

VIGOROUS GROWTH IN AUSTRALIA

Dorothy Helmrich Reports on CEMA

BY the time this appears in print listeners in both islands will have had several opportunities of hearing Dorothy Helmrich, the famous Australian soprano, singing from the studios of the National stations. She arrived in Wellington the day before her first broadcast, and we were able to call on her to hear at first hand something about the Australian CEMA, in organising which, as we knew, she played a very big part.

Australia's "Council for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts" began to grow only a couple of years ago, largely on Miss Helmrich's initiative, and now it has centres in New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia, Victoria and Canberra. Tasmania and West Australia are still to be drawn into the fold. The first number of *The CEMA Review*, a little cyclostyled journal of branch notes and so on, came out last October, and Miss Helmrich handed us a copy of it when we told her we wanted to hear about CEMA.

Queensland, she told us, is concentrating on music for industrial workers, and recently held a three-day conference, with well-known speakers in attendance, to work out future plans; Melbourne held last year what Sir Robert Garran (Federal President) describes in *CEMA Review* as "the greatest festival of music, art and drama ever seen in Australia." Sydney is planning for next June a series of orchestral concerts, plays, ballet, puppet plays, and folk-dancing. Viennese music is to be played out-of-doors under the Viennese conductor Henry Krips.

"I want them to have a beer garden," says Miss Helmrich, "but they ask me where the beer is coming from."

More and Better

A glance through *CEMA Review* gives a picture of the complexity of CEMA's growth.

Its aim, in the words of the editorial, is to have "more and more people demanding and getting better art," or in the words of Sir Robert Garran, it is "based on the belief that art in the widest sense of the word is not a luxury for the few but a necessity for all."

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only with an effort after a lapse of nine or ten years. One explores ancestral links and feels that one has come home. Fifty or sixty years roll away as the elders recall with kind affection the companions and the incidents of their youth. Where else would one find such an old lady as one with whom we sat in the evening and watched the light illumining Sail Rock—shall we ever forget the kindness of her welcome, that embracing courtesy that can keep a mixed group all welcomed and at ease, the vivid brilliance of her memory that

It is not heavily subsidised as the British CEMA was. It has "sprung spontaneously and democratically from the people, and has had to make shift with such contributions as it could collect, and cut its coat according to the cloth." It does not compete with existing cultural organisations; it aims, not to supplant them, but to work with them and help them.

"What it has done with slender means is remarkable," says Sir Robert Garran. "What it could do if endowed to the extent of enabling it to establish a small full-time organising and administrative staff is incalculable."

It Had to Come

The growth of the whole organisation appears to Miss Helmrich to have been inevitable. "It had to come," she says. "I can just see it, like blood in the veins, going out and reaching to the furthest places. For years and years the people in the country have had nothing but cinema and the radio, and now they're getting music, plays, pictures, ballet."

There is no sign yet of a Government grant evidently, but a good deal of help has been given by the newspapers, many of which have started to back cultural endeavours.

In the painting field, CEMA has been sponsoring an exhibition called "Australia at War," a collection of 300 pictures covering all aspects of the war effort from the home front to the fighting services. Prizes have been donated by private individuals, societies and firms, and the collection is to be shown in all States. Full-time organisers were lent by the Army, and a special panel of works by Official War Artists was lent for inclusion.

CEMA International

Miss Helmrich has now been invited by the British Council to go to England to plan co-operation between the Council and CEMA and expects to go quite soon. She hopes to see a full-scale interchange of cultural activities between Australia and Britain, and sees no reason why there should not in due course be a link up with New Zealand too. CEMA (Australia), it seems, has not stopped growing yet, if Miss Helmrich has any say.

can light up the vanished years, and the wit and verve of her talk.

I love Sail Rock and the sea and the islands as they lie before you at the Cove. I love the names of the district, the Millbrook, the North River, the Braigh. I love the memories of other days that lie around and beyond the Waipu of to-day, which no doubt goes about its daily business much as do other places. Waipu is different, nevertheless, and I think its differences should be cherished, as should those of all other communities which have something worth preserving in the warp and woof of our national life.



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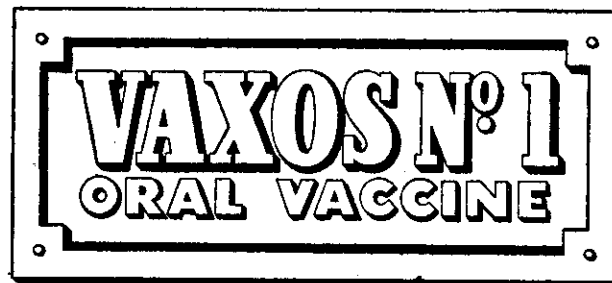
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