

# GOOD-BYE MAORILAND

THE SONGS & SOUNDS  
OF NEW ZEALAND'S GREAT WAR

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## CHRIS BOURKE

By the  
author of  
award-winning  
*Blue Smoke:*  
*The Lost Dawn*  
*of New Zealand*  
*Popular Music*  
1918-1964



*They left their Southern Lands,  
They sailed across the sea;  
They fought the Hun, they fought the Turk  
For truth and liberty.*

*Now Anzac Day has come to stay,  
And bring us sacred joy;  
Though wooden crosses be swept away –  
We'll never forget our boys.*

– JANE MORISON, 'WE'LL NEVER FORGET OUR BOYS', 1917

Be it 'Tipperary' or 'Pokarekare', the morning reveille or the bugle's last post, concert parties at the front or patriotic songs at home, music was central to New Zealand's experience of the First World War. In *Good-Bye Maoriland*, the acclaimed author of *Blue Smoke: The Lost Dawn of New Zealand Popular Music* introduces us the songs and sounds of World War I in order to take us deep inside the human experience of war.

*'Chris Bourke's Good-bye Maoriland is an impeccably researched account of the influence of music in World War I – from military bands and concert parties to Māori music and patriotic song writing. Profusely illustrated and highly readable, it will attract anyone interested in war and the cultural history of New Zealand'*

– Lieutenant Colonel (Retired) Christopher Pugsley, ONZM, DPhil, FRHistS

*'The words of the men and women are so skilfully woven into Good-bye Maoriland's narrative that they come to life on the page. The fantastic images add immeasurably to the book's scope and importance. The book is imaginative, poignant and powerful.'*

– Peter Downes, music and theatre historian

**Chris Bourke** is a writer, journalist, editor and radio producer. He has been arts and books editor at the *NZ Listener*, editor of *Rip It Up* and *Real Groove*, and producer of Radio New Zealand's Saturday Morning with Kim Hill. He wrote the best-selling, definitive biography of Crowded House, *Something So Strong* (1997) and *Blue Smoke: The Lost Dawn of New Zealand Popular Music, 1918-1964* (AUP, 2010). At the 2011 New Zealand Post Book Awards *Blue Smoke* won the People's Choice Award, the General Nonfiction Award and the Book of the Year Award. Chris Bourke is currently content director at *Audioculture: The Noisy Library of New Zealand Music* ([www.audioculture.co.nz](http://www.audioculture.co.nz)).

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## CHAPTER ONE

# SAY AU REVOIR AND NOT GOOD-BYE



Summer idyll: an audience enjoys a brass band performing at the Auckland Domain rotunda, 8 December 1913.

