

Talking With Sir Bernard Heinze

IT was a clear, bright Spring morning. No snowdrops erupting through the cracks in the city pavements, no shoutings up and down Tinakori Hill, but the sniff of Spring unmistakably there even in a hotel super-heated for trans-Pacific tourists. Sir Bernard appeared, parted amiably from James Robertson with whom he had been breakfasting, shook hands with *The Listener* representative, dashed off to make a phone call, came back and steered us up in the lift to the first-floor lounge with a sort of absent-minded expeditiousness. In the lounge he led the way towards a patch of sunlight slicing through the Venetian blinds as a thirsty man hunts down water. The Australian in him, though presumably undaunted by rain, had evidently found our airs too nipping and eager for his comfort.

Once settled in his chair, Sir Bernard talked easily, the phrases well-turned in his mind so that they fitted what he wanted to say with the same understated elegance as the dark charcoal suit and muted grey check waistcoat fitted his sturdy frame. Sir Bernard Heinze is a man on whom age seems to have set almost no mark. His hair is smooth, black except for touches of grey at the temples. At times, he seems to simmer with surplus energy and general bonhomie. He works ferociously hard at rehearsals and performances—so hard that he has had to have constant treatment on his New Zealand tour for a strained back—yet, at other times he gives the impression of being cool, even a little remote. Without effort, unconsciously and yet unmistakably, he is a civilised man, a product of Australia who has remained Australian but has been shaped and smoothed by European influence.

"It's five years since I was last in New Zealand. It's been a very pleasant experience, and a very interesting one, to see how the Orchestra has improved so tremendously—both technically and musically—in that time. It has a fine potential, and I think will bring great lustre to the reputation for cultural development of this Dominion." We thought this a rather handsome tribute,

coming from a representative of the elder brother in the Australasian partnership, but then elder brothers can sometimes afford to make a generous gesture. What we wanted to hear from Sir Bernard was not what he expected we wanted to hear, so we gave the conversation a gentle shove in a more contentious direction.

We asked him about the stature and outlook of Australian composers today. "Australian culture," he replied, "like that of the United States and your own, is a transplant of European culture. We have no musical background on which we can call, toward which we can look for inspiration, as a medium of national expression. The Australian aborigines sing in eighth tones and less. Some of their songs are translatable into the European tonal system, but I've never heard a composition based entirely on aboriginal tunes. Some of our composers, like Clive Douglas and John Antill, have used its rhythmic figures as a foundation and have used arrangements of the songs for thematic material. But I cannot believe extensive use of it will ever be made. While I'm a great protagonist of national music, I think you must recognise that it has to be international in appeal. If European music deliberately moves towards the acceptance of quarter and eighth tones as extensions of the faculty of musical composition, perhaps Australia and the Asiatic

"A merry little piece," was Shostakovich's description of his Ninth Symphony—and apparently Sir Bernard Heinze and James Robertson find the score just that

countries may come into their own, but the chances are remote. Especially as several of the Asiatic countries are strenuously educating their musicians in the European system."

Composers, said Sir Bernard, are all the time searching for an idiom expressive of their own country's musical content, and musicians should be given every conceivable encouragement in their often thankless efforts to explore new fields. "The acid test of all music is public performance," he added, "and here the conductor can help by trying to ensure that new music gets not just one performance, but three, four, or more. Think what would have happened to the world

of music lovers if Beethoven had got only one performance of his works!"

The thought being too dreadful to contemplate for more than a second or two, Sir Bernard moved on to consider the work of Margaret Sutherland (whose *Adagio for Two Violins* he had introduced into his programmes here) as being typical of a new development in Australian music. "This *Adagio* is remote, tender and tremendously personal to her. It contains a great deal of feeling within a slender mould, and at the same time has an immediate appeal. I think it could quite well quicken our belief that eventually the music we produce will be as expressive of the human scene as our painters have been successful in presenting the Australian light and landscape."



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Junior Orchestra's Concert

"IT is an orchestra with a continually changing membership," said Dr. Charles Nalden, discussing the recorded concert by the Auckland Junior Symphony Orchestra which 1YC will broadcast at 8.26 p.m. on Saturday, September 1. "We build the orchestra to a peak and then, suddenly, we lose a lot of players—a most frustrating business," he added. "For example, 26 of the 80 players were lost to the orchestra at the beginning of this year, nearly all of them having left Auckland. But this sort of thing is only to be expected in an orchestra which trains young musicians to fill places in more mature groups."

Dr. Nalden, who was recently appointed Professor of Music at Auckland University College, said that only 25 per cent of the players were drawn from the university, and not all of them from the music school. For most of the players music was a spare-time activity. For this reason, and because of the limited rehearsal time available, the orchestra gives only one concert a year. During

this period Dr. Nalden has the task of striking a balance between the sections. This is difficult because, although the strings are quite adequate, many of the woodwind and brass players have had little or no training when they join. Peter Musson, who is now with the National Orchestra, joined the Junior Symphony as a clarinet player, switched to the bassoon, and was taught to play it by George Hopkins. Other woodwind players have been similarly started from scratch.

The Auckland Junior Symphony Orchestra was formed by Gordon Cole, music master at Avondale College, in 1947-48, and Dr. Nalden has been its conductor since 1950. The concert to be broadcast by 1YC was recorded last October in the Town Hall, and includes the Piano Concerto No. 2 by Rachmaninoff (soloist, Russell Channell), Geoffrey Skerrett, who is the soloist in the Handel Organ Concerto No. 9, studied for two years at the Royal College of Music, London, on a Government Overseas Bursary, and is now completing his



DR. CHARLES NALDEN

music degree. He is organist at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, Khyber Pass.

Young Persons' Guide

"WHAT did you make of that? A glorious sound? A filthy row? Do any of you know what music it was and what sort of body played it? It was the opening of the *Young Persons' Guide to the Orchestra*, theme by the old English composer Purcell, dished up by the new English composer Benjamin Britten." With these words James Robertson begins his own tour of the fascinating country that makes up the orchestral landscape. With him are players from the National Orchestra to demonstrate their instruments and to combine at the end of each session in a comic duet. These programmes, eleven in all, were first played in the Broadcasts to Schools programmes, but their entertainment value is such that now they will be heard from all YCs, starting Monday, August 27, at 7.0 p.m. Starting with the violin and viola, the listener moves through the orchestra until the percussion's demonstration piece, "The Limited," the harp and a full presentation of Britten's own music, bring this excellent series to an end.