



Maori Pageantry



History in Story and Song

THE haunting melody of Maori music is one of the proud heritages of the pahuka. The charm of their song, the rhythm of poi dance and haka, make their entertainment distinct and beautiful.

Before the advent of broadcasting and recording the Maori was heard by only a few, but the fame of his music, by these means, has been widely spread. No sooner had broadcasting become established in this country than the possibilities of broadcasting Maori music and song were realised, and the widely-famed Wanganui Maori party was asked to provide a programme from 2YA. On February 6, 1928, the Radio Pageant of the Maori race was staged in the newly-opened studios of 2YA. It was a memorable night.

The pageant was the presentation in music and dance of the colourful story of the race. Scenes were drawn from Hon. Sir Apirana T. Ngata's great poem, "Scenes from the Past." In all, there were six phases, covering the life of the Maoris as they were from their advent to these shores right up to the present era.

THE first of the six phases dealt with the coming of the Maori. A brief recital, and listeners were introduced to the frail canoe, impelled by its human machinery, speeding over the water to this, the land of "the long white cloud." Their landing and the thanksgiving to their gods brought in the second phase, dealing with the Maori at home. The routine of village life and the exchange of greetings gave scope for the poi and haka. Then came the change; "the bird with the great white wings" ushered in a new era, and the Maoris changed. The two races which fought so bitterly, welded, and the outcome was the great brotherhood of to-day.

Then the shadow of war blotted our horizon, and, side by side, the Maori went into the strange soil of France, into a country that he had, mayhap, never heard of, to fight a foe that neither he nor his ancestors had seen. And they died—for the country of their adoption. All this was interpreted into the throbbing haka of those who went and solemn wail of those who remained.

The life of the Maori of to-day was interpreted in music, and listeners heard the Maori renderings of many of the popular songs of the day. An apt finale, the Maori in reminiscent vein, brought the history-making performance to a close.

It was repeated the following night for the sake of distant listeners, and a rebroadcast was undertaken by at least 2FC, Sydney. It was a memorable night, and one which, unhappily, cannot be duplicated. Listeners were addressed

on the Treaty of Waitangi by the late Hon. Sir Maui Pomare, that great pillar of the Maori race, who has been described as the Totara on the Hill by the Hon. J. G. Coates, who also spoke from 2YA that night. The leader of the Maori party, the late Hamiora Hakopa, has since passed away.

THE widespread appreciation of the evenings decided the Broadcasting Company to repeat the performance in July last year. Again Hon. J. G. Coates was present, and spoke to listeners. This repeated success of the Broadcasting Company has resulted in this year's performance. This time the legend is different, and the Maoris go back to the mythical Hawaiki. Listeners will follow them through their long voyage to New Zealand, and learn how in the greatest of dangers the Maori kept up his spirits and won his way to victory. Then will follow the portrayal of typical life and customs of the Maori before the White man came. Listeners will be taken into the marae of a pa, and will hear much of interest concerning the mode of living and the social amenities of the Maoris.

The influence of the White men will be typified, and the pageant will end with the Great War, when Maori and paheka marched away shoulder to shoulder. Many of the items will be entirely new to listeners. The entertainment is under the capable direction of Messrs. Ritche and Mete Kingi, who have secured a splendid party of young Maori entertainers. The solists and chorus have been coached by Mr. Oswald Kitson, of Wanganui.

THE order this year will be:
 Act 1—The prelude, in a modern pa on the Wanganui River; the venerable chief, Parakaia, soliloquises on present-day life compared with that of old times. He dreams of Hawaiki. Radio sets back the clock. Act 2—At Hawaiki. The oracles speak. Preparing for migration. Act 3—The long canoe journey. Incantations by tohunga to sun and moon; rhythmic swing of the paddles; incidents on the voyage; the tired crew; the joker; inspiring haka; at last, "The Long White Cloud." Act 4—Maoris settle in New Zealand. First haka; old-time pa life and customs; work and play; entertainment of visitors; hakas and pois; items on the koauau (primitive flute). Act 5—Coming of the pakeha. Missionaries; traders; the great war; memorial hymn. Act 6—Maori concert in modern pa.