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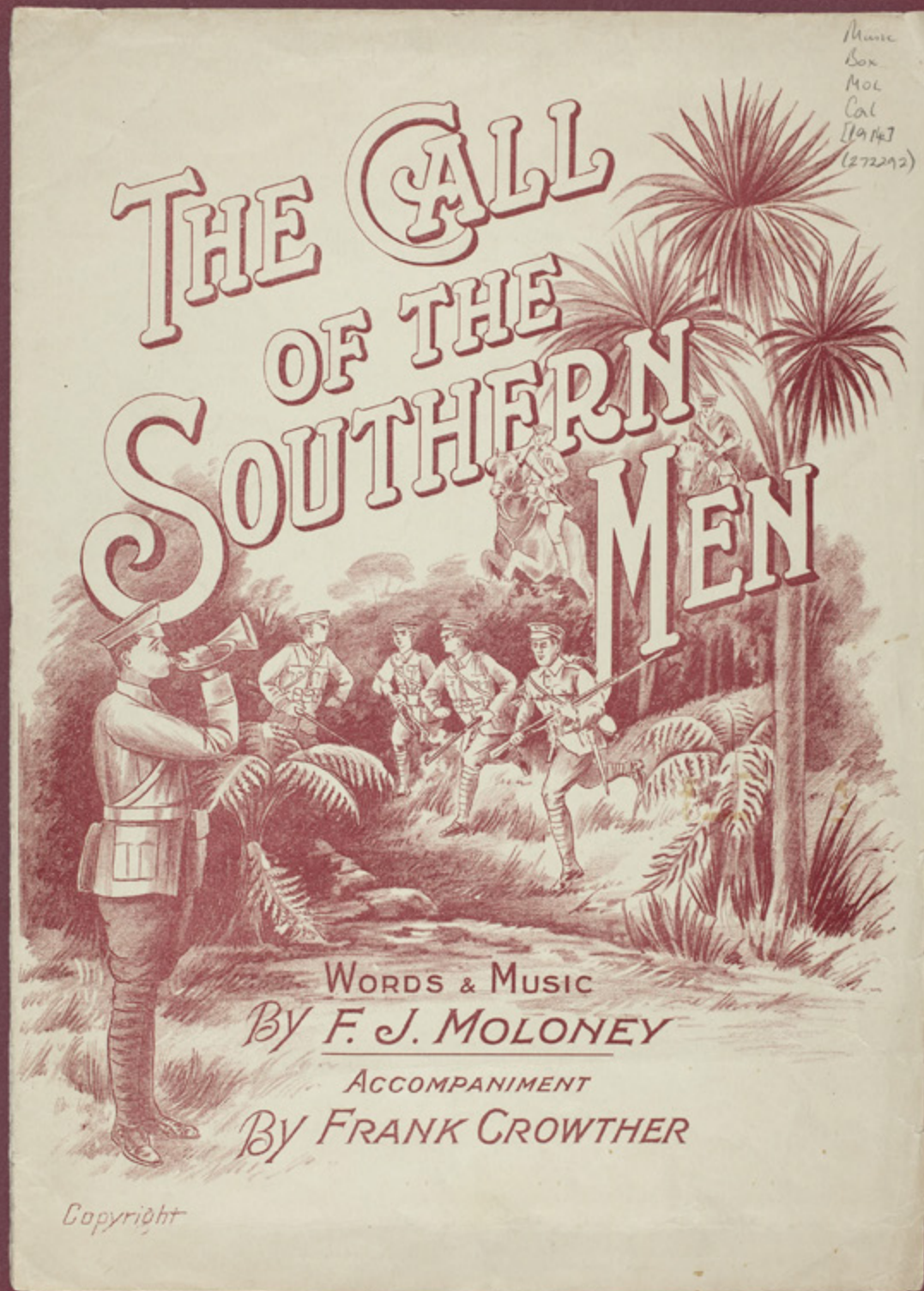
On a balmy Sunday afternoon in late summer 1914, six months before the First World War, an audience gathered in Linwood Park, Christchurch. The entertainment was the Linwood Band, a brass ensemble of 22 local players. A march was the opening piece, and the reviewer for the *Christchurch Sun* was disdainful: the band's performance was rough, its phrasing was non-existent and each set of instruments seemed to play in different pitches. 'No two of them were in tune.' A solo from the euphonium player sounded as if it was being played by a baritone; the soprano player cautiously felt his way through a cadenza. Only the cornet player showed competence. A selection from Verdi's *Macbeth* was tragic, but not in the way the composer intended – 'this was tragic enough to make one's blood curdle'. The reviewer – whose pseudonym was 'Maestro' – offered some advice: 'Try and get someone to help you tune the band up. Have scale practices. That is the only way to effectually cure the bad faults mentioned above, and then select easier pieces for programme work.'<sup>1</sup>

While Maestro was scathing, his review of an inconsequential concert by a lamentable band shows that musical life in New Zealand was vibrant during the antebellum period. All genres of

music were available to the young society, whose population stood at 1.1 million as the war began. Most weeks in the main centres – and almost as frequently in the provinces – audiences could enjoy classical concerts and recitals, opera, vaudeville, civic functions, tours by international artists, pit orchestras at silent films, as well as amateur performances or recordings in the comfort of their living rooms. In Christchurch alone, there was enough brass band activity that the *Sun* provided Maestro the space to write a weekly column. Similarly, the *Auckland Star* ran lengthy reviews of the weekly recitals by the city's official organist, J. Maughan Barnett.

