

THE NEW MUSIC

NEW ZEALAND audiences are sadly out of touch with the world of new music, according to Richard Hoffmann, formerly of Auckland, and now lecturer in music at Oberlin Conservatory, Cleveland, Ohio. Mr Hoffmann claims that one reason for this is the unimaginative programmes given here by famous concert artists from overseas, who pamper New Zealand audiences by playing only the better-known classics. In America, he says, a new work is a "must" at nearly every concert.

"Performers who come out here on their summer circuit cater for the local taste. They play what they know, what the audience knows, and what is easy. Their audiences are largely social ones which, they fear, may be scared away by new music. But," said Mr Hoffmann, "new music is not a fad and New Zealand is a young country which should be receptive of new ideas. New music would be better understood if music appreciation, as taught, went a little further than Elgar."

Richard Hoffmann was a pupil of the late Arnold Schoenberg and, like his tutor, was born in Austria. From the age of five he studied the violin, and has been composing music since he was nine. In 1935 his parents brought him to New Zealand, where he continued his musical studies. He became one of Professor Hollinrake's pupils at Auckland University College, and graduated in 1946.

Asked how he came to study composition under Schoenberg, Mr Hoffmann explained to The Listener that Schoenberg had married a cousin in Mr Hoffmann's family, and had been living in Los Angeles since 1932. He was Professor of Music from 1936 to 1944 at the University of California. In 1946 Mr Hoffmann wrote to Schoenberg and sent him some of his compositions. Schoenberg replied offering him free tuition in return for some secretarial work. So Mr Hoffmann travelled to Los Angeles and there he studied and worked under Schoenberg until the latter's death in 1951.

In the meantime, Mr Hoffmann had won the Huntingdon-Hartford Prize and had been granted a teaching assistant-ship at the University of California. In 1951 he became a lecturer, and in 1953 he won the Huntingdon-Hartford Fellowship, which enabled him to devote a full year to composition. Since 1954 he has been teaching theory and composition at Oberlin Conservatory.

In America Mr Hoffmann has found the climate for new music favourable—literally and figuratively. It was, he said, the climate of Southern California that caused both Stravinsky and Schoenberg to settle there and, with the exception of Germany, America offered more opportunities for hearing new music than any other country. This was largely due to the support given composers by the music foundations, the funds of which are supplied tax-free by major American business and industrial concerns. But sponsorship of music in this way has its limitations, Mr Hoffmann says. Such well-established organisations as the New York Philharmonic Orchestra and the Metropolitan Opera are not allowed to depart from established ways in music, while most new music is not regarded by the major radio networks as a good commercial vehicle. However,

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