

professional companies travelling regularly through the country, visiting not only the main centres but also towns which would hardly ever see professional productions today - towns like Nelson, Wanganui, New Plymouth and Napier. After the big touring companies of this century, with the top Williamson casts of 1932, there was a hiatus during the second world war. Afterwards, following tours by Italian and Australian companies, Donald Munro's New Zealand Opera Company was established in 1954, becoming professional. At the time people thought this represented the first stirrings of operatic activity in New Zealand. They'd lost touch with the continuity of what had gone before

Will your forthcoming book, O'pera in New Zealand: aspects of history and performance ' open up new territory?

I believe so. It arose from a feeling that some attempt should be made to indicate the richness of the operatic tradition in New Zealand. As a preliminary step to more comprehensive books I felt there was a chance to draw on the expertise of a number of people who'd studied individual aspects in isolation, so producing a symposium that would immediately give an indication of the variety of the territory. It was originally intended to celebrate the 35th anniversary of the New Zealand Opera Society which since it coincided with 1990, it seemed appropriate to mark in some permanent fashion. The book has grown beyond its modest first concept, but is still dedicated to the Opera Society, who have supported its publication.

The book contains sections on companies, composers, singers and supporters. Included are the stories of New Zealand's first two international prima donnas, Frances Alda and Rosina Buckman, the first of whom was a star at the New York Metropolitan by 1908, and the second of whom made her name at Covent Garden just before World War I. They were both colourful characters, but not as colourful as New Zealand's earliest operatic composer whose works reached the international stage, Luscombe Searelle. And for those who have a taste for the unusual, the story of Tom Pollard and his Lilliputians, New Zealand's first indigenous opera company, made up of young children between the ages of about eight and eighteen, has to be read to be believed. The range of this book's contents will certainly surprise anyone who believes that New Zealand has no operatic past.

Do you believe that a historical study of opera is a crucial part of any rounded approach to the nature of New Zealand society?

If we don't study the kinds of things people enjoyed, we only get a partial picture of their lives. It tells us something about Julius Vogel when we know that, in his youth, he was a wildly enthusiastic amateur actor. As premier he was assiduous in patronising the Simonsens Opera Company, attending as many performances as he could manage. There are many other aspects of the effect of the travelling opera companies on New Zealand musical life. The composer, Alfred Hill was taught the cornet by William Mathias, principal cornet of the Simonsen Opera Company's orchestra, and violin by Rivers Allpress, leader of that same orchestra. When the company went away, he described himself as being "like a ship without a rudder...". Opera is far from Dr Johnson's dismissal of it as "an irrational entertainment": it can be a potent nationalistic force as with Janacek and crystallise whole aspects of a country's musical culture as with Britten. In New Zealand it is still early days.

TE TIRITI o WAITANGI : ONE TREATY AMONG OTHERS?

From conversation to conference
Genesis of the 1990 Stout Centre Conference
BILL RENWICK

The 1990 Stout Conference had its genesis in a conversation Claudia Orange and I had about two years ago. I had already agreed to organise the conference. I was casting about for a theme and, given that it would be held in 1990, something associated with the Treaty seemed right. But even by 1988 discussions on the Treaty were following a well beaten track.

Claudia asked me if I had read a piece by Ian Campbell in *Historical News*. It was about treaties signed during the nineteenth century between indigenous Pacific leaders and colonial powers. What about, she asked, looking at the Treaty in the context of other treaties between metropolitan countries and indigenous peoples?

That opened up enormous possibilities. The British had been everywhere - in India, Canada, Africa, Asia and the Pacific; and in Australia as well as New Zealand. Why, after all, did New Zealand Maori merit a treaty when Australian aborigines didn't? The French were in about as many places as the British. The Spanish, Portuguese, and Dutch preceded them both most. And what about the Americans, with their treaties with Indian tribes?

We had a theme alright, but could we harness it? That concentrated minds. Claudia agreed to work on the project with me.

Some of the glimpses that seemed to promise so much in that first conversation soon faded. If we were to be realistic we should plan for eight, at the most nine sessions for a weekend conference. If we were to ensure a strong Pacific focus, perhaps we should leave out the Spanish, the Portuguese and the Dutch. But what about the French? They might have been in New Zealand. They were in the New Hebrides with the British in the famous pandemonium. They still are in Tahiti and New Caledonia. Perhaps a British-French comparison with particular reference to the Pacific? And Canada, too?

