

Richard Fuchs



Composer / Architect

Born: Karlsruhe, Baden, Germany, 26 April 1887

Died: Wellington, 22 September 1947

Richard Fuchs, architect, pianist and European intellectual lived in Karori, a western suburb of Wellington with his wife and two daughters, in a modest house much like other houses nearby. He was on the staff of the Housing Department of the Ministry of Works. The local police constable described him, in support of his application for New Zealand citizenship, as a man of considerable ability, of a retiring nature, very musical, whose life was wrapped up in music, his chief form of recreation.¹ Few knew that this serious, cultured, conscientious, elderly man, friendly and pleasant, was a composer of symphonies, chamber music, choral works and songs.

¹ Archives New Zealand: IA 1 115/1766 Richard Fuchs

His compositions are now in the manuscript collection of the Alexander Turnbull Library, part of the New Zealand National Library. Many of these were never performed. Richard Fuchs as a composer was forgotten.

He was born in Karlsruhe, Baden, Germany, in 1887, the son of a prosperous timber merchant. He grew up in a musical home. ‘At an early age I showed signs of gift for music and also for arts, drawing and painting’ he wrote in notes he prepared, possibly for a lecture. ‘Since my father was an ardent music lover, the atmosphere of my youth was favorable for the development of my musical talents. I went through the usual school education, and was thoroughly schooled in music at the same time. I was a student of the musical high school of my home town (the Hochschule für Musik Karlsruhe) My special musical interest was at all times directed to the knowledge of harmony, counterpoint, and instrumentation.’ He was a good pianist, capable of reading complex orchestral scores at sight, yet, as he said in his notes about his life, ‘After the final school examinations I nevertheless decided to study architecture, which surely, was a profession of more practical usefulness, and gave also scope for my creative inclinations.’²

As a young architect he lived and worked in Berlin. Berlin was a large cosmopolitan city that attracted creative talent from East and West. With its three opera houses, many theatres, one of the world’s best symphony orchestras and vibrant café life, it was one of Europe’s great cultural centres. By comparison Karlsruhe was a small provincial town, though, like many other German cities, it had its own university, opera, theatre and symphony orchestra.

² Richard Fuchs papers in the possession of the family.

When war broke out in 1914 Richard Fuchs enlisted. All the four Fuchs brother did. They were patriotic Germans. Volunteering to fight for the Fatherland signified that though Jews, they identified with German civilization. He took part in the battle of the Somme and the battles on the Western Front. There is a photo in the Wellington Museum of City and Sea of Richard Fuchs in uniform on horseback. Making use of his skills as a draftsman, he served as a war artist, a member of the *4 Batterie of the Feldartillerie – Regt Grosshezeg*. He was awarded the Iron Cross for surviving four years of warfare on the front.³ Curiously, the date on the accompanying document is 1933. Perhaps early during the Nazi era he remembered his entitlement to this medal and applied for it as a proof of his patriotism. Years later, after his release from Dachau, he threw it in the Rhine.

After the war he returned to Karlsruhe, resumed advanced studies at the renowned Karlsruhe University of Applied Sciences, and gained a doctorate in architecture.⁴ He went into practice as an architect. He had a number of architectural projects to his name⁵, including the new Gernsbacher Synagogue⁶.

If he wrote any music during this period none of it survived. It is said that he worked on an opera with his cousin, but the opera was too long to be performed.⁷ Neither the opera, nor any other music that he might have composed in these years

³ Wellington Museum of City and Sea – Richard Fuchs papers, Ref: 2003-4768

⁴ Fuchs: “Die Baugeschichte des Markgräflichen Baden-Badischen Jagdschlusses Scheibenhardt: Mit Anhang über die Baugeschichte des Markgräflichen Baden-Durlachischen Jagdschlusses Stutensee.” Karlsruhe, Tech. Hochschule, Diss. [1924], 51 S. Ill., Kt.

