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**The Repertoire of the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra  
1951-2000**

**Analysis and comparison with four leading overseas orchestras**

A thesis meeting the requirements for the award of the degree of

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in Music

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## Errata

p. 1 - amend to read “to assemble, analyse and critique”

p. 50 - change Patrick to Michael

p. 24 - disregard implication that Finland is part of Scandinavia

## Abstract

The publicly-performed repertoire of the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra is assembled and analysed for the period 1951-2000. The data is organised in spreadsheets, in a manner allowing analysis from numerous standpoints:- repertoire diversity; composition period; programme structure; regional origin; individual composer contributions; item categories; representation of New Zealand compositions; conductor and other influences on programme choice. These are displayed over 5- and 10-year performance periods, or as developing trends. To position the orchestra in the international context, and provide additional data for assessment of the adopted analysis methods, the equivalent data for four leading overseas orchestras (the New York, Berlin and Vienna Philharmonics, and the Manchester Hallé) were similarly assembled and combined with the New Zealand data; these provide both similarities and contrasts. In respect of composition period, the New Zealand orchestra provided a very stable distribution from the Classical period onwards, with steady incorporation of repertoire from the period 1951-2000. Although the size of the data set is smaller than those of the New York, Berlin and Manchester orchestras, the diversity with respect to composers is superior. But performances of New Zealand compositions were overall very infrequent.

## Acknowledgements

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## Introduction

The New Zealand Symphony Orchestra (its present title, hereinafter shortened to NZSO) was founded in 1946. It has functioned as the country's national orchestral body since then, performing in the main centres and many smaller towns. No analysis has yet been made of the content and evolution of its repertoire. This study seeks to rectify this. It has three main aims:-

- (a) to assemble and analyse the orchestra's repertoire over the period 1951-2000
- (b) to scrutinise previous methods of repertoire analysis and explore possible new procedures, in order to enable study from many possible angles and demonstrate developments with time
- (c) to incorporate the repertoires of four leading overseas orchestras:- New York Philharmonic (NYPO); the Hallé of Manchester; Berlin Philharmonic (BPO); Vienna Philharmonic (VPO); these were chosen to provide both similarities and contrasts to the NZSO, allowing to some extent its placing within an international framework, and providing additional data for general consideration of repertoire analysis methods.

The items presented by each orchestra at concerts in their home cities have been assembled for ten 5-year periods (1951-2000) in Excel spreadsheets, designed to allow analysis from a large number of angles:- repertoire development over time; repertoire from different composition periods; origin of items in respect of composers' countries or regions; programme structure in respect of item type (symphonies, piano concertos, etc.); individual composer preferences over time; contribution from living composers; contribution of national composers; artistic and non-artistic influences on repertoire choice.

The analysis generated many diagrams. These, together with the appendices, have been bound separately, allowing the reader to view text and diagrams simultaneously without interrupting the flow of the former.

## Chapter 1: Relevant Historical Details of the Orchestras

### New Zealand Symphony Orchestra

A very short-lived predecessor of the NZSO was the 55-strong New Zealand International Exhibition Orchestra, formed in 1906 for the Exhibition celebrating the country's new Dominion status; failure of the Government of the day to grant funding caused its demise already in 1907. A National Broadcasting Service (NBS) String Orchestra emerged in 1939, some six years after establishment of the NBS; it briefly merged with other players to form a 65-strong orchestra for Centennial celebrations in 1940. James Shelley, director of the NBS, urged the founding of a permanent orchestra in 1945, gaining the necessary support from the Labour Government of Prime Minister Peter Fraser. Under the name National Orchestra of the New Zealand Broadcasting Service, its first public concert was at the Wellington Town Hall on 6 March 1947. It has operated continuously since then, but underwent a number of name changes and management overhauls. Its history to the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary is recounted in books published after 20, 40 and 50 years (Jensen, 1966; Tonks, 1986, 1996). The Broadcasting Service became the New Zealand Broadcasting Corporation (BCNZ) in 1962; two years later the orchestra was assigned the rather clumsy title New Zealand Broadcasting Corporation Symphony Orchestra. This was changed in 1975 to its present name - the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra - under the management of Radio New Zealand, a new entity within the BCNZ. In 1988, the BCNZ ceased to exist, and the orchestra became a Crown-owned entity as a limited liability company (New Zealand Symphony Orchestra Act, 1988), fully cut off from its Public Service ties and responsibilities. This status lasted until 2004, when the passing of the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra Act 2004 changed the orchestra's status to that of a government-owned Crown Entity. The orchestra's Statement of Intent to Government for the three years to June 2008 reveals that Government is the dominant contributor of funding (86%). Together with sponsorship, this comprises almost all income exclusive of concert activity, for which costs come close to balancing income.

