

# "HINEMOA"

Alfred Hill's Cantata  
to be Produced

ACCORDING to the classic legend, Hero, priestess of Aphrodite at Sestos, was seen at a festival by Leander of Abydos. They fell in love with each other, and he used to swim the Hellespont at night to visit her, guided by a light from her tower. One stormy night, the light was extinguished, and Leander was drowned. Hero, seeing his body, drowned herself likewise. Hinemoa, heroine of a famous Maori legend, was concerned in a somewhat similar love affair, but in this case she herself did the swimming and the consequences were a good deal happier.

Part of the musical entertainment planned for the Royal Tour was a presentation of Alfred Hill's Maori cantata *Hinemoa* at the Civic Theatre, Rotorua. But although the tour has been postponed indefinitely, the opera will be staged towards the end of March. Recordings of the performance will be made by the NZBS and sent to the King and Queen as a gesture of loyalty and affection from the Maori people.

*Hinemoa* will have an all-Maori cast, to be chosen from the Rotorua district, and a chorus of from 40 to 50 voices. Chorus rehearsals are now being held under the direction of Te Mauri Meihana, of Rotorua, and the musical director will be Gordon Cole, of Auckland, who was chorus-master for the Auckland season of the opera *Carmen*. The organiser is Sam Edwards, of Auckland, and the project has the support of the Mayor and Council of Rotorua. Bernard Beeby, who is in charge of the NZBS Production Studios, Wellington, will be the producer. Free and blank verse, to link up the music, has been written by Tom Tyndall, of the NZBS.

## The Story

The cantata has four main characters—Hinemoa (a Maori maiden, soprano), Tutanekai and Tiki (Maori youths, baritone and tenor), and the Tohunga (a Maori wizard, bass). The legend, according to a version written by Isolde Hill, concerns a Maori chief who, with his four sons, lived on the small island of Mokoia, in the centre of Lake Rotorua. The youngest, Tutanekei, was considered to hold an inferior position in the tribe, though his physical prowess made him famous among the young warriors of his day. On the shore of the lake lived Hinemoa, daughter of a chief of a rival tribe, and her beauty drew suitors from far and near, among them Tutanekei.

Helped by Tiki, Tutanekei built a high look-out tower where they retired every evening to play a musical duet, hoping that the melody would reach Hinemoa's ears. One day Tutanekei sent Tiki to tell her of his love, as was the custom, and arranged that on a dark night she should paddle a canoe to the island, guided by the music. But Hinemoa's father, becoming suspicious, had all the canoes pulled high on the beach and securely tied. Throwing off her garments, Hinemoa dived into the lake and swam towards the melody.

Reaching the island almost exhausted, she groped her way ashore and, finding herself in the warm water of a spring,



ALFRED HILL, a characteristic study

rested, wondering how she could reach Tutanekei's whare. A slave passed carrying a calabash to get his master a drink. Assuming a gruff voice, Hinemoa, too, called for a drink. No Maori may refuse such a request to anyone and, thinking the voice came from some great chief, the slave handed her the calabash, remarking that it belonged to his master, Tutanekei. The calabash dropped and smashed against the rocks. The slave returned for another. Again Hinemoa gruffly demanded the calabash and dashed it to pieces before the slave.

When Tutanekei heard the tale he took up his war weapons and ran to punish the person who dared to break his calabashes. He found Hinemoa, wrapped his cloak around her and took her to his house, which, according to ancient Maori law, made them man and wife. Next day there was joy and rejoicing on the island of Mokoia.

## Rarotongan Air

A note on the score by the composer says that the main Maori air which runs through the work was obtained many years ago from a white man, E. D. Hoban. Years later a half-caste Maori, Wi Duncan, asserted that it was a Rarotongan melody. Others claimed that the Rev. Mr. Williams, of Hawke's Bay, wrote the words and a Maori friend the tune. Finally, Hari Hongi, a Government interpreter, and author of

a Maori grammar and other works, verified Wi Duncan's assertion that the air came from Rarotonga. It appears that a chief who came from Rarotonga in 1868 to visit the Maori chief Tawhio, first brought the air to New Zealand. The Maoris quickly appropriated it and turned it into a hymn.

The cantata is dedicated to Hone Heke. The lyrics are by Arthur Adams.

Alfred Hill, now 78 years of age, probably has the affectionate regard of more fledged students in Australia than any other musician. Because of his devoted study and absorption of the idioms of Maori music, Hill is often mistakenly thought of as a New Zealander. He was born in Melbourne.

Hill entered the Leipzig Conservatorium at 16, and promptly showed his inclination for borrowing and absorbing a strongly nationalistic idiom as the basis of his own fertile invention, in a Scottish sonata for violin and piano which, among other works, was published in Germany. He was at Leipzig for five years and later came to New Zealand, where he spent four years as conductor of the Wellington Orchestral Society.

He wrote his Maori cantata *Hinemoa* at that time, and it was performed first at the Wellington Exhibition and later by the Royal Philharmonic Society of Sydney, where Hill settled.

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