We warmed to that idea, but not for long. The French Embassy didn't reply to our letters asking them to assist us financially to bring a couple of French scholars to Wellington for the 1990 Stout Conference. We had lost the first round in the diplomacy of conference funding.

The conference had to pay its own way, so we had the problem of chickens and eggs that all conference organisers face. Without a star-studded cast list there is no point in talking even to a friendly sponsor. But without the assurance of financial support it is very difficult to sign up speakers. We sought out our speakers first and then tried our luck with funding bodies.

We were greatly encouraged by the widening circle of men and women we drew into discussion and correspondence in many parts of the English-speaking world. Their responses confirmed that the theme we were exploring was an idea whose time had come.

We were equally fortunate in the financial help we received when, towards the end of 1989, we had settled the main outlines of the conference programme and most of our speakers had agreed to take part. The New Zealand-United States Educational Foundation and the British Council have in the past been very helpful in assisting visits by overseas academics, and they were helpful on this occasion, too. Don Brown was already in residence as Visiting Fulbright Lecturer and, as well as making helpful suggestions about the programme, he agreed to write the paper on native rights to self government in the United States. The NZUSEF also agreed to bring Bill Tagupa, a native Hawaiian, to the conference to speak on American policy in the Pacific. (We later asked him to speak on Fiji as well). The British Council paid for Paul McHugh. The Canadian High Commission assisted financially towards the costs of bringing Robin Fisher from Vancouver; and the Australia-New Zealand Foundation (Canberra) did the same for Pat O'Shane. (The Australia-New Zealand Foundation (Wellington) agreed to fund a second Australian speaker but the person we invited had to withdraw not long before the conference).

Half our speakers and commentators were resident New Zealanders, whose costs we would expect to meet from conference fees. But we wanted participation from Pacific Island scholars as well. We applied to UNESCO for a substantial grant, our application was supported by the New Zealand National Commission for UNESCO and, in June - just in time for us to make good use of it - we received a generous grant.

In the short time available to us, not all the people we invited were able to accept. But the conference benefited greatly from the attendance of Sione Latukefu, Malama Meleisea, Ron Crocombe, Margery Crocombe, and John Mugambwa. The UNESCO grant included a grant towards the cost of publishing the conference papers.

By the time we put the conference programme together we were embarrassed by the richness of the talent available to us. Eight, perhaps nine sessions had become eleven (not counting the final panel discussion), with fifteen speakers. We knew this would test the endurance of our audience, and it did. But we also knew from the pre-conference enrolments that the 170 men and women who would be the 1990 Stout Conference were themselves very well informed on Treaty issues and would bring a considerable depth and diversity of experience to bear on the issues to be discussed. We hoped that, with so many knowledgeable people present, the conference would generate its own momentum.



Summing Up

JOAN METGE

One of the six speakers in the final session 'Drawing The Threads Together'.

In the experience of the Maori and many other indigenous peoples, the coming of writing has 'fixed' the record, militating against change. Most people, including those in positions of power, tend to take what is recorded in writing ('documented') as somehow proven and of superior value to what is not written but in oral form. All the treaties we have been talking about were written down on the initiative, initially and often only, in the language of the signatories who had writing. The oral record has been submerged. Literary is not simply the ability to write but the whole mind-set which goes with writing and printed forms of recording.

Pakehas are often preoccupied with the words of the Treaty of Waitangi. The Maori continually insist on the importance of the spirit of the words. For most of the nineteenth century the Maori did not refer to the actual words of the Treaty: they had, and talked in terms of, their own oral understanding of it.

The encounter between Maori and Pakeha involves an encounter between two traditions, the literacy tradition which underpins university scholarship, and the oracy tradition. These traditions have their own distinct forms of expression and argument. The literacy tradition tends to go with an emphasis on strict, often straight-line, forms of logic and on 'the facts'. The oracy tradition emphasises oratory and rhetorical forms, prominent among which are metaphors and hyperbole, exaggeration to drive home a point and make it memorable. Pakehas are often upset by Maori discourse, because they take it literally and do not recognise its use of rhetoric.

At this conference we have experienced the excitement that results when people skilled in both traditions put them together to generate new forms of communication and understanding. If we are to understand the Treaty and translate that understanding into action, we must make use of the approaches of both cultural traditions and explore the words (concepts) of both languages