

## Robert Burch

ONE of the youngest composers in the history of radio, now being heard from YZ stations is Robert Burch, of W. Hingston. He was born in Lyttelton in 1929, and studied music at Victoria University College under Frederick Brown and Douglas Lilburn, and at Lower Hutt under Claude Haydon. He was awarded a Government bursary to London, where he studied composition with Benjamin Frankel at the Guildhall School of Music, and horn with Raymond Bryant of the BBC Symphony. Recent compositions by Robert Burch include a piano sonata and a *Sinfonia* for String Orchestra. In the 15th programme of *Music by New Zealand Composers* John Taylor plays his Four Barcelles for Piano. He wrote these in Paris, and they received their first performance at a concert of the New Zealand Music Society in London.

Robert Burch says he can't trace any musical background in his family, though he doesn't consider this unusual. His late father was, in fact, shipping manager for a well-known travel agency in the South Island. He himself works as a programme officer at Station 2YA, and devotes all his spare time to com-



position. But he also has another interest at the present time, for at Christmas he plans to marry Leah Tozer, a New Plymouth girl who was studying singing at the Guildhall in London at the time he was there. So now, like many another young prospective bridegroom, he is busy hunting through the suburbs of Wellington and Lower Hutt for a suitable flat or house to start married life in.

In 1916, later Wood was to conclude that "Picardy" was "a washout," but the washout has sold well over a million and a quarter copies and has earned its composer around £20,000. "Roses of Picardy" is probably the best-known of the 200 or more songs Haydn Wood has written.

PICARDY and the melody is used as signature tune for a BBC *Masters of Melody* programme about him which is being broadcast from National stations. Also on the programme is "A Brown Bird Singing," another best-seller sung by Doris Gambell; and Haydn Wood himself comes to the microphone to introduce "Joyousness," the item he chose to conduct.

Haydn Wood was considered a boy prodigy on the violin. He was a pupil of Stanford, Charles Wood and Walter Parratt, and became a fluent composer in the classical and freer forms. He car-

ried off second prize—Frank Bridge was third—in the first Cobbett chamber music contest in 1905. In his twenties he was for eight years a concert violinist with the soprano Emma Albani (he visited New Zealand during that period) billing himself as Herr Zakavsky to avoid stigma when he came down to "playing the halls."

According to Charles Reid, who wrote a pen portrait of Wood in the *Radio Times* a couple of years ago, that was his last concession to musical snobbery. In the summer of 1913 he and his wife bought for £200 a second-hand car with a driving seat wide enough to hold both them and their pianist. They set out on tour with the popular ballads Haydn Wood had begun to write. They were ballads addressed to people who "didn't know the difference between a fugue and a fipple flute," and the trio kept going for 13 years at fees of up to £75 a week.

Charles Reid describes Haydn Wood as small and straight-backed, with a cheerful eye and a mane of snowy hair—"a brisk worker still, capable of turning out the music for a five-minute ballad between breakfast and the nine o'clock news."

THE hero of Nicolai Gogol's Russian comedy *The Government Inspector*, at present being broadcast in a BBC adaptation, is a humble little civil service clerk who is mistaken for the government inspector by corrupt village officials—and takes full advantage of the error. He is

SHARP TIMING played in the BBC version by Max Adrian, who has a highly individual line in comedy and gives an amusing impersonation of a sly rogue. As a comedian Max Adrian's sense of timing is acute, and he is chiefly known to London theatre-goers for his work in such pointed revues as *Tuppence Coloured* and *Penny Plain*.

**CORRECTION:** In Open Microphone for November 12, Phyllis Mander was said to be married to an Air Force officer and living in Aden. Her husband is Graham Beavis, a petroleum technologist at Suez



ERIC WATERS

artists at the microphone. He also composed as a piano teacher, his pupils including Owen Jensen, who succeeded him as official accompanist at 2YA, and Mrs. Vincent Aspy, wife of the leader of the National Orchestra. Owen Jensen has described him as "a very clever natural musician as well as a very good accompanist, and a conductor as well." He wrote the musical scores of the operettas *Tutankhamen* and *The Abbess of Whitty*, which were two of the most ambitious and successful productions staged by the Auckland Amateur Operatic Society. In addition to his musical activities Eric Waters took a keen interest in literature and other cultural affairs, and was proud of the fact that he was a cousin of Katherine Mansfield. He was a considerable linguist, and also a first-rate raconteur.

DO you remember "Roses of Picardy?" You might if you heard it during the war as a revival. Actually, it was written a long time before that, because Dorothy Court, the wife of its composer Haydn Wood, first sang it from manuscript at a Belfast charity concert



BARBARA JEFFORD and KEITH MICHELL being interviewed by BARBARA BASHAM (at left) shortly after their return to New Zealand for a summer tour with the New Zealand Players. The interview was broadcast in 2YA's Women's Session

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