Previews of vaudeville shows were also a regular feature of the newspapers in all the main centres. These shows usually featured visiting performers on the international circuit, brought here by entertainment impresarios such as Benjamin Fuller and J. C. Williamson. Singers of international renown made nationwide tours of New Zealand, among them John McCormack and Nellie Melba. A tour by a classical ensemble such as the young Cherniavsky Trio was eagerly covered by the press, especially the energetic, confrontational arts and music magazine, the *Triad*. Founded in





## CHAPTER FIVE

# WE SHALL GET THERE IN TIME

A Wellington teenager was one of the first composers to react to the country's need for patriotic songs. Just two weeks into the war, Joye Eggers's song 'England's Watching' received its debut performance at a Town Hall fundraiser, in the presence of the Governor's wife Annette, Lady Liverpool. Before a backdrop showing a rustic woodland scene, 'four little girls' performed Eggers's song, after which the Dunedin tenor James Jago sang 'Rule Britannia'. The mayor, John-Pearce Luke, read out a telegraphic cable with positive news from the front, which brought 'wild enthusiasm' from the audience. He launched into a song 'meant to represent the National Anthem', starting 'at least an octave too high'.<sup>1</sup> However, few could resist the manipulations of the event – the presentation of red, white and blue bouquets, posies 'sweetly proffered by the little children', the song 'Give! Give! Give!' 'melodiously sung by Hugh Wright' – and donations were generous.<sup>2</sup> When 'England's Watching' was published a month later, the *Evening Post* said the song was 'of

that comparatively simple and easily-mastered type which counts for popularity in songs of this class . . . the refrain possesses a tuneful swing, without which an essential element of success would be lacking'.<sup>3</sup>

Songs were starting to flood the market in support of the cause, but the taste of the public seemed to be absent without leave, said the *Free Lance*:

What are called patriotic songs will always sell at such times as these, if they have any of the necessary qualities. The sentiment must be obvious, the mildly trite but catchy. The market for such shallow stuff will continue good, but musicians in the true sense will have little to do or to get till the war is over.<sup>4</sup>

Amateur songwriters, dedicated hobbyists and professional musicians were already crafting their responses to the war. The first batch uniformly championed the Empire and the courage of New Zealand's sons as they went to defend it.

*'The Call of the Southern Men', by F. J. Moloney, Invercargill, c. 1915. The arrangement is by Frank Crowther, later a prominent Wellington music identity. ALEXANDER TURNBULL LIBRARY, WELLINGTON, B-K-11-COVER*





*The Christchurch Sun pulled no punches when reviewing 'When We Meet You Kaiser Billy in Berlin', despite the song being produced entirely in Canterbury. While J. S. Donaldson's words were above average, Sidney Hawes's music was 'extremely simple and a little too conventional . . . the song lacks what would be described in vaudeville circles as "kick"'. SUN, 25 MAY 1917, P. 5; ALEXANDER TURNBULL LIBRARY, WELLINGTON*

The country's connections with 'Home' were assumed in songs such as 'Britons All', which stated that the Empire's distant sons were needed to defend the Motherland and the Empire's 'free' way of life. While many songs assumed New Zealand's support, as if the Empire had a sense of entitlement, and the fledgling dominion no sense of independence, other songs emphasised the uniqueness of the far-flung outpost. New Zealand had its own symbols – ferns, stars, clouds – but these

just made the young country an exotic member of the imperial family. Coming from pioneering stock, New Zealand's troops were courageous and reliable, loyal but independent: a special breed of warrior to counter the threat from the perfidious foe.

The most prominent themes of songs written and published by New Zealanders during the war expressed New Zealand's patriotism and support for the Empire ('New Zealand's Sons Fall In', 'Britannia's Southern Sons'). Almost as common were songs that expressed homesickness for New Zealand, which they describe as a peaceful idyll ('The Long White Cloud', 'A Cottage Built for Two'). These songs were aimed at the domestic market ('Good-Bye My Sweet New Zealand Lassie') and written by civilians for civilians; evidence that songs were sent from New Zealand for the enjoyment of soldiers overseas is slight and unreliable. Overt recruitment songs such as 'The Lion-Heart (Enlist for Service Freely)' were uncommon, being incorporated instead into songs expressing patriotism: it was apparently self-evident that to do one's duty, one needed to enlist ('Our New Zealand Boys', 'Britain Calls Again').

The exuberant nature of some song titles portray the war as a great adventure, and rarely is a song limited to just one theme. 'The Soldier', for example, acknowledges the Empire's call, the courage of New Zealand recruits, while lamenting the girls left behind. Earnestness is the norm, perhaps because New Zealand lacked a music-hall tradition of humorous, satirical and topical songs; or, for families, the sense of distance and loss was more acute compared to Britain, whose troops could return home from the Western Front in 24 hours. A rare example is 'We Shall Get There in Time' which is not as craven as its title suggests. Instead, it uses music-hall humour and many puns to exhort recruits to help the Empire, while also vowing to 'catch the Kaiser'. Even more uncommon were songs directly confronting the reality of losing loved ones, such as 'The Heroes Who Sleep Over There'.