Repertoire for the settling-in period 1947-50 under conductor Andersen Tyrer was not included. Few of the original players had previous orchestral experience. Some were hardly more than students, others formerly cinema musicians. Much of the wind section was drawn from the Royal New Zealand Air Force Band (Jensen, 1966), while the management team, appointed from the ranks and according to the grading system of the Public Service, had no previous experience of artistic management. Additional limiting factors influencing repertoire choice in these early years were the size of the orchestra, the unavailability of seldom-required instruments, and lack of ready access to scores. Although a considerable number of studio concerts were broadcast, Wellington concerts have always constituted the basis of the publicly-performed repertoire; items performed there generally comprised the programmes in other centres.

Subsequent chief conductors were:- Michael Bowles (Irish, 1950-53); Warwick Braithwaite (New Zealander, 1953-54); James Robertson (English, 1955-57); John Hopkins (English, 1958-63); Juan Matteucci (Italian/Chilean, 1964-69); Brian Priestman (English, 1973-75); Michiyoshi Inoue (Japanese, 1977-80); Franz-Paul Decker (German, 1984-88; 1990-94). Two appointees (Gyorgy Lehel, Hungarian, 1988-89; Eduardo Mata, Mexican) did not provide sufficient repertoire for assessment due to illness (Lehel) and accidental death (Mata).

Fig.1.1 shows the periods served by the chief/principal conductors. Matteucci was the last resident chief conductor. Since then, they have come for only parts of the concert year. Interim years in the foregoing list, and those between 1994 and the appointment of James Judd (English) in 1999, were filled by guest conductors, predominantly from overseas.

### **New York Philharmonic Orchestra**

The NYPO is the oldest professional orchestra in the United States (first concert on December 7, 1842). In time context, the Vienna Philharmonic gave their first concert in the same year; Beethoven had died 15 years earlier; Mendelssohn and Spohr were at the height of their influence in Europe; Mendelssohn had assumed the directorship of the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra (founded 1743) in 1835; the *Symphonie Fantastique*, *Romeo and Juliet* and *Requiem* of Berlioz were already established in the European repertoire; Liszt and Paganini were idolised as

the titans of their instruments. The NYPO's early history is outlined in Shanet (1975), and its role in the social history of American orchestral performance in Mueller (1951). Their website (<http://newyorkphilharmonic.org>) provides general details. The original musicians were mostly immigrants from Europe. There is a parallel between the NYPO in the 1840s and the NZSO at its inception a century later; both were establishing themselves in communities largely ignorant of orchestral repertoire or concert practice, but in 1947 the available repertoire was vastly enlarged.

By 1950, the NYPO had already accumulated more than 100 unbroken years of concert series. It was presenting more than 60 programmes annually in New York (most repeated once or twice on successive nights), and undertaking extensive internal and international tours. More than 180 composers in its broad repertoire included about 20% of US nationality (Mueller, 1951), and it had achieved its high reputation under chief conductors who were household names in both Europe and America (Gustav Mahler, Wilhelm Mengelberg, Arturo Toscanini, Artur Rodzinski, Bruno Walter). Its financial security has never been seriously threatened during the period 1951-2000. Any operating deficits have been resolved by private contributions and business sponsorship, which have been readily forthcoming under the prevailing social conditions. High patronage of subscription series, broadcasting fees (radio and television) and recording royalties have constituted the main sources of earned income, reaching 80% of costs in some periods. The NYPO played its 13,500<sup>th</sup> concert in 2002, and by early 2005 had performed in 412 cities in 57 different countries. Over the period 1951-2000, the orchestra's chief conductors were Dmitri Mitropoulos, 1949-57; Leonard Bernstein, 1957-69; George Szell, 1969-70 (interim period); Pierre Boulez, 1971-77; Zubin Mehta, 1978-91; Kurt Masur, 1991-2002. Such long tenure periods imply stability, encouraging examination of the influence of chief conductors on repertoire choice.

