



AT the Edinburgh Festival even serious music has a ceremonial importance if it happens to be played at the first concert—Beethoven has been the done thing on at least two occasions in recent years. So no less a person than the music critic of *The Times* praised the imaginative enterprise of the promoters—"as wise as it was welcome"—when this year, for the first time, they devoted the entire programme to the work of one living composer. It was a British composer at that, for they asked Sir William Walton to conduct the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra in a programme of his own works. Those chosen were his first symphony, the Cello Concerto—with Pierre Fournier—and the Partita for Orchestra. The Concerto and the Partita have been chosen also by the NZBS to begin—from YC stations on October 20—a series of BBC programmes recorded at the festival. Incidentally, it was announced the day after the Walton concert that Sir William's second symphony will be played for the first time at next year's festival.

Within a few days of this ceremonial opening the "lurid" musical episode of the festival occurred, when the Scottish National Orchestra under its new conductor, Alexander Gibson, presented a new Sinfonia for Two Orchestras by Iain Hamilton. This work, which had been commissioned jointly by the festival authorities and the Burns Federation, will be the second outstanding programme (Sunday, October 25, 8.45 p.m.) of the first week's festival broadcasts from YC stations. If New Zealanders react to it as *The Times* critic did they won't all be satisfied, but neither will they be indifferent.

"It is a sinfonia but not a symphony," he wrote. "It is a set of 11 variations which are not variations. It is laid out for two orchestras which do not play in antiphony—so why? It does all sorts of things explained in the programme note which the ear cannot take in. It is eruptive with cat-call motifs; it is a jigsaw of textures and sonorities; it communicates nothing except the composer's interest in technique. It asks, like so



SIR WILLIAM WALTON

many of this school's recent essays, a fundamental aesthetic question: Is music a construction (like fretwork) or a communication (like language)?" This sinfonia, he added (determined that his point wouldn't be missed), certainly frets and does not communicate, in spite of "an astonishingly persuasive per-

NATIONAL ORCHESTRA'S WEEK

NEXT week the National Orchestra will play in the following centre:

Wellington, October 24, 8.0 p.m. (with the Christchurch Harmonic Society, William Herbert, and other soloists in Handel's "Israel in Egypt").

The Orchestra will also be heard in live or recorded programmes as follows: October 20, 3YZ; October 22, 1YC; October 24, YCs (Handel's *Israel in Egypt*); October 25, 2ZA, 4ZA, 1ZC (conductor, Vincent Aspey), 2ZC.

formance" by Mr Gibson, who got all its nuances just so. It is, he might have added but didn't, the sort of composition the old school write letters to the editor about.

Completing the first week's festival programmes from YC stations (Thursday, October 22, 8.0 p.m.) will be a recital by the tenor Richard Lewis (with Gerald Moire accompanying) of songs by Purcell, Vaughan Williams, Arnold Bax, George Butterworth, Faure and Michael Tippett.

The second week of Edinburgh Festival programmes will include the Walton symphony and a programme by the Edinburgh University Singers—Five Studies for Chorus and Piano by Anthony Hopkins is among the items. In succeeding weeks listeners will hear two further programmes by the Royal Philharmonic, who will play works by Beethoven, Bartok and Richard Strauss. Richard Lewis will be heard (with Josephine Veasey) in Janacek's *Diary of a Man Who Disappeared* and Nicarnor Zabaleta in a harp recital. The Prometheus Ensemble, the Lucerne Festival Strings, the Sextet Luca Marenzio and the soprano Irmgard Seefried will each be heard in two programmes; and the series will end with a performance of *Wozzeck* by the Royal Opera, Stockholm.

HANDEL'S BICENTENARY

"WHEN Handel died on April 14, 1759, and was buried in Westminster Abbey," wrote Winston Dean recently in a special article for the Handel bicentenary, "he had long been not only an Englishman . . . but a national institution. He was revered as such for a century and a half after his death; and in much of England today *Messiah* is still the best-loved work in music, if not in any of the arts. Yet of all the great composers he is by far the least understood."

This, said Mr Dean, is due to an historical accident. Handel's oratorios greatly appealed to the rising London middle-class till his reputation as a sacred composer was tarnished by the discovery of the religious masterpieces of J. S. Bach. But Handel in fact never was a great religious composer in the sense that Bach was. He was before all else a dramatist; and the English oratorios, his supreme achievement, with one or two exceptions show "scarcely a trace of Christian feeling." Handel's music, adds Mr Dean, has been further handicapped by "the deplorable habit" of rewriting his orchestral accompaniments.

Listeners in New Zealand will be able to reassess the works of Handel during

the next six weeks when a series of bicentenary programmes is broadcast. They will be introduced by C. Foster Browne on Tuesday, October 20, in a talk from YC stations. On October 22 YC stations will broadcast two Handel organ concertos, played by E. Power Biggs with the London Philharmonic Orchestra. The big broadcast of the week will be a relay over YC stations on Saturday night (October 24) of a performance in the Wellington Town Hall of *Israel in Egypt*. Taking part will be the National Orchestra with the Christchurch Harmonic Society, conducted by John Hopkins. The soloists will include the visiting tenor William Herbert. Earlier the same evening YC listeners will hear a Handel Concerto for Orchestra and the Italian Cantata "from the War of Love." The first week's broadcasts will end with a Sunday night concert from YA and YZ stations by William Herbert with the National Orchestra.

Major broadcasts in succeeding weeks will include *Joshua* (from Aldeburgh), *Julius Caesar* (a Handel Society performance), *Semele* (with the Saint Anthony Singers and the New Symphony Orchestra of London), *Joseph and His Brethren* (with the London Chamber

Singers and Orchestra), and *Acis and Galatea* (a Handel Society performance). Among other items of special interest is a performance of the Music for the Royal Fireworks, conducted—with the original instrumentation—by Charles Mackerras. There will be four more Saturday night programmes each with a concerto for orchestra and an Italian cantata; several programmes of harpsichord suites played by Janetta McStay; another programme of organ concertos; and a BBC programme which will include two Chandos Anthems and an organ concerto. Playing dates and times will appear in all YA and YC programmes each week till November 29, and full details will be found in programmes for 2YA and 2YC.