⁵ These included and the remodeling of the Café Stubinger, Der Gottesauer Hoff, the Dreyfuss & Siegel store and the block of apartments on the corner of Mozart and Motkestrasse. Richard Fuchs papers in the possession of the family, articles in *Badischen Presse* 4 Jen 1927 and 30 March 1927, 13 November 1928

⁶ Biographical sketch of Richard Fuchs by Dora Fuchs, Leo Back Institute Archives, New York, 1970 For details of the Gernbacher synagogue see

http://www.alemannia-judaica.de/gernsbach_synagoge.htm

⁷ Soni Mulheron, daughter of Richard Fuchs

can be traced. The earliest of his compositions in the Turnbull Library is his Piano Quintet, dated February 1931. This is followed by his String Quartet of January 1932, the Symphony in C minor for large orchestra, dated April 1932 – July 1933, *Heitere Music für acht Blasinstrumente* (Cheerful Music for eight wind instruments) of May 1933, “*Fruhling*”, a song cycle for soprano and orchestra, 1935, and his crowning achievement, the prize-winning “*Vom jüdischen Schicksal*” (The Jewish fate) for choir, orchestra and four soloists of 1936. There are three more symphonies among the papers in the possession of the family, numerous songs, and a setting of T. S. Eliot’s “*Song for Simeon*” for voice and orchestra.

These are substantial compositions by a mature composer. In 1931 Richard Fuchs was 44 years old, the date of the first of these pieces. It is inconceivable that these were his first compositions. None of his works have opus numbers. It is possible that when the family decided to emigrate from Germany he destroyed all his early music, or they might have been lost like so much else. It is also likely that as a busy architect he had little time for composition, but in the 1930s, with the depression, architectural commissions dried up and he had time to return to music, his first love, a vocation that seemed to be of less ‘practical usefulness’ than architecture when he left school.

His String Quartet in D minor and his Piano Quintet in D Major were played at a concert of Karlsruhe composers on 20 February 1932, with Fuchs playing the piano, sharing the program with Gustav Luttgers, a composer now quite forgotten⁸.

His *Hymnus an Gott* (Chasidic Song) for tenor, organ and string orchestra was performed with the Mannheim Community Orchestra (Instrumentalgemeinschaft) at a

⁸ This concert was reviewed in the *Residenz – Anseiger* Karlsruhe’s midday newspaper and in the *Karlsruher Tagblatt*, both of 23 February 1932. The concert was held *im Saale der Hebelloge, Bismarckstrasse 15*, on 20 February 1932. The artists were the Karlsruhe Streichquartett: Ottomar Voigt, Wilhelm Grabert, Heinrich Müller and Paul Trautvetter.

concert in main synagogue of Karlsruhe on 28 January 1934, among works by Purcell, Mendelssohn, Corelli, Handel as well as Johann Kaspar Ferd and Ferdinand Hiller⁹. It is possible that some of his other compositions were also performed. There are numerous copies of some among his papers, which suggests that they might have been prepared for performance. There is reference to a piece by Richard Fuchs on the programme of the Frankfurt Judischen Kulturbund orchestra conducted by Julius Pruwer in 1938, sharing the bill with Rossini, Schubert, together with Jacob Schoenberg and Max Wolff, other now forgotten Jewish composers.¹⁰

He took his compositions seriously. In 1933 he sent his music to Wilhelm Furtwangler and Felix Weingartner, the principal conductors of the Berlin and Vienna Philharmonics. Furtwangler said that he was too busy during the concert season to look at the music; perhaps, if Richard Fuchs would send it to him again later he might have more time. Weingartner praised his accomplishment as a composer. ‘I have your score and looked through it. I am really astounded that you, not a professional musician, are so skilled technically.’ He wondered whether the thematic material had sufficient appeal; that the pathos of the last movement might be taking excessive risks but here was one of the great conductors of the generation recognizing Richard Fuchs as a composer. But, Weingartner said, he had to keep in mind the public, who wanted music like Bruckner’s great symphonies, or music with novelty value. He could not take a chance on unfamiliar music that would require lots of rehearsal. ‘Your work

⁹ 28 January 1934, in *der Hauptsynagoge*. The orchestra was the 35 member INSTRUMENTALGEMEINSCHAFT, Mannheim, the soloists were Else Eis, soprano, Max Lipmann, Tenor, Theodore Munz, organ, conducted by Max Sinzheimer.

