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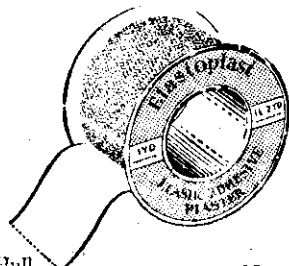
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# MUSIC IN NEW ZEALAND

Extracts from a Talk by



WARWICK BRAITHWAITE

I HAVE been asked to talk to you about Music in New Zealand, but particularly to sum up my experiences and to tell you some of the things, good and bad, I have observed since I came back to New Zealand nearly two years ago. First and foremost, let me say at once that a real miracle has taken place before your eyes during the past eight years. That miracle is the National Orchestra. To have built an orchestra of such excellence in New Zealand is an almost incredible achievement. . . It says much for the musical life of this country so far away from the centre of cultural life, that musicians here kept going despite the lack of any kind of comparison with fellow musicians abroad. And the NZBS, plus a benevolent Government, has made this possible. . .

The Orchestra has its critics, of course; critics of three kinds. Some people don't think you should have a national orchestra in New Zealand. Others don't like some of the programmes it plays; others again criticise the Orchestra's performance. Now, in general, criticism of these last two kinds is all to the good. Criticism has a legitimate place in the arts; responsible, well-informed critics can give a real service to music, provided only that they live up to the requirements of their position. They should write or speak from sound knowledge; they should criticise helpfully. . . But—and this is very important—they should be on guard lest what they say with genuine intent to improve and to help, should be misapplied by others to harm or, it may be, to destroy.

## Music Festivals

It's a most praiseworthy thing to organise and carry through a festival of the arts. Mind you, it takes a lot of very hard work. But nothing succeeds like enthusiastic planning and sincere work. If some festivals are more successful than others, I think you'll find the differences are mainly traceable to the degree of enthusiasm put into them: first in organisation; then in performance. You have the talent here to make every festival a success, provided only you harness latent enthusiasm. To see what can be done with choral groups, you need only look at the Christchurch Harmonic Society and the Schola Cantorum of Wellington. . . The choral excellence of a festival of music must spring from the standard achieved year by year by the already existing Choral and other musical societies. To put three choirs together and call them a Festival Choir but fail to mould them into one united body is asking for failure.

## Music in Schools

There is the wonderful work being done in schools . . . but I wouldn't like New Zealanders to think that this is better done here than in England. The school my sons went to in England has two symphony orchestras—a junior and a senior. My younger son, 15 years of age, plays the trombone in the senior orchestra, and my elder has carried his viola playing into the Cambridge University Symphony Orchestra. Now this last fact is important. How many New Zealand schoolchildren are able to carry on their playing in orchestras after they leave school? There is the weakness of the situation here. In the old

days of my youth in Dunedin, there were two big orchestras, an operatic society, a choral society and various suburban ones, and a Male Voice Society of about 50 voices. This was in a city of 65,000 population. These adult opportunities haven't multiplied in keeping with the growth of population, notwithstanding music in schools.

## Band Music

Let me talk about brass bands—an excellent part of New Zealand musical life. Just consider for a moment the amazing standard achieved, by brass band players. All these players are amateurs in the true sense of the word, but how much more advanced they are than the amateur string orchestras in the country. That the repertoire must be improved is self-evident, and I am hoping that that great artist Ken Smith will do much in that direction. The recent achievement of the New Zealand Brass Band in Edinburgh and Manchester speaks for itself. The excellence of the brass section of the National Orchestra is the result of the good work done by brass bands in this country.

## Conservatory of Music

I feel most strongly that a College of Music is the most urgent musical need at the present time in New Zealand . . . and the only way of collecting together teachers of all sorts and providing facilities for the proper education of musicians. I have felt for a long time that ear training, rudiments of music, sight singing and a broad education in all branches of music is somewhat lacking in New Zealand. For instance, when I went to the Royal Academy of Music in London, I found that I was not allowed to take up only one subject, but had to take besides composition, piano-forte, harmony and counterpoint, sight singing, ear training, opera and choral classes. . . The outcome of this curriculum was that in three years my musical wits were considerably sharpened, and I have never lost that state of razor-edged knowledge. One other thing such a curriculum can do for a musician is the developing of latent gifts which suddenly blossom out and which the musician never dreamt existed.

N.Z. LISTENER, AUGUST 20, 1954.