

"NOW I WILL TELL YOU . . ."

Lili Kraus Discusses Music—and New Zealanders

LILI KRAUS, the Hungarian pianist, who has been in New Zealand since June of last year, has again been engaged by the NZBS to give concerts in the four main centres, and parts of these concerts will be broadcast. Between March 5 and April 23, she will give 10 concerts, one of which (in Wellington) will be an orchestral concert including two piano concertos. All her performances this time will be in public—there will be no studio broadcasts.

Since she ended her first tour under contract to the NZBS, Mme. Kraus has seen something of the country she came to with such high expectations, and after such long delays, as she has already described in *The Listener*. When she passed through Wellington on her way to the Summer School of Music now being held in Cambridge by the Auckland Adult Education Centre, we asked her to tell our readers what she has done and seen in the interval, what music she will be playing in March and April, and what are her plans for the future.

FIRST of all, she said, she had had six weeks' holiday in Queenstown—that is to say, six weeks' work at the piano, uninterrupted by concerts. That was "a heaven-sent joy," because Queenstown had just the qualities she longs for.

"If I compare it with any place, in Switzerland, Italy, or even Bali. Queenstown more than holds its own. It has the untouched primeval beauty of nature and the handful of people who live there fit in harmoniously. So, it is for me very congenial surroundings.

"After that, I travelled for Adult Education in the Auckland Province to places where never before real concerts took place, and again there was a radiant proof for me that I did not over-estimate New Zealanders. Or to put it in a positive way, all my faith was fully justified, whether my audiences were in schools, or colleges, or theatres, or cinemas—simple people or highbrow people—or children, from five to 19 years.

"Her response was invariably alive—it was never one-sided. It was never that I sat and they adored. We were all one in a tremendous musical experience."

"By what means do you know that?"

"Because—in the most inaccessible Schubert sonata, 33 minutes in one go, or a Beethoven sonata which was 23 minutes in one go, or in an evening where the programme consisted only of three major works and nothing else, the tension in the hall was such, that mostly I had this feeling: the wings of my imagination were fortified by theirs. And this blissful 'action and reaction' made my flight ever so much easier than could be possible without such an audience.

"For an example: At Tirau, there were 420 people, as many as the hall could seat, or stand; they came from up to 70 miles away. Afterwards, 200 remained for a reception. That was unexpected, and the floor of the hall had to be used. They stayed till after midnight and we were told that people who had been cross with each other for ages were happy together. It was real brotherhood. But I must remember to tell you this:



LILI KRAUS
Her faith was fully justified

before I played in Hamilton, a man in Auckland told me I should not play in Hamilton because it would spoil my reputation in Auckland; and before I played in Tirau, a Hamilton man said I should not play in Tirau because it would spoil my reputation in Hamilton. However, the Hamilton man came himself to Tirau to hear the concert nevertheless. And afterwards he said he was sorry for what he had said."

"COULD you take concerts like yours to similar small towns in Europe?"

"You cannot say 'in Europe.' In France, no. In Germany, of course. In Scandinavia, yes. In England, now, but not until recently. And one must say that in Holland, the smaller the place, the heavier they liked it. But I think Scandinavia is the nearest in Europe to the kind of thing I find here. Here, the country towns look most eagerly for the real stuff."

LILI KRAUS struck a palm to her forehead. Then she said, "Now I will tell you something. . . ." After a pause she began:

"There are two approaches to music which are possible, equally for the listener as for the player.

"One—in which the music is a pastime or a distraction—enables the listener to get (or the performer to give) as much entertainment and thrill as makes the listener want to repeat that experience, or the performer able to repeat it (because the demand is great enough). For this approach, music is preferred—by listeners and performers—which is not too spiritual; not so spiritual that it takes the attention away from the immediate material happenings, the sounds coming from the instrument, which are the focal point of the interest.

"That means that in concerts that are designed from this approach, music appears, of which the instrument is the essence—which shows the instrument off to its best advantage, by its most brilliant, and catching appeal.

"The other approach—which demands the highest form of concentration—sees the instrument as just the medium for the composer's expression of universal experiences, which are therefore, primarily spiritual, and which in the process of materialisation—through the instrument—do not lose that quality. This means that the listener, like the performer, partakes in an adventure which not only leads his imagination away from the immediate thrill of material perfection, but leads it into infinity. And what people call 'a revelation' can only come by means of this approach to music, which is just the opposite of the other. You see? In the first kind, the listener is passive; but in the second he must partake creatively, with his whole spirit."

"Would you name some composers in each category?"

"Certainly. In the first, Paganini, Wieniawski . . . Saint-Saens. And for vocalists—Puccini; and please put Wagner! And in the other category, let us say, Bach, Handel, Scarlatti, Mozart, Haydn, Schubert, and Beethoven. But obviously the first list is endless, because so many of them are imitators."

"And what about border-line names?"

"Chopin is a border-line case. And Mendelssohn, surely. Tchaikovsky also. And so is Schumann."

AT this point it seemed natural to ask Lili Kraus to give us a rough outline of her programmes for the forthcoming concerts.

There will be two all-Beethoven concerts, and altogether she will play seven Beethoven sonatas, four of which she has not played in New Zealand before, in the ten concerts. She will play four Mozart sonatas (one new one) and two fantasias; three Schubert sonatas (including two new ones, both in A minor—Opus 42 and Opus 143); the Haydn Variations in F minor; Bach's *Tocatta and Fugue* in D minor and possibly some other Bach; some Brahms' intermezzi and rhapsodies; and Schumann's *Etudes Symphoniques*. And she will play two modern works, a *Peasant Dance* by Bela Bartok, and a new *Sonatina* by Douglas Lilburn. At the orchestral concert to be given in Wellington, Mme. Kraus will play Mozart's *Concerto in D minor* (K.466) and Beethoven's *Fourth Piano Concerto* (in G major). Auckland, Wellington, and Christchurch, will each have three concerts, and Dunedin will have two. At none of these concerts will Lili Kraus play works which she has previously played in public in the same city. Some of her audience may be hearing music they have heard her broadcast, but in each case her programme will be wholly new as a concert performance there.

HER plans for the future will keep her in New Zealand for several months yet. After this broadcasting tour, she will give recitals with the Hungarian violinist Robert Pikler, who is at present in Australia. Late in August she will return to Australia for a period, and then will come back to take a "real rest" in Queenstown. After that she will go, via Canada, to England and Europe, where she intends to stay for about three years.