

## Helmann Impressed the Australians

ALEKSANDR HELMANN, who opens his New Zealand concert tour next week, is reported to have scored a personal triumph in Australia. Although his name was almost unknown when he arrived, his last concert in the Sydney Town Hall was given to a packed house. He also scored a great success in a recital devoted entirely to the works of Chopin. There is wide public interest in this composer in his centennial year, but Australian critics nevertheless considered Helmann to be one of the finest interpreters of Chopin they had heard.

His interpretations of modern composers in Australia included a fiery performance of Prokofiev's Sonata No. 7 (played here last year by Richard Farrell), and a delicate playing of *Four Piano Pieces*, by the little-known Norwegian atonalist Fartein Valen. He also played two *Etudes* by Stravinsky, *Trois Mouvements Perpetuels* by Poulenc, and *Three Little Funeral Marches* by Lord Berners, the last-named providing music suitable for the demise of a statesman, a canary, and a rich aunt respectively. Another of Helmann's favourites is the unpublished Sonata No. 10 in C Major by the 18th Century Swedish composer J. H. Roman, which he plays from the manuscript.

"Helmann's musical personality," said one Australian writer, "strikes a rare balance of emotion and intellect. His approach is scholastic, and the result can be a blaze of rhetoric and an emotional surge that leaves the most experienced concert-goer nervously exhausted." His virtuosity is not, however, over-emphasised at the expense of other qualities—deep sensibility, sound dramatic sense, a keen intellectual grasp of the music, and just a touch of good showmanship, the critic concluded.

At the Wellington Grand Opera House next week Helmann will play two concertos with the National Orchestra. On Tuesday, August 23, he will play Mozart's Concerto in A Major, K.488, and on Thursday, August 25, Tchaikovsky's Concerto No. 1 in B Flat Minor. He will play three concertos with the orchestra in the South Island—on Tuesday, September 20 at Dunedin, on Saturday, September 24 at Invercargill, and on Saturday, October 1 at Christchurch. He will probably play Rachmaninoff's Concerto No. 3 in D Minor at one of these performances. In addition, the first half of several of his public concerts will be broadcast, the dates of these being: 1YA, September 7; 2YA, September 13; 4YA, September 22; 3YA, October 8.

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