There are two major collections of New Zealand sheet music, both of which are larger than that of the National Library of New Zealand: Music Heritage New Zealand, run by David Dell, and Alistair Gilkison's private collection. The combined number of First World War songs (written between 1914 and 1919) in their collections that are identifiably by New Zealanders is 178; a few are co-written with Australians, the rest are by Australians, Britons, Americans, and one by a Canadian. The themes of these songs can be divided as:

Support the soldiers	30	17%
Empire/King	24	13.5%
New Zealand patriotism	24	13.5%
Nostalgia for home (NZ)	13	7.3%
Family/lovers	11	6.2%
Farewell to New Zealand	8	4.5%
Regiment/brigade loyalty	8	4.5%
Peace	7	3.9%
Loss (and death)	7	3.9%
Coming home/welcome	6	3.4%
Recruiting	6	3.4%
Anzac/Gallipoli	6	3.4% <sup>5</sup>

The songs' themes suggest the war is being fought for New Zealand as much as the Empire. If one looks at the keywords of the songs, despite the imperialistic impression the sheet music collections may give – possibly because of the prevalence of Union Jack imagery – the emphasis is on New Zealand as an entity, the contribution of its soldiers to the war, and a nostalgic sense of place and difference (Maoriland imagery). The occurrences of the words Britain/Britannia/Britons/Empire/England have to be combined to match the prevalence of 'New Zealand' alone. So, in songs, the identification of 'home' meaning Britain – although often used in in speeches and newspaper reports – is on a par with the idea of New Zealand being home. Referred to just three times in titles, the King has equal status with God, women, the dominion and Berlin.<sup>6</sup>

New Zealand	23	11.7%
Sons/boys/lads/men	19	9.6%
Patriotic (usually subtitle)	15	7.6%
Maoriland words	15	7.6%
Britain/Britannia/Britons	13	6.6%
Goodbye/farewell	10	5.1%
Soldier	9	4.6%
Home	7	3.5%
Peace	7	3.5%
Te reo (Maori language)	7	3.5%
Family/mother/daddy	7	3.5%
Empire	6	3.0%
Anzac	6	3.0%
Flag (Union Jack)	6	3.0% <sup>7</sup>

The difference between the songs written in New Zealand and those written in Britain comes down to the almost incomprehensible distance from the conflict. Britain, with its healthy music-hall scene and established recording industry, could quickly publish sheet music and manufacture gramophone discs, then distribute both to large markets. The British songs were designed for more varied social settings, including music halls and garden fêtes. British historian John Mullen has described a 'culture of consolation' in which the songs acted as a palliative to the workers.<sup>8</sup>

However, the New Zealand songs were aimed at one broad audience, so class issues were not prevalent, and the approach was more formal: the venues for the songs were private parlours, cinemas, military camps, school events or patriotic concerts in public halls. These were places in which sanctioned and suitable messages were acceptable, rather than bawdy or subversive. Unlike Britain's music halls, there were few venues in which a song such as 'John Bull's Little Khaki Coon' – celebrating the contribution of black soldiers from the Empire – could be performed. New Zealand vaudeville favoured novelty songs over the topical; a rare exception was expatriate





'New Zealand's sons, awake to glory / Hark! Hark your enemies arise!' One month after the war began, in September 1914, uncredited new lyrics appeared for the melody of the stirring national anthem of France. (The advertiser William Panckhurst was a draper in Westport.) Webley, *Sons & Gofton*, Christchurch, c. 1915. ALEXANDER TURNBULL LIBRARY, WELLINGTON

English singer Nellie Kolle's adoption of 'Where are the Lads of New Zealand, Tonight?', a regional reworking of a UK hit. Songs of dissent – such as 'I Didn't Raise My Boy to Be a Soldier', a hit in the US before entering the war – were not acceptable in Britain, Australia or New Zealand, and mentioned in news reports mostly with disdain.<sup>9</sup>

