

A MERRY-GO-ROUND OF ARTISTS

FOR eight months after she left New Zealand after her broadcast tour last January, Dorothy Helmrich, Australian soprano and founder of CEMA, toured England, Scotland and Wales at the invitation of the British Council. She is now touring New Zealand again, singing over the main National stations; our Auckland representative interviewed her after she had given her first recital from IYA on Sunday evening, January 5.

MISS HELMRICH and Frederick Page, who is her accompanist on this tour, were rehearsing at IYA, Miss Helmrich singing very softly, Mr. Page offering alternatives for accompaniment of a song to be sung later. When they had finished Miss Helmrich swept up her music and her very gay striped nylon umbrella and said with happy confidence:

"Now let's go and find some coffee." I shook my head to Mr. Page's procession of names: all closed for holidays.

"Good heavens! How many holidays do they have in this country?" asked Miss Helmrich as we walked back to her very temporary hotel from which she was to move in the afternoon. "And where on earth am I to live for the

rest of the week?" So we called at another hotel and achieved a berth for three days; the other two of her Auckland stay she would have to spend with friends.

"Well, I'm used to rushing about—I've had a lot of it in the last year. But it doesn't make the best atmosphere to work in."

* * *

MISS HELMRICH visited Great Britain primarily to see the work that is being done by the Arts Council of Great Britain (of which CEMA is the Australian equivalent) which works with a Government grant of £300,000 to distribute the arts within Britain; and by the British Council (which was originally called the British Council for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries) with a grant of two millions to send British culture abroad.

"The most striking thing is that art is quite decentralised in Britain now," Miss Helmrich said. "Everywhere I went, from Cardiff to Edinburgh, I found music or ballet or drama or exhibitions of paintings on the move. And the repertory movement is extraordinarily alive. Such excellent use is being made of the generous funds of the Arts Council and the British Council. Scholarships are being established (there is one for Australia this year) and artists are being sent out. But perhaps the best thing of all for us is the plan to exchange—a beginning is being made this year with an exhibition of paintings: one from Great Britain is to come to Australia and one from Australia is to tour Great Britain. So pretty soon we may find in Australia—and you may find in New Zealand, for the British Council is most anxious to help—that we are sharing the art of London just as the provinces in England have begun to do."

Everything is Changed

Before she left London Miss Helmrich made some records for the BBC.

"In the old days I used to go upstairs," she said. "But this time I went to Oxford Street and went downstairs—down four floors, 48 feet underground to the rooms that were safe from Hitler's bombs. It was just one of the many signs I saw of a changed London and a changed England."

"Did you find the people themselves changed?"



DOROTHY HELMRICH

"Oh, very much so. I feel England has grown up. The people have come through so much suffering and have been so close for so long to calamity that they seem to me to have arrived at very real values in their lives. Perhaps I could say they have become a more spiritual people."

"And London itself?"

"Everything is changed. By ten-thirty at night London might be a country village—the streets without crowds, the

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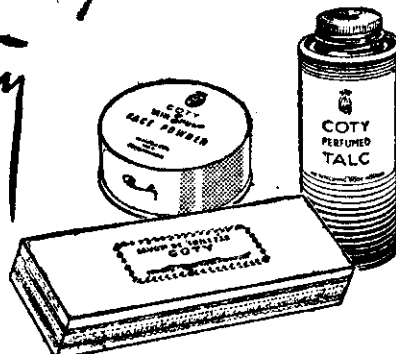
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