

MUSIC FROM THE NETHERLANDS

FOUR or five hundred years ago Dutch and Flemish composers conducted the leading orchestras of the day at the courts of all the reigning monarchs, and the fame of the "Dutch school" exceeded that of any other country in Europe. But for three centuries after those days when Dutch music was at its zenith the composers of the Netherlands had only the memory of their former glory to inspire them. At the beginning of the present century, however, things changed for the better. Under the example of the surrounding countries, Dutch composers started to write their own individual type of music again, and the creation of the Amsterdam Concertgebouw Orchestra proved a great stimulant to contemporary composers.

A new series of 13 programmes of *Music by Netherlands Composers*, comprising mainly the work of these modern musicians, will be broadcast by NZBS stations, starting from 1YC at 7.0 p.m. on Saturday, October 30. These programmes were compiled by Radio Nederland and have been issued on transcription for use by the NZBS. They contain works by three generations of Dutch composers from 1880 to the present day, including some of the younger writers such as Hans Henke-

mans and Jurriaan Andriessen. Some of this music—Henkemans' Flute Concerto, for instance, or Willem Pijper's Third Symphony—is already well known outside of Holland, but many of the works will be unknown to New Zealand listeners. The only composer of an earlier period to be included in the series is Peter Hellendaal, an 18th Century musician, who lived for a number of years in England and succeeded Dr. Charles Burney as organist at St. Margaret's Church at Lynn in Norfolk. His Concerto Grosso No. 2 in D Minor is included in the tenth programme.

The renaissance of Dutch music can be dated from about 1880, when a handful of young composers got together with the ideal of creating a truly Dutch music. Bernard Zweers, the most notable of them, composed in 1880 his Third Symphony, dedicated "To my Fatherland." In it he sought to crystallise his impressions of the Dutch landscape, and the symphony succeeded in focusing world attention on the new Netherlands school. Zweers became senior professor of composition at the Amsterdam Conservatoire, and inspired a new generation of composers with his ideals. The best known of his pupils was Willem Pijper, who in his turn carried on the nationalist spirit and won great personal renown abroad.

But in Holland itself the great personality after Zweers was Alphons Diepenbroek. He was a self-taught composer and a classical scholar by profession. Although his remarkable *Missa* for male choir, tenor solo and organ was unappreciated for a long time, it was a landmark in his history of Catholic church music. In it he adapted the polymelodic vocality of Palestrina and the harmonic inventions of Wagner to his own style, and in his later works he remained true to his principle.

Whereas Diepenbroek made use of the many excellent Dutch vocalists to exploit the possibilities of the human voice, preferably against a subtly coloured background, the third important composer of his generation, Johan Wagenaar, was drawn to the symphonic poem. He displayed unmistakable influences of Berlioz and Richard Strauss, yet he brought a genuine Dutch humour to his parodies which made him widely popular. In the meantime the Concertgebouw Orchestra, founded in 1888, gained world fame under the direction of Willem Mengelberg, and it helped to gain international recognition for such writers as Pijper. Pijper died in 1947, and was regarded as an extreme modernist who never made any concessions. He maintained his closely-knit motif style with its polytonal and polymetric devices



ALEXANDER VOORMOLEN

to the end. His Third Symphony (in programme three) was composed in 1926 and dedicated to Pierre Monteux. It is an exciting work and remains characteristic of his extensive body of work.

Pijper's clever and caustic essays have had a decisive influence on the younger writers, and it is largely due to Pijper's leadership that a group of Dutch com-



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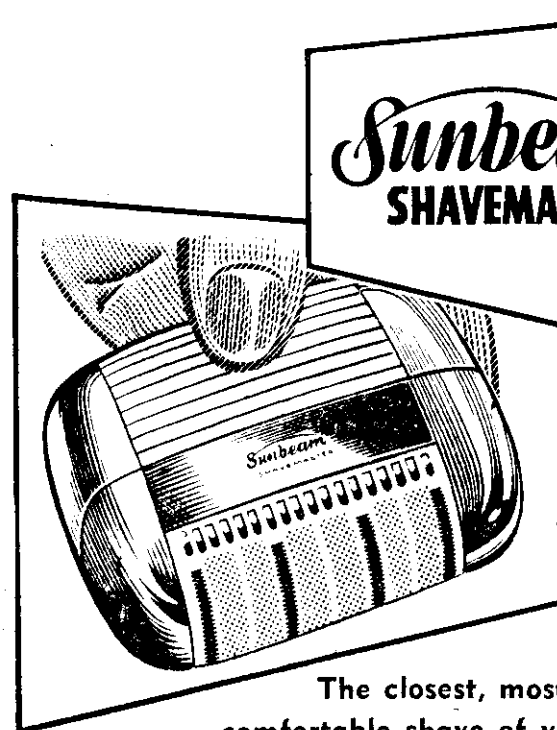
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