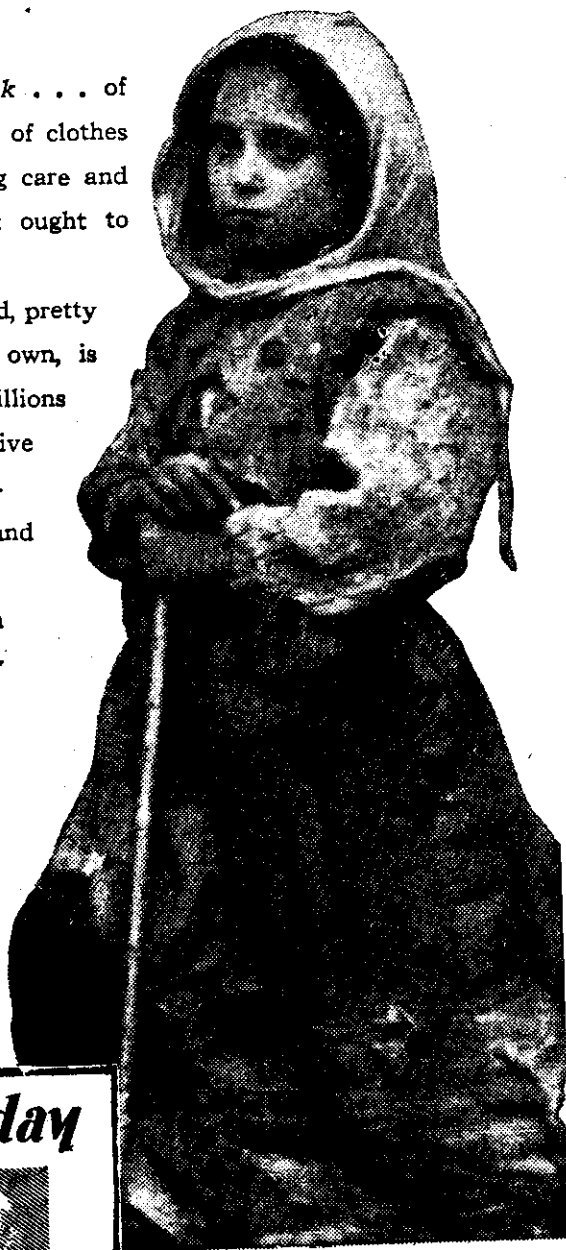


What price the "New Look?"

This is the old look . . . of poverty, hunger, lack of clothes and shoes and loving care and everything else that ought to belong to childhood.

This sweet-faced child, pretty enough to be your own, is only one among millions struggling to survive hunger, cold and illness in Europe and Asia.

Only our help can give them the new look . . . colour in their cheeks, good nourishing food, decent clothes—and a real chance to live.



Give a day



SAVE A CHILD

Give a day's pay or profit . . . or give every penny you can spare . . . for the help of children in greatest need. Contribute directly, or through your place of work, to DISTRICT TREASURER, UNITED NATIONS APPEAL FOR CHILDREN, c/o your Mayor or County Chairman; or to DOMINION HEADQUARTERS, Box 650, Wellington.



WILL CONROY and his assistant, Ronald Hubbard (left), mixing colours on their bench-size "palette"

SCENE-PAINTING FOR "CARMEN"

THE other day a member of *The Listener's* staff clambered up to the paint-room high above the stage of Wellington's Grand Opera House to interview Will J. Conroy and his young assistant, Ronald Hubbard, who are preparing the 2,000 square feet of scenic canvas which will be used in the coming *Carmen* season. With the exception of odd jobs for repertory and other amateur societies, scene-painting as a profession in New Zealand went out with the conversion of the legitimate theatre to the picture-house. Scene-painters turned to commercial art, bringing out their huge palettes only for major productions, so that it is many years since the old Opera House painting-frame—20ft. by 40ft.—was used for such a large undertaking.

Mr. Conroy is amused at the common idea that painting a stage scene means using a white-wash brush and slapping on the colour. He learned his job under Stafford Hall, at the Royal Court Theatre, Liverpool. "The famous Australian scenic artist John Brunton (father of the actress Dorothy Brunton) was Hall's first pupil and I was his last," he told us. "Hall was recognised as one of the world's great scene-painters. My first appointment was with the Moody-Manners Grand Opera Company; I also had the making of sets for a presentation of *Elijah* which had been adapted for the stage.

"I've done a fair amount of work on the Continent," he continued, as he painted in the hinges of a Spanish door. "Over there they work with long-handled brushes laying the canvas on the floor. We use an upright frame raised and lowered with a hand-winch."

"How does a scene-painter start his job?"

"We read the story of the opera or play, and sketch out the entrances and exits, platforms, and so on. And we study the architectural design of the

period to which the tale refers. We make drawings of the scenes as they present themselves to us, not necessarily to scale, but suggesting the general set-up. Then we make a model of the stage, to the scale of half-an-inch to a foot, and set up cardboard scenes according to the stage plan. The carpenter then makes them up to size. In this case a good deal of preliminary research was done by the staff of the NZBS."

To design sets for opera was to confront many hazards, it was explained. The artists must consider the size of the stage, remembering that the curtain went so high and no higher. Every piece of scenery must be easily handled by the stage-crew and certain units had to be double-sided, to present a new scene in the shortest possible time. Then there must be room for players to get on and off.

"Are stage-crews still available?"

"There are groups in every centre—men who were once employed full-time at theatres. They are still ready and willing to take a hand with a show. It is usually my job to advise on lighting, for painting and lighting are closely allied. Reds are peculiarly affected by blue and amber lights; blue makes red muddy and amber takes out all the brilliance. We rarely use black—it just goes grey."

The palette Mr. Conroy uses is a large table surrounded with boxes of paint in powder form. Water is added with a glue-size medium to bind it. "Once it's on the canvas, it sticks like discarded chewing-gum to a theatre-seat."

Carmen has been presented in New Zealand by various visiting companies and amateur societies, but it is believed that the production which opens in Dunedin on Thursday, May 27, will be the largest and most comprehensive seen here. Janet Howe and Arthur Servent, who are being brought from England by the NZBS, will play the roles of Carmen and Don José.

NEW ZEALAND LISTENER, MAY 14