

## NEWS OF BROADCASTERS, ON AND OFF THE RECORD

**JUSSI BJORLING**, the operatic and concert singer, is only one of four tenors in his family. When he was ten his father organised the family into the Bjorling Male Quartet, and for two years they toured the United States, appearing in native costume primarily in Swedish churches and at Swedish community gatherings. Back

**SWEDISH TENOR** in Stockholm Jussi trained as an operatic singer, and he was chosen by Toscanini for the role of Don Ottavio at the Salzburg Festival of 1937. Next year he



**JUSSI BJORLING**  
"He likes to wrestle"

made his New York debut at the Met, singing in *La Bohème* and *Il Trovatore*. He stayed there until 1941, when he returned to Sweden, spending the next four years in the military forces and singing with the Stockholm Opera. In 1945 he reappeared in the United States and rapidly regained his old place as one of the leading operatic tenors in America today.



National Publicity Studios photograph

"WELL, folks, the show seems to have got away to a good start," said compère Bill Entwistle when the Sixth Korea Concert Party gave a performance in Wellington shortly before their departure last week. A delayed broadcast of their farewell concert at Papakura Military Camp will be heard in a link of the YA stations, 3YZ and 4YZ, at 9.15 p.m. on Monday, November 15. From left to right: Bill Entwistle, Lois Bognuda, Betty Evans, Pauline Ashby, and Henry Rudolph

N.Z. LISTENER, NOVEMBER 12, 1954.

## N.Z. COMPOSER

### Thomas Gray

HERE'S an old army joke about the volunteer pianist who was told off to dig slit trenches, but fate was a little kinder than that to Thomas Gray when he enlisted during the First World War. He already had a considerable musical life behind him, including study at the Royal College of Music, and he was lucky enough to serve as a trumpeter in the cavalry band of the Seventh Queen's Own Hussars. When he came to New Zealand in 1939 and settled down as orchestrator and arranger to the Centennial Symphony Orchestra, he told a newspaper reporter, "You mustn't expect anything too highly-coloured from me, you know." But Thomas Gray is a modest man, and his *Festival Overture* which was performed by the National Orchestra last December is a gay and colourful work. It was described by one critic as "boisterous, hearty, holiday fun." In addition he has written a symphony, a cello concerto, a tone poem and several instrumental works on a smaller scale.

But perhaps Thomas Gray has made his greatest mark in music as an arranger. His orchestrations of arias and songs for such artists as Heddle Nash, Oscar Natzka, and Isobel Baillie, who sang with the Centennial Orchestra, were highly regarded. In 1940, with the formation of the NBS String Orchestra, he was engaged to build a library of orchestrations particularly suited to this

Jussi Bjorling, whose first name is the equivalent of the English "Jack," is described by David Ewen as even-tempered and affable, except before a performance, when "debut nerves" make their appearance. He is stockily built with the fair hair and light complexion often seen in Scandinavians. He loves the sea and spends much of his leisure time in boats and in fishing and swimming. Other diversions are tennis, billiards, and the Swedish sport known as hand-wrestling. In 1935 he married Anna Lisa Berg, one of Sweden's most



Spencer Digby photograph

group. He created over 200 arrangements, transcriptions and compositions that were featured in dinner music and more serious programmes by the orchestra. He has arranged for all musical combinations from solo voice to symphony orchestra, and has also reconstructed works for orchestra from the piano score. In the current *Music by New Zealand Composers* series his *Questions and Answer* suite, and his arrangements of two folk songs, "Jock o' Hazeldean" and "Bonnie Wee Thing," are played by the Alex Lindsay String Orchestra.

beautiful women, and a lyric soprano of marked gifts, and they have three children.

It is said that the essentially Italianate quality of Bjorling's singing is the result of study with Tullio Voghera, the coach whom Enrico Caruso employed during his first six years in the United States. Mrs. A. Boon, of Hamilton, who has asked us to publish Bjorling's photograph, writes to say that "Caruso's wife paid him a grand compliment some time back by stating he was the nearest she had ever heard to Caruso, and presented him with a costume worn by Caruso in his last performance in *Rigoletto*."

★

AMERICAN jazz has produced many extraordinary musicians, but Mel Powell is one of the few to make the transition from swing to serious composition without losing his mastery of either idiom. In a new recording by the Mel Powell Septet currently being heard from YA stations, Mel

leads an all-star group of jazz musicians in some of the most exciting improvisations put on record. Mel had never played with any of the musicians in this septet up to the time the recording was made, and the result was a constant stream of fresh improvisation, stimulated by play-backs, that eventually achieved a perfection that astonished not only the engineers and producers but the players themselves. Mel Powell was 16 when he replaced Teddy Wilson in Benny Goodman's Band in the early 1940s. His arrangements and compositions proved highly popular, but then like most 18-year-olds Mel was drafted in 1943 and soon found himself in uniform in Glenn Miller's Air Force Band. After Miller's death Mel took over the band, but when the war ended he threw up jazz for classical music, studying with Paul Hindemith. He is married to Martha Scott, and teaches music theory at Queen's College, U.S.A.

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