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## MUSIC FROM THE BATTLEFRONT

### Denis Mulgan's Oboe Suite Performed

**W**HEN Denis Mulgan's "Suite for Oboe and Strings" was played last year at Oxford by the famous oboist Leon Goossens and a chamber orchestra, few realised that the composer was a New Zealander. In fact, he is the nephew of Alan Mulgan, Supervisor of Talks to the NBS and although he has not been in New Zealand since he was a child, he was born here of New Zealand parents.

The other day, *The Listener* saw a letter written to a Wellington friend by the composer's father, with a clipping from the *Oxford Mail* covering the concert, and a copy of the programme. Denis Mulgan himself is at present absent from England on active service. His photograph appears on our cover this issue.

"Denis was writing a suite for oboe and orchestra before he went abroad," wrote the composer's father. "Goossens liked it, and said he would play it. The last number, 'Tarantella Congarese,' which is the longest and to my mind the best, was written entirely on active service in Tunisia, without the aid of a piano or any musical instrument, and

the score reached us after the rehearsals for the concert had begun. I was very gratified to find that each number represents a distinct step forward in freedom of expression and invention. This is as it should be. I am glad Denis has had this success, situated as he is. If anything happens to him, he will have left something behind which may find a place in the permanent history of oboe music. Already Boosey and Hawkes have asked to see the score.

#### Full House

"The concert itself was a great success. The Sheldonian holds 1500, and 2000 got in and over 500 were turned away. Goossens is most popular in this country—not only is he the greatest player of his instrument, but he is also a most charming man. It was typical of him after the applause had died down to hold up his hand to the audience, get silence and then say that as the composer could not be present, he felt sure that the audience would wish to give the applause they would have given him, to his mother—he went over and took her hand and made her stand up while she was given an ovation.

"Percy Scholes, who wrote the *Oxford Companion to Music*, wrote congratulating me on the 'high success of your son's very skilfully written and interesting work, so beautifully performed by soloist and orchestra.'

"We heard from Denis to-day, he is with the Fifth Army, has recently been in Naples, and was well 10 days ago—the chief complaint seems to be mosquitoes."

The clipping from the *Oxford Mail* and the programme showed that the concert at which Mulgan's suite was played was, like the concert of Douglas Lilburn's music in Christchurch last year, given in aid of the International Students' Service Distress Fund, by which students help fellow students in all parts of the world, send books to prisoner-of-war camps, and so on. Percy Scholes was present to appeal for the contributions, and the sum collected exceeded £200. Dr. Scholes having announced that a Yorkshireman had offered to add £50 if it topped that figure.

The concert was given by the combined choirs of New College, Magdalen, and Christ Church, and the conductors were Sir Hugh Allen, Dr. Thomas Armstrong, Dr. H. K. Andrews, and Philip Taylor. Denis Mulgan was formerly an organ student at Worcester College and a pupil of Leon Goossens.

#### Neo-Elizabethan Titles

According to the programme: "Like some of his Elizabethan predecessors, the composer has paid tribute to his friends in short pieces which are influenced by the idiom of the contemporary dance. . . . Two of the titles of the movements of this suite refer to other Oxford musicians who were his contemporaries and friends—to Ivor Keys, of Christ Church, brilliant pianist and organist, and to Ian Parrot of New College, a composer. All three of this group have long been with the forces."

The movements of the suite are (1) "Sir Ivory Keys' Cascade" (2) "My Lady Anne's Pavane" (3) "Mr. Parrott's Promenade" (4) "Tarantella Congarese."

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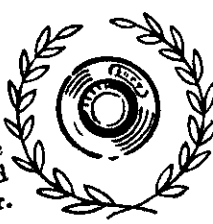
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