

## THE BOWL OF BROOKLANDS.

In 1958 the City Council granted a lease to the New Plymouth Public Relations Office, allowing the use of the Brooklands gully for conversion into an open air theatre. The very beautiful native bush scenery that skirts the small lake at the foot of this valley makes the theatre site, beyond doubt, one of the loveliest to be found anywhere in the world, and it would require considerable financial expenditure to construct and landscape what nature has given to the city of New Plymouth free of cost.

Built into a semi-circular curve of the bank and overhanging the lake is the massive concrete stage, focal point of the Bowl itself, this stage was built almost entirely of communal labour volunteered by the citizens of New Plymouth and surrounding districts, and is 1000 sq. feet in area, the materials donated by the business people for its construction included six tons of cement, 48 yards of shingle and many yards of reinforced metal--the foundations are approximately 4 feet deep.

To cover the stage and to reinforce the acoustics of the Bowl, a modernistic soundshell has been built. This structure designed by Mr. S.H. Borrell, Dip. Arch. (Dunedin), A.R.I.B.A., A.N.Z.I.A., A.M.T.P.I., departs entirely from the accepted semi-circular shape we find in the majority of soundshells. The cantilever roof is designed to fit into the surrounding bush scenery, modern enough to be outstanding, but aesthetic enough to be at home amongst the beautiful shrubs and trees that skirt the lake.

The auditorium itself is capable of seating over 16,000 people, of which 7500 take advantage of the wooden seats and the other 8500 watch informally from the sloping green banks of the Bowl. The one in eight slope formed for the seating enclosure required 4000 yards of soil to form it. This was all shifted from the two slopes to right and left of the auditorium, the work being provided by two contractors voluntarily.

The reflections, seen from the surface of the lake, are beyond description, particularly in ballet entertainment. In 1958 the Wellington Ballet Company danced "Les Sylphides" with orthodox blue lighting, thrilling everyone in the audience--not only with their magnificent dancing but with the out-of-this-world reflections gained on the perfectly still water. The setting has a beauty all its own that places the Bowl of Brooklands in the ranks of the world's great open air theatres.

The curtain between acts on the stage is formed by a beautiful floodlit waterfall that rises 15 feet into the air and falls into the lake pumped from a pipe that encircles the outer edge of the projecting stage. This water curtain, capable of being lit in many colours, makes intervals between performances an entralling part of the evening's entertainment.

The beech tree which you will see at the bottom of the road, at one time grew in the centre part of the amphitheatre--this tree was shifted by cranes to its present position and weighed with its huge root bowl, approximately eight tons.

In 1960 the Bowl of Brooklands was taken over by the City Council and placed under the administration of a citizens' committee, The Bowl of Brooklands Trust.

Each year the New Plymouth "Festival of the Pines" is held at the Bowl of Brooklands. The 1964 Festival is to be held during January and the early part of February and evening entertainment is to be provided by national artists and includes a pantomime, variety nights, band night, and Ballet. Since 1958 the Festival has been attended by over 40,000 people annually.

BOWL OF BROOKLANDS TECHNICAL AND INFORMATIVE DATA.

SOUND EQUIPMENT:

Thirty (30) speakers set in three positions (two sound columns on each side and 40ft. forward of the stage and at the head of the soundshell).

Six (6) sound channels with stereophonic installation. Designed and installed by Mr. Baden Winchcombe, New Plymouth.

LIGHTING:

Four (4) rows of top battens with kilowatts of power with four colour changes.

Side bunches with 12 kilowatts of power.

All front lighting from the head of the sound columns with floods, mirror spots, low watt spots and strand 558 installations.

All these lights are on dimmers.

All background lighting if ed throuth 40 power outlets, all with separate plugs making possible thousands of different lighting effects.

Trees illuminated with strand 558 installations, 1000 watt floods and fluorescent tubes.

SEATING:

Wooden seats with back, capable of seating 7506 people. Total seating capacity, using grass slopes--16,000.

PARKING SPACE:

Convenient parking space is available for 4000 cars.

WATER CURTAIN:

A Water Curtain is affixed to the front edge of the stage, capable of producing 170 jets to a height of 15ft. in many different colour combinations.

STAGE 1 (Extended 1959):

Full concrete with portable ballet floor.

2200 sq.ft., with front foundations 3ft. deep and 7in. of concrete overall.

Stage 2:

Wooden in three flights. Total area 1600 sq.feet.

SOUND SHELL:

32 ft. high at the front and 14ft. high at the bank.

Frontage of 52ft. and an overall depth of stage 57 ft.

Four horizontal baffle boards for reflecting sound to the audience and four baffle boards to reflect sound to the performer.

Cantilever construction supported by eight concrete pillars.

Double roof to allow for maintenance, technical repairs during performances and possible change of colour medium during performances.

Approximate staff and performers during Festivals--1500.

Approximate communal man-hours required to construct installation--10,200.

BOWL OF BROOKLANDS INFORMATION.

December, 1963.

Compiled by the New Plymouth Public Relations  
Office.