

# Malcolm Sargent Gives Wellington the Treat Of A Lifetime

## Famous Conductor Cheered By Huge Audiences

THERE were two memorable highlights last week in Wellington's musical history—the performing of a concerto by Russia's greatest living conductor, Rachmaninoff, with a famous fellow countryman, Paul Vinogradoff, at the piano, and the greatest living conductor of concerto, Dr. Malcolm Sargent, wielding the baton; the second, at the Royal Choral Union's concert, when the vast audience rose to its feet and, with Dr. Sargent conducting, the full orchestra and choir gave the National Anthem as it has seldom been heard before. Eyes were wet before the first majestic chords of Mendelssohn's "Elijah" were ever struck.

DR. MALCOLM SARGENT, whose magical baton and charming naturalness have set all Wellington talking in the past week, has done more for music in the capital than any other person in the last 20 years.

Had Sir Thomas Beecham arrived with the full Covent Garden Opera Company, greater enthusiasm could not have been shown. Music has gone back to its lofty pedestal, and Wellington citizens—in fact, listeners all over New Zealand—owe a very great debt to the Wellington Symphony Orchestra and the Royal Choral Union for their courage and foresight in enlisting the services of such a man as Dr. Sargent.

And twice in one week the Town Hall echoed to the cheers—yes, full-throated and hearty cheers—of audiences whose enthusiasm is usually confined to a few hand-claps. Wellington has been given the musical treat of its life, and it is indeed glad news that a further concert, this time in company with the talented pianist, Eileen Joyce, will be given by Dr. Sargent before he finally leaves for Australia.

The musical critic of "The Dominion," enthusing rightly about the performance of the Wellington Symphony Orchestra under Dr. Sargent's baton the other evening, said: "The band did not seem like the Wellington Symphony Orchestra at all, praiseworthy as many of its performances in the past have been. It was an orchestra under the spell of a conductor of infinite knowledge, sympathy and inspiration; an orchestra with a new dignity, a new sense of tone values, a new affinity with the conductor and one another, and a new and deeper appreciation of ordered modulation. This was the magic exerted by Dr. Sargent."

Gratifying as this praise was, Dr. Sargent had no desire to allow his conducting of the orchestra to detract from the work that had been done by Mr. Leon de Mauny. In a telephone conversation with the "Radio Record" on the morning following the concert, the doctor paid generous tribute to both the orchestra and its regular conductor.

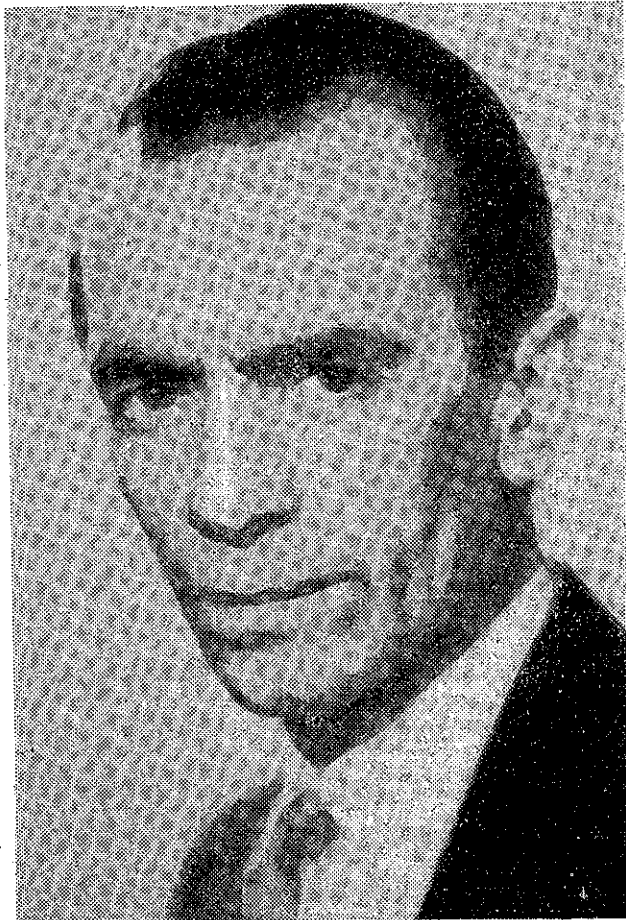
"The combination is a splendid one," he said, "and we could never have given the performance we did if it had not been for the excellent work done by Mr. de Mauny. I have been both amazed and delighted at the musical knowledge and execution of the Wellington Symphony Orchestra and the Royal Choral Union."

These words are not mere conventional praise from a visiting musician—Dr. Sargent is not a man to make pretty speeches. He says what he means, and often straight from the shoulder.

Although disappointment was felt at the last-minute change from the "Peer Gynt" suite to Elgar's "March of Pomp and Circumstance" at the symphony concert, there was not a person who could deny that the playing of Elgar's composition was one of the dramatically stirring moments in Wellington's musical history. Those last few bars, with the orchestra playing as it had never played before, the great organ welling majestically on, and Dr. Sargent, his personality vitally affecting players and audience alike, wielding the baton, will go down in memory as one of the supreme achievements in New Zealand music.

On the Saturday evening the Town Hall was besieged by thousands, the huge and enthralled audience including their Excellencies, Lord and Lady Galway. A few moments before the Governor-General appeared, Dr. Sargent took his place in the rostrum, and the waiting thousands rose to their feet and remained stock-still until the last notes of "God Save the King" had died away. The Choral Union had other surprises in store. The part of Elijah was sung by Sydney de Vries, the well-known Dutch baritone, who is touring the national broadcasting stations, while Beatrice Pugh was the soprano.

The choir and orchestra were like beings possessed, and, when near the end, voices and music were lifted to "Behold! God the Lord Passed By!" the great hall echoed and re-echoed to the wonderful and terrible majesty of the music.



Dr. Malcolm Sargent, the man who, in little more than a week, has awakened in Wellington a vast new interest in music.