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MUSIC FOR THE FILMS

**William Walton's Accompaniments For
Bergner Pictures And "Major Barbara"**

A SPECIAL musical accompaniment for the film *Major Barbara*, based on Bernard Shaw's play of the Salvation Army, has been occupying the full time and attention of William Walton recently, according to the latest news to reach New Zealand of this talented young modern composer.

Walton is an interesting case among modern composers. Just as the great composers of the past worked for royal benefactors, or in the direct service of an opera house, so he devotes his talents to the service of a medium of the times in which he lives: the cinema. Or he may compose direct for the radio, or for the modern ballet.

Walton has, of course, composed for orchestral and concert presentation as well as for cinema, radio and ballet, but the average listener will remember best the musical accompaniment which he provided for all of Elizabeth Bergner's films, particularly *Escape Me Never* and *Dreaming Lips*, but also *Stolen Life*, the last Bergner film to reach New Zealand. Shaw's *Major Barbara* is shortly to be screened in New York, and local musicians will have something to look forward to on its presentation here.

Walton has been equally successful with modern ballet music, of which the latest is *The Wise Virgins* (Bach, arranged by Walton), presented a few months ago at Sadler's Wells. Parts of his two "Facade" Suites have been turned into ballet music, and the music from the *Escape Me Never* film has also been adapted for ballet.

Everything on Record

The overture "Portsmouth Point" (composed in 1925 when Walton was 23 years of age), was the first work to win the applause of any wide body of music lovers, but since then he has had the unusual distinction of having had recordings made of all his works, including even the piano quartet he composed when he was about 15 years of age. His habit has been to compose sparingly and thoughtfully, so that the list of his works is not particularly long. It is marked with wide experimentation. For example, it includes "Belshazzar's Feast" for baritone solo, chorus and orchestra, which was presented at the 1933 International Society for Contemporary Music Festi-

val at Amsterdam; "Passionate Shepherd" for voice and orchestra; "Sinfonia Concertante" for piano and orchestra; "In Honour of the City of London" for chorus and orchestra; also chamber music and songs, and the Concerto for viola and orchestra which had its premiere performance from the BBC. "Crown Imperial," a Coronation march, which also had its first presentation from the BBC, was played in the Abbey as the King and Queen entered. The BBC also had the honour of first presenting the finale of Walton's Symphony (which incidentally was heard on a recording from IYA recently). The greater part of the Symphony was first presented in the Queen's Hall by the London Symphony Orchestra under the late Sir Hamilton Harty, but Walton took a long time in writing the finale. This symphony has made a strong impression by its individuality, although some critics found the influence of Sibelius.

Walton is probably best known for his "Facade" Suites. Originally this music was a setting of the satirical poems of the Sitwells spoken by Edith Sitwell and Constant Lambert, and accompanied by clever musical parodies. Later it was revived into two orchestral suites, from which is derived the music for his comic ballet.

Link with New Zealand

Among Walton's most recent work has been an Overture specially written for the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. It will be placed later in the Chicago Museum.

Curiously enough one of his most lovely works has not yet been heard in England, his native country. However, there is a special reason. He composed a violin concerto specially for Jascha Heifetz, the copyright of which rests with Heifetz for two years. It has been performed and widely acclaimed in New York and Cleveland, but as Heifetz is still in America, the British musical world has still to hear it.

Much of Walton's music was written in Italy, although he resided in London until the blitz made composition there impossible. He is still in England.

Walton is not yet forty years old. He now has a link with New Zealand in that his sister, Miss Nora Walton, is lady-in-waiting to Her Excellency, Lady Newall.



WILLIAM WALTON
Has a link with New Zealand

LOOK BEFORE YOU LISTEN

A Run Through The Records

By B.W.

Boy Preacher and Tea Taster

BRANSBY WILLIAMS, who introduced Dickens characters into the Music Halls, started life as a tea-taster. He then became a wall-paper designer, and during that period became a boy preacher with Dr. Harry Grattan Grunness. He next turned to vaudeville, his first "turn" being imitations of famous actors in favourite roles, including Irving as Matthias in "The Bells," and Charles Wyndham as "David Garrick." Finally in 1897 he began his famous Dickens character impersonations — Micawber, Peggotty, Bill Sikes, Pecksniff, Sydney Carton, Mrs. Gamp, and a host of others.

IYA listeners will hear Bransby Williams, entertainer, on Tuesday, April 22.

Strange Wedding Present

ONE of the strangest wedding presents in musical history came to the Russian, Serge Koussevitzky. On the eve of his wedding to the daughter of one of the wealthiest merchants in pre-Soviet Russia he was asked by the bride's father what he would like as a gift. Money? A palatial home? But he wanted none of these

(Continued on next page)

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