The cheers in Wellington after the announcement that New Zealand was at war had barely faded when a new song was heard. 'Sons of New Zealand' was by Raymond Hope, a pseudonym

often used by the prolific Dunedin songwriter James H. Brown.<sup>10</sup> The words to the rousing march insisted it was the duty of New Zealand men to defend the Empire, and the sheet music showed a New Zealand flag unfurling, with the Union Jack dominating the Southern Cross. Less than three weeks into the war, Auckland cinemas featured prominent local bass A. L. Cropp performing the song while footage of men in training at Addington camp flickered behind him on the screen; in Christchurch, young baritone Charles Dickie sang it at the Grand Theatre. Patrons were exhorted to 'come along and join in the chorus':

Sons of New Zealand,  
Lads of the land so free,  
Don't you hear the bugle call  
Sounding o'er the sea?  
The Empire is in danger,  
And sorrow may be nigh.  
Let's show the world  
When the flag's unfurled,  
How to conquer or to die.<sup>11</sup>

Summing up the overseas music that had arrived in the first four months of the war, the Christchurch *Press* critic 'Strad' acknowledged that 'It's a Long, Long Way to Tipperary' seemed to have become the song of the war, almost by default. Although, with more time, a more substantial song may have emerged, it was – to use a 'vulgar' term – catchy. Its refrain was 'seasonably dressed' in ragtime, and beneath its heartiness was a recognition that the war would take a long time, and the reference to 'the girl he left behind him' was always going to move a soldier. Listing the 'best specimens so far imported from Home', Strad shows the overwhelming effect the patriotic songs had on the market: 'Fall In', 'Sons of Old Britannia', 'Your King and Country Wants You', 'We're All Plain Civilians', 'Our Country's Call'.<sup>12</sup>

## MY HEART'S RIGHT THERE

'As music it is beneath contempt' – the New Zealand *Free Lance* declared war on 'It's a Long, Long Way to Tipperary' just two months after hostilities began. Even as a popular song, it had 'little or nothing to commend it. It is a music-hall ditty of the thinnest and cheapest sort.' But after reports arrived of the British troops singing it in France, the song sold hundreds of thousands of copies in Britain.<sup>13</sup>

New Zealand fell into line. Stanley Horner, manager of Begg's in Wellington, said 'Tipperary' was the biggest hit he had ever experienced in his 21 years in the music business. The branch sold 4000 copies in three weeks, and once its stock had run out, staff still had 1600 orders to fill.<sup>14</sup> Frank Morton of the *Free Lance* was bemused by the song's popularity among the soldiers of the NZEF as the first troopships left Wellington on 16 October 1914. 'Just a hint in a cablegram, and a song becomes the rage. This Tipperary song is not a martial song. It has nothing much to do with any subject akin to war. It is a caprice of fashion, and caprices of fashion are not to be reckoned with.'<sup>15</sup>

The song was actually two years old when the war began, and its wartime popularity happened by chance. Written in 1912 by English songwriter Jack Judge, 'It's a Long, Long Way to Tipperary' received little response when originally sung in music halls. An early interpreter, expatriate Australian music-hall star Florrie Forde, dropped it from her act in 1913 because audiences didn't react favourably. Their indifference changed when, in the second

week of the war, a *Daily Mail* reporter described hearing troops of the Connaught Rangers singing it while marching through Boulogne. This caused 'Tipperary' to be revived in Britain as a patriotic connection with the troops, and by the end of 1914 British sheet music retailers were selling 10,000 copies every day.<sup>16</sup>

The news report was cabled to New Zealand, where it caused a similar fervour for the song.<sup>17</sup> In September, Begg's advertised it as 'The best and most popular chorus song published in years. Sung by all Britishers.'<sup>18</sup> Reports of the song being performed in the first weeks of the war came from many parts of New Zealand. It was heard at Newtown Park, Wellington, in early October, played by a NZEF band at a military carnival to help keep morale up when the first troopships' departure was delayed.<sup>19</sup> The Gisborne contingent of the Maori Expeditionary Force sang it to thank the large crowd gathered to farewell them on the wharf, and the City Band responded with 'Auld Lang Syne' (one of the recruits carried with him a copy of 'Sons of New Zealand' presented to the men to learn as 'the New Zealand patriotic song').<sup>20</sup>

To those who rued the popularity of 'Tipperary', the *Auckland Star* warned that it was 'a happy coincidence that the song of the moment happened to be a "marchable" one, and not a syncopated ditty like "You Made Me Love You," or a Transatlantic lilt like "Dixie." . . . [B]attle songs are not made to order.'<sup>21</sup>

In 1917 the collector of soldiers' songs F. T. Nettleingham wrote that although there





