



EMINENT ARTISTS who have appeared with the Orchestra have included (left to right) Yehudi Menuhin, Isaac Stern (violin), Larry Adler (harmonica), Victoria de los Angeles (soprano), Richard Farrell, Hephzibah Menuhin (piano), Alfredo Campoli (violin), Leon Goossens (oboe), and Solomon (piano)

orchestra toured the country with the NZBS production of *Carmen*. The next year an Italian Opera Company toured with a large repertoire, and again the orchestra had more experience of operatic work, this time under the internationally known conductors Franco Ghione and Manno Wolff-Ferrari. In 1950 Andersen Tyrer's term ended, and applications for the post were invited from New Zealand and overseas. Over 70 applications were received and Michael Bowles, who had had considerable experience in Dublin with the Irish Broadcasting Service, was eventually appointed. Subscription concerts were started, and guest conductors now began to appear. Audiences saw Sir Eugene Goossens, Warwick Braithwaite, Sir Bernard Heinze and the South American composer-conductor Juan José Castro. Castro's concerts were memorable ones for the orchestra and the audiences. "When he raised his baton he looked most intense," said a member of the orchestra. "We were to start with the César Franck Symphony, with the cellos playing a pianissimo passage. They played only a few bars when with a roar Castro shouted 'That's not pianissimo, that's mezzo-forte.' Then we knew we were in for it."

In 1952 the first Proms. were started, and the following year Michael Bowles was succeeded for a short term by the New Zealander Warwick Braithwaite, who had had a great deal of experience in London. All the time the orchestra's technique and powers of interpretation were developing and its stimulating effect on the musical life of this country began to be felt.

For instance, choirs attempted larger works, and many out of the way towns were visited. Today it is one of the most widely travelled orchestras in the world, a statement that the players will acknowledge ruefully as they step from the Limited, or climb off the ferry after a strenuous southern tour. Last year it travelled over 8500 miles, and visited 15 different cities and towns. It gave a total of 101 concerts, including studio concerts, which amounted to a concert almost every three days.

In 1954, when Warwick Braithwaite left to conduct the ill-fated Australian Opera Company, the choice for conductor fell on James Robertson, from Sadler's Wells, London. Under his vigorous direction the orchestra has become technically more efficient and at the same time several new activities have developed, such as the youth concerts and the Composers' Workshop, which tries over new works submitted by New Zealand composers. Today the orchestra no longer plays as a conventional symphony orchestra, but for all kinds of occasions, from studio operas to light music for the ZBs. Each year about 300 different orchestral works are presented. The first outline of the year's programmes is made by the conductor. He

takes into account innumerable factors such as visiting overseas artists, choral societies' programmes and New Zealand artists. This draft is then discussed by a programme committee of representatives from various parts of the Service, including an expert on copyright problems.

"Any committee must be careful not to stifle the initiative of the conductor," said Mr. Rickard, who is head of programme organisation, and serves on the committee. "That is our paramount aim, and we also contribute ideas from our own experience. When we are all satisfied the programme is then handed over to the librarian, whose job it is to make sure that the scores arrive at the right time. At the same time the programmes go on to Mr. Newson, of Head Office music, who works out the best way of using them for the Service."

J. H. Booth, music librarian who looks after the 15,000 scores in the library, 3500 of which are orchestral,

then finds out which scores are on his shelves and which must be hired from outside sources.

"There are numerous difficulties connected with the hiring of music," he told us, "and yet when all things are considered, it is surprising that such a small percentage of the music fails to arrive in time. Only twice in the past six months has music arrived too late to be performed as planned originally, but on a number of occasions it has arrived on the day of rehearsal."

Mr. Newson on his part makes arrangements for the use of landlines as the orchestra can only be rebroadcast through these. "We try and almost succeed in putting all the works in the subscription concerts on the air once, nationally. All concerts are broadcast locally if there is a station." Often programmes are recorded and rebroadcast later on the Sunday main national programme, some are played by the Com-

mercial network, and others are kept for delayed broadcasts on YZ stations which do not have the opportunity of live relays. After this the completed programmes are allocated broadcast times at a general programming conference where representatives from all departments of the service meet once a quarter.

Finally, what of the orchestra itself? The members are a vigorous, enthusiastic body, devoted to maintaining the highest artistic standards, and anxious that these aims will not be frustrated. They are interested in extending their repertoire, in playing modern works, and because of our isolation from other orchestras respond well to the stimulus of visits from overseas guest conductors. Ten years from now, when the twentieth birthday is celebrated, the pattern of their story will be a different one—and it is during this next ten years that the character and personality of the orchestra will be more firmly established.

Bringing the Orchestra to the Radio Audience

SINCE the National Orchestra was founded ten years ago, it must have been heard by almost every adult, and most children of secondary school age in the Dominion. But only a proportion of these people have actually attended concerts—the remainder have been able to enjoy performances by listening to broadcasts. Few listeners, however, whether regular or casual, will have given much thought to the technician, working throughout the performance to ensure that the reproduction of the concert will be as close as possible to what is heard by the audience at the hall.

The man who probably knows most about the difficulties which have to be overcome by the technician is Cyril Brown, technical officer of Head Office programme operations. Mr. Brown controlled the relays of the inaugural concerts of the orchestra, and established a standard microphone placement. At this stage, three microphones were used. After the first tour, station technicians were left to carry on, and the system was continued until last year, when it was decided that it would be an improvement to have one technician in each of the four main centres to look after all National Orchestra broadcasts in his district. These men have been selected for a period of about a year to 18 months, after which new selections will be made. This will ensure that there are plenty of technicians trained for the specific job of National Orchestra broadcasts.

At this time, the number of microphones used was changed from three to four. One, an omni-directional microphone, is placed fairly well out in the

auditorium for the purpose of giving as much life to the performance as possible; it picks up reverberations and general atmosphere from the hall itself, as well as giving an overall picture of sound. One is placed over the violin section, one over the violas, cellos and double basses, and one over the woodwind section. The technician can then control the output from the microphones to ensure that equal prominence is given to all sections. If the microphones are not in exactly the right place, or the microphone adjustment is not accurate, the effect of the performance can be greatly distorted. The overall microphone is used as much as possible, and the others to balance where this is necessary. Extra microphones are used on such occasions as a choral concert or the performance of a concerto.

Mr. Brown pointed out that the system of having only four technicians on National Orchestra broadcasts had many advantages. A standard balance of the orchestra on the air was achieved in the four districts; and it had also been found that a technician who had worked at a concert in a main centre could achieve a satisfactory balance quickly in a smaller hall. In the original broadcasts of the National Orchestra headphones were used by the technician sitting in the circle, but recently broadcasting booths have been installed at Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch. These make the technician's job considerably easier, as he can listen to the broadcast on a loudspeaker in the control booth. They have also made possible the employment of score readers, who sit beside the technician and direct



N.P.S. photograph

CYRIL BROWN

him on the all-important matter of balance, pointing out the section to be given prominence at any time.

A great deal of co-operation was received from James Robertson, said Mr. Brown. For example, on several occasions the position of various sections has been changed to suit the broadcast. All performances are put on tape for audition purposes, and Mr. Robertson and other NZBS officers listen carefully to the recordings, so that techniques can, if necessary, be improved on future occasions.