### **Hallé Orchestra**

It was originally thought that the Glasgow-based Scottish National Orchestra would be a British orchestra well suited to this study; like the NZSO it is a touring orchestra serving other centres. However, attempts to obtain the repertoire over

the required period proved unsuccessful. The choice switched to the Hallé, founded by Sir Charles Hallé in 1858, which proved ultimately to be suitable in the way of similarities and contrasts. The Hallé was Britain's first professional orchestra, performing the Hallé Concerts till the founder's death in 1895. Establishment of the Hallé Concerts Society in 1899 put the orchestra's organization and activities on a permanent footing. In 1900, the great good fortune to appoint Hans Richter, at that time arguably Europe's most eminent conductor, heralded the development of high orchestral capability and representative repertoire, which continued under Thomas Beecham (1914-19) and Hamilton Harty (1919-33), following Richter's departure in 1911. The Principal Conductor between Richter and Beecham was Michael Balling, who founded the Nelson School of Music (Australasia's first music conservatorium) in 1894 during a spell in New Zealand (Maurice, 2003), and was later a principal conductor at the Bayreuth Festivals (1904-25). Robert Beale's recent book (Beale, 2000) provides details of very awkward and persistently shifting financial worries between the two World Wars, despite which the orchestra stayed afloat. The involvement of several top class conductors (Pierre Monteux, Adrian Boult, Albert Coates, Nikolai Malko, Malcolm Sargent) maintained the high artistic standards until and after the outbreak of World War II. Intrusion of the BBC into the musical scene, an important aim of its mission being to bring classical music to the masses throughout the country, provided at first some help to the financial situation, but eventually led to a potentially fatal crisis for the Hallé in 1943. Many of the musicians, as well as some from the Liverpool Philharmonic, played with the part-time BBC Northern Orchestra, also based in Manchester. When the BBC decided to make their orchestra full-time, most Hallé players opted for the security and other advantages offered under the BBC umbrella at that very uncertain time. John Barbirolli, returning to England in June 1943 to take over the Hallé after his years as Chief Conductor of the NYPO, arrived in Manchester to discover his players reduced in number to a mere 23. Reid (1971) relates how Barbirolli, in a difficult wartime situation, raised his complement to 70 in time to present his first concert already on July 5, 1943; the new orchestra gave 194 concerts in Manchester and elsewhere during its first 9 months! This fascinating part of the Hallé's history is mentioned here because it has some parallels to the formation of the NZSO some 3-4 years later. The Hallé was essentially reborn, and included

many players with no previous experience in a symphony orchestra. However, in much the same situation, the NZSO had the luxury of several months' rehearsal time before its first public concert.

The Hallé has flourished artistically over the period 1951-2000 under successive chief conductors (Barbirolli to 1968; Maurice Handford, 1968-70 (essentially an interregnum); James Loughran, 1970-82; Stanislaw Skrowaczewski, 1983-91; Kent Nagano, 1991-2000; Mark Elder from September 2000). But financial worries continued to plague the orchestra, with the vagaries of Arts Council funding providing the biggest headache for management (Beale, 2000).

### **Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra**

For this orchestra, founded in 1882, one can justifiably speak of eras under distinguished, influential conductors. Over the 113 years since the appointment of Hans von Bülow in 1887, only six chief conductors held sway:- Hans von Bülow, 1887-92; Arthur Nikisch, 1895-1922; Wilhelm Furtwängler, 1923-45 and 1952-54; Sergiu Celibidache, 1945-52; Herbert von Karajan, 1955-1989; Claudio Abbado, 1989-2000. Furtwängler, Karajan and Abbado had considerable influence on repertoire during 1951-2000.