*Lieutenant David Kenny, left, teaches the Kiwis their parts for the pantomime Achi Baba and the More or Less Forty Thieves, Dickebusch, Belgium, 21 December 1917. Photograph by Henry Armytage Sanders.*

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## CONCERT PARTIES

**Life on the Western Front in northern France was not all fighting, digging and devastation: the soldiers occasionally enjoyed a reprieve. The New Zealand military authorities realised that brief spells of intense conflict interspersed by long periods of inaction damaged the morale of the troops. The YMCA learnt from its customers in khaki that the soldiers wanted not a sermon but a rest, a mug of hot tea, and some kind of distraction.**

Organised entertainment was one answer. In late 1916, the New Zealand Division emulated the British by establishing concert parties, with performers taken from the ranks of the NZEF soldiers. Soon there were three sanctioned troupes, best known by their nicknames – the Kiwis, the New Zealand Pierrots, and the Tuis – and the pleasure they generated would be remembered long after the armistice.

From soldiers in the New Zealand Division, the concert parties recruited versatile entertainers who could pass as professionals in several crafts: singers, instrumentalists, musical arrangers, actors, comedians and set builders. Situated very close to the front lines, their task was to relieve the monotony and the trauma endured by soldiers. With music and often subversive humour, they stimulated morale and helped the military objectives.

The concert party troupes performed variety shows and large-scale pantomimes, with elaborate sets and costumes, first-class singers and orchestras, delivered with quick-witted humour and an air of frivolity in taxing, dangerous conditions. Female impersonators – femmes – were an essential element of the casts, providing an illusion of normality in an all-male environment, and a distraction from the soldiers' harrowing experiences. Behind their greasepaint, though, many performers felt guilty that their war was easier than their colleagues' ordeal.

The troupes' concerts included songs from music hall, light classical, straight ballads, comic duets and novelty items, as well as original, full-scale revues. Several of the performers became household names: though the Kiwis' musical director Dave Kenny died before the war ended, others such as Ernest McKinlay, Stan Lawson, Theo Trezise and Tano Fama enjoyed careers in entertainment into the 1930s.





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## PATRIOTIC SONGWRITING

New Zealand's songwriters rallied to support the war as soon as it began, and flooded the market with their original songs. By the armistice they had written approximately 200 songs responding to the conflict. A large percentage championed the British Empire and its way of life: what the war was trying to preserve. Some songs emphasised New Zealand, romanticising it as 'Maoriland', while highlighting the country's loyalty, familiarity and connections with Britain. Most were earnest, although they also portrayed the war as a great adventure. Early songs such as 'England's Watching' and 'Sons of New Zealand' emphasised the dominion's subservient status. As the war continued, the tone of the songs changed; by the latter stages, songs such as 'We'll Never Forget Our Boys' acknowledged that so many had sacrificed their lives.

Some of the songwriters were music professionals – usually teachers or organists – but most were dedicated amateurs trying to capture the moment with their hobby. The most successful song was written by an amateur two years before the war: 'Good Old New Zealand' by Louis Benzoni sold over 51,000 copies. The sales were eclipsed by the massive success of songs from Britain – among them, 'It's a Long, Long Way to Tipperary', which was ubiquitous – but the locally written originals were often performed in patriotic concerts.

New Zealand's role in helping the Empire was the songs' most common theme: Britain was often portrayed as the Motherland, and as the youngest child in the imperial family, it was New Zealand's duty to come to her aid. 'To keep the flag of freedom flying high' was the cry, and a song such as 'We Shall Get There in Time' epitomised New Zealand's loyalty and dependability.

The patriotic songs were of their moment rather than written for posterity, providing topical commentary on recruitment, training camps, or battles such as Gallipoli. By 1916 a Wellington music critic cried 'enough' to the flood of patriotic songs. War fatigue crept in, and scepticism about censorship and propaganda; sentiments in the songs shifted from stiff upper lip to bittersweet. When the armistice arrived on 11 November 1918, the patriotic song industry quickly ground to a halt, its pro-war message unwelcome, and its repertoire untouched inside piano stools.

*A rare example of humour in a New Zealand song from the First World War is 'We Shall Get There in Time' by Harry Ribbands and Archie Don, published by Don in 1915 and later by Begg's. The message is not as craven as its title suggests – instead, it uses many puns to exhort recruits to help the Empire, while also vowing to 'catch the Kaiser'.*

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