

TEN DAYS WITH LILI KRAUS

A LIST of the activities of Lili Kraus during the ten days she spent in Auckland at the beginning of her tour of New Zealand to give piano recitals for the NBS helps to explain why she was able to tell me the day after her arrival that she is habitually "underslept". Those who tried to be present for every musical occasion have been heard making the same complaint—and they shared only a few of her activities.

There were, for instance, three studio recitals, three recitals given in different places free for students—one to a lunch-hour group, one to the University students, and one to Teachers' Training College students—a limited number of lessons to piano students, several sessions with photographers, a visit to the halls to try the pianos for the various recitals, a civic reception and tea, half-a-dozen press interviews, and a number of suppers and bouquet-presenting ceremonies—all in addition to a strict adherence to a rule that at least seven hours' piano work must be done each day; and finally the public concert.

AT a small gathering in his room, the Mayor of Auckland, Mr. J. A. C. Allum, welcomed Miss Kraus and Dr. Mandl and Ruth Mandl and wished them a pleasant visit to this country. He explained that the gathering was held not only in honour of a great artist but also in honour of music itself, which he described as the most international of human bonds.

BECAUSE he was playing the piano for the production of *Peer Gynt*, Owen Jensen was unable to hear the

first broadcast on Wednesday evening. The next day he called at the studio and in the course of conversation mentioned to Lili Kraus that he had been especially sorry to miss the Haydn. She simply sat down at the piano and played it for him then.

He couldn't find words to thank her adequately; he could only tell her that she made it sound so astonishingly easy.

"That is the highest praise I could ever have," she said with great seriousness.

ONE morning she had a piece of sticking plaster on her right index finger and, good heavens, I thought, she's cut herself.

"Oh no, nothing, just that I played too hard and played the skin off." Whereupon she struck into magnificent and stormy Brahms.

DR. MANDL and others were sitting talking when Lili Kraus came to join in the conversation for a moment before she was led off somewhere else. There wasn't a vacant chair and two of us begged her to have ours. But she squatted in front of us and said "Please mayn't I squat? I so much prefer it." I had seen her between times in the studio stroll about smoking and then squat in front of Ruth or Dr. Mandl for a short conversation.

"Have you always squatted, or did you learn it in Java?" I asked her.

"In Java, yes. It is so very restful."

THE normal attendance at Owen Jensen's Friday lunch-hour recitals in Auckland is about 80; on Friday the studio was forced to hold more than 160 music-listeners sitting or standing or even leaning through the windows off the roof garden. Lili Kraus played Mozart, Beethoven and Schubert and roused such tense feelings in that room that Owen Jensen was able to look from side to side and say "I see we have come past the stage of swooning—the stage I say, not the age—when we hear such music." At the end Lili Kraus went back to the piano and said that she did not like the convention of giving encores—"but, as you are my first live audience in New Zealand, I shall play some more." And she played Bartok arrangements of Hungarian dances. Her description of that audience as live may have been accidental; but I think not.

Owen Jensen has a happy tongue for a rare occasion: "Sometimes we find a great pianist, or a great interpreter, and occasionally we find a great human being. To-day I think we've found all three combined in Miss Kraus."

Usually one shilling is charged for the lunch-hour recitals to cover expenses; the admission charge was raised on this occasion to half-a-crown, the total proceeds to go to CORSO or a Food for Britain Fund—and this suggestion came from Lili Kraus. The half-crowns collected added up to a little more than £25.

SOMEONE asked Lili Kraus if she was still always excited before a concert.

"Of course I am! How should I not be? Because every concert, even after hundreds, is a new and a different experience. Look! My ten fingers, anything can happen! We are not machines. I cannot know how it will go; it may be flawless, technically smooth and perfect, but you never can know beforehand whether that magic, that God-given fire will be there. That's the mystery that is always there, always."

—J.

BABY CRAFT

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LILI KRAUS with her husband, Dr. Otto Mandl, and their daughter Ruth and their son Michael