

# CLARINET AT THE BALLET

THERE are many ways of seeing the world. Eileen Price, of Sydney, is seeing New Zealand at least, literally by blowing her own clarinet. She started to learn this instrument as a little girl, "because all my family are musical and my father picked out the clarinet for me" and she is still a student at the Sydney Conservatorium, but she was very anxious to visit New Zealand and an appointment as first clarinetist with the Ballet Rambert Orchestra gave her the opportunity. To see a young woman playing a clarinet is unusual in this country. "I

of their recitals. During the war she joined a big dance band, but that was only a temporary translation. Now she concentrates solely on symphonic and chamber music. "But I have an awful lot of bother getting reeds," she complained. "They've been very hard to come by since the war."

Women players of woodwind are rare professionally in New Zealand. The National Orchestra of the NZBS has a woman flautist and occasionally we have been visited by performers on musical instruments not usually associated with their sex, such as the American trumpeter, Grace Adams East, who was here eight or nine years ago. But women players of brass, woodwind and percussion are by no means uncommon in England. During the first world war they filled the places in orchestra vacated by men who went overseas and they have come to be accepted by many conductors, with the notable exception of Sir Thomas Beecham.

When, in 1946, Beecham formed his sixth orchestra, known as the Royal Philharmonic, he engaged for it some of Britain's best musicians—but no women. He said: "If a lady is not well-favoured, the male instrumentalists do not want to play near her; if she is well-favoured they can't . . . . Not that I don't think women are good musicians."

We asked the well-favoured Miss Price what she thought of Beecham's dictum.

"When he visited Australia," she said, "he conducted orchestras containing a good many women players and didn't seem to object. Women can attain just as high a degree of musicianship as men and I think that is pretty well recognised today," she said. "Of course women are apt to get married and leave the orchestra, but that's quite a good thing. New blood comes along and the orchestra is kept alive and fresh."

As she had expressed a strong preference for chamber music we asked Miss Price if players could expect it to provide them with a reasonable livelihood.

She was doubtful—"They could, but only if they had the highest reputations." However she, personally, did not intend to spend all her life in orchestras.

We mentioned the tendency for students of music, both in New Zealand and Australia, to take their talents abroad, polish them with study under great masters, and stay away.

Overseas experience was most valuable, she thought, but there had been such an increase in Australia in the enjoyment of good music—and, she had noticed, in New Zealand too—that there seemed to be ample scope for professional musicians in their own countries. "I think we should stay in our own countries as long as possible to encourage, particularly, the youth concerts and school concerts. To-day Australia is lucky. As long as a man like Goossens is there, nobody need go overseas for experience."

Eileen Price will be heard from 4YA on Sunday, July 11, at 3.25 p.m. when, with Marjorie Reed, she will present Arnold Bax's Sonata for Clarinet and Piano. She will be heard later from Christchurch.

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Spencer Digby photograph  
EILEEN PRICE  
Well favoured

am often amused," she told *The Listener*, "by the comments of people in the stalls nearest the orchestra."

Not unfairly, some American dance-band instrumentalists may be blamed for creating the impression that a clarinet is peculiarly a piece of jazz equipment. Actually in 1739 the orchestra of Kremsmunster, Austria, had two clarinets, and a Frankfurt paper of the same period bore an advertisement of the arrival of two good clarinetists and invited the public to go to their inn to hear them play. As far back as 1690 J. C. Denner added two keys to the primitive chalumeau, bridging the gap between the series of notes based on the effective length of the tube, and the overblown twelfth and thereby giving the chalumeau a range of two octaves or more, and creating the clarinet.

It became a great instrument, playable in all keys, in 1843, when Hyacinthe Klosé adapted the Boehm flute key system to the clarinet. Mozart introduced it into the symphony orchestra, though Haydn and Gluck had used it occasionally in opera. Beethoven used it as a harmony instrument in his first two symphonies, but his first use of it as a solo instrument was in his *Eroica* in 1804. After 1825 the place of the clarinet was firmly established.

## Music Clubs in Sydney

Miss Price said that there were about 30 music clubs in Sydney, each giving from six to eight chamber music concerts a year. She had played in many



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