

Especially for Young People

IN all the cities and provincial towns which the National Orchestra visits it tries to give concerts for school children. At these concerts many children see a symphony orchestra in action for the first time, and experience, also for the first time, the real thrill that "live" music alone can give. What happens when these children leave school? Does their newly-awakened interest in good music just die for lack of nourishment? The regular subscription concert series is mainly supported by older music-lovers, but during the "Prom" series the young people appear in encouraging numbers again. They enjoy the light-hearted atmosphere, the less serious choice of music, and the greater emphasis on contemporary works which they find easier to appreciate than the classics.

Now the NZBS plans to try out an experimental concert in Wellington especially for young people aged about fifteen to twenty-five. *The Listener* asked the Orchestra's conductor James Robertson what he had in mind for this concert, which is to be given in the Wellington Town Hall on Saturday, April 16.

"We're trying to bridge the gap for these young people between the music which they hear at school concerts and the subscription programmes," he said. "They all like the 'Proms,' but we want to give them something more solid than that—something of their own. For instance, young people generally like and understand contemporary music better than older people do, so we're giving them the Malcolm Arnold Second Symphony in its first performance in New Zealand. This was first heard in England only last year. Arnold used to be a trumpeter before he became a full-time



composer and his music is gay. Its harmony is modern, but not dry or academic. We're starting off with Arthur Benjamin's *North American Square Dance*, which is very lively, and the next item I won't say much about except that it's an orthodox tune treated in an unorthodox way. I hope this will be enlightening, but fun.

"In a more romantic mood, Janetta McStay will play the solo part in Grieg's Piano Concerto. That's one of the popular classics which almost never gets played. Programme planners are

scared stiff of it, but it will probably be new to most of our audience, and is really a lovely thing. Without being pedantic I hope to run through the main themes of the Arnold Symphony which comes next so that it will be easier to take in. Then there'll be another mystery item with some last-minute changes in the membership of the Orchestra, and we'll finish with Enesco's *Roumanian Rhapsody*."

When we talked about the Youth Concert to J. L. Hartstonge, the Service's Concert Manager, he said that it was an idea that the NZBS were very keen to try out. Similar concerts were being given in America, Australia and England, and had proved a great success. The Australian concerts were started by Sir Bernard Heinze, who was then conductor of the Victorian Symphony Orchestra. Now the Youth Concerts Committee there has to organise its own subscription series with a big proportion of young artists among the soloists. The ABC sponsors the concerts and the demand for seats is so great that each concert has to be given twice. Like the Australian series, Wellington's concert will be given at reduced prices, and reservations will be open on the first three days only to young people. For the remaining two days anyone may apply. "Of course," Mr. Hartstonge said, "we're not going to police the doors looking at everyone's teeth. The



JAMES ROBERTSON
"We're trying to bridge a gap"

Music for the Young in Heart

WELL, well, well, a youth concert it's to be. The Orchestra's next appearance on the platform is for the up-and-coming audience. And if youth rallies round as it did during the Prom season this should be an occasion indeed.

This is all very well, but I wonder who James Robertson, his players and the NZBS have in mind when they throw the ball to "youth." If you ask me, looking at the programme and the way it's drafted, it's more for the young in heart—from eighteen to eighty or more—for those to whom a concert is still an exciting experience, and listening to music an adventure. And I rather suspect that James Robertson himself would be happy to count himself among these.

As for myself, while I have long given up any aspirations to jump five-bar gates, I'll be right along toeing the line on the first bar of a first performance of a new symphony, especially when it comes from the pen of so bright a spark as Malcolm Arnold. For that's what we

miss so much these days—the opportunity of hearing music, not only fresh from the composer's pen, but virtually as a surprise packet. This Wellington youth concert, then, should be an evening of ripe listening.

What's more, Malcolm Arnold's music is the right stuff to generate enthusiasm. Mr. Arnold, who was a lively spirit back in his London Philharmonic days—not so far back, either—is no moody philosopher or gloomy dean of music. His is one of the brightest stars on the English musical horizon. In fact, it's well on its way to its zenith.

One of the critics, after the first London performance at the Festival Hall on June 3 last year, affected to find traces of Mahler, Sibelius and Stravinsky in this Second Symphony. I think you will find large slices of Mr. Arnold himself, too. Says the same critic: "Mr. Arnold's music, and particularly in this symphony, may simply be enjoyed as the gay philosophy of an extrovert."

Yes, this should be quite an occasion.

—Owen Jensen

concert will be open to anybody who thinks he'll enjoy it." It is being held early in the season so as not to clash with examination times. Hostels and other institutions catering for young people are being given full information, and it is hoped that in this way many people who have not met the Orchestra before will come, like what they hear, and come again. The NZBS haven't forgotten the inner man either. Refreshments will be on sale—not buffet style as at the "Proms," but theatre-fashion.