

Music in His Blood

*An Auckland Conductor and
Teacher Who Owns His
Great-Grandfather's Violin*

Special to the "Record"

by

"WIRIHANA"



COLIN MUSTON, L.R.A.M.

... Is Descended from a Family of Fiddlers.

CONDUCTORS are a much-misunderstood race of men, for they have not only to interpret the soul of music, but must do it without bruising the often tender souls of musicians. Theirs is a post which, if it is to be held with credit and a quiet mind, demands both the tact of a diplomat and the courage of a true artist.

By that criterion, Mr. Colin Muston, L.R.A.M., of Auckland, must rank as one of New Zealand's best conductors—not only in name but in performance. For thirty-one years he has wielded the baton in Auckland, winning appreciation not only from concert-goers and radio listeners, but also from the thousands of performers who have worked under him. As teacher and performer he is outstanding for technical thoroughness and keen perception.

FOR the foundations of his musical ability, Mr. Muston has to give credit to his father's tuition; for he comes of a fiddling family and his father early taught him how to follow tradition. To-day, he still owns a violin that was given to him by his father, after it had belonged in turn to his great-grandfather, and his grandfather. Now it has been passed on to his son Ronald, an Auckland architect, who is a fine violinist himself and draws the bow hauntingly across the old strings.

The Mustons are like many another musically-gifted family, and have not laid waste the talents inheritance brought them. Father to son, and to son again, the training has gone on. Are there not many great names to bear testimony with them to the excellence of paternal tuition? Page, Hugo Backer, Caesar Thompson, Jacques Thibaud and Jan Kubelik, to mention just a few, all owed their youthful musical background to their fathers.

BORN in Leicester, England, the young Colin Muston early showed signs of musical talent. At the age of ten he was playing first violin in local orchestras in his native city. He studied with Kiene and William Henley, the eminent English violinist, and at 15 years of age took the diploma of the College of Violinists, London, and later the licentiate of the Royal Academy (performer and teacher). Under competent professors he also studied the piano and the Italian method of voice production.

There followed a period of several years during which the violinist played in string quartettes with Johansen, Kiene, Willy Lehmann, and, with the addition of Richter,

the pianist, in quintettes. Soon Mr. Muston became leader and deputy-conductor of the Leicester Symphony Orchestra.

Before he left Leicester to settle in Auckland in 1907, he was tendered a concert and presented with a cheque for £150, plus a presentation album containing valuable testimonials from professors and well-known musicians. On this farewell occasion, the Mayor of Leicester joined congratulations with the late Ramsay MacDonald, Sir Herbert Marshall and Sir John Rolleston.

PROMINENT in the musical world of Auckland is Mr. Colin Muston, teacher and conductor, a favourite with radio listeners who enjoy good orchestral programmes. He was once threatened with a revolver at a rehearsal—but not for the reason for which people generally threaten conductors at rehearsals.

FROM 1907 to 1914 Mr. Muston was conductor of the Orphans' Club Orchestra, and then took over the conductorship of the Bohemian Orchestra, a position he has held ever since. Since 1917 he has also been conductor for the Auckland Choral Society. The most ambitious work he ever presented for the Society was Verdi's opera "Aida" (in concert form) in Auckland; in Wellington, where he conducted it for the Wellington Choral Society.

Mr. Muston was appointed conductor for the Auckland Amateur Operatic Society when it started in 1918, and, with three exceptions, he has acted as conductor for every performance since then. A minor duty is his conductorship of the Savage Club performers.

In addition to all these semi-official positions, Mr. Muston is in charge of the choir of the beautiful Roman Catholic Church of St. Michael's at Remuera. There his services are valued very highly and are always in demand. His most recent outstanding success was the performance of "Credo"—highlight of the Catholic Centenary—which he conducted before an audience of 55,000 at the Western Springs Stadium.

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