By 1951, the start of the analysis period, the BPO had largely overcome the damage to its reputation associated with its role in the cultural activities of the Third Reich, and the demoralising effects of anti-Semitic policies on its players. Wilhelm Furtwängler, re-established following the Nuremberg trials, had maintained and enhanced the orchestra's standards throughout the difficult years. The destruction of scores and other property in 1945 had been largely overcome, but a satisfactory concert venue was not available until the new Philharmonie was completed in 1963. Furtwängler was able to attract a municipal subsidy from the city of Berlin, a continuing factor in the orchestra's financial stability. Though the musicians were since then employees of the city, the BPO's status has been essentially that of a self-governing body. The generous city support and high income from audio and video recordings have given the orchestra financial stability, in marked contrast to the shifting balance of income affecting the Hallé throughout the analysis period.

## **Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra**

Because of its quite limited concert repertoire, in respect of both size and content, this orchestra stands out in the pack of five. Its first concert (1 March 1842, under Otto Nicolai) predated that of the NYPO by just 9 months. Its musicians were then, and still are, exclusively those of the Vienna State Opera orchestra; their duties there involve them 7 nights weekly, with a 2-month summer break. Its present complement is 149, entirely male; the occasional presence of women is tolerated reluctantly, but only in the buried anonymity of the Opera's orchestral pit, never on the concert platform of the Vienna Musikverein (established 1870), where the orchestra performs its limited series of subscription concerts (averaging 14 per year over the period of this study). The VPO was established as a co-operative body dedicated to artistic excellence, organisational and financial self-responsibility; all decisions are made democratically, with the administration conducted by an elected 12-member committee. Most of its musicians have studied at the Vienna Musikhochschule (since 1998 the University of Music and Performing Arts) many of whose teachers are drawn from the orchestra's ranks; this has undoubtedly been a major factor in maintaining its standards, unique style (particularly its renowned and very recognisable string tone) and tradition. The VPO is happily self-supporting. Tickets to the subscription series are renewable year by year, but new applications usually endure a very long wait. Like the BPO, the VPO has a huge recording legacy, and undergoes frequent tours and festival appearances.

The Philharmonic Concerts have been guest-conducted since 1933, though Wilhelm Fürtwangler was accorded the title Chief Conductor during 1933-45 and from 1947 until his death in 1954. Karl Böhm and Herbert von Karajan were honoured with the title Laureate Conductor, and Leonard Bernstein became Laureate Associate.

At the start of the study period, the VPO had largely shaken off the difficulties and some stigma associated with its pre-1939 and WWII years. Because it has performed many fewer concerts than the other orchestras, its repertoire is bound to be more limited in comparison; but it is nevertheless very unadventurous – adherence to the traditional Viennese symphonic repertoire still dominates.

## Chapter 2: Definition and Discussion of Repertoire and associated Terms

The comprehensive reference source *Grove Music Online* (2005) ignores the word repertoire in favour of repertory, which is assigned a number of meanings for different situations. Three of these are relevant to the present study:- (a) the stock of works that a musical ensemble has in readiness to perform at a given time; (b) more loosely, the sum total of works that it has performed (i.e. had in readiness) throughout its history; (c) but also the totality of works known to have been written for an ensemble. This emergence of repertory as a now Grove-sanctioned, English-American equivalent of the French word repertoire is problematic; it introduces a *double entendre*, which could cause confusion in an analysis such as the present. For this reason, the word repertory is used here only in the sense of (c) above. Repertoire is defined according to (a) or (b).

Most full-sized professional orchestras are by now capable of performing any available work from a vast repertory. Repertoire is a retrospective concept – it comprises composers and works already performed, but it grows year by year. Its balance therefore shifts with time as new works are incorporated, while many non-artistic factors can affect programming in the short term. Consequently the extent of the backward look assumes importance in determining repertoire composition at any point of time. Works of the Baroque and Early Classical Period were performed by symphony orchestras during the 1950s and 1960s, but are now largely the province of chamber orchestras and period instrument groups. At the other end of the time spectrum, many 20<sup>th</sup> century composers have been accepted into the symphonic mainstream. Repertoire will therefore be considered and analysed in this study as an evolving/devolving agglomeration of already-performed items selected from the repertory by artistic management.<sup>1</sup> The time-scale is incorporated by sorting repertoire into ten 5-year sets over 1951-2000.

