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ENCHANTING SYMPHONY

AT the next concert by the Burnside Symphony Orchestra early in August, Bizet's Symphony in C major will be the concluding item of a pleasantly varied programme.

Incidentally, the orchestra's final concert for the year, in November, will be the last under the guidance of Dr. John Black, the orchestra's founder and conductor, before he leaves Australia to take up an academic appointment overseas.

If anything is a test of an amateur orchestra's powers and growing sense of style it is this deliciously-scored work by Bizet.

Bizet's adolescent masterpiece, his only symphony, is one of the enchantments of the repertoire. Composed when he was a student, it was for Bizet merely a preliminary to his career as a composer for the theatre.

Bizet's ambition, like that of every other French composer of the day, was to write opera. But his training at the Paris Conservatoire was comprehensive: and so at the age of 17, and with an eye to the Prix de Rome, he tried his skill with a conventional symphony.

Unfortunately, Bizet's career, cut short when he was only 38, was a series of false starts. The successive disappointments he suffered over his various works for the stage culminated in the hostility which greeted his opera "Carmen."

It was not until after his death that the opinions of critics and public were reversed; but the ultimate success of this opera came too late for him to enjoy.

Though a boyhood work, the symphony is an astonishing exhibition of both technique and personality.

The liveliness of the texture is given character and seductive scoring, especially happy in the woodwind parts.

In this regard, and also in the Italianate quality of his themes, the music is reminiscent of Mozart and Rossini, both of whom Bizet intensely admired.

This 100-year-old symphony has been known to the world only since 1935. For 80 years it languished in the archives of the Paris Conservatoire, where Bizet's first English biographer, D. C. Parker, unearthed it during his researches.

It was shown to the conductor Weingartner, who played it for the first time in 1935.