

Theatre for Wellington

torium. At the moment Wellington has not a suitable theatre for repertory productions—the concert chamber of the Town Hall was never designed for the presentation of plays, and the Grand Opera House, in its rental and size, make it a pretty hopeless proposition for repertory societies. Amateur musical shows might be produced with advantage, too, in an intimate theatre.

For instance, although 'Miss Hook of Holland' had an excellent season in the Grand Opera House, it just managed to clear expenses. Similarly, when 'The Wind and the Rain' company returned to Wellington

for a one-night season the Opera House was not available and the company had to travel to Lower Hutt before it could find a suitable theatre. In this instance an up-to-date city theatre seating between 700 and 800 people would have filled the bill very nicely.

"Visiting concert artists, too, find the Town Hall too big and 'unsympathetic' to perform in, while professional companies presenting 'straight' plays and light comedy could often show a bigger balance on the right side of the ledger if there was an intimate theatre available for use. It is essential, however, that this theatre be maintained strictly as a theatre and not let for dances or functions of that kind.

"The Radiant Hall in Christchurch is an excellent example of an intimate theatre. The various musical societies and the Canterbury Repertory Society must count themselves very fortunate in the possession of such an excellently equipped little theatre. I see that Auckland has been forced to abandon temporarily its scheme for the erection of an intimate theatre there, while Wellington has never had any place approaching suitability for repertory productions. People might say that there would be no "catch" trade if the Arcraft Theatre in Molesworth Street were acquired, but the amount of "catch" trade for amateur musical and dramatic productions is so small that it scarcely matters. Anyway, the Town Hall and concert chamber are scarcely in a busy part of the city.

"When I was at the Old Vic in London some months ago people were being turned away. It was the second of last performance of 'King Richard II'—a matinee—and I got the last seat in the house. We have often talked of reviving successful repertory productions in Wellington and, if a theatre of this kind was acquired, it might be possible. I would like to revive 'A Bill of Divorcement,' the second play in the Repertory Theatre's career, and there are others

that I think would be successful, too."

"There was a plan afoot for buying the Arcraft Theatre some years ago," said Mr. Thomas Wood, conductor of the Circassians Choir, "but nothing came of it. My choir would be very pleased to see something achieved in the matter, as, at the present time, we are packed like sardines on the stage of the concert chamber.

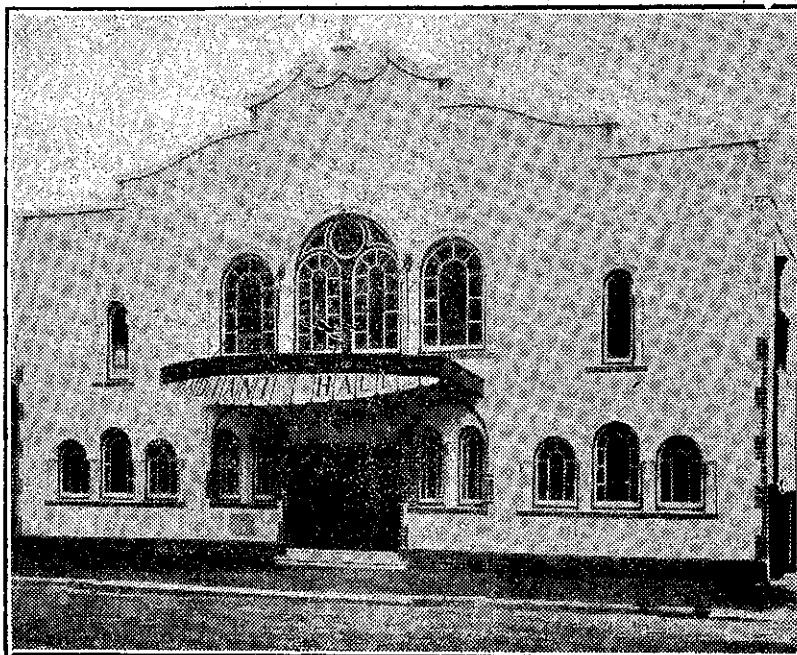
It's a rotten place.

too, for acoustics. The location of the theatre, in my opinion, doesn't matter, and there should be no lack of bookings for an intimate theatre of the type suggested. It should be possible to form a

company the shares being taken out by people interested in the cultural development of the city."

"If a central theatre was available in the city," said Mr. A. J. Heighway, president of The Thespians (incorporated), a thriving and fairly new dramatic society in Wellington, "it would encourage suburban societies to organise their dramatic and musical talent with a view to providing performances in the city theatre. For instance, the Hutt Liedertafel, which has broadcast on several occasions from the King George Theatre at Lower Hutt, is an excellent combination which could extend its seasons if a suitable theatre was available in Wellington.

"The Thespians, which is less than two years old, has 400 members, the majority of them actively engaged in dramatic work. If such a theatre as the one suggested—and for which there is manifest need as an adjunct to Wellington's cultural amenities—was brought into being, my society would most certainly lend it every support."



The envy of musical and repertory societies all over New Zealand—the Radiant Hall in Christchurch. This hall, which was built some years ago, is ideal for the production of dramatic and amateur musical shows.

Scheme for Repertory and Musical Societies To Acquire Property As Cultural Centre