

is nothing in the book which changes my generation's image of Fraser as a first class political thug, who used his power brutally where he thought it was in the best interests of the nation as judged by himself. It was an image symbolised by the Lee expulsion, by the conscription referendum, and by some of the industrial relations disputes, but there are related minor other incidents of his life handed down from other fathers to other sons. They could be explained by the circumstances. Here was Fraser leading a country at war, and he had to deal with various dissenters including Leeites and communists (although this latter element is still shadowy). War leadership involves desperate measures, and so a higher

level of political thuggery. Thus is Fraser's justified, more than that of his successor Sid Holland? Moreover, beneath it all, there was a more liberal story. Conscientious objectors were treated more tolerantly in the Second World War than in the First, apparently partly as a result of Fraser. 'Guilt' snorted my generation. But were we not reared on the Fraser-Beeby principles? Do we not support the cultural life he promoted? Did he not detest racism as we do? Was he not almost a feminist as much as a man could be of his time, perhaps as a part of love and respect for that strong woman Janet Fraser? (Hillary Stace's contribution is another jewel in this book). And was not our commitment for a moral foreign policy

founded on his earlier one?

I know my family inheritance from the Eastons, even though I knew neither my grandfather nor great-grandfather. But I know also I have an intellectual inheritance from Peter Fraser. I remain unsure what it is, but this book gives me clues, and stimulates me to think about them. Which is all we should ask of a book. ☞

BRIAN EASTON *is a well-known writer and commentator on economics.*

Notes

- 1 The presentation text included: 'He may even have lived in sin (as was the quaint terminology of his day) with Janet before her divorce came through'. However Hillary Stace assures me that subsequent research (based on addresses) almost certainly rules that possibility out.

BOOK REVIEW

by Edmund Bohan

Farewell Colonialism: The New Zealand International Exhibition, Christchurch, 1906-07

John Mansfield Thomson (ed), The Dunmore Press, Palmerston North, 1998, \$39.95

THIS HANDSOMELY presented and superbly illustrated book of twelve essays by eleven different contributors had its genesis in the Stout Research Centre 1995 conference on the Christchurch Exhibition.

Surprisingly, given the significance of the Exhibition in our social and cultural history, that conference and this publication seem to have been the first to have studied the event in any satisfactory detail, for hitherto it has been comprehensively ignored in most of our

general histories. Perhaps if it had been held in Auckland that would not have been the case, but at least after this book such an extraordinary achievement will be ignored only by the most crass of future historians. Promoted by Seddon to display to the world New Zealand's 'distinctiveness and imminent greatness', the exhibition triumphantly celebrated the successes of an emergent nation and was visited and enjoyed by nearly two million people – nearly twice New Zealand's entire population in 1906.

Our first major international event, and a significant tourist attraction, was directly inspired by and modelled on the greatest and most influential of 19th-century exhibitions, as John Mansfield Thomson makes so admirably clear in the first brief essay: "'That Enchanted Pile": A Note on the Great Exhibition at the Crystal Palace in 1851'. Jock Phillips, in 'Exhibiting Ourselves: The Exhibition and National Identity' follows with an analysis of the event as the 'national self-definition' of a young

and self-confident Dominion, and draws a parallel with the aims of our contemporary Te Papa. Using the seven themes which he finds underlay the 1906 Exhibition – the ‘Land of Abundance’, ‘Beautiful New Zealand’, the ‘Social Laboratory of the World’, ‘Britain of the South’, ‘A Man’s Country’, ‘Maoriland’ and

‘A Respectable People’ – he conducts us expertly around the imposing exhibition site in North Hagley Park. Gavin McLean, ‘The Colony Commodified: Trade, Progress and the Real Business of Exhibitions’, delivers a somewhat more critical but

equally fascinating analysis of exhibitions in general, but it is a pity that he seems to have been overly influenced by the doctrines of Paul Greenhalgh, author of *Ephemeral Vistas ...* (1988). In “‘The Social Laboratory Writ Large?’ The Department of Labour’s Court’ John E. Martin expertly enlarges on the particular theme, persuasively promulgated by Pember Reeves and so dear to the Seddon and Ward Liberal Governments, of ‘God’s Own Country’ as the world’s social laboratory.

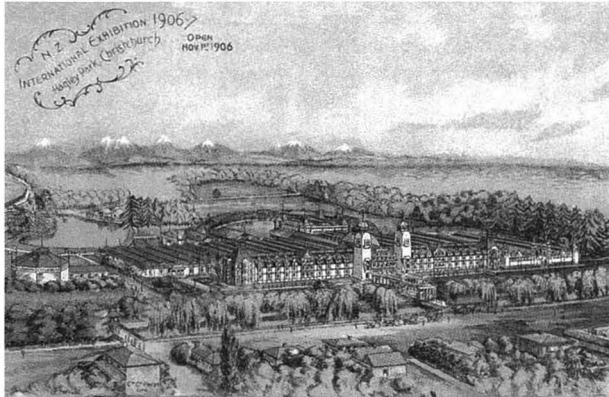
The appearance of the Exhibition site itself was a grand one and the excitement of a first glimpse of its

towers and dome continued long into Christchurch’s collective memory. In “‘Supreme in all its Towered Majesty of White and Gold’’: The Exhibition Architecture’, Peter Shaw succinctly discusses the design, building and eventual demolition of the Exhibition buildings; and Walter Cook’s

utes fascinating translations and transcripts of their letters in ‘Maori Writing about the Exhibition’.

The Exhibition was designed to entertain, as well as to instruct and to impress visitors with New Zealand’s achievements, and the fairground set around the shores of Lake Victoria – the only visible

reminder on the ground that the Exhibition actually happened – succeeded mightily. But just as successful, and of continuing cultural significance, were the Exhibition’s art, handworks and, especially, its music. Linda Tyler in ‘Art for Empire: Paintings in the British Art Exhibit’ and Jane Vial in ‘New



A postcard of the New Zealand International Exhibition, opened 1 November 1906 in Hagley Park, Christchurch, New Zealand.

‘Gardens at the Exhibition: Garnishing for a Harvest Festival’, revives for us on the page something of the glory that the Horticultural Committee created, including the famous fernery (eventually relocated to moulder at Mona Vale until its restoration in recent times’.

Bernard Kernot describes the *tableau vivant* of the model Maori Pa, where resident Maori of considerable contemporary fame (mainly Te Arawa and not Ngai Tahu) mingled with visiting Cook Islanders, Niueans and Fijians under the medical and cultural guardianship of the dynamic young Dr Peter Buck; and Margaret Orbell contrib-

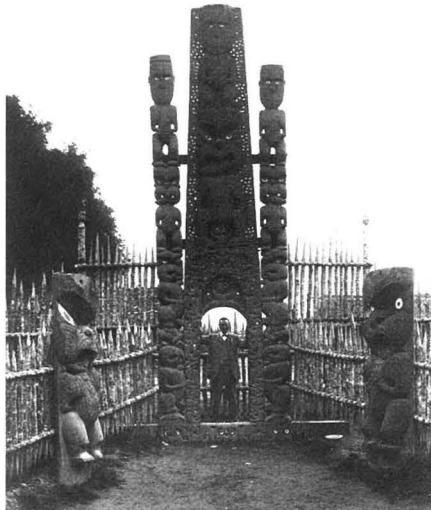
Zealand and Australian Art’ survey well the paintings and the sculpture gathered for what can be legitimately described as New Zealand’s first culture fest. It is as timely to recall how many exhibits were bought for our fledgling galleries, as it is instructive to understand the local, British and Australian art politics of 1906 which excluded Whistler, Sargent and Brangwyn. Ann Calhoun’s ‘More than mere Embroidery!: Women, the Arts and Crafts and the Exhibition’ is a celebration of the strength and vitality of New Zealand’s own Arts and Crafts movement linked to that of Britain.

Admirable and informative as all these essays are, however, the most significant, I think, is the editor's elegantly written "A Triumph for Instrumental Music of the Highest Type": From the Orchestra to the Besses o'th' Barn Band'. The persistent ignoring of New Zealand's colonial musical heritage and music-making is one of the most serious gaps in our social history. As a nation our musical achievements are internationally recognised but too often overlooked here at home. Music, an integral part of pre-European Maori culture and often the consuming passion of so many European settlers and their descendants, has scarcely rated a mention. When cultural historians *have* deigned to include references to colonial music-making in particular, they have usually dismissed such activities as the mere tinkling of parlour pianists, warblings of amateur ballad singers and the rustic blowings of small town bands. All my own researches into 19th-century New Zealand public life and politics have continually revealed to me how false a picture that is. Fortunately, Adrienne Simpson has brought to wider attention in recent times the thriving operatic and theatre world of colonial New Zealand. And in his own impressive corpus of work, John Mansfield Thomson has gone even further.

Historians no longer have any excuses to ignore the place music held and continues to hold in our culture, and in the story of its development the Orchestra set up for the Exhibition of 1906 by the dynamic composer and conductor

revolutionised not merely the Christchurch orchestras and choirs, but others throughout New Zealand. Memories of the Exhibition Orchestra's success and high standards led to the formation of the ensemble for the 1940 celebrations and, after the war, to the National Orchestra itself. Similarly, the Exhibition provided a recital platform for such a tremendous local pianistic talent as the young Ernest Empson and others.

John Mansfield Thomson's essay is worth the price of the entire book and would in itself justify the whole project. The success of this enlightening volume, however, lies in the fact that it does not stand alone. Individually and collectively, these essays deliver a comprehensive survey of one of emergent New Zealand's most significant social and cultural events. ☞



Ceremonial entrance to the inner Pa, created for the Exhibition by Neke Kapua and his sons at the Colonial Museum, Wellington, specially for Te Araiteuru. Two cemetery posts for Ruato stand in the foreground. From Farewell Colonialism, p65.

Alfred Hill towers as a beacon. It was formed because a tradition of orchestral music already existed and flourished, the fruits of the hitherto almost forgotten immigration of superbly trained and accomplished German and British professional musicians (notably the outstanding violinist and conductor Frank Wallace) who, from the 1880s,

EDMUND BOHAN *was the J.D. Stout Research Fellow in 1995. He is the author of Edward Stafford: New Zealand's First Statesman' (1994), 'Blest Madman': Fitzgerald of Canterbury (1998), To Be a Hero: a biography of Sir George Grey (1998), New Zealand The Story so Far (1997), and the historical novels The Opawa Affair (1996) and The Dancing Man (1997). He has also had a distinguished career as an operatic and concert singer in Britain, Europe, South America, Australia and New Zealand.*