

Bands on the AirSeries No. 4

Why It Never Wins

By
"Wirihana"

Auckland's Municipal Band Is Not Eligible

BAND that has never won a contest, the Auckland Municipal is one of the best—if not the best band of its type in the Southern Hemisphere. Not eligible for contests because it is a military and not a brass band, the Auckland Municipal Band, in its instrumentation, is unique in New Zealand and Australia.

Just as Boston is known the world over for its Symphony Orchestra, and Philadelphia for its Philharmonic Orchestra, so is Auckland, at least, in Australia and New Zealand, known for its municipal band.

First Conductor

FORMED 15 years ago, the Municipal Band had as its first conductor one of the best of British bandmen, the late Christopher Smith, who was specially brought from Adelaide, where he was then conductor of the Adelaide Municipal Tramway Trust Band.

Mr. Smith toured Australia and New Zealand as conductor of the famous old English combination, the Besses O' The Barn, and at the conclusion of the tour Adelaide fortunately secured his services.

This wonderful conductor built up a truly great band in Auckland, and made it one of the most efficient cultural amenities of the city. He met an untimely end on August 27, 1930, when, after leaving a band rehearsal, he was knocked down and killed by a tram.

His place was filled by another most experienced bandman, Captain George Buckley, who acted as conductor until he retired in March, 1936. Captain Buckley is at present conductor of the Auckland Artillery Band.

AFTER the appointment of the present conductor, Mr. T. J. O'Connor, the band was placed under the control of a sub-committee of the Auckland City Council, comprising the mayor, Sir Ernest Davis, the Hon. Bernard Martin, M.L.C., deputy-mayor, and Councillor C. Bailey, as chairman. Mr. Bailey was one of the original members of the Auckland Municipal Band as a player of the euphonium.

Known to his intimate friends as "Tim," Mr. O'Connor was born and educated in Timaru, where, as a very young boy, he started off his

musical career by learning to play the tin-whistle—left-handed, too.

He took music seriously at the age of 17, when he began to learn the clarinet, and later joined the then Timaru Garrison Band under Herr Paul. Old-time bandsmen will remember that at this time Harry Elgin was drum-major and guided the band through many a quick-step to contest victories. Later, Mr. O'Connor was for several years a member of Derry's Military Band, Christchurch. His first professional engagement was when he played in a band at the races.

His First Sovereign

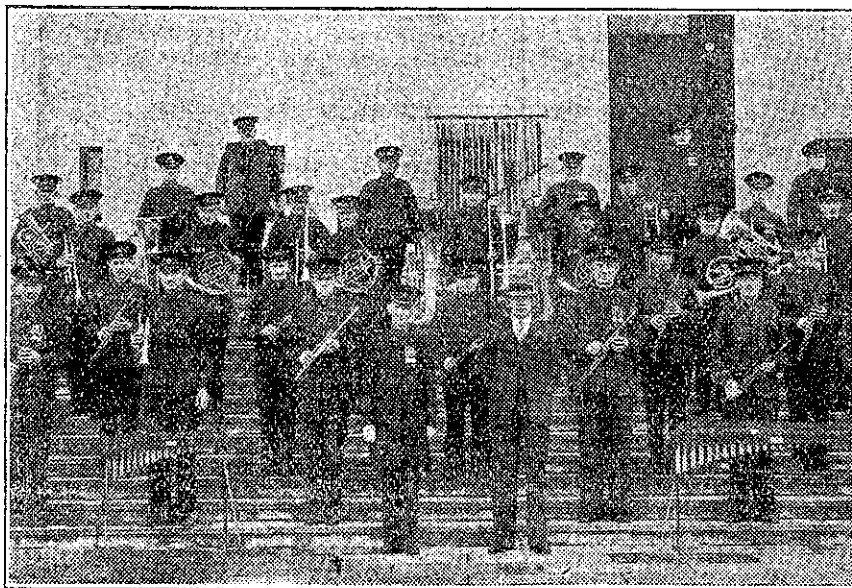
"YOU have no idea how proud I was when I raced home to my mother with the sovereign that I earned," "Tim" told me, adding that he learned to play the clarinet in his spare time. His first important engagement was when he played in an orchestra at St. James Theatre (then His Majesty's) in Wellington, on Boxing Night, 1912.

He says he was distinctly fortunate in receiving such sound musical tuition and general advice from two well-known Wellington musicians, Frank Crowther and Jack Garry. They guided him in his early days and taught him the vaudeville side of playing. This might sound strange to some, but vaudeville playing is regarded as the finest grounding any musician can have.

THE first post of Mr. O'Connor as a conductor was in 1914, when he formed an orchestra in Timaru. When he enlisted for the war in 1915, his tin-whistle came into its own. Returning to New Zealand in 1917, "Tim" took over the musical directorship of the Timaru Returned Soldiers' Association's orchestra, writing, orchestrating and conducting a number of the shows. He played with Pat Hanna's "Diggers," conducted orchestras and church choirs in Australia and in New Zealand, and took part in grand opera, symphony work, solo performances on the concert platform, and woodwind in Gilbert and Sullivan presentations under Gustav Slappoffski.

In fact, the whole gamut of the musical scale built up his present high reputation as a musician and band conductor. He re-

(Cont. on page 39.)



MILITARY AND NOT BRASS
... Centre group of players in the Auckland Municipal Band.