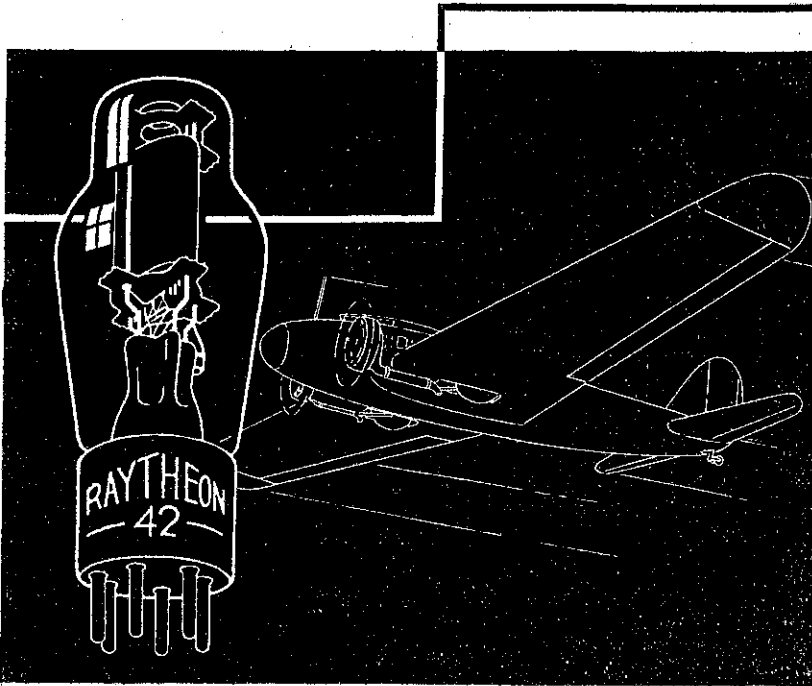


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GRAND OPERA TO BE PLAYED IN N.Z.

Newly-formed Society Discusses Plans

Keen interest has been aroused throughout the Dominion by the announcement of the formation of a New Zealand Grand Opera Society for the presentation of at least two grand operas each year.

Apart from the bare announcement of the formation of the society, and the fact that two voice trials have been held in Wellington during the past week, the public has been left guessing as to who is "behind the movement," but the "Radio Record" is in a position to state that the movement is not merely a local one, but is the culmination of a year's preparation, during which period negotiations have been proceeding with leading operatic authorities overseas with a view to "ironing out" the many difficulties attendant upon an ambitious enterprise of this nature.

There are many who will confidently assert that the project is one impossible of fulfilment, but the promoters, and members, of the new society take the view that nothing should be deemed impossible until it has been given a fair trial. Admittedly, they say, the project is one of the most ambitious yet attempted in New Zealand, but they point out that, apart from principals, the last Williamson Grand Opera Company which toured New Zealand was comprised of young Australians, practically all of whom had had no experience of operatic work until they were taken in hand by the musical conductor and producer of the company.

What Australia can do New Zealand should also be able to do, claim the promoters of the new society. They point to the fact that there is no reason why a fine operatic chorus should not be trained locally, and if it is found impossible to "bring out" principals capable of sustaining leading roles there are trained principals available in Australia who are willing to cross the Tasman to take part in the New Zealand productions.

At the voice trials held last week in Wellington, no difficulty was found in securing excellent material for a chorus of approximately 50 voices, and of these ten have been selected for special training for principal roles.

The proposal envisages an annual opera season for New Zealand. It is proposed to form branches of the society in each of the four main centres and in the leading provincial towns. In each case thorough rehearsals will be undertaken of the chorus work of the operas chosen for presentation.

It is anticipated that active rehearsals will be started in Wellington in June—twice weekly—with a view to presenting the first production toward the end of September. Arrangements have been made for scenery and costumes, and word is now awaited regarding the arrival of the music for the first work to be produced, which, it is understood, is one of the best-known of Mascagni's operas. The first general meeting of members of the society, and performers, will be held toward the end of this month, when a full statement will be made regarding the society.