Else Eis was a member of the Mannheim Opera, sang Wagner under Josef Kripps, was deported in 1940 to the French concentration camp, Gurs, and died in 1942

Max Lipmann, member of the Mannheim opera, released an recording of popular operatic arias, may have moved to South Africa in 1939.

Max Sinzheimer moved to America, taught at the American Conservatory of Music, and published a number of organ works.

¹⁰ JEWISH THEATER IN NAZI GERMANY-Artistic work outside Berlin, Herbert Freedman, http://www.jewishtheatre.com/visitor/article_display.aspx?articleID=291&refpage=http%3a%2f%2fwww.jewish-theatre.com%2fvisitor%2farticle_display.aspx%3farticleID%3d736

deserves recognition' Weingartner wrote, 'but this is not the time for it.'¹¹ The 1930s was not an auspicious time for scheduling the premier of a new work by an unknown Jewish composer. In 1936 Richard Fuchs sent his music to Sir Henry Wood to have it included in the Promenade concerts, but Sir Henry thought that it was not Promenade Concert material.¹² Why did he approach the conductors in Berlin, Vienna, and London, not those nearer home, in Karlsruhe, or even in Stuttgart or Mannheim? All these towns had very respectable orchestras. Perhaps he thought that only recognition in the great musical centres was worth striving for.

When the Nazis assumed power they introduced legislation to separate 'German' and 'Jewish' culture, create an artistic segregation to limit the 'baleful effects of Jewish control over German art'. Many of the greatest interpreters of German music were Jewish: Bruno Walter, Otto Klemperer, Arthur Schnabel, Fritz Kreisler, and numerous others, but the Nazis, maintained that Jews 'attempt, openly, secretly, or deceitfully to influence our (Aryan) culture'¹³ Jewish actors, artists and musicians were only permitted to perform in Jewish venues in front of exclusively Jewish audiences.

'Jewish artists are working for Jews' said Hans Hinkel, the Reich Culture Governor. 'They may work unhindered so long as they restrict themselves to the cultivation of Jewish artistic and cultural life.'¹⁴

Jewish Cultural Associations, *Judischen Kulturbund* were established, first in Berlin, then in other cities, to provide work for Jewish performers and concerts, plays

¹¹ Turnbull Library, Manuscripts collection, Fuchs, Richard (Dr) 1887-1947: Papers Inward correspondence MS-Papers-6663-1 & 6663-02

¹² *ibid.*

¹³ *The Inextinguishable Symphony*, Martin Goldsmith, New York 2000. p. 123

¹⁴ *Ibid*

and lectures for a Jewish public. The Judischen Kulturbund Orchestra in Berlin had in its ranks six concertmasters from various orchestras around Germany. In Karlsruhe Richard Fuchs founded the *Judischen Kulturbund für Baden-Württemberg*. He was an eminent member of the Jewish community, president of the Karlsruhe branch of B'nai Brith, the international Jewish service organization, and a musician. 'Once he realised (in 1933) what the Germans were doing to the Jews, he worked tirelessly for Jewish culture in Karlsruhe'¹⁵ Some of his music was performed at these Kulturbund concerts, including some of his songs, sung by the great Russian bass, Alexander Kipnis.

Hans Hinkel summed up in a speech in 1936 about the separation of Jews and non-Jews in German cultural life, the underlying rationale for excluding Jewish musicians from performing German music in front of German audiences. It was about 'giving Jews the opportunity to develop within their own community and creative borders'¹⁶

The question of Jewish music was seriously debated within the Judischen Kulturbund movement. In May 1934 the head cantor of Wuppertal, Hermann Zivi, had tried to come to terms with the question of whether there was such a thing as "Jewish music." He pointed to the amalgamation of the musical tradition of the synagogue with the traditions of music in the different host countries in which Jewish communities had emerged:

