

AUCKLAND'S MUSIC FESTIVAL

Impressive Choral Programmes Arranged

OUTSTANDING choral programmes and no fewer than four complete presentations of Gounod's "Faust" will highlight Auckland's Centennial Music Festival which opens on Friday, June 7, and in a spirit of friendly rivalry no effort is being spared to surpass, if possible, the impressive scale on which Dunedin and Christchurch staged their festivals.

The overseas artists and important visitors for the festival will be welcomed at a luncheon given by the Auckland Society of Musicians—a body some 200 strong—on Thursday, June 6, at Auckland University College, and the visitors will also be entertained at morning tea by the Auckland Travel Club the following day.

The celebrations proper, from the point of view of the general public, will begin with the first performance of "Faust" on Friday evening, June 7. It will be a momentous start, for the preparations for the opera have been on a scale unprecedented in Auckland. In addition to the overseas singers in the main roles, assisted by local artists, there will be a full chorus and ballet, with appropriately impressive settings. The Auckland singers who will have solo parts are Ruth Martin (contralto), who will take the part of Martha, and Martin Liddle (baritone),

who will have the role of Wagner. The stage manager will be Rex Sayers.

"Finest Ever Heard"

Both chorus and ballet have been in intensive rehearsal for a long period and have attained a high level of proficiency. Indeed, Professor H. Hollinrake, the Auckland representative on the National Committee, is confident that "Faust" will be a revelation to the audiences and to the listening public.

"The performance of 'Faust,'" he said, "promises to be the finest ever heard in New Zealand."

Choral Works

The major choral presentation will be Sir Edward Elgar's oratorio setting of "The Dream of Gerontius," written by Cardinal Newman. This mystic and majestic work will be sung in the Auckland Town Hall on Saturday, June 8, the soloists being Gladys Ripley (contralto), Heddie Nash (tenor), and Raymond Beattie (bass-baritone). They will be assisted by the Auckland Choral Society, the Royal Auckland Male Choir and the National Orchestra.

Newman's poem is a moving narrative, telling how Gerontius, on his deathbed, sees the mysteries of the unknown, how, after death, his soul is escorted by the Guardian Angel to the throne of God. Elgar's music follows the Wagnerian form, giving in the prelude an epitome of the leading themes of the work. In succession follow themes representing Judgment, Fear and Prayer, with others suggestive of Despair and Death. The work is scored for contralto, tenor and baritone. Gerontius is the tenor, the Guardian Angel the contralto, and the baritone is the Angel of the Agony.



T. W. M. ASHBY, Secretary to the Fine Arts Sub-Committee of the Auckland Provincial Centennial Council, who has been largely responsible for the organisation of the Auckland festival. He is also Auckland's City Treasurer

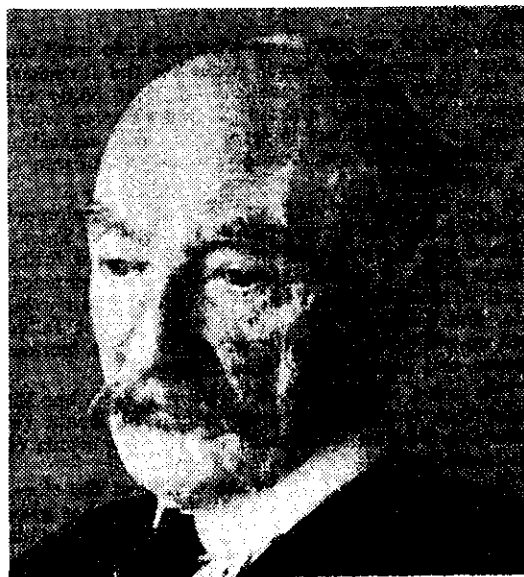
Souvenir Programme

In keeping with the quality of the entertainment provided, the Auckland organising committee has printed a 48-page souvenir programme which will be an admirable permanent record of the season. The booklet has been fully illustrated throughout and it contains, in addition to details of the programmes, the complete libretto of all the choral works to be presented during the festival, as well as articles dealing with the history of the Auckland Choral Society, of orchestral music in Auckland and the part played in the musical life of the city by the University College. There are also many annotations, dealing with practically all the musical compositions which will be heard.

THOMAS HARDY'S CENTENNIAL Tribute From 2YA

Thomas Hardy, novelist and poet, was born on June 2, 1840. The National Broadcasting Service plans to celebrate this centennial with a short programme of talks and song, from 2YA on Sunday afternoon, June 2. G. Gabites will give a talk on Hardy, and settings of some of Hardy's poems will be sung. The Society of the Men of Dorset in New Zealand will pay a tribute to Hardy in the Dorset dialect.

IT is said that many years ago, when an admirer of Thomas Hardy inquired about him in the Dorchester district where he lived, he found he was better known as an architect than as a novelist. The story has some significance. It suggests that literary fame was of less account in that ancient history-crowded countryside than in more sophisticated societies, and it points to Hardy's roots in Dorset and his early training there. Hardy is a common Dorset name, and Thomas Hardy was born, the son of a local builder, in the village of Upper Bockhampton, in a thatched cottage almost hidden by a slope of the downs and the garden bushes. In this cottage his mother lived until her death at the age of ninety. Thomas Hardy, then, came of the very soil of Dorset, and grew up among the peasants and yeomen and townsfolk from whom he took so many of his characters. Apprenticed to an ecclesiastical architect in Dorchester, he was taken by his work



THOMAS HARDY

into many of the neighbouring villages, and thereby widened his knowledge of rural types. Many of his admirers may not know that he won some distinction as an architect, for as a young man he was awarded two prizes. He worked at his profession in London, but he began to write, and in his early thirties he definitely abandoned architecture for literature and London for Dorset. There he lived until his death at the age of eighty-eight.

Gallery of Rustic Types

Dorset, we have said, but Hardy's country was really Wessex, the Wessex of the Saxon Heptarchy. Places as wide afield as Oxford and Salisbury, Winchester, Taunton and Exeter, are identifiable in his novels. In these stories he presents an incomparable picture-gallery of rustic and small-town types. It has been said that if there are any tales that are racy of the soil, they are Hardy's stories of Wessex life and manners. But, so it is added: "His chiefest characteristic is perhaps his determination at all risks to present in all its width and depth the tragedy of human life, perhaps to err on the side of regarding life as too terribly and inevitably sad and sombre." The end of "Tess of the D'Urbervilles," when Tess is hanged in Winchester, is often quoted as an example of this. "Justice" was done, and the President of the Immortals, in Aeschylean phrase, had ended his sport with Tess." And in "Jude the Obscure," about which there was considerable outcry, there is the murder of the children by "Father Time"—"Done because we are too menny"—and Jude's invocation of Job's curse on the day he was born.

Humour As Well As Sadness

But there is a lot of humour in Hardy, and if he is a pessimist he is a manly one. His sadness about the doubtful doom of human kind is a sadness that comes out of the good earth and is not the product of stale city cafés. Hardy is not a cynic.

His fame grew slowly, and "Tess" and "Jude the Obscure" were over-strong meat for many late Victorians, but it has grown steadily, and is now higher than ever.