*Grove Music Online* (2005) also discusses the concept of standard repertory, defined as “the collection of works commonly found in the programmes of

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<sup>1</sup> The contrast between the terms work and item is also important in the following – works are available compositions; items are performed works.

Western-style orchestras, containing selected works of the period from Haydn to Richard Strauss and Debussy”. This definition becomes progressively inaccurate in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and is clearly completely unacceptable by 2000. Nevertheless, it poses the question – how might one define standard orchestral repertoire at any time. Can a global standard repertoire be discerned, and how do national differences influence this possibility?

Canon is a term frequently used and argued over by musicologists. *Grove Music Online* (2005) defines this as describing a list of composers or works assigned value and greatness by consensus. Subjectivity is involved here - does a consensus exist; if so, who agreed to it? Is it a steadily evolving body of works, or does it shed some with time? In the first scenario, canon devolves into museum, a concept appearing often in musicological and critical assessments of orchestral concerts throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, stimulated to some extent by concerns over perceived diminution and ageing of audiences and the effect of this on present and future financial viability – see e.g. Burkholder (1983), Botstein (2004), Hatzis (2004). This view of musical compositions as museum artefacts is subject to much provocative debate. The similarity is perhaps valid in the sense that individual response to artefacts, paintings and musical compositions depends on the manner of presentation – venue, setting, lighting and acoustics, and many other factors. However, this study will not be concerned with such arguments. It concentrates exclusively on the changes in performed repertoire which are apparent over the chosen performance period, i.e. what can be classified as standard symphonic repertoire; this is an accessible concept via such analysis.

The orchestral repertory accumulated rapidly following Mendelssohn’s initiation of the Leipzig Gewandhaus subscription concerts in 1835 (see Chapter 4). Performed repertoire has since accrued with heavy emphasis on accepted “great works” from dominant national cultures, particularly that of Germany-Austria. Less significant composers and works have been sidelined into obscurity over time, a situation only recently being addressed by archive researchers, chamber orchestras and some enterprising recording companies. In reference to the role of Joseph Haydn in the development of the symphony, Laki (2003) refers to “... that hard-to-define but easy-to-feel quality that is genius”. This has always been a

major factor in selection of orchestral works for performance from a now very large orchestral repertory, and for the continuing dominance of a quite small number of composers within successive historical periods. Sustained quality of performance might now be considered the primary necessity for an orchestra's survival; but choice of repertoire is of equivalent importance, due to its influence on audience loyalty. The repertory would remain a museum if there were not "testing of the water" by interspersing the works of contemporary composers who may or may not survive the inevitable competition with tried-and-trusted repertoire. Radio and recordings now give new works a better chance of repeat hearings than was possible prior to the 1920s; the proactive role of Radio New Zealand's Concert FM in repeating performances of New Zealand orchestral compositions (see Chapter 9) may prove to be a factor enabling better chance of recognition and survival for the local corner of the repertory. Concert FM also plays a vital role in broadening the musical knowledge and tastes of the potential audience for live concerts.

It is remarkable that the most prolific period of orchestral composition is now the most neglected by symphony orchestras. A catalogue by LaRue (1988) lists 16,588 symphonies from the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and many more are likely to have come to light now. Yet the symphonies from that century played during 1951-2000 by the five orchestras of this study are almost entirely those of two composers, Haydn and Mozart; they contributed less than 1% of the 16,588, but were nevertheless those whose innovations to the form and content of the symphony laid the foundations for subsequent generations, initiating enlargement of the symphony orchestra towards its present size and combination of instruments. These composers, followed by Beethoven and his successors, strove to widen method, content and structure, a view looking to the future rather than the present.