"In the East they sing in a melancholy manner, as do the Slavic and oriental people; in the West they sing in another way, and this is also true in the synagogue. The question as to whether there is such a thing as "Jewish

¹⁵ Wellington Museum of City and Sea – Richard Fuchs papers, Ref: 2003-4768, note by Mrs. Dora Fuchs

¹⁶ The Inextinguishable Symphony, *Martin Goldsmith*, New York 2000. p. 123

music" must be answered in the negative. If the Jews one day become permanently established, and live in compact communities unmolested by oppression and compulsion, then, with spiritual peace, they might also gain the strength to develop in this native country a music of their own that has grown up in the soil of Jewry"¹⁷

On the other hand Joachim Stutschewsky, a Viennese cellist and collector of music, contradicted Zivi's claims. Stutschewsky asserted that twenty-five years before no one would have talked of "Jewish music," but an important change had taken place. He mentioned the names of Joseph Achron, Ernest Bloch, Alexander Krein, Levin Milner, Brandmann, Michail Gnessin, and Lazare Saminsky, and included his own name, too. 'For a long time we had many Jewish musicians, concert artists, composers of operas and symphonies, but no Jewish music' he wrote. 'Today we have Jewish musicians who also compose music of their own kind out of their deepest personal being and who, striving for a new inner centre, are creating a Jewish art of music.'

Richard Fuchs addressed the question of Jewish music some years later in his comments on Mahler in the notes he prepared for a lecture to the British Music Society in Wellington.

'Mahler was a Jew (racially, not by religious membership) who deeply felt the spiritual need to be at somewhere on this planet or in the universe. He himself would very likely fervently deny it, but one has only think of Wagner's genuine German antagonism after all in "Jewry in music' which he describes as "homelessness" or "international" and Mahler of course knew all that.

¹⁷ Jewish Cultural Centres in Nazi Germany, K.K.Duewell. Jewish Theatre News http://www.jewish-theatre.com/visitor/article_display.aspx?articleID=736

Mahler's soul longed for a real "home" inside his people and nation, which for him was of course the German people.¹⁸

Richard Fuchs was clearly interested in the concept of "*Jewish music*". As early as 1933 he wrote *Hymnus an Gott* (Chasidic Song), the texts he used for his songs in the early thirties were all by Jewish poets, but the idea of writing a major work on a Jewish subject culminated in *Vom jüdischen Schicksal* (The Jewish fate) for four soloists, choir and orchestra, set to the text of three poems by the eminent German poet, Karl Wolfskehl, and to a poem by the 13th century Jewish minnesinger, wandering minstrel, Susskind von Trimberg. This work was awarded a major prize in Berlin, *den Preis des Reichsverbandes der Jüdischen Kulturbünde in Deutschland*. Those who established the competition were looking for works, which originated against the "*jüdische Gegenwart und ihre spezifischen Bedingungen*" [the socio-historical situation of Jews in Germany and their specific conditions]. There were 122 works submitted for the four sections of the competition, 1) *Feierliches Vorspiel* [solemn/festive prelude], 2) *Chorwerk mit Orchesterbegleitung* [For choir and orchestra], 3) *Chöre für Jugendbünde* [for youth choir], and 4) a. and a *capella Chöre* [a capella choir], b) *Liederzyklus* [song cycle]. *Vom jüdischen Schicksal* was awarded the prize in the choral section of the competition.¹⁹ Getting recognition by the well-known musicians in Berlin who were at the helm of the *Jüdische Kulturbund* was an acknowledgement that Fuchs was more than a provincial dilettante. The work was to be included in a festival of Jewish music, but every piece performed had to be approved by the *Reichskulturkammer*, part of the Ministry of Propaganda, under Hans Hinkel. This approval had been denied just before the performance was to take

¹⁸ Richard Fuchs papers in the possession of the family.

