



ON Thursday evening, August 22, listeners will hear from YC stations the first New Zealand performance of three contemporary Australian compositions, *An Outback Overture*, by John Antill, Alfred Hill's *Symphony Australia*, and the *Symphonic Suite, Xanadu* by Robert Hughes.

While in Australia last year for a conference of the Australasian Performing Right Association, the New Zealand composers Douglas Lilburn and Ashley Heenan met Alfred Hill, and heard his *Symphony Australia*, which the composer completed in 1951.

"We both considered it an amazing work, and were both very impressed," Mr Heenan told *The Listener*. "With age (he is now 86) Alfred Hill's writing seems to be maturing and improving, and this work has remarkable vitality. There are four movements; the first with an introduction representing 'the lonely, silent land,' then an allegro in which the themes stand for 'the workers' and

'the thinkers.' The second movement is titled 'Australia the mysterious and beautiful,' the third 'the Aborigines,' and the last 'the challenge.'"

Alfred Hill had a very good sense of orchestra, said Mr Heenan, and the second and third movements of this symphony showed this faculty off to particular advantage. These movements were often performed separately in Australia.

Hill prefaces his score to this symphony with a quotation from the poet George Essex Evans:

Her song is silence: unto her
Its mystery clings.
Silence is the interpreter
Of deeper things.
O for sonorous voice and strong
To change that silence into song!
Which sleeps in the deep heart of peace
With folded wings.

And the composer adds his own note to the work: "The heart of Australia is lonely and silent. On the fringe of the great Island Continent, men crowd

like ants into the cities they have made. Some seek the quieter places. Australia with its vast plains, forest ranges, rocky coast, and subterranean caves is an eerie place, but very beautiful.

In the deep recesses of the Australia they once owned, a few aboriginal tribes still go walkabout. They hunt their food, sing their songs, and dance their tribal rituals. There is a challenge to Australians to build a world worthy of their race and country."

John Antill, composer of *An Outback Overture*, to be heard in this programme, is already well known to New Zealanders for his ballet suite *Corroboree* which, incidentally, will be played at a National Orchestra Youth Concert later this year. This new work of Antill's, however, is on a different facet of the Australian scene, being based on a memory of one particular evening camping in the outback. The composer notes the following themes as the subject of the overture: The peace and quiet of the

Australian bush, a running creek, a woolshed—"from which comes the sound of an antiquated out-of-repair concertina playing over and over again a certain easy phrase." Then there is preparation and the arrival of guests, a Woolshed Polka and a Midnight Quadrille, accompanied by much clapping of hands and stamping of feet. The overture concludes with the concertina theme which, the composer notes, "remains in our memories until this day."

The third work to be heard, Robert Hughes's *Xanadu*, was composed in 1954. For this work, the composer shared the prize awarded in the orchestral section of the Australasian Performing Right Association's 1954 competition.

The composer notes that the music of *Xanadu* does not follow any pre-conceived choreographic scenario, but that while writing the work he had in mind a ballet interpretation. As the music possesses the character of "oriental" music the name of Kubla Khan's fabulous city was chosen.

The work is in three "scenes," and the composer makes free use of a large number of percussion instruments in the orchestration, including gongs, a Chinese cymbal, and tom-toms.

The recorded presentation of these works (YCs, August 22, 9.5 p.m.) will be by the National Orchestra conducted by James Robertson.



JOHN ANTILL



ALFRED HILL



ROBERT HUGHES

... and Music from Europe

TWO works of particular musical interest to be heard from 2YC in this week's programmes are Orazio Benevoli's *Festival Mass* and the *Divertimento* for Strings and Oboe by the Swiss composer Peter Mieg.

Benevoli's *Festival Mass*, first recorded in 1952 during the 26th Salzburg International Music Festival, was written at the request of the Archbishop, Count Lodron, to mark the Consecration of the new Cathedral of Salzburg in September, 1628. The contemporary chronicles reporting on the day do not mention the composer by name, but only rate the music as excellent.

The *Festival Mass* is in 53 parts, 16 of which are vocal, the other 37 "instrumental voices." These parts are grouped into two eight-part choruses joined by four solo quartets (16 solo singers); two six-part string choirs, one eight-part wind choir, three brass choirs with 13 parts in all, two pairs of timpani, two organs, and the *basso continuo*, which in works of this type and period is taken for granted.

The Austrian Guido Adler, who edited this work for publication in 1903, commented that though Benevoli's *Festival Mass* was written at a time of musical change, it is not only to be regarded as "the product of a transitional style,"

but retains its value as the work of "... a richly blessed genius, an accomplished artist in command of complete technical mastery."

The first recording was undertaken in face of great difficulty. The cathedral was no longer quite large enough to take the number of performers necessary, and a few economies had to be made. Thus the first organ was left out, as not being essential to the score. The placing of the performers was solved by setting up two groups along the side aisles of the nave, and a section of the instruments next to the organ in the chancel; with his back to the organ the conductor could thus see all the forces at his command.

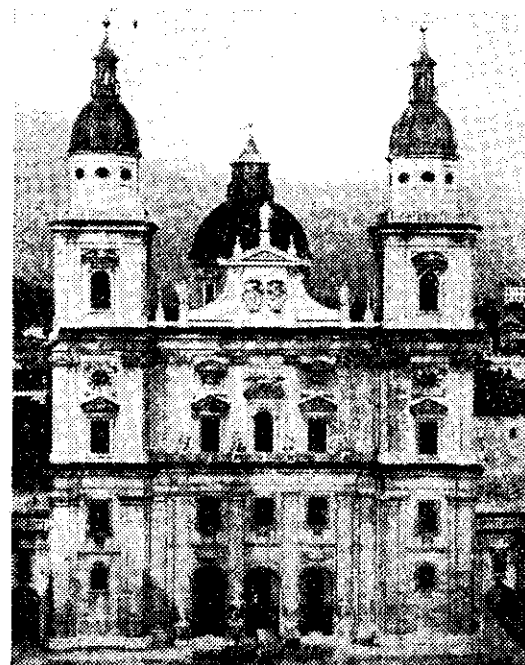
The performance to be heard from 2YC at 10.0 p.m. on Tuesday, August 20, was the first performance and first recording of Benevoli's work since its premiere in 1628. The orchestra is the Vienna Symphony conducted by Joseph Messner, with the Salzburger Domchoir and soloists.

Peter Mieg's *Divertimento*, to have its first New Zealand performance in a recital from 2YC at 7.22 p.m. on Sunday, August 25, was composed in 1950 and had its first performance in Switzerland in January, 1952. Since then it has been played many times in concerts

and over the air. Mieg and Frank Martin (who was his teacher) are recognised as Switzerland's leading composers. Most of Mieg's music has been performed on the principal radio stations in Western Europe and in concerts in his home country, in France, Germany, Austria, Italy and the United States.

Originally under the influence of Frank Martin, Stravinsky and Bartok, Mieg has gradually found his own style. His language has been described as "clear, precise, and brilliant, and at the same time colourful. His forms are linear and polyphonic; one could call his music almost classical." His other compositions are a ballet, two concertos for two pianofortes and orchestra, a concerto da camera for strings, pianoforte and timpani, a septet for woodwinds, strings and harpsichord, and a concerto for harpsichord and orchestra. His latest work is an Oboe Concerto which will be first performed in November this year at Winterthur.

Peter Mieg's *Divertimento* for Strings and Oboe will be played in this studio recital by Norman Booth (oboe), Malcolm Latchem (violin), Glynne Adams (viola) and Peter Langer (cello).



THE CATHEDRAL at Salzburg