

Sutcliffe scoring one of his elegant centuries on a sun-drenched Carisbrook pitch is mine. Nevertheless, 'my Otago' can certainly be found in Olssen's pages, and I thank him for that. More importantly, in this wise, witty and beautiful book we have a contribution not only to regional but to national history of the highest quality.

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Into a New Key. The Origins and History of the Music Federation of New Zealand Inc. 1950-82. By John Mansfield Thomson. The Music Federation of New Zealand Inc., Wellington, 1985. 192 pp., illus. N.Z. price \$19.95.

THE WORLD of music is accustomed to mark the passage of time by the celebration of centenaries, most frequently of births and deaths of composers. At first sight rather curiously, this book was commissioned in the 32nd year of the life of the Music Federation of New Zealand, and appeared in its 34th. It stands somewhat apart, too, as celebrating not the life and work of an individual, nor even the survival of a performing organization or venue, but that of a concert-promoting organization.

An anniversary can indeed be celebrated, as a reading of the early pages of this book suggests. It is just forty years since, towards the end of the European war, the Wellington Chamber Music Society held its first concert, and its success and its initiative had a great deal to do with the subsequent success of the national venture. Those who commissioned the book felt conscious of the passing of an era, with the death of Arthur Hilton, for so long a leading figure in the Federation. The later chapters of the book certainly show that his work was worth celebrating, whether the resulting book fell neatly into a time-frame or not.

Arthur Hilton was, as Thomson points out, one of those refugees from Nazified Europe who did so much to stimulate New Zealand's intellectual and cultural life. Another, fortunately still with us, was Fred Turnovsky, closely associated with the Federation and also, of course, with the New Zealand Opera. Not all the enterprise and energy were imported, however. Among the early enthusiasts was J. C. Beaglehole. The editors of the *New Zealand Journal of History* were to draw for their first number on his knowledge of typography. Its readers will find that the Wellington Chamber Music Society was just as wise: 'he would agonise over an ampersand', it was said (p.25). But he was also an eloquent critic, and, not surprisingly, a far from complaisant one.

There is indeed a risk that a commemorative book of this kind may become a chronicle of worthies. The risk is increased in this case, inasmuch as it has also to give an account of the artists the Federation employed and the programmes they gave, from the first meeting, when a quartet led by Vincent Aspey performed Dvořák and Haydn, to later ventures, like the visits of the Amadeus Quartet and Les Percussions de Strasbourg. The other main sources available do not entirely diminish the risk. There are reviews of concerts, the nearest the historian can perhaps get to recreating the experience the audience and the artists then shared, but still perhaps far from it. There are accounts of meetings, chiefly the more public ones, and of the speeches made at them.

Thomson makes much of this live, and it will mean something even to those who are not devotees of the Federation. Arthur Hilton, as I can vouch from my recollections of him on the Arts Council, is well characterized: a man of stature and calibre, at times appearing an autocrat, even an intriguer. 'He did indeed bring a European concept of power to the Chamber Music Federation. He enjoyed holding all the cards in his hand, playing off one person against another, or one society against another. He was born and bred to it' (p.115). But if Thomson does justice to the European contribution to the venture, he might perhaps have done more to set it in its New Zealand context. 'A transplant that took' could be said of Hilton and Federation. But it was not merely because of the initiative of the migrants and of their colleagues in Wellington and other main and provincial centres. The story would have been more secured from the risks of a chronicle if the author had been able to take a fuller account of other factors. Some are indeed mentioned, the implications of few discussed. The invention of the LP disc, the improvements in air travel, the growth of state patronage: of these we hear, but much less of the development of the New Zealand community itself which more broadly determines the parameters within which an organization like the Federation must work.

It would perhaps be unfair, however, to blame Thomson for not tackling this task in the present volume. It is more the task of the larger work he is preparing on the history of musical performance and composition in New Zealand. To that historians will look forward with eager anticipation stimulated both by the present book and by Thomson's superb biography of Alfred Hill, *A Distant Music* (Auckland, 1980). But those who guide the Federation into the future will want it, too. The role of a pioneer is challenging. The next phase may be harder still: the task is less clear.

The Federation began with an emphasis on New Zealand artists and with enterprising programmes. From the early 1950s it arranged tours by major international groups. That brought New Zealand's musical life into direct contact with the standards and developments of musical life elsewhere. But, along with the increasing costs involved, it made it difficult to continue to use venues of suitable intimacy, and perhaps contributed to caution, if not timidity, in the selection of repertoire. The Federation's responsibility to New Zealand musicians was asserted in a number of ways, such as the institution of the Westpac School Music contests. Should there be others? Arguments about the future of the Federation should be a stimulus, not a discouragement to its activities. This sound history of the pioneers will be an encouragement to those who come after.

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Biography in New Zealand. Edited by Jock Phillips. Allen and Unwin/Port Nicholson Press in association with the Stout Research Centre, Wellington, 1985. 105 pp. N.Z. price: \$14.95.

BIOGRAPHY IN NEW ZEALAND presents to a wider audience the papers and prepared commentaries that were first delivered in Wellington on 28/29 July 1984 at the