¹⁹ Private email from Friedrich Voit, Auckland

place²⁰. The parts had already been printed²¹. There was no reason given for stopping the performance; the decision of the German authorities was final and often arbitrary. But it is unlikely that it was the musical content that troubled them. It is more likely that it was Karl Wolfskehl's poems, performed in a public concert, that were deemed unacceptable. The powerful musical accompaniment enhanced their power. Karl Wolfskehl's words offered exactly the kind of hope that Jewish audiences craved and the Nazi authorities were set to deny them. Some of the lines from these poems illustrate this:

'Ever driven forth and scourged with hate

What fearful right have ye to take our tears?

Crouching all day to prey upon our fears?

And watch us scowling by night always terror torn!

To wailing, oath and prayers, ye, ye gave us only scorn:

Nothing we heard but hatred, shrieking cry, -

*And still we do not die!'*²²

Karl Wolfskehl's collection *Die Stimme Spricht* (The Voice Speaks) was written in Italy in 1933 and 1934. It first appeared in 1936. It was the response in poetry of a German Jew to the events of 1933. It was a document of the mood of a cultural stratum of German Jewry in the midst of its final catastrophe. In the years that

²⁰ Turnbull Library, Manuscripts collection, Fuchs, Richard (Dr) 1887-1947: Papers Inward correspondence MS-Papers-6663-1

²¹ Richard Fuchs papers in the possession of the family

²² Turnbull Library, Manuscripts collection, Fuchs, Richard (Dr) 1887-1947: Papers regarding Vom jüdischen Schicksal 1936-37 MS-Papers-6663-10. Translation by Alan Mulgan. The original poems are from the collection Karl Wolfskehl *Die Stimme Spricht*.

followed, copies of the book were carried in the baggage of German Jews to the four corners of the earth²³. It offered a solace in those desperate times.

Karl Wolfskehl and Richard Fuchs, corresponded, but had not known each other in Germany. It so happened that they both came to live in New Zealand. Wolfskehl settled in Auckland, Fuchs in Wellington

In November 1938 Richard Fuchs, together with his brother, Walter, and many other Jews from Karlsruhe, was arrested in the aftermath of the pogroms of Kristallnacht, and taken to the Dachau concentration camp. By then he and his family, sponsored by an acquaintance, a German dentist, already living in New Zealand, had been granted their New Zealand visa and immigration permit. Dora Fuchs, Richard's wife, approached the Gestapo with the New Zealand Visa in hand as proof that they intended to emigrate, and amazingly, obtained her husband's release. In the words of her daughter, she was a very tenacious and brave woman. The family left Germany on December 26, 1938 and traveled to New Zealand via England. In England the Fuchs family met Ralph Vaughan Williams, who wrote a recommendation for Richard Fuchs as a composer.

‘I have heard and seen several compositions, including works for orchestra, for choir and solo songs by Dr Fuchs and in my opinion he is a competent and well trained composer with an excellent technique in all branches of composition of which he has shown me examples.’²⁴

²³ Karl Wolfskehl, *Die Stimme Spricht / 1933: A Poem Sequence*, translated by Carol North Valhøpe and Ernst Norwitz, Schocken Books, New York, 1947, Introduction

²⁴ Turnbull Library, Manuscripts collection, Fuchs, Richard (Dr) 1887-1947: Inward correspondence MS-663-1

They also met Gordon Jacobs, the influential English composer, Professor of Composition at the Royal College of Music, London. He too was impressed by the music of Richard Fuchs.

‘Richard Fuchs has today played me his choral work “*Vom judische Schicksal*”’ he wrote, ‘and I have also seen other musical manuscripts. These works show Dr Fuchs to be an accomplished musician – particularly so for one who is not actually a musician by profession, and his music might enable him to earn a little money in addition to that coming from his profession as an architect. I understand that Dr Fuchs and his family hope to emigrate to New Zealand and I believe that there has lately been a considerable awakening of interest in that country’²⁵

The comment about the awakening of interest in music in New Zealand was not unfounded. 1940 was the centenary of the proclamation of British sovereignty of New Zealand, the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi. Planning for the celebrations began some considerable time before. Gordon Jacob would have been aware of the discussions taking place.

