

### The Evolution of New Zealand Community Music

Once settlers began to establish homes and adapt to the new environment around them and began to establish relationships with Maori, music began to evolve more and more, changing its shape to fit in with the new lives they were beginning to build. More and more spare time became available to the settlers who had conquered the wild land around them and towns and what would become the major cities of New Zealand established themselves as thriving centres for businesses and people alike.

With the establishment of the towns came advancements in technology, and nine years into the new century, a way of recording sound was pioneered with the first recording to be produced in New Zealand done by a Christchurch-born soprano, Madame Frances Alda. **The phonograph revolutionised the way people listened to music. It was no longer necessary to have an instrument present or someone with musical talent in the room, all that was required was a phonograph and a record.** Because phonographs preceded radio and TV, people would gather to have a “gramophone evening”, listening together to the latest music from around the world. **They would gather not only in their homes but sometimes even in music shops, like a shop in Wellington that held concerts called the “Talkeries”, or in community halls. Music and the way people enjoyed and listened to it would never be the same.**

1

2

In the 1920’s, the private use of gramophones in homes became commonplace and most households had one. Microphones were just coming into use and the quality of the recordings began to get better. Most records available for sale in New Zealand were imported from America and Britain, and the most popular record in 1925 was made by The Temple Church Choir in London, and sold an incredible 30,000 copies.

Once technology began to become more widespread in its use, musicians in New Zealand and around the world were able to utilise tools like microphones, amplifiers, sound desks and recording software to communicate their music to a wider audience. Soon the general public were able to enjoy listening to their favourite musicians at a venue of over a thousand, previously not something that was possible outside of an opera house or purposely built space that had the right acoustics for projection of an acoustic instrument. Small bands of only 5 or 6 players could now make themselves heard to an audience 100 times their size! Not only that but musicians could now record their works and sell them to a wider range of people.

**New Zealand’s community music was impacted through this advancement in technology because music and social gathering were now no longer limited to the musicians within the local area. Because of technology you could have Elvis Presley singing at your party!**

3

### Conclusion: Have we Lost Community Music?

**In conclusion, I have found through my research that Community Music is less accessible and more commercialised than what it used to be 30 years ago. The advent of technology has revolutionised music in terms of its accessibility, but in it becoming more widespread**

4

music has lost the local flavour and connectedness to the people around each individual that it once had.

No particular genre defines Community Music as Community Music is defined by the circumstances that surround the music itself, though some genres lend themselves better to Community Music. Community Music has become something that is only organised and planned by community choirs, orchestras, pipe bands etc. or councils instead of the ideal where each community would have a space where music and impromptu social events would be the norm. However, this requires the cooperation of everyone in the community, and with most people not knowing who their neighbours are the likelihood of this is not large.

5

The decline of Community Music then, merely reflects the fact that people today do not often belong in a true community, and it is only after major events like the 2011, February 22<sup>nd</sup> Christchurch earthquake that people become more interconnected. The essence of community Music always comes back to this; when people connect, the music flows.

6