at the present time is likely to come from musicians in Otago. Statements made by those who have heard the orchestra only under poorer conditions should be accepted with some reserve; those who really have the interests and advancement of the orchestra at heart would do well to make every effort to hear it at its best—in the Dunedin Town Hall.



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