

HEROES AND PIONEERS

"LET us therefore brace ourselves to our duties, and so bear ourselves that, if the British Empire and its Commonwealth last for a thousand years, men will say: 'This was their finest hour.'"

These famous words of Sir Winston Churchill supplied the title of a new programme which starts on Friday, April 12, at 7.30 p.m., from the ZBs, 4ZA, 2XP, 2XA, 2XN, 3XC; and at 8.0 p.m. from 2ZA and 1XH.

Their Finest Hour is, however, not about wartime Britain, but about those men of the British Empire and Commonwealth, who faced the challenge of adversity and overcame it in a historic moment. Each added something enduring to the British heritage, and each has left an example of courage and ability in a particular sphere. Scott of the Antarctic and Clive of India will not be forgotten while heroic example can inspire men. Scott's gallant dash to the South Pole and the tragedy of the return journey enshrine a tradition of courage and endurance in the face of certain death. Robert Clive, in his taking and holding of Arcot with less than 500 men against over 10,000, established British ascendancy in India at a time when France was the great imperial rival.

Other men dramatised in the first few programmes earned renown less for daring adventures than for dogged persistence in the pursuit of a vision. The Rev. John Flynn, head of the first inland Mission in Australia, began his work when the outback farms were isolated beyond reach of medical aid, and death was a commonplace. He dreamt of flying doctors called by wireless, and worked unceasingly for the realisation of his dream. Sir Christopher Wren had a different dream—of a London clean and beautiful and nobly

planned which should rise from the ashes of the Great Fire. His plans were largely ignored, but the many buildings and churches he did design are fitting companions to his masterpiece, St. Paul's Cathedral.

Reginald Joseph Mitchell designed aircraft, and he became famous for the designs of the streamlined seaplanes which finally won the Schneider Trophy outright for Great Britain. The German challenge in the air inspired his final design for the Spitfire, but it cost him his life. John Logie Baird, the subject of another programme, spent his life in perfecting a system of television, only to have the BBC choose a rival system for its service in 1936. Refusing to be discouraged, he immediately turned his attention to colour television.

Many other men who made history are to be featured in this series, which has, in a small way, made a little history itself as the first Commercial Division programme series to be made in Australia to New Zealand specifications. Audition tapes were supplied for criticism and the alteration of parts to meet special requirements of the NZBS Commercial Division, who will use the series before it is heard in Australia.

Several writers have worked on this big assignment, which combines drama with history. One writer, Peter Yeldon, now lives in London, where he has been able to do most of his research. There are other writers in Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide who are pleased to be engaged on this important new series.



A MAN'S finest hour may come to him within the confines of a workroom or laboratory—as it did to R. J. Mitchell, designer of the Spitfire, or J. L. Baird, pioneer of TV (above left to right). Or it may come, as it did to the Rev. John Flynn (right) in the solitudes of a vast continent.

New Concert Hall at Lower Hutt

THE new Lower Hutt Town Hall (see photograph opposite) will be officially opened on Thursday, April 4, and a Music and Drama Festival is being held to celebrate the event. Organisations taking part in the Festival include the New Zealand Opera Company, the New Zealand Ballet Company, the Hutt Valley Orpheus Choir, the Hutt Repertory Society, and Hutt Valley schools.

The inaugural concert will be given by the National Orchestra on Saturday, April 6, when James Robertson will conduct a programme consisting of a fanfare, the Overture to *The Magic Flute*, and the aria "Mi Tradi" from *Don Giovanni*, by Mozart; Beethoven's Symphony No. 5, the Piano Concerto in A Minor by Grieg, and Tchaikovsky's "1812 Overture."

Sybil Philipps and Janetta McStay, the soloists, both live in the Hutt Valley, and the band to be heard in the Tchaikovsky overture is a combination of the Lower Hutt Civic and the Lower Hutt Municipal Bands (bandmaster, K. G. L. Smith).

The first half of this concert will be broadcast on the YC link at 8.0 p.m. this Saturday, April 6, and the second half will be heard on the National Programme on Sunday, April 14, at 2.0 p.m. These will be the first of many broad-

casts from the new Town Hall, and arrangements have been made for visiting artists to appear there with the National Orchestra. Now that there are two major concert halls in the Wellington area, James Robertson, for one, hopes that there will be a two-way traffic between the two centres. Each will present a different type of programme. Wellington has a reputation for being the most serious audience in the country, and the Lower Hutt programmes will contain many of the established favourites which Wellington, in search of new excitement, does not often hear nowadays.

The architects of the building, Messrs. King, Cook and Dawson, have paid particular attention to the acoustics of the new Town Hall, a task made more complicated by the varied uses to which the hall will be put, which have required timbered flooring and movable seating. They have not designed an unusual or complicated building, but have planned a simple form with the main side walls in a flat chevron pattern of alternate fibrous plaster and limpet asbestos, with a stepped ceiling. All upper surfaces are designed to reflect the sound downwards to the gallery. Those who have heard the tests so far made in the completed building say that it reveals an amazing evenness of sound diffusion.

OPERA GUIDE

Three in a Week

Our opera guides usually describe the main YC link opera broadcast of the month, but wherever possible we bring to notice interesting operas coming from individual YC stations. This week there are three of these, so we compromise and give brief notes on each.

THE best known of the week's operas is *La Gioconda*, by Ponchielli—its composer's greatest triumph. It tells the story of Barnaba, a spy of the Inquisition, who has evil designs on the ballad singer La Gioconda. The plot is so involved as to be in itself an argument for getting hold of a book of opera plots. *La Gioconda* has many "big" scenes—all the pageantry of 17th century Venice, inside and outside, and the spectacular ballet "Dance of the Hours" (1YC, Tuesday, April 9, 7.30 p.m.).

Donizetti at his best writes sparkling melodies, but in *La Favorita* (2YC, April 11, 7.30 p.m.), he is in a more tragic vein. The hero of the opera is a monastic novice, Fernanda, who falls in love with Leonora and in pursuit of her leaves his monastery, suffering many hardships before he finds her. His trials grow greater and seeking peace he returns to the monastery. Leonora comes



to find him only to fall dead in his arms.

Donizetti wrote 67 operas, but it took him some time to free himself from the influences of Rossini, whom he greatly admired. *L'Elisir D'Amore* and *Lucia Di Lammermoor* were two of the first to show his real powers, and a little later came *Daughter of the Regiment*, *La Favorita* and one of his best comic operas *Don Pasquale*.

Smetana is renowned for his Bohemian national operas, and his *Bartered Bride* is one of the great folk operas of all time. *The Kiss* (3YC, April 12, 9.5 p.m.) is another folk opera. In it, Hanno, a young widower, is eager to kiss his bride, Marinka, before their marriage—popular belief has it that such a kiss arouses the anger of a dead wife. He succeeds, but only after many humorous complications.