The Fuchs family arrived in Wellington on April 17, 1939. There was at the time no symphony orchestra in New Zealand, no organization promoting regular concerts and no music conservatorium. There were few prospects for a composer. Richard Fuchs earned his living as an architect, first working for Natusch and Sons and later the Housing Corporation, part of the Ministry of Works, the benign employer of a number of European refugee architects.

²⁵ Turnbull Library, Manuscripts collection, Fuchs, Richard (Dr) 1887-1947

With his numerous major compositions, Richard Fuchs was arguably the most experienced composer living in New Zealand in the years between 1939 and 1947. In 1939 Douglas Lilburn, the one New Zealand composer of the next generation to attain international recognition, was still a 23 year old student at the Royal School of Music in London.

The 1940s was not a fertile period for the creative arts in New Zealand. Richard Fuchs, architect during the day, played chamber music in his spare time with some of the leading musicians living in Wellington. These included Frederick Page, pianist, pioneer of the performance of the music of the major composers of the twentieth century, and later, founding Professor of Music at Victoria University, Hilde Cohn, a pianist heard regularly in concerts and broadcasts, and her husband, the violinist Gustav, the cellist Marie Vanderwart, the organist Clement Howes, and Kato Kurzweil, the Hungarian pianist and one of the foremost piano teachers in Wellington. The writer, Alan Mulgan, who translated the poems of Karl Wolfskehl that Fuchs set to music was one of his many friends.

His daughter, Soni recalls her father:

“He had lots of laughs and a big circle of friends, New Zealanders and refugees. He loved getting out into the countryside to paint. This was difficult for him because we had to rely on friends to take us. We had no car and during the war and we could not travel further than 10 miles (I think) without a permit because we were enemy aliens. And money was short. He did go on a few trips to Nelson and Christchurch. He was scathing about NZ architecture, which he called "a kind of Polynesian Baroque"

He had met Karl Wolfskehl on one occasion when Wolfskehl visited Wellington. The celebrated poet wrote to Friedrich Ost, another refugee architect, poet and playwright who came from Czechoslovakia:

“Dr Fuchs, an architect as well as a musician, lives in Wellington. He came from the southern part of Germany. He set several, and indeed, particularly significant poems of mine to music. These poems are from my volume *‘The Voice Speaks’ (Die Stimme spricht)*. These seem to me to be pretty successful compositions.”²⁶

There was a huge pool of talent among the European refugees including Ost’s wife, Greta Ostova, a cellist and later a member of the newly formed National Orchestra..

Richard Fuchs continued to compose, but disillusioned with Germany, he turned his back on German poetry. He tried to be a true New Zealand composer. He wrote a Quick March for the Royal New Zealand Air Force Band, probably never performed. A good patriot, he set to music the poem “I Vow to Thee My Country” by Cecil Spring-Rice, and “A New Zealand Christmas” a poem by Eileen Duggan. He wrote a Piano Quintet in D minor in March 1941 a Symphony dated June 1943 in one movement, which, he incorporated in a much longer but unfinished four-movement symphony in 1944,²⁷ and a String Quartet in December 1945²⁸

A well-known singer, Molly Atkinson sang some of his songs, his string quartet was played in a concert in Christchurch, but apart from these, none of the music of Richard Fuchs was ever performed in New Zealand in his lifetime. He

²⁶ Letter of Wolfskeh to Frederick Ost, October 7, 1943

²⁷ Richard Fuchs papers in the possession of the family

²⁸ Turnbull Library, Manuscripts collection, Fuchs, Richard (Dr) 1887-1947

beseached the newly formed Chamber Music Society to programme his music. He wrote:

‘I did not wish to trouble the new born (*Chamber Music*) society in the case of a "refugee". But I think these considerations should now be pointless or will be so next year. (*He was about to be naturalised*) I must also admit that I hoped the society might take the initiative. But it seems to me that I am still an unknown quality at least so in Wellington. - Well, I am not a professional musician, though my activities as a composer are far more than a hobby. When I came to this country more than six years ago I brought some recommendations from very famous men like Furtwangler, Weingartner and the English composer Dr Vaughan Williams.’²⁹

He had hoped that his newly completed string quartet, or perhaps the piano quintet that he wrote in New Zealand might be included in the Chamber Music Society’s subscription series, but this was not to be.

John Thomson recorded in his history of the Chamber Music Society that ‘among the musicians ... there was even a composer, a Dr. Richard Fuchs. He quoted Ray Gilbert (married to a European refugee and later a member of the Chamber Music Society Committee) “(Richard Fuchs) was a clever fellow, gentle, very much an old-style architect by profession. He played the piano beautifully and was always composing music and songs – his music was romantic, very Straussian. He was always very frustrated because nobody was interested much in his sentimental music.” Not even, alas, the newly formed Wellington Chamber Music Society.’³⁰

²⁹ Turnbull Library, Manuscripts collection, Chamber Music Society Inward Correspondence

³⁰ John Mansfield Thomson, *Into a New Key*, Wellington 1985, P.23

This short account says much about the New Zealand intellectual climate of the time. “A clever fellow” implies someone who was somehow different. “An old style architect” suggests that he was not one of the new school, an architect like Ernst Plischke, another European refugee, whose radical designs altered the way people looked at architecture. Fuchs’s doctoral thesis was on the history and architecture of the splendid Karlsruhe palace of Ludwig Wilhelm of Baden. The Gernbacher Synagogue, which he designed, conformed to traditional concepts of synagogue architecture; the apartment block on the corner of Mozart and Moltke Streets had a pleasing ageless, German look. He was more interested in tradition than in the modern ideas of functionalism. He was a generation older than his groundbreaking colleagues.

The comment: “His music was romantic, very Straussian” illustrates how his music was perceived. Richard Strauss was falling into disfavour, representing a romantic German tradition discredited by the war and superseded by the avant-garde. Fuchs wrote music reminiscent of Wagner, Bruckner, Mahler and Strauss, but “sentimental” was certainly not an apt description of his serious large-scale works.

New Zealand looked to Britain for cultural guidance. The young Douglas Lilburn went to study in London with Ralph Vaughan Williams. The BBC advised the New Zealand Broadcasting Corporation on the appointment of the conductors of the New Zealand National Orchestra. There was an entrenched suspicion of those heavy German composers, Bruckner and Mahler, whose music was seldom performed in Britain and was not highly regarded³¹. Some of Mahler’s symphonies were not played in England until the 1950s, years after Fuchs died. The resources were certainly not available in New Zealand in the 1940s, and even much later, to perform works calling for a large orchestra, let alone the Wagner tuba in Richard Fuchs’s Symphony.

³¹ See Ralph Hill, Editor, *The Symphony*, (1949) Hammondsworth, U.K., Penguin, Chapter 16, Geoffrey Sharp, *Mahler* p.297 ff

Still, Richard Fuchs did not pass up opportunities and sent his music to Andersen Tyrer, examiner for the Royal Schools of Music and later, first conductor of the National Orchestra. Andersen Tyrer was not pedantic about small details. He replied:

‘Dear Dr Carl (sic) Fuchs,

I have looked through the enclosed composition and found it very interesting.’³²

No suggestion that the pieces may be worth playing by the newly formed orchestra, not a word of encouragement. The prospect of any performance of Fuchs’s orchestral works was buried by polite indifference.

Richard Fuchs was not entirely forgotten in the decades after his death. In 1954 a Maori Girls’ Choir in Rotorua sang his ‘New Zealand Christmas Carol’ on the occasion of the Queen’s visit. This short little piece for children’s voices became his most widely performed work. It was also sung by a massed choir of 300 children in the Wellington Town Hall under Judith Temple White, one of the leading choral conductors, it was featured in the Hawkes’ Bay Festival, and in a concert in Gisborne. There were enquiries from people who wanted to obtain the music, but of course, the music had not been published and was soon forgotten. Blandford Press, the British music publishers wrote to the minister of St. John’s Presbyterian Church in Rotorua, where the piece was sung, asking him to get in touch with the composer. ‘We are most interested to hear news in England’ they wrote, ‘of the performance by your choir of a “New Zealand Christmas Carol” in the presence of Her Majesty the Queen. ... We have in preparation at this moment a book entitled “Carols of the Nations” and

³² Turnbull Library, Manuscripts collection, Fuchs, Richard (Dr) 1887-1947

we would be most keen to include “New Zealand Christmas Carol”.³³ There is no reply to this letter among the Fuchs papers, and no indication that the music was ever published. It was ironic that the most successful composition of a German Jewish composer of large-scale symphonic works was a short, modest little setting of a Christmas song for a children’s choir.

Some of the songs of Richard Fuchs were broadcast in later years; Rosemary Gordon, a well-known opera singer sang some in 1965, Gerald Christeller, baritone and lecturer in German at the university, sang others in 1970, but the bulk of his music has never been performed.

Richard Fuchs was born in the 19th century and grew up in an era when German culture attained its pinnacle, but for the rest of his life, he was an outsider, out of step with the age he lived in. In the Germany of the 1930s he was a Jew. Living in Karlsruhe, far from Berlin and Vienna, the main centres of music, he was a provincial. In the New Zealand of the 1940s he was a German; at a time when his contemporaries were discovering the avant-guard, Bartok, Schoenberg, Stravinsky, he wrote rich, late romantic music His daughter, Eva, wrote in a letter to the American bass, Todd Duncan, pleading with him to include her father’s songs in his programme:

‘They (New Zealanders) want a New Zealand composer, not a Jew from Germany, and my father wore his heart and boots out going to local musicians, only to be “put off”.’

It is true that those were the years when New Zealand artists, writers, and musicians were exploring the meaning of being a New Zealander, when Allen Curnow in literature, and Douglas Lilburn in music sought a distinct New Zealand

³³ Richard Fuchs papers in the possession of the family

voice, different from the colonial voice of an earlier period. They looked to the New Zealand landscape and history for inspiration. These found no reflection in the music of Richard Fuchs, deeply rooted in the German tradition. Fuchs belonged to a generation, perhaps like his friend, Alan Mulgan, who viewed New Zealand as part of a European culture. The poems he used for the songs he wrote in New Zealand, poems by Louise Haskins, Mary Webb, Wilfred Gibson, and Irene McIver don't belong to the era of Curnow, Glover, Fairburn, Mason and Baxter. In his compositions he made no concessions to what was practical or possible. He wrote large-scale orchestral works, and extended works of chamber music, but though a very good pianist, he did not write any music for piano that could have been played in concerts without requiring the resources of an orchestra, or even a chamber music combination.

In the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s European refugees made great contributions to the arts in New Zealand. European artists, architects, and performing musicians, not to mention European concert audiences transformed the New Zealand cultural scene, but these were much younger than Richard Fuchs, more adaptable, more at home in their adopted country.

The last composition of Richard Fuchs, his second string quartet, was dated December 1945, almost two years before his death. From 1931 to 1945 he completed a number of works almost every year, but in the last twenty months of his life he composed nothing. There are fragments of melodies among his papers; he even sketched melodies on the back of concert programmes and architectural drawings, but left no complete compositions.³⁴ Did he run out of inspiration, or did he get discouraged? Perhaps he returned to the choice of his youth; architecture was a

³⁴ Richard Fuchs papers in the possession of the family

profession of more practical usefulness. During the years when he was out of work, or only had occasional, casual architectural detailing work, he pursued his first love, music, but once he had a full time job at the Housing Corporation he was back to being a working architect. He was an architect during working hours, a musician in his spare time, and a composer in his inner being. His compositions, beautifully written in an architect's meticulous hand, are marked with detailed instructions for performance. Although his music was not performed, he could hear in his mind the sound of a great orchestra, a singer, a choir, soaring above the instruments, or perhaps the deep meaningful dialogue among members of a string quartet.

He died on September 22, 1947 after a short illness, a disappointed, disillusioned man. He was cremated, though Jewish custom abhors cremation. Perhaps fittingly his ashes were scattered by the wind over the stark, desolate, wild, forbidding Rimutaka Ranges north of Wellington.