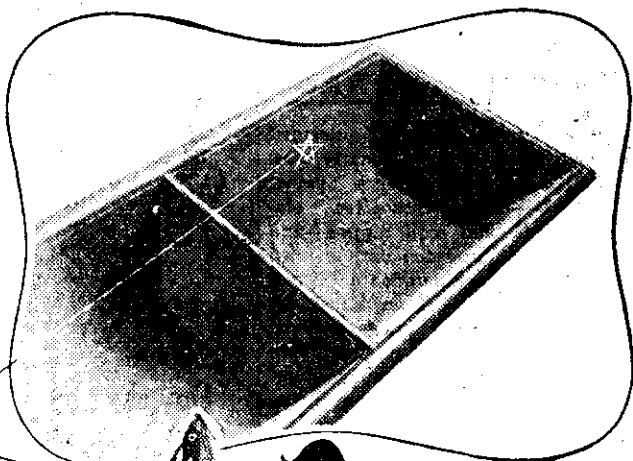


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First Performance

TWO-PIANO PARTITA

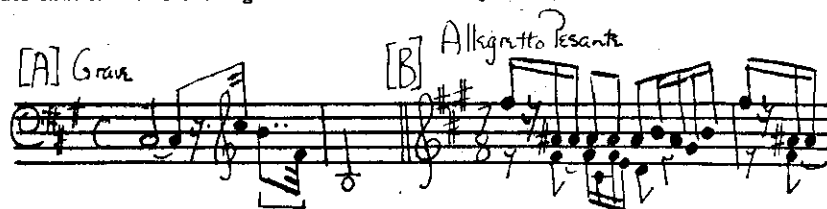
ON Sunday, August 19, at 2.0 p.m., from Station 2YA, in the fourth
programme of the series "Music, and News of Music from
Britain," Beryl Richardson and Leslie Souness will present from
the studio the first New Zealand performance (as far as is known) of
Howard Ferguson's Partita for Two Pianos. Here BESSIE POLLARD
discusses this work in outline.

HOWARD FERGUSON, born at Belfast and educated at Westminster School,
studied composition at the Royal College of Music with R. O. Morris, and the
piano with Harold Samuel. His most important works are a Violin Sonata (1933),
and Octet (1934), the Partita for two pianos and also for Orchestra (1937), and a
Piano Sonata (1940). According to Grove's Dictionary, there are "... qualities in
his work that recall Brahms, however different the idiom, and this impression is
strengthened by the fundamentally diatonic framework of his music. Though he has
profited by 20th Century experiments in harmony, his thought is linked to the
classical tradition."

Very few composers since Bach have made use of the title Partita. In the
17th Century this name was applied to collections of dance tunes which were played
consecutively, and afterwards grouped together to form instrument Suites. Bach
used the name (1) as the equivalent of Suite, in the Six Clavier Partitas; and (2)
for sets of variations on chorales for organ.

In a note on the score of his Partita for Two Pianos, Howard Ferguson says:
"There are two versions of the Partita: one for orchestra and the other for two
pianos. Each version was conceived for its own medium, so neither may be said
to be an arrangement of the other."

The first movement begins with a Grave introduction which makes a good
deal of use of the double dotted quaver-demisemiquaver motif marked with a
bracket in "A" below. This moves into an Allegretto pesante section ("B" below)
where the time signatures hover between 7/8 and 5/8, giving an unbarred effect to
the music. There are big tonal contrasts in this section of the movement—



The second movement (*Allegro un poco agitato*) with its 3/2 time signature
suggests a sarabande type of movement with a certain air of restlessness imparted
by a soft, ever-moving bass part. It begins—



At the 16th bar, the time changes to 9/4, alternating with 6/4. Here Piano II.
has a pastoral melody accompanied by harp-like reiterated "D's" from Piano I.
(below). The music works up to a great climax at about the 50th bar, which is
sustained for some time, and then it gradually subsides into a mere wisp of
melody at the end—



The third movement (*Andante un poco mosso*) makes great play on the motif
suggesting an inverted mordent, marked with a bracket in "A" below. This move-
ment has strange, rather elusive moments; the idiom is modern but not extremely
so. The Finale (*Allegro con spirito*) opens with four pizzicato-like chords from
Piano I, and then a little figure ("B" below) is played by Piano II. The *piu lento*
middle section harks back to the opening bars of the second movement, but the
brilliance of the opening mood reasserts itself, and the work ends with a flourish—



N.Z. LISTENER, AUGUST 10, 1951

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