



# MCH, 2019n

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## A history of the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra

News: 20 June 2013

The New Zealand Symphony Orchestra (NZSO) is New Zealand's premier, and only professional full-size orchestra. It boasts a diverse programme ranging from classical to contemporary composers, and regularly performs to large audiences nationally and internationally.

The idea of a national orchestra was first mooted in 1925 after the Radio Broadcasting Company of New Zealand was founded. By the late 1920s broadcasting studio orchestras were formed in the main centres. In 1939 an orchestra was formed as part of the Centennial Exhibition but with the outbreak of war plans for this orchestra to become the country's first permanent national orchestra

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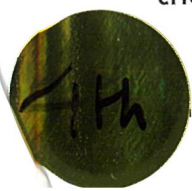
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### Media Viewers

Adobe Reader 8.0



Updated 3rd edition reference  
[nz/news-events/news/history-new-zealand-symphony-orchestra](https://www.mch.govt.nz/news-events/news/history-new-zealand-symphony-orchestra)

were shelved.

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After the war's end, National Broadcasting Service director Prof. James Shelley, with the support of Prime Minister Peter Fraser, revived plans for a fulltime, professional national orchestra. In 1946 Andersen Tyrer was appointed conductor and auditions for players were held throughout the country.

The 65 person National Orchestra of New Zealand was launched in October 1946 and performed its first concert in March 1947 at the Wellington Town Hall. The national orchestra remained under the patronage of the various iterations of the national radio broadcasting service from its foundation until 1988 when the NZSO became a Crown-Owned Entity run by a five person board.

In 1948 the orchestra accompanied the NZBS opera production of Bizet's *Carmen* on a four month, 33 date tour of the main centres. The following year the orchestra completed its first major tour of provincial centres. At year's end, founding conductor Andersen Tyrer resigned to be replaced by Michael Bowles from Ireland.

In the early years of the orchestra the members returned to play with their respective regional orchestra around October each year. In 1951 the decision was made to base everyone in Wellington resulting in the resignation of a number of players from other cities.

1959 was a big year for the orchestra with the release of its first commercial recording, *Festival Overtures* on EMI; the formation of the National Youth Orchestra to act as a developing ground for future National Orchestra musicians; and a tour by