



TEN YEARS *with the Orchestra*

ON October 24, 1946, a number of musicians assembled in St. Paul's schoolroom in Wellington. They entered the hall, sat down behind their music stands and listened to speeches of welcome from the several distinguished visitors present. Finally, the Governor-General, Sir Bernard Freyberg, asked the orchestra to play. Andersen Tyrer stepped on to the rostrum, and the orchestra, the National Orchestra of the New Zealand Broadcasting Service meeting together for the first time, played as its first work part of Dvorak's "New World" Symphony. "It might have been terrible, but in fact it sounded very good," said one of the members, "as we had the pick of the orchestral players in this country." Many of the musicians were drawn

from the ranks of the orchestras that played for the silent films, others, especially wind and brass players, had come from the R.N.Z.A.F. Military Band.

To celebrate this first ten years anniversary Youth Concert, to which all ages are welcome, will be held in the Wellington Town Hall on Wednesday, October 24, and the programme will open with a work specially commissioned for the occasion from Douglas Lilburn. In an interview with *The Listener* Mr. Lilburn told us about this new composition.

"It's a great pleasure for a composer to be asked to write a work for an occasion such as this and not be left sitting always in the world of his own imagin-

ation," he said. "Mr. Robertson asked me to use the full orchestral resources, triple woodwind, saxophone, piano, plenty of percussion and generously left me quite free as to the kind of music it should be.

"The shape of the work is roughly that of an overture with a lengthy introduction to present various sections of the orchestra. But I can see no evidence of sonata form and the music is rather in concertante style with a good deal of solo work, and as wide a range of colour and mood as I can manage.

"This made for difficulties over a title for the piece. Rather than use the approximate German-form 'Concert stücke' or obscure Italian such as 'Overtura Concertante,' I am calling it simply 'A Birthday Offering.' The style also

gave me new problems of construction. To solve these I have used a technique which is in vogue today, as it was in the 16th century. At the opening of the work a solo horn summons the orchestra with a theme of four notes. Everything that follows melodically and harmonically derives from these, much in the way that the classical composers would use the common chord or a scale.

"Why these particular four notes? Actually I borrowed them from a well-known composer because they met my need better than any others. The central section of the work owes something to one of Denis Glover's 'Sings Harry' lyrics.

"Have I set out to uncork a bottle of champagne? Certainly not, but I hope the music may please some of those who like to taste a New Zealand wine."

This will be followed by Smetana's Symphonic Poem "The Moldau," and by Jocelyn Walker playing Saint-Saens's Piano Concerto No. 2. The symphony in the programme is an unusual one, Symphony No. 5½ (Symphony for Fun) by the American composer Gillis. Then comes a surprise item, which Mr. Robertson, guarding the secret, has refused to discuss. The programme ends with the ballet suite "Coppelia," by Delibes (YCs. Wednesday, October 24, 7.45 p.m.).

THE National Orchestra was founded as the orchestra of the New Zealand Broadcasting Service. Six years before there had existed a Centennial orchestra under the conductorship of Andersen Tyrer, but because of the war this was disbanded at the end of the celebrations. When the war ended the Prime Minister, Peter Fraser, announced that a permanent symphony orchestra would be formed, and in 1946 Andersen Tyrer was appointed to train and organise it. At this time the players worked in groups in the main cities and assembled in Wellington for short periods of intensive rehearsal. This group system, now disbanded, worked during the first few years of the orchestra's existence.

The first concert took place in Wellington in March, 1947, and, soon after, the orchestra set off to give its first concerts in the other main centres. These first concerts were notable for enthusiasm and a will to succeed rather than for their interpretative qualities, and by now the worst of the mishaps can appear in a humorous light.

From the beginning the orchestra gave schools concerts, and visiting artists played concertos with it. In 1948 the

★ THE FOUR conductors who have successively been associated with the Orchestra since its formation. From left, Andersen Tyrer, Michael Bowles, Warwick Braithwaite, and James Robertson ★

