

Early in the year preparations were made to produce the opera "Carmen." Although originally intended as an attraction during the Dunedin Centennial celebrations, it was decided to present the opera in the four main centres. Local societies in each centre managed the opera and provided minor principals, chorus, and ballet. The Service made available an opera orchestra comprising forty-five members of the National Orchestra, with Andersen Tyrer as Musical Director, Bernard Beeby as Producer, Janet Howe, English mezzo-soprano, in the title role of Carmen, and Arthur Servent, English tenor, in the role of Don Jose. Two New Zealanders, Dora Drake and Bryan Drake, were also included in the cast of principals.

Thirty-three performances in all were given in Dunedin, Christchurch, Wellington, and Auckland, and a number of these performances were broadcast. Each of the local societies received a considerable financial benefit from their association with the Service in this production, and amateur theatrical activity generally was stimulated by the opportunity given amateur players in each centre to perform with professional principals and an adequate orchestra.

The young New Zealand pianist, Richard Farrell, made a Dominion-wide concert tour under the auspices of the Service. This was the first New Zealand concert tour by this young pianist, who has spent some years overseas. During his tour he visited all the main centres, as well as Invercargill, Hastings, Napier, and Nelson, giving twelve broadcast recitals. As he was able to extend his stay in New Zealand, he was engaged to give two concerto performances with the National Orchestra in Auckland. Both performances were enthusiastically received by large audiences. Richard Farrell played a number of modern compositions in his concert programme, and these works were popular with his audiences.

The National Orchestra reassembled in Auckland after the "Carmen" season. Its opening concert featured the "Carmen" principals, Janet Howe and Arthur Servent, and was followed by the orchestral concerts with Richard Farrell and concerts for schools. Later two orchestral concerts were presented in Wellington with Dr. Edgar Bainton as Guest Conductor.

Although the "Carmen" season reduced the time available for public performances, the orchestra gave 23 symphony concerts, 16 schools concerts, and 5 lunch-hour concerts in the various centres.

In October the National Orchestra dispersed to group activities in each centre, assisting the existing studio orchestras in local broadcasts and also giving broadcast performances as National Orchestra groups. The Auckland group, in addition to normal studio work, assisted the Auckland Choral Society in a performance of the "Messiah," and took part in a studio broadcast of a pianoforte concerto with the pianist Haagen Holenbergh. In February, 1949, the group also accompanied Madame Zealanda in studio broadcasts. The Christchurch group combined with the Christchurch Harmonic Society in a "Messiah" performance in December, in addition to regular studio work.

The Wellington group, the largest of these units, began a series of studio broadcasts on Tuesdays and Saturdays of each week, which continued until mid-December. The Tuesday broadcasts were symphonic, and included eight of the Beethoven symphonies. The Saturday night broadcasts were of a varied classical nature. During this period the Wellington group of the orchestra visited Wanganui and combined with the Wanganui Male Voice Choir to perform the choral work "The Desert," by Felicien David. On this occasion the orchestra was transported for the first time by buses, accompanied by an equipment truck. The arrangement resulted in a saving of time and expense. Members of the Wellington group, in conjunction with the 2YA Studio Orchestra, also assisted the Royal Wellington Choral Union in a presentation of Elgar's "Music Makers," and later in a performance of the "Messiah."

An arrangement made in the latter part of 1948 between the New Zealand Broadcasting Service and Messrs. J. C. Williamson, Ltd., brought the International Opera Company to New Zealand